



Inuvialuit Comment of the Importance of Sealift to the ISR Communities

Inuvik, October 4th, 2018 –The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) today outlined several concerns with the 2018 sealift season and the GNWT plans going forward. Duane Smith, the Chair and CEO of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation stated that “Both fuel and supplies to the hamlet of Paulatuk, and vital supplies to our cousins in the Kiktikmeot region continue to be stranded due to poor planning and lack of sufficient resources to tackle our changing northern climate.” The announcement was in response to a release by Marine Transport Services Ltd. (MTS – a division of the GNWT) that a year’s worth of supplies, including heating oil, would not make it to their final destination this year.

The Inuvialuit have been pressuring the GNWT and the Government of Canada to support northern infrastructure projects and provide additional security to marine transportation corridors. Several projects, including a deep-water port in Tuktoyaktuk and northern Coast Guard assets, could allow the use of new shipping techniques and provide more efficient transportation timetables. “The issues with the sealift demonstrate the logistical problems that plague northern construction projects, and in anticipation of future delays IRC will be reaching out to its funding partners to gain additional flexibility and address these challenges,” Mr Smith said referring primarily to the multi-year housing construction project underway in the region.

On September 27th, 2018 the National Snow and Ice Data Centre (NSIDC) released their annual analysis of the ice conditions in the circumpolar region noting that ice levels were at one of the lowest levels in the 40-year history of data collection. “With the levels of sea ice dropping precipitously over the last few decades we have seen an increase in tourism and trade activities throughout our region, we continue to see increases in the number of cruise ships traversing our waters,” said Mr. Smith, adding, “more priority needs to be given to supplies and fuel so that we do not end up in another desperate situation as we are this year.” Several communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region have been plagued with gas shortages in recent years leading to the rationing of fuel. “Food costs throughout the North remain some of the highest in the world, and the limited fuel made available restricts our people’s ability to use traditional food sources such as hunting and fishing”

“Although we are relieved that MTS has agreed to airlift some fuel, we are concerned that the costs associated with this will come from other vital programs and services that already form part of the GNWT’s tight budget,” said Mr. Smith, “IRC will be reaching out to the coastal communities to see how we can support them in this precarious time.”

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