

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

MARCH 2017

Evaluation of the Marine Communications and Traffic Services Program

The Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) Program is a national program delivered by the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG), which contributes to the safe and efficient navigation of vessels in Canadian waterways; the protection of the marine environment; and the safety of life at sea. MCTS officers provide vessel traffic services to vessels transiting selected Canadian ports and waterways; and marine safety information to all mariners in Canadian waters 24-hours per day, seven days a week. The program works closely with a number of partners from the CCG (Search and Rescue Services, Environmental Response Services) and federal government (Transport Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada). The program's mandate is derived from several federal acts (the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the *Oceans Act, 1996* and the *Canada Shipping Act, 2001*) and international conventions, including the Safety of Life at Sea Convention and the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities' standards.

WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

Marine Communications and Traffic Services Program – Key Findings

- Canadian legislation and commitments to international conventions support a continued need for MCTS information and services.
- MCTS information and services play a key role in supporting the marine transportation sector. The need for MCTS support will continue to increase in response to an increased demand for data and higher public expectations for enhanced safety and protection, stemming from the increased volume and traffic of vessels worldwide. Despite technological advancements, the need for MCTS as a key component of the Canadian marine safety system is unlikely to decrease in the near future. MCTS is required by law to coordinate all communications in the case of marine safety incidents, in order to ensure the quickest and most effective response to exceptional marine occurrences and Search and Rescue incidents.
- The MCTS program adequately addresses the current needs of users, and provides the support they need to ensure their safe transit of Canadian waters. The program's efforts to maintain its relevance and responsiveness to users' needs in future would benefit from increased engagement and communication with its external clients and internal partners; and the development of a long-term, forward-looking vision.
- In Canada, it is appropriate for the federal government to deliver the MCTS program. By providing vessel traffic and safety functions through one government program, MCTS has access to all relevant data sources, and can deliver the most comprehensive picture of the marine situational environment at any given moment. Currently, no feasible alternative leads exist for delivering MCTS services.
- MCTS clients and internal CCG partners are satisfied with the quality of the program's information and services, which are timely, accurate and accessible. No significant changes were found in the quality of the MCTS services in the past five years, despite the transformations undergone by the program in this time. The few gaps in service quality that were perceived by survey respondents were associated with the Consolidation and Modernization project. Minor quality issues that were identified appear to be transitory in nature and will likely be resolved once the adaptation of the program and staff to the new operational environment is fully completed.

- The MCTS program completed the major modernization of its technological systems and the consolidation of its centres, while maintaining its provision of services with almost no impact to mariners. The program is now well-positioned to respond to evolving demands for services.
- The MCTS program reduced its total expenditures and number of Full-Time Equivalents positions over the last five years, while maintaining the same level of service. However, over the last two years there was an increase in the salary overtime costs, mainly as a result of the increased need for on-the-job training and re-certification of officers for new locations after the consolidation of the operations.
- Under-staffing of MCTS centres is the primary factor affecting the efficiency and economy of the program. Understaffing has caused a number of challenges for the program, which the Consolidation and Modernization project exacerbated. In November 2016 there was a staffing gap of 42.5 Full-Time Equivalents, which will increase in the next few years. The MCTS program will need to work with the CCG College to develop a long-term strategic staffing plan for the program.
- Marine Weather Broadcasting is a long-time service delivered by MCTS to mariners. In most areas this service duplicates the work of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC); however, in the Arctic and in some other areas of Canada, ECCC broadcasting is unavailable due to technological limitations. There is an opportunity for MCTS to reassess this service, in cooperation with ECCC, and to investigate whether any duplication of federal resources exists.
- The MCTS program is currently implementing a national quality management system, which is expected to improve the national coherence of the program, ensure a high quality of service, and better clarify the roles and responsibilities between National Headquarters and the regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that the Deputy Commissioner, Operations develop and implement a sustainable staffing strategy to address the short, medium, and long-term staffing needs of the program.
2. It is recommended that the Deputy Commissioner, Operations consult with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to investigate whether there is any duplication in weather broadcasting services delivered by MCTS and ECCC; if duplication exists, it is recommended that this be addressed jointly.
3. It is recommended that the Deputy Commissioner, Operations pursue the implementation of the national quality management system to ensure that MCTS operational guidelines and procedures are standardized and applied nationally.

ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

This report presents the results of the evaluation of CCG MCTS Program. In 2015-16, actual program expenditures were \$38.7 million. The evaluation covers the five-year period from fiscal years 2011-12 through 2015-16 and was conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Evaluation Directorate. This is the first evaluation of the MCTS Program. The evaluation took into consideration the significant transformation undergone by the program during the implementation of the Consolidation and Modernization project between 2011 and 2016. For more information about this evaluation and its findings, please consult the Evaluation of the Marine Communications and Traffic Services Program report, including the Management Action Plan, accessible online at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ae-ve/evaluations-eng.htm>