



# MERCHANT NAVY COMMEMORATIVE THEME PROJECT (MNCTP)



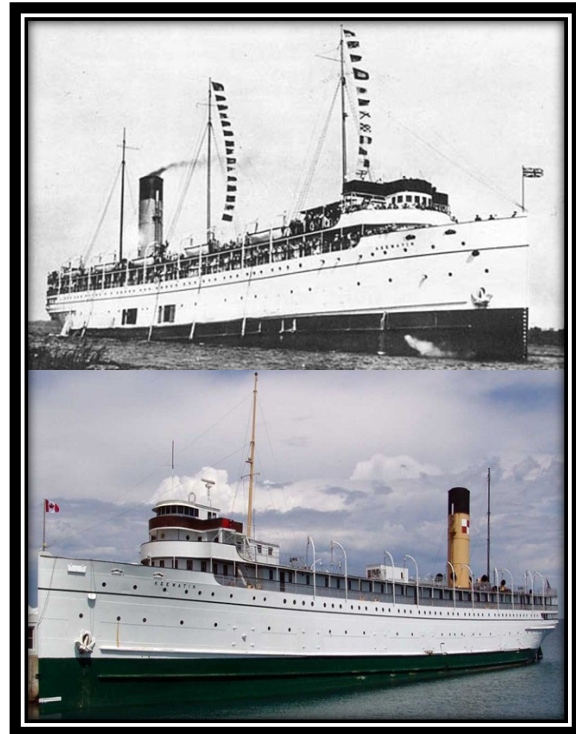
## NEWS RELEASE

**S.S. KEEWATIN TO BE LAUNCH VENUE FOR THE  
80TH ANNIVERSARY OF MN WWII COMMEMORATIONS**

**MAY 16, 2019**

**Today** – Mr. Stéphane Ouellette, President and CEO, Merchant Navy Commemorative Theme Project (MNCTP), joined Mr. Eric Conroy, President and CEO, Friends of Keewatin, and Mr. Bruce Stanton, Member of Parliament for Simcoe North, in celebrating this year's opening of the S.S. Keewatin, located in Port McNicoll, Ontario, Canada.

This year's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Merchant Navy/Marine WWII Commemorations will be held at the S.S. Keewatin, in the Heart of Georgian Bay, on September 1, 2019. This will be under the auspices of the *Merchant Navy Veterans Day Act*, enacted by Parliament in 2003. Canada officially recognizes this date each year as September 3<sup>rd</sup>. This day is also officially recognized by Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.



The S.S. Keewatin began her service in the Canadian Pacific Railroad Great Lakes Steamship fleet in 1907. This majestic Edwardian luxury liner was built in Glasgow, Scotland on the Clyde. The S.S. Keewatin was designed and constructed in the same tradition as the RMS Titanic (built in Belfast, Northern Ireland) with comfort, class, and beauty in mind. She transported passengers and freight on a two-and-a-half day journey across the Great Lakes between railheads, from Port McNicoll on Georgian Bay to Fort William and Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay) on Lake Superior. She was retired in 1965 and then saved from the wrecker's torch by a US couple, who towed her to their marina in Michigan to serve as a museum. The S.S. Keewatin was returned to her home port of Port McNicoll by a Canadian entrepreneur in 2012.

The S.S. Keewatin now stands as the last Great Lakes passenger steamship, and the last Edwardian passenger liner in the world. This luxury ship is representative of a bygone era, when attention to craftsmanship and opulence was an art form. The "Kee" is a true symbol of growth and development in North America. She is a treasured piece of Canadian history, and has a direct link to the Canadian Merchant Navy: some of her crew, and crew of her sister ships, served in the Merchant Navy during World War II. This makes her a fitting venue for recognition of Merchant Navy Veterans Day.



It was on that fateful day of September 3, 1939, when the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany, the passenger ship the S.S. Athenia was torpedoed by U-30, while on patrol in the northwestern sector of Ireland. The ship was carrying 1,103 passengers, including approximately 500 Jewish refugees, 469 Canadians, 311 Americans, 72 British, along with 315 of her crew. However, 98 passengers and 19 crew members were killed. Fifty-four were Canadian, 28 were American, including Canadian Stewardess Hannah Baird. The first casualties of WWII were Canadian and American civilians.

During the Second World War, a total of 25,343 merchant ships, with 164,783,921 tons of cargo on board, sailed from North America to Britain. The Royal Canadian Navy gave to the struggle over 2,000 dead and 24 warships. More than 900 RCAF and Canadian Army personnel were also lost. Over 2,199 Canadian Merchant Navy Seaman were killed in both WWI and WWII. Moreover, more than 250,000 American Merchant Marine sailed the treacherous oceans of the globe. Over 6,835 American Merchant Marine were killed and over 11,000 wounded. In addition, 604 Merchant Mariners were taken prisoners of war, resulting in 61 casualties within POW camps.

## Quotes

*“On behalf of the people of Simcoe North and the Parliament of Canada, I extend my sincere wishes for the official opening of the S.S. Keewatin for the summer season. I also look forward to this year’s Merchant Navy Day of Remembrance, organized by the Merchant Navy Commemorative Theme Project and the Friends of the S.S. Keewatin.*

*“The SS Keewatin is a remarkable part of Canada’s development and progress as a nation in the early 20th century. She heralds from an era in passenger ship travel that is no longer available to witness, except along this pier in Southern Georgian Bay. As a treasured piece of Canadian history, the S.S. Keewatin also speaks to our proud naval history from coast to coast.”*

– Mr. Bruce Stanton, Member of Parliament for Simcoe North, Ontario, Canada

*“Friends of Keewatin is proud to have the S.S. Keewatin serve as a venue for the recognition of Merchant Navy Veterans Day. We’re looking forward to telling the stories of Seamen from the Upper Great Lakes Fleet who volunteered for service in Canada’s Merchant Navy during WWII, and remembering all Seaman who served during WWI and WWII.”*

– Mr. Eric Conroy, President and CEO, Friends of Keewatin

*“The MNCTP is proud to be a partner with the Friends of Keewatin in planning this year’s Merchant Navy Veterans Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorations.”*

– Mr. Stéphane Ouellette, President and CEO, MNCTP

## Contact Information

- Merchant Navy Commemorative Theme Project (MNCTP)  
Mr. Stéphane Ouellette  
President and CEO  
Tel: 1.613.421.9005  
E-mail: [ouellettes@rogers.com](mailto:ouellettes@rogers.com)  
Website: [www.alliedmerchantnavy.com](http://www.alliedmerchantnavy.com)
- Friends of Keewatin  
Mr. Wayne Coombes  
Marketing and Communications  
Tel: 1.416.805.5669  
E-mail: [wayne@sskeewatin.com](mailto:wayne@sskeewatin.com)

Website: [www.sskeewatin.com](http://www.sskeewatin.com)