

**Update on GNWT Marine Transportation Services**

Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie River is our marine highway to the Arctic Ocean. A reliable shipping route for generations, the Mackenzie River is the northernmost link of an intermodal supply chain that stretches from the Gulf of Mexico to the Beaufort Sea and beyond.

2017 marked the year that the Government of the Northwest Territories assumed responsibility for scheduled tug and barge services to our communities on Great Slave Lake, the Mackenzie River and Arctic coast. In 2017, the GNWT Marine Transportation Services Division registered and reactivated six tugboats, transported more than 37 million litres of fuel, and carried more than 10 thousand tonnes of deck cargo to communities and commercial clients.

Other key accomplishments included maintenance work on Canadian Coast Guard vessels and substantial charter work for large, industrial clients. The cost-effective and efficient delivery of such services to NWT businesses is one example of how the GNWT is fulfilling its mandate to strengthen connections with private sector partners in transportation infrastructure.

At the peak of last season, Marine Transportation Services employed over 140 people. 60 of those were from the Northwest Territories. Last season, Marine Transportation Services issued almost \$ 3 million dollars in contracts to Northwest Territories businesses, and created many indirect spin-offs for local businesses.

Continued investment in our supporting marine infrastructure, including Canada's northernmost inland shipyard will allow us to take advantage of such opportunities. The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to pursue opportunities for funding that may be available through initiatives such as the federal Oceans Protection Plan.

As we prepare for the 2018 sailing season, we begin from a much better operational situation than we did in our first season. Experience from the 2017 sailing season is informing service improvement strategies, and work to determine an appropriate business model for the longer term continues.

Commercial, industrial and tourism activity in the Arctic is increasing, along with the economic and development opportunities that go with it.

To support this anticipated growth, we are pleased with the recent announcement by Transport Canada that they will provide funding to the Nunavut Fisheries and Marine Training Consortium to establish a Marine Training Centre in the Northwest Territories. The establishment of a centre for marine-related training is a strategic investment that supports the Government's priority to develop a skilled northern workforce.

Mr. Speaker, our priority remains that essential goods will be delivered without fail and at reasonable cost to residents who rely on Marine Transportation Services. We are committed to building new business relationships, training our people, creating jobs, and stimulating the economy of the Northwest Territories.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.