

Malépart), but the hour allotted for Private Members' Business has now expired.

• (1800)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 46 deemed to have been moved.

ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY—WELLAND CANAL BLOCKAGE— REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF SHIPPING SEASON

Mr. Allan Pietz (Welland): Mr. Speaker, the question I wish to address this evening is one I raised with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) in Question Period on October 21 having to do with the upgrading of the Welland Canal section of the St. Lawrence Seaway. The blow-out of Lock 7 on October 14 has served to focus attention on the need to look again at upgrading the canal facilities. We now know that the canal will be open on November 6. The St. Lawrence Seaway Authority is to be commended for the fast action taken in repairing the damage. Notwithstanding this, the matter of upgrading the canal is one which must be addressed.

The recent accident has affected all of the communities along the canal. Sailors have been laid off and industries, both local and across the country, have been affected. Detractors would have us believe that the canal has outgrown its usefulness. That is not true. According to statistics gathered by the Canadian Trade Commission, 26 per cent of Canadian goods are transported by truck; 32 per cent by rail; but fully 40 per cent of Canadian commodities are shipped by water. There is no indication that this will change. Water transportation is cheap, fast and efficient and it will continue to be that way if we maintain our waterways to international standards.

I would like to take a few moments to outline briefly some of the history of the canal. I think it is important for Hon. Members to realize what this engineering marvel has done for the country's development. When the first Welland Canal was completed in 1829 it provided the means to bring grain cheaply and quickly from the interior of the country to the St. Lawrence River and on to Europe. One forgets what an incredible achievement it was and is to have conquered the obstacle presented by Niagara Falls, making it possible to link the Canadian West along 2,200 miles of continuous inland waterways to the Atlantic Ocean.

Since 1829 the canal has been rebuilt four times. The first canal included 40 locks. Later this was reduced to 27 locks and still later to 26 locks.

At the turn of the century, a report of a Government-appointed commission which said that wheat, lumber, copper and iron from the upper lakes would pass through the canal in

Adjournment Debate

increasing amounts were it not for the fact that larger boats of the period could not go through the then existing canal resulted in the 20-year construction of the present waterway which was opened in 1932 and which became generally known as the fourth Welland Canal.

For this fourth canal a new route was chosen which would take ships across the Niagara Peninsula in virtually a direct north-south line of only 26 miles. The difference of 326.5 feet between the levels of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie was overcome by seven lift locks and one control lock. Three of the seven lift locks are twinned, thus allowing ship traffic to move in both directions simultaneously.

• (1805)

Improvements have been ongoing over the years. In anticipation of the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959 the depth was increased to 27 feet. A sophisticated control centre was installed in 1966 and it is being updated this year. The most important improvement, however, was the \$200 million Welland Canal bypass which was completed in 1973. The old nine-mile stretch of the Welland Canal which bisected the city of Welland and imposed a navigational problem for the new and larger ships was abandoned and replaced with a new bypass.

This project took seven years to complete, during which period I was mayor of the city of Welland. I am, therefore, very aware of the immense amount of work which went into this realignment project not only to the canal itself but to the railway and road systems which were taken under the new channel by means of tunnels.

The completion of the bypass channel allows lakers 730 feet long to travel through the Seaway locks. What a difference this is from the 100 by 20 foot vessels which used the first Welland Canal.

I hope through this brief historical outline I have illustrated how ongoing improvements to the Welland Canal have kept it up to world engineering standards. The Seaway's corporate plan, however, indicates that the Welland Canal will not be able to handle the increased demand which will be placed on it in the future in terms of both the number of ships using the canal and the larger size of ships which will be in use in the 21st century.

The corporate plan indicates that the capacity pressures will surface in about 15 years, around the year 2000. That is not a long time away, Mr. Speaker, for improvements to be planned. The recent accident at Lock 7 is currently holding up 107 ships in the Great Lakes system. The financial losses this is causing to the Seaway, shipping companies and suppliers are running at a very high level. I therefore suggest that the Seaway authority consider a program of upgrading the lock system at an early date.

A necessary part of this process would be a cost benefit analysis of proposals which have already been made. These proposals include three conceptual plans for lock improvements. One plan is a new system of superlocks in a new location which would lower the number of locks to three, as