

Government Orders

major impact on the viability of the Canadian inland fleet as they will be unable to meet all their commitments.

With the outlook for below normal temperatures to continue for the remainder of December, the announced clearance date of December 19 may not be achievable, and the dependability and reliability of the seaway as a transportation route will be jeopardized.

It is therefore critical that coast guard services be restored as soon as possible so that the seaway may be closed in an orderly fashion and all vessels can complete their transits.

In addition to the seaway, the St. Lawrence River ports have substantial impact on the local, regional and national economy. Traffic at Ports Canada facilities located on the St. Lawrence River generate over 16,500 jobs and \$750 million in total income.

[Translation]

The 1988 daily average container traffic in the Port of Montreal was 15,000 tons, Madam Speaker, each ton worth \$25 in revenue. The impact of the strike is estimated to be 50 per cent more per ton for containers transported by land. This figure is based on the estimated cost of shipping them by rail. All told, this could translate into daily losses amounting to \$1.2 million.

On top of that the Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City grain elevators are losing orders. Grain sales have been slow this fall and now that the shipping season on the Great Lakes and in the St. Lawrence Seaway can come to an abrupt end practically overnight because of the extreme weather conditions, chances of catching up are very slim indeed.

Madam Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board estimates that in excess of one million tons of export grains must be shipped from the St. Lawrence ports between now and January 1990. So far Trois-Rivières has lost three grain and one forest products shipments which had to be rerouted through another port. Ice jams on Lake Saint-Pierre are causing bottlenecks in the ports of Trois-Rivières and Quebec City. As a rule icebreakers could easily restore traffic to normal.

Madam Speaker, if shipping does not resume the City of Sept-Îles stands to lose 500,000 metric tons of cargo, mostly iron ore, shipped through the Great Lakes during the current shipping season.

Quite possibly Chicoutimi will have to do without the 50,000 metric tons of petroleum products that were to be shipped there. Madam Speaker, other vulnerable sectors include petroleum products, aluminum, titanium, lumber, grain and iron ore.

With respect to the petroleum industry, for example, the Lévis Ultramar refinery produces over 40 per cent of Quebec's total output. To maintain its operations the refinery must get a shipment of unprocessed petroleum every five days, and each shipment is estimated to be worth something like \$11 million. Most of its products are usually loaded aboard ships bound for maritime terminals in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

• (1630)

[English]

Now, Madam Speaker, let us look at the problem of ships currently delayed and time lost. Today there are in excess of 70 ships experiencing delays in the St. Lawrence River below Montreal. In addition, there are 51 ocean-going vessels still to exit the St. Lawrence Seaway before its announced clearance date of December 19. This gives a total in excess of 120 ships affected or potentially affected if this strike is not immediately resolved.

At an estimated daily cost per ship of \$5,000 to \$25,000 per day or more, the losses in ship time alone are presently about \$1 million per day and this figure could escalate to millions per day if all the ships are not able to exit the seaway.

Earlier we were talking about Atlantic Canada. Atlantic Canada is feeling the brunt of the strike. For example, the port of Dalhousie in New Brunswick moved over 856,000 tonnes of commodities in 1988, all of it in support of Canada's international trade.

In the Miramichi region which includes ports of Newcastle, Chatham and Millbank, these facilities handled over 240,000 tonnes of commodities in 1988. Exports to international markets accounted for over 64 per cent of this traffic with an estimated value of these exports exceeding \$121 million.