

*Gunderson Slough Harbour Act*

disposal to bring the concerns of his constituents to the attention of the House.

The Bill under discussion concerns the transfer of the title of a certain portion of upland and water lots from the Fraser River Harbour Commission to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Before discussing the specifics of this Bill, I think it is important that we have an appreciation of the important port known as the Fraser River Harbour Commission. Therefore I should like to take a few minutes in my introduction briefly to place the Fraser River Harbour Commission in perspective by beginning with a review of the historical development of west coast ports.

The earliest activity in foreign commerce on the Canadian west coast was in the trading of otter and other furs with markets overseas. As the influx of settlers to the west coast increased, other products such as coal and lumber began to move to export markets. However, it was not until the 1860s that the first real growth in international seaborne shipments began.

By 1900 the principal commodities were coal and lumber, which accounted for 900,000 tons and 175,000 tons respectively. The decade to 1910 experienced a decline in international shipping activity. However, this was followed by a revival in shipping activity as a result of the opening of the Panama Canal. A phase of vigorous expansion followed to about 1930, caused by two major developments—the transcontinental railway had become a valuable transportation route for the westward movement of bulk commodities, and shipping technology had replaced sailing clippers by the more business-like steamships. By 1930 exports had increased to eight million tons.

The export movement required an efficient transportation system for reliable delivery and, consequently, the development of ports was of paramount importance. The development of west coast ports began in the middle of the eighteenth century, and their location was affected by the distribution and accessibility of natural resources such as lumber and minerals. These ports, including the one which became known as the Fraser River Harbour Commission, was situated along the south and east coasts of Vancouver Island and the coast of the lower mainland.

In 1929 Vancouver emerged as the premier port on the west coast. Vancouver was followed by New Westminster, as the Commission was known in those days, which handled 0.3 million tons, and its emergence was attributed to the growth of the Fraser River as one of the most important centres of the sawmill industry.

The period of depression in the 1930s greatly influenced world commodity markets and created a highly unfavourable trading environment. The foreign trade of west coast ports dropped sharply until the end of the Second World War. Port development on the West Coast was affected markedly during this period. Vancouver suffered most, mainly because of the loss of the grain trade. The effect on the other ports was less pronounced as they depended upon the relatively stable lumber trade for their commercial prosperity. The Port of New

Westminster continued to be the second largest, and in fact narrowed its gap with Vancouver.

After the Second World War the international trade through west coast ports entered a phase of expansion similar to the 1920s. By 1962 ports on the west coast reached a peak of 16.6 million tons. The grain trade was revived and the trade in forest products also increased. An important development was the dramatic post-war economic growth of Japan. As we will see later, trade with the Japanese is a very important part of the present day business conducted by the port we now know as the Fraser River Harbour Commission.

In general, post-war economic growth brought new prosperity to all west coast ports. Several ports, including New Westminster, benefited from expansion in forest product traffic. By 1962 New Westminster was handling over 1.1 million tons of cargo. The foregoing certainly does not do justice to the development of our great system of west coast ports in general, nor to the Fraser River Harbour Commission in particular, but it does adequately set out the scene for a more explicit description of the port with which we are concerned here today, the Fraser River Harbour Commission.

The jurisdictional boundaries of that Commission extend from the mouth of the main arm of the Fraser River at Steveston upstream, along the shores of Delta and Richmond, past New Westminster and Surrey to a boundary where Kanaka Creek enters the Fraser. Also included within the harbour limits are a small section of the north arm of the Fraser near New Westminster and another body of water, the Pitt River, which extends to Pitt Lake. The Commission lies immediately adjacent to two other lower mainland ports—Vancouver and the North Fraser Harbour Commission.

Most terminals of the Fraser River Harbour Commission area are located five to 20 kilometres upstream of the entrance to the Fraser River. Under certain circumstances vessels up to 60,000 deadweight tons have been accommodated on the Fraser River.

The relative importance of coastal traffic is greater for the Commission than it is for the Port of Vancouver. In 1978, coastal cargo tons accounted for 57 per cent of the total tonnage handled by the port. The Commission is served by a combination of multi-purpose and single purpose facilities, and a wide range of services is offered. The principal terminal types fall into seven categories—dry bulk terminals, grain terminals, multi-purpose, general cargo, forest products, rail roll-on/roll-off, auto roll-on/roll-off, and liquid bulk.

In addition there are a number of small operators primarily involved in coastal trade—fish packing companies located at the mouth of the river, forest product operators, and a variety of small industries located primarily on Annacis Island. With the exception of wood chips and sawdust, the Commission is not used in the movement of significant quantities of dry bulk materials. Two terminals on the Fraser are involved in the handling of automobiles, the second most important import on the river. These facilities include large storage areas for the storage and sorting of vehicles and are the largest of their kind in western Canada.