



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
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No. 54/11 ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY AND POWER PROJECT

An address by the Minister of Transport, Mr. Lionel Chevrier, delivered at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, February 15, 1954.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I consider it a great honour to be here tonight to deliver the concluding lecture in this series sponsored by Queen's University.

Previous speakers in this series have been Professor Knox, who has given the geography and the economic significance of the St. Lawrence, and Dr. Mackintosh, who has presented the St. Lawrence in Canadian history. I have been asked to speak on the St. Lawrence seaway and power project, and what its significance will be for the future of the country and particularly eastern Ontario.

Projects to improve the natural waterway of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes have been before the public for over a hundred years. They have been the subject of negotiations between Canada and the United States since before the turn of this century. Early in the negotiations the current project became one for the development of power as well as navigation in the upper part of the St. Lawrence, where it marks the boundary between the two countries. The negotiations produced first the St. Lawrence Deep Waterway Treaty, signed in 1932, then the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin Agreement, signed in 1941. Both proved abortive. The 1932 treaty was rejected by the United States Senate. The 1941 agreement was before Congress for eleven years without securing approval, whereupon late in 1952 Canada rejected it in favour of a new plan for an all-Canadian seaway. I will elaborate in a few moments on this new plan, which contemplates the key power works being constructed by Ontario and New York.

It is not too much to say that the broad water highway of the St. Lawrence has shaped the whole economic development of Canada, as you will appreciate from the two preceding lectures. Let me just remind you of the historic competition between the St. Lawrence and other routes to the American West. Let me mention also four highlights in 19th Century canal building:

1. The Erie Canal, completed in 1825 and later improved, from the Niagara to the Hudson Rivers.
2. The 9-foot St. Lawrence and Welland Canals from Montreal to Lake Erie, completed in 1850 by the two Canadas.
3. The deepening of the above to 14 feet after Confederation, completed by 1904.
4. Three U.S. and one Canadian canal at Sault Ste. Marie.