

material. This export growth has made an important contribution to the health of the Canadian oil-producing industry and to our national prosperity.

Possible shortage in March

However, recent levels of export demand for our oil have been such as to strain the capacity of our oil production and transportation systems and to threaten the continuity of supply of Canadian oil to domestic refiners dependent on such supply. Moreover, recent and prospective export-demand growth is such as to require continuous monitoring of the extent to which oil production will be available in quantities surplus to reasonably foreseeable requirements for use in Canada. In March there may be a transient problem of supply adequacy which we must be prepared to deal with, but it is now clear that the determination of exportable surplus of oil requires continuous scrutiny.

It is in these circumstances the present measures are being taken. They of course represent an important change in the mode of implementation of our national oil policy.

Today's amendments are interim in nature. The National Energy Board will shortly hold a public hearing in order to provide opportunity for interested parties to be heard as to the appropriate methods for protecting the public interest in respect of oil exports over the longer term. After such hearing, the National Energy Board will report its findings and recommendations to the Governor in Council and the regulations will be amended to the extent appropriate after opportunity to consider these matters.

Housing-start increase in January

The number of housing starts increased sharply in January, to a seasonally-adjusted annual rate of 257,300, according to preliminary figures released recently by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. In December, the rate stood at 213,400 units.

The actual starts in the urban areas amounted to 11,141 in January, an increase of over 18 per cent from the 9,423 figure for the same month last year.

Canada-Cuba hijacking treaty

Canada and Cuba signed an agreement in Ottawa on February 15 providing for the prosecution or return of hijackers of both aircraft and ships.

Secretary of State for External Affairs Mitchell Sharp, who signed the treaty on behalf of the Canadian Government, stated that agreement had been accomplished during the round of negotiations held in Havana earlier in February. Dr. Rene Anillo, First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, who signed on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Cuba, had come to Ottawa with his delegation, for the purpose of concluding the treaty.

Inco ready to start construction in New Caledonia

In response to the French Government's request made last November for a firm commitment, the International Nickel Company of Canada, Limited has presented its timetable for the lateritic nickel project in New Caledonia, which it is prepared to start implementing immediately.

The project involves the construction of a plant to produce annually some 45 million pounds of metallic nickel and three million pounds of cobalt. It utilizes Inco's Reduction Acid Leaching Process for Laterites (IRAL).

The project represents a forward investment estimated at \$275 million. This is in addition to some \$29 million of past expenditures, of which Inco itself has spent over \$23 million. It is envisaged that other important industrial organizations will be participating in the project.

Inco's timetable leads to completion of the plant and the production of nickel during the second half of 1977. Detail design would go forward this year, and construction would begin in 1974.

The project has been specifically designed to develop the Goro orebody in the south of New Caledonia. Inco's commitment and timetable are contingent on the availability of the Goro orebody, upon which an Inco laterite project has always been based, and obtaining suitable tax exonerations

as provided by existing legislation in France and New Caledonia.

Inco expects to raise the project's annual capacity in an orderly manner to 110 million pounds of nickel, and, eventually, to 220 million pounds of nickel.

Lake ports look to Europe

A 15-member trade mission has been sent by the International Association of Great Lakes Ports (IAGLP) to Britain, Germany, Yugoslavia, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium to encourage more shipping to use the St. Lawrence Seaway into the Great Lakes ports of Canada and the United States, according to *Canada Commerce*, a publication of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Among the Canadians in the task force are Charles Gress of Windsor, Ontario, past president of IAGLP, Ian Brown of Toronto, the Association's secretary-treasurer, and W.H.M. Colvin, secretary of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners.

Mission objectives

The aims of the mission — the first of a series — are the reinforcement of existing trade ties and the establishment of new contacts in developing nations. It is hoped that the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway will become household words in the world's shipping and commercial circles.

The IAGLP is the only international voice the Great Lakes ports of Canada and the United States have in common. The Association's president, F.D. Flori, says: "The coastal ports of Canada and the United States have been in business many more years than we have and that is precisely why we must move as a force to establish our position in the world."

The Great Lakes region is the largest manufacturing and commercial area in North America; the tonnage handled on the Canadian side is greater than anywhere else in Canada.

The Canadian members of the IAGLP are: the Hamilton Harbour Commissioners, Oshawa Harbour Commission, Lakehead Harbour Commission, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners and the Windsor Harbour Commission.