

# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
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No. 49/3 THE PLACE OF THE ST. LAWRENCE AND THE SAULT  
IN OUR NATIONAL DEFENCE

An address by Mr. Brooke Claxton,  
Minister of National Defence, at  
a dinner given at Sault Ste. Marie,  
by the Sault Ste. Marie Regiment,  
on January 11, 1949.

Tonight I thought I should touch on three subjects of great  
interest to you and of great interest to all of Canada.

They are:

- (1) The Place of the St. Lawrence Waterways in  
our National Defence;
- (2) The Importance of Steel;
- (3) The Role of your Regiment.

(1) The Place of the St. Lawrence Waterways in our National Defence

Here we are 1500 miles from the sea at one of the four  
main junctures of Canada and the United States across the mighty St.  
Lawrence system. The foresight and co-operation of Canadians and  
Americans built the locks which opened the waterways system from Fort  
William to Sarnia and joined Lakes Superior, Michigan and Huron into the  
greatest inland area of deep water transportation on the face of the  
earth. What this single engineering job at the Sault has meant in profit  
to the people of Canada and the United States is impossible to calculate.  
More tonnage passes through the Sault Ste. Marie canals than through the  
Panama and Suez canals combined and this despite the short season.

The way opened here was extended by other canals on through  
Lake Erie and Ontario, down the St. Lawrence as far as Prescott, adding  
500 miles to deep water inland navigation.

Now there is only the part from Prescott to Montreal blocking  
the flow of deep water trade and travel from Lake Superior out into the  
oceans of the world.

You will recall that it was during the darkest days of the war  
that President Roosevelt and Mr. Mackenzie King worked out again an agreement  
for the construction of the St. Lawrence Waterways. The project was  
advocated as a great contribution to the peaceful life and trade of this  
continent and it was planned as a definite line of communication for the  
defence of our continent.

If it were desirable in 1941 that we should construct the  
waterways for purposes of transportation and for power, recent events have shown  
that it is even more desirable today; if it were desirable to proceed with the  
construction of the St. Lawrence Waterways for purposes of defence in 1941,  
nothing that has happened since has in any way diminished that need.

In the interest of national defence and international security the St. Lawrence Waterways project should be started as soon as possible and pressed to completion. General economic benefits, transportation and communication, power and iron-ore are reasons which give the completion of the St. Lawrence urgent priority in joint defence. Let us examine each of these.

1. The completion of the waterways system; like every other major development of transportation and power would lead to the expansion of the civilian economy and any expansion in the industrial and economic potential which in peacetime leads to prosperity and a higher standard of living, also leads to an increased ability to arm ourselves for our own defence. Here, in this home of steel, there is no need to remind you of what Hanson Baldwin said, that it was "The factories of America, the industrial know-how of America and the mechanical competence of America ... that won the war."
2. In modern war the lines of communication stretch all the way from the battlefield to the factories and the full use of the St. Lawrence would bring resources of the interior of our continent closer to any possible fighting front; it would permit the more effective mobilization of the industrial potential of the continent; it would make possible the construction of all but the largest vessels in the industrial centres of the Great Lakes; it would provide a means of transportation alternative to the railways.
3. We saw in the last war how important an element was water power. You may remember how it led us in 1942 to build at Arvida a plant bigger than Boulder Dam in a little more than a year. The United States and Canada need the full power potential of the St. Lawrence now.
4. The completion of the waterways would make it possible for the great resources of iron ore in northern Quebec and Labrador to be made safely available to the smelters of Canada and the United States.

This matter has already received the attention of the Permanent Joint Board of Defence. Ordinarily, its recommendations are not made public, but this was of such interest that the recommendation of the Board in May, 1947, was put in evidence by General Marshall at a Congressional hearing. The Honourable James V. Forrestal, Secretary of Defense of the United States, gave evidence of the need for the project.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Governments of the United States and of Canada, accepting the advice of their principal military and civilian advisers, are pressing for authority to proceed with the completion of the St. Lawrence Waterways as a combined power and navigation project in the interests of prosperity in peace and security in war.

