

Marine Transportation Services

Mr. Speaker, five years ago the Government of the Northwest Territories took on responsibility for the tugs, barges and marine facilities that have served our communities for decades. Since then, Marine Transportation Services, also known as MTS, has evolved and improved and provides reliable and professional marine shipping service while also supporting the Northwest Territories' economy and workforce development.

In 2020, MTS delivered more than 6,300 tonnes of cargo and 28 million litres of fuel to communities on Great Slave Lake, the Mackenzie River, the Beaufort Delta, and the Arctic Ocean coast. Millions of liters of fuel were delivered to 20 coastal North Warning System radar sites on behalf of the Department of National Defence.

Mr. Speaker, planning for the 2021 Sailing Season, our fifth season, is on schedule. The first barges are expected to depart Hay River in mid-June. This is the first of 16 tows scheduled for the season. With a robust COVID-19 mitigation plan in place to protect our communities, residents can ship and receive their cargo safely. Thanks to funding provided by Canada, four new double-hulled barges joined the MTS fleet late last year. These barges will be in service this season, carrying deck cargo and petroleum products to our communities and customers.

For the past two summers, adventurous teenagers from Ndilo, Dettah, Łutselk'e and Yellowknife have joined a unique research expedition to help scientists conduct a bathymetry study of Great Slave Lake, the deepest of any lake in North America, and to install moorings in Christie Bay.

These young people worked with researchers using cutting-edge technology and shared traditional knowledge of the water they grew up on. They shadowed the captain and crew of the vessel, learning about exciting and fulfilling career paths they might never have otherwise considered.

This collaboration between young Northerners and world-class scientists took place on the MV Nahidik. The MTS vessel is leased to the Arctic Research Foundation, a non-government organization that collaborates with Northern and Indigenous communities, to support scientific research in the North. I had an opportunity to visit the vessel and meet some of the students when it docked at the end of last season. I toured the vessel, was given a demonstration of some of the equipment they used, and most importantly met some of the students who had just completed this exciting expedition. Our association with the Arctic Research Foundation supports infrastructure projects and northern youth, and by advancing northern science we may better understand the effect of climate change on northern waters.

MTS also supports the Canadian Coast Guard's navigational aid program in NWT waters, performing annual inspections, overhaul, repair and maintenance to the Canadian Coast Guard's vessels Dumit and Eckaloo at the GNWT Hay River Shipyard. This essential program places and maintains buoys and range markers each year, facilitating the safe passage of commercial marine traffic on the Mackenzie River and Great Slave Lake.

Through the Marine Training Centre and with the support of Transport Canada, our partnership with the Nunavut Fisheries and Marine Training Consortium supports marine-related education and training within the NWT, creating long-term and fulfilling employment opportunities for NWT residents.

Mr. Speaker, through MTS, the GNWT will continue to pursue opportunities with public and private stakeholders, and our hardworking MTS crew will continue to deliver essential supplies to our communities.

Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.