

Oral Questions

decision as to whether they will accept some of the recommendations in that particular document which says that traffic on the St. Lawrence Seaway will be pretty well clogged or jammed by 1985, in just four short years.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): I have had discussions on that subject with a number of people, and it is generally held that capacity on the Great Lakes will have to be increased in the coming decade. The year 1985 was not generally accepted. The choice of means is not generally accepted, either. There are a number of possibilities, and discussions are going on regarding this subject. There is also uncertainty about some of the commodities being shipped on the Great Lakes now; just to mention two, iron ore and coal. In view of that uncertainty, the two authorities, the Canadian and the American, are now sponsoring a study on the conjuncture as it exists now. I will report on that when I have it.

All this is to say that capacity is generally accepted as being in need of increase—choice of means, twinning of the Welland Canal, changes in speed of traffic, extension of the season, and so on. I was reading on the subject just a few days ago and was impressed by the gains which can be made by the improvement of the management of the seaway. I remember that the figure for April was 5 per cent on the Welland. Obviously, there is some progress which can be made without the bigger, mega-projects of twinning the Welland, for example.

TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Madam Speaker, the minister seems to be uncertain in terms of the direction that he wants to go in this particular matter. Coming from western Canada, a grain producing area which ships virtually all of its grain down through the St. Lawrence Seaway, we become very alarmed over the kind of inaction which the minister seems to be saying may lie ahead. What kind of time-frame, then, does the minister have in terms of starting to do something concrete, in terms of the added expansion which will have to take place within the St. Lawrence Seaway itself?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I referred to the study being done by both authorities, the Canadian and the American Seaway authorities, as being one on the present conjuncture of traffic on the Great Lakes. I would submit that I should wait to get this one before making further comments on the subject.

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THE CONSTITUTION

ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question to the minister of housing regarding his comments to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. In that speech the minister suggested that the role of local government warrants a more secure place in the Consti-

tion. I would ask the minister if he could elaborate on those remarks to the House.

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I could probably assist the hon. member by referring to my earlier answers in the House, which is to say that I view the process as being one which is almost as important as any effects altered or any changes made. The process is one which is very important. I said in the speech, and to other hon. members and to the media after the speech, that the process is one which must involve the provinces and the municipalities in discussion before any specific way, any specific method, any specific institution or any specific relationship is altered or proposed for consideration by other governments.

MINISTER'S VIEWPOINT

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, once again, the minister referred specifically to security. I would like to ask the minister, through Your Honour, exactly what point of view is he putting forward as far as the security of municipalities under the Constitution is concerned? Where are the insecurities?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, as I indicated in my last comments, my thought was that from my experience in local politics the thrust should be to have a somewhat more structured relationship between the municipalities, the provincial governments, and the federal government, than that which presently pertains. For example, at the last meeting between myself and ministers of housing from across Canada there was only one province which invited observers from that province to attend such a convention. My feeling is that such a relationship should be strengthened in the sense that it should be more frequent, and there should be some certainty in the type of relationship which would pertain in the future.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

RECIPROCITY WITH GREAT BRITAIN

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In reply to a question that I put in committee two and a half years ago about reciprocal arrangements on pensions between the United Kingdom and Canada, the minister replied as follows:

That is my priority. Italy was a priority, Great Britain was one. Italy is done and I am very proud of it, but I want to unblock the Great Britain dossier. It is very important.

In view of the fact that the minister considers it important and a priority, I wonder why there has been no action in two and a half years?