

somehow and somewhere if in fact those fees that now will not have a ceiling under this legislation and will be provided for by an independent body, namely the board of trade, that there needs to be some kind of accountability.

• (1740)

The shipping industry is going through some very rough waters indeed. Shipping is down in many parts of the country. Ports Canada includes basically the administration of seven autonomous ports: Halifax, Montreal, Quebec Prince Rupert, Saint John, St. John's and Vancouver. Under the Ports Canada Corporation, there is an additional seven regional divisional ports. Ports Canada reports shipping activity declined nearly 7 per cent in 1989 from the year earlier, representing some 174 million tonnes of cargo less being shipped this year than last year. Eighty-three per cent was handled by the seven port corporations and 17 per cent by the Canada Ports Corporation, i.e., the seven divisional ports. The total tonnage in the berths of the seven port corporations was down again by 8 per cent. In the seven smaller Canada Ports Corporation berths, the total tonnage was down by 9 per cent. Coal shipments were down 2.5 per cent; grain was down 26 per cent to 19.2 million tonnes; containerized traffic was down from 12.5 to slightly over 12.3 million tonnes from the previous year.

In Montreal, one of the ports being debated this afternoon, the 1989 total volume was 20.4 million tonnes, down from 22 million tonnes in 1988. Similar percentage decreases were also experienced by the port of Quebec City, where it was down to 15.7 million tonnes from 18 million tonnes.

These statistics are tabled with Your Honour to show that the shipping industry is not going through good times. We have seen the situation on land in terms of transportation. We know what has happened to our rail infrastructure. We know what is happening in the airline industry. We know about the 3,000 Canadians laid off by Air Canada and Worldways and other companies. We know about the open skies concept. What we should not do is also undermine the shipping industry, an industry that has shown health and diversity. In fact, it has scared

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away the Americans from competing with us head to head because they have too much respect for us.

The Americans were very quick to try to compete with us in the trucking industry. They did and they hurt us. Now they wish to compete with us head to head in the air. That is why we are entering the open skies arrangement favoured by this government.

When we talk about increasing and modernizing fees for the shipping industry, we should keep in mind the delicate nature of the business. We should not try to put people out of business, but try to give them an infrastructure to facilitate growth and dynamism so they will not only flourish, but the jobs in the industry will increase so that Canadian families across the country, particularly in the cities surrounding these seven major ports may continue to have a vibrant livelihood.

We look forward to moving this bill into committee stage where we can pursue a number of areas where we can, while modernizing these fees, also continue to have a responsibility and an accountability so that those fees being charged are clearly going to be in the interest of the shipping entities in the shipping companies so that they may continue to work.

The other points I would like to raise are, perhaps in committee, in terms of if a shipping company feels that the fees are too exorbitant, what is the appeal mechanism? Now that we are giving more autonomy to the boards of trade and the various wardens, what is the role of the Canadian government vis-à-vis a complaint coming from a shipping company in terms of the fees charged.

We may also contemplate—and I say this to the minister and his parliamentary secretary—we know now that the ports must submit a yearly audit. We may now be suggesting that we are giving more autonomy to have a more comprehensive report. Rather than getting a simple audit with numbers on a piece of paper that sometimes do not mean very much, we may want to expand the comprehensiveness of that type of report.

We also may engage the boards of trade. Now that they will be directing the shots, we may also have the boards of trade enter into a closer working relationship with the Government of Canada. Once again, while we appoint the wardens, I think we ought to be responsible in terms of the fees discharged to the shipping industry.