

tial of the port some improvements should be made to it. You may ask what is the reason for suggesting greater use of the port of Churchill. I suggest there is a very practical reason for its greater use. Here I quote from a report prepared by the office of the Minister of Agriculture for the crop year 1971-72. It is interesting to note the comparison of costs involved in shipping grains. I refer to page 23 of this report headed, "Estimated average cost of moving Canadian wheat from a mid-prairie point . . . during the crop year 1971." The report indicates that in the crop year 1971-72 some 20 million bushels were shipped through the port of Churchill, and some 23 million bushels in the previous year. I believe the estimates show that the approximate amount of grain shipped through the port of Churchill this year was some 25 million bushels.

But, Mr. Chairman, the cost, on an estimated average forwarding cost basis, to ship by the port of Churchill was quoted as 36.652 cents per bushel. The cost of using maritime ports was 59.110 cents per bushel, and the cost of shipping by way of Thunder Bay overseas direct was 44.578 cents per bushel. I suggest that savings of that magnitude certainly justify taking a much closer look at the potential of the port of Churchill.

Briefly, I would like to suggest some of the things that must be done, at a very minimal cost, in order to utilize the port fully and perhaps effect much greater savings that should evolve to the benefit of the wheat growers, producers and shippers in the prairie provinces who have access to the Manitoba seaport of Churchill. First of all, the capital improvements that are required are in the neighbourhood of \$15 million. But these improvements should not be undertaken as in the past, on a piecemeal basis or with a shotgun type of action: they should be undertaken as a total development concept.

The first thing that must be done is to deepen the harbour by dredging. I do not like to go back into history but I believe the last dredging of the port was carried out in 1962. Since that time there has been some minor maintenance dredging but nothing of the nature required. The port near the wharf itself must be deepened by another four feet as a minimum, in order to handle the larger ships that are becoming more common to the area. The present depth at the wharf is some 32 feet and, of course, relying on the tides, which can be up to 15 feet in height, it is now necessary that further deepening be done in order that the larger ships can come into the harbour, receive grain with a minimum of delay and return to Europe.

Coupled with this must be the deepening of the turn around basin. When the ships are loaded they must be turned around in the mouth of the Churchill River. In order to maintain the proper depth in the turn around basin it is necessary that constant dredging be done. This has not been the case for some years. The result is that the turn around basin is getting shallower and shallower and certainly is not adequate for the size of ships used in that area in this day and age.

Another item that must be attended to is the provision of grain galleries and wharf facilities which will handle the larger ships. There is no point in deepening the harbour unless the facilities are upgraded to handle the size of ships now in use. And coupled with this is grain storage and cleaning facilities. As I have mentioned, the storage

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capacity now is some five million bushels but because of the distance and the fact that the port is at the end of the line it is necessary that these facilities be increased and that the service of cleaning grain be added. Mr. Chairman, it is not necessary that the service be added right at the port of Churchill. There is no reason why it could not be included at some point in the rail line leading to Churchill where it would facilitate the rapid movement of grain out of the port.

• (2150)

One reason given for the failure to use the port as much as possible is that the Churchill River runs into the bay and in the late fall slush-ice forms in the river, pushes against the wharf facilities and makes it difficult for the ships to manoeuvre. Various plans have been put forward to overcome this problem, one of which, the tidal barrier, is quite feasible and could be constructed at minimum cost. Another reason which is sometimes put forward is the short season. The grain marketing people have said that they need a longer season in order to justify any increased expenditure at the port. This is not necessarily a physical problem, however.

One of the reasons the season is so short is that the marine insurance companies arbitrarily set the dates for which insurance will be in effect for the ships using the Hudson Bay and the port of Churchill. The season commences July 23, usually, and extends almost to the end of October. The season could be extended to 107 days if the hulls of the ships were reinforced. With the use of icebreakers it is conceivable that the season could be extended to 214 days. Were this the case, the service time for the port could be extended considerably and the volume of grain handled could be increased substantially.

Coupled with improvements to the port, icebreakers must be provided to keep the bay clear and an adequate tug must be provided at the port to ensure that the ships are quickly taken to berth, loaded and returned to the bay. One of the bottlenecks has been caused by the fact that ships often have to wait a long time in the bay before they can get into the wharf to load. Another factor to be considered is that railway facilities should be upgraded to handle the new hopper cars purchased by the government. These cars cannot operate to their full capacity at the present time. The railway to Churchill should be upgraded so that it can support the port in the shipment of grain and other products.

Another difficulty is that the port does not receive the support it should from the government. The National Harbours Board is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the port, but the Wheat Board and the Minister of Agriculture are responsible for deciding what method is used to ship grain. It requires some extensive re-examination of the problem and the promotion of a number of things, and I sincerely hope that all these will be taken into account.

Mr. Chairman, I do not want to deal with this matter very much longer. However, I would express the hope that hon. members opposite, particularly the minister, will take a good look at the port of Churchill and give serious consideration to providing the capital needed to make it