

St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act

Mr. Howe (Wellington-Huron): Mr. Chairman, I am sure we are all interested in this measure to provide additional borrowing authority to the St. Lawrence seaway in the amount of \$190 million. The minister has explained that this is necessary in order to defray the cost of the twinning of the Welland canal locks and to provide capital funds for the diversion at the Victoria bridge.

This is quite a sizeable sum of money. I think the committee is entitled to know when the pre-engineering work was done on this twinning project, how long it will take for the project to be completed, how much additional revenue is expected to be received, and whether this will be a toll free lock.

The St. Lawrence seaway was a tremendous development project, completed just a few years ago. It has done a great deal to stimulate trade and commerce throughout central Canada, and I notice its revenue increase in 1962 was 8.1 per cent over 1961. We will expect a further increase this coming year due to the huge grain sales, and I wonder if the minister can give us some idea at this stage what the increase in traffic will be for the present navigation period and when the seaway, without the twinning, is expected to pay its way, so that it would not have to be returning periodically to the treasury for assistance.

Mr. McIlraith: I can give some information, and the best way to get an accurate picture is to give the latest figures I have on total cargo tons for both the seaway and the Welland canal. Taking the period April to October, the figures for the Welland canal in 1962 were 30,421,305 tons, and in 1963 they were 34,192,548 tons. The figures for the Montreal-lake Ontario section for the same period were 21,853,929 tons for 1962 and 25,732,923 tons for 1963. From those figures it will be seen that the rate of increase on the St. Lawrence section is 17.7 per cent over last year, and on the Welland canal section 12.4 per cent. Of course the rate of increase is being held up through November and it will be appreciated that the figures may vary slightly at the end of the year, but I think the picture they give is an accurate one.

Regarding tolls, in accordance with the agreement made with the United States a review of the tolls is necessary and the preparatory work is going on now. The review is required to be completed by the middle of next summer, and I do not think there is anything useful I can add at present on the question of tolls.

With regard to the \$180 million which is to be spent on the Welland canal, I think I indicated in my statement to the house on August 2 that a situation would arise in which there would be restriction of shipping if this

[Mr. McIlraith.]

work were not undertaken immediately, because otherwise the Welland canal would not be able to handle all the traffic.

The work is being undertaken in such a way that practically all of it will be done during the off-navigation season, and the engineering plans for the sequence of doing the work are made in such a way that benefits will start to flow from the work in the early years. It is a five year program and will not be completed until the navigation season of 1969, but the work will be of benefit before the end of the five year construction period.

Perhaps I could give the programming of the costs through the years. The amount to be spent this year will be smaller than in the succeeding years. Some \$10 million will be spent this year, and more than that in the succeeding years.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Chairman, members of this group naturally support this expenditure as part of the development of the country, but individual members of parliament are required to justify their actions when they appear before their constituents. I think the minister should take this opportunity to give us an outline of the need for the twinning of the locks, the type of development that is intended, what additional benefits it will give to the seaway, the plan to be followed with respect to construction, and a breakdown of the expenditures for the various aspects of the work.

This is a lot of money, \$190 million, which we are giving the seaway authority to borrow in addition to its present authority, and when we come to the second reading of the bill I hope the minister will give us the story in sequence, the history of the need, the planning with respect to the development, a breakdown of the cost, the time schedule for construction, and the improvement it will bring to the handling of traffic on the seaway.

If I were to go home at this time, Mr. Chairman, and were asked by my constituents to explain this matter in detail, I would have a pretty foggy idea. I know in general that it is necessary, and so on, but I think when we are considering items of this amount we should get a very clearcut and thorough explanation of the circumstances which cause the government to bring this legislation before the house. When we get to the second reading of the bill the minister will no doubt have had an opportunity to get the facts together and possibly get some assistance from his officials. I hope at that time we will get a story on the record which will be informative to hon. members of this house and of use to them in informing their