## (2) The Importance of Steel

When we were fighting for our lives and for our freedom, money wasn't the limiting factor. The most important single factor controlling industrial output for war or peace is steel. Here you have one of the great plants in Canada. How many people know that during the war we more than doubled our steel capacity? How many people know too, that since the war we have been using more steel than we did during the war? At a time of very high production and employment, such as we have today, any considerable production of war materials could only be made by diversion of steel from civilian to military uses. Even with our increased pro-

duction while we could go a long way towards meeting wartime needs, it may be desirable for peacetime purposes, as well as to meet an emergency to increase productive capacity and as you know, the government has been for some time considering this with representatives of the industry.

(3) The Role of Your Regiment

The importance of the Sault in the transportation system of the continent, taken together with your importance as a steel producer brings home the necessity for your having effective defence measures here.

You are rightly concerned about the safety of these important links in the chain of our security. For this reason I am particularly interested in seeing the progress made by your Regiment. This is one of the vital points in Canada and the United States which must be guarded against sabotage or other damage by the combined efforts of the forces of the two countries. Under the arrangements for joint defence, this is one of the matters actively receiving consideration.

As you know, it was decided to convert you into a heavy anti-aircraft regiment because this seemed to be a place where such a regiment would be justified. While Canada is fortunate in that there are not very many vital points which would compete in attractiveness for the use of the very few and very expensive atomic weapons that an enemy might have, we must see to it that effective steps are taken to ensure that everything possible and practicable is done to protect such points in the event of an emergency.

On this account, your Regiment is more important than ever. It deserves every possible support.

I know very well what form you would like that support to take. You need an armoury as badly, if not worse, than any regiment in the Province of Ontario. The priority of the need has been recognized. One of the main purposes of this visit is to enable me to see at first hand the conditions here. Whether or not it will be possible to begin construction in 1949 will depend on the extent of the construction programme that the Cabinet will authorize and that Parliament will approve as well as on the local availability of labour and materials.

Let me give you just one or two facts and figures on this which will make it clear to you why it has not been possible for us to proceed before.

Since the war we have been organizing the active forces to meet the modern defence needs of Canada. This has involved the location of the forces at many isolated centres. The great proportion of the men in the armed forces are veterans. They had been separated from their families for a good many years. A greater proportion than ever before were married. Our aim has been to provide the active forces of Canada with the conditions and amenities of a good life in a good community. We could not do this without constructing married quarters. From my appointment two years ago I gave married quarters top priority in our construction programme. In consequence, since the war, we have completed 5,347 married quarters and we hope to complete between now and March 31, 1949 another 2,013. We are finishing them now at the rate of about 20 a day. You can imagine what this means in the way of improved morale, as officers and men, sharing alike (except that the officers pay more for the same quarters) become re-united with their families in the exceedingly good quarters that we are building for them. During the fiscal year of 1948-49 we will be spending more than 30 millions on married quarters alone, a good deal more than the average expenditure on all defence purposes prior to the war. We have an even larger programme planned for 1949-50. That is good news to the men in the active forces and there are 38,000 of

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them now. The only limit on the amount of defence construction in Canada has been the quantity of labour and materials available.

Now, next year, despite our huge programme, we hope to do some other types of construction. We are going to have to build some new buildings for operational units. We are going to do more building at Churchill. Those needs must be met first. But you may be assured that your member Mr. George Nixon, M.P., and the officers of the regiment have kept me fully alive to your need.

Now, just a word about the Reserve and its work.

Today we have in the reserve forces about the same number as in the active forces, that is about 40,000. We believe that in age, training and physique they are well up to anything that we have ever had before. The number is higher than it was on the average in the years between the war and better work is being done. We want still more men. While we have not been able to increase the construction of large scale armouries, we have added very considerably to the armoury accommodation for reserves through the adaptation of wartime buildings and where it has been possible, through the purchase of buildings. During and since the war we have built or bought armouries for practically every naval reserve division. Altogether, since 1939, it is a fair estimate that we have increased the total accommodation for the three services by more than 50%. We have increased the part occupied by the reserve army by more than 25%.

This shows the importance we attach to the reserve.

For this reason, I am glad to be here and to ask for support for this great unit, with its fine record and to thank you for the job you are doing by working together in this community in the defence of Canada.

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