



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

NO. 52/1

THE ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY PROJECT

1952

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Text of an address by the Minister of Transport, Mr. Lionel Chevrier, delivered over the Trans-Canada Network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on January 8, 1952.

Tonight I would like to report to you on the St. Lawrence Seaway Project, and to tell you of the recent steps taken by the Canadian Government to bring it closer to reality.

The Seaway Project, in one form or another, has been the subject of negotiation between Canada and the United States since before the turn of the century, when Canada's 14-foot canal system was completed through the St. Lawrence River. Early in the negotiations the project became one for the development of both power and navigation. The proposals were formalized in a treaty signed in 1932, and in an executive agreement signed in 1941. The 1932 treaty was defeated in the Senate of the United States. The 1941 agreement, after more than ten years, still awaits Congressional action one way or the other. It has not been rejected, but neither has it been approved.

Meanwhile the Seaway has progressed from being highly desirable to becoming extremely urgent. The urgency stems from both internal development and external tension in the post-war period. It applies to both the power and the navigation aspects of the project. In the face of continuing uncertainty as to United States action on the 1941 agreement, therefore, the Canadian Government is preparing an alternative course. That alternative is the all-Canadian Seaway.

Two steps in this alternative course have been approved by Parliament last month. One is the creation of a St. Lawrence Seaway Authority. The other is the conclusion of an agreement with the Government of the Province of Ontario respecting the development of power in the International Rapids Section of the St. Lawrence River.

First let me describe what the proposed St. Lawrence Seaway is, what work has been done on it already, and what remains to be done.

The proposed St. Lawrence Seaway is a twelve hundred mile channel, twenty-seven feet or more in depth, extending from Montreal to the head of the Great Lakes. Together with the St. Lawrence Ship Channel, already provided by Canada, it will permit large vessels to navigate more than two thousand miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the heart of the North American continent. Coupled with this navigation channel is the large-scale development of power at two sites at least and possibly three. The first is the International Rapids Section of the St. Lawrence River, where it is proposed to develop 2,200,000 horsepower, divided equally between Canada

and the United States. The second is the Soulanges Section where the Beauharnois development already harnesses about one million horsepower, and an ultimate expansion to two million horsepower can be accomplished readily. The third site is the Lachine Section, where a projected 1,200,000 horsepower might be installed.

A very large part of the work on this Seaway has been completed already. Deep draft navigation is an accomplished fact throughout the Great Lakes. The locks of the Welland Ship Canal are 30 feet deep, and the lock in one of the five canals at Sault Ste. Marie is 31 feet. From Duluth and Fort William to Prescott the various downbound channels provide approximately 25 feet, and the shallowest upbound channels 21 feet. They serve a great inland fleet that is said to provide the cheapest transportation in the world. The largest vessels load more than 20,000 tons.

Again, below Montreal the St. Lawrence Ship Channel is about 35 feet deep. It has made Montreal one of the busiest seaports in the world, attracting any but the largest of ocean vessels.

But between Montreal and Prescott there is a bottleneck that keeps the ocean vessels on one side, the lake vessels on the other. For a matter of 115 miles the unharnessed rapids of the St. Lawrence River are passed only by 14-foot canals with small locks. The largest vessels that go through these canals carry less than 3,000 tons.

Removing this bottleneck and harnessing the untamed water is the essence of the Seaway Project today. Major works are required in the three sections of the river that I mentioned a moment ago.

The first is the International Rapids Section. Power works would include an upper control dam near Iroquois and a main dam and power-houses near Cornwall. Short canals would carry navigation past the dams. In 1941, it was proposed that the canals be on the United States side of the River. But there is nothing to prevent them being put on the Canadian side, and plans have been prepared for this possibility.

The second of the three sections is Soulanges. Here the basic development already exists at Beauharnois, and a wide power canal is available for navigation. Little more is necessary than to add the locks and short connecting channels.

Thirdly, in the Lachine Section, the minimum development will be a ten-mile canal and considerable channel enlargement. But a large-scale power development is possible in this section too. Discussions have been opened with the Province of Quebec, out of which may come an agreement for a combined power and navigation development.

I pass now to the Great Lakes. In order to achieve Seaway standards, it will be necessary to further deepen the inter-lake channels and canals to 27 feet. The locks already are of ample size for even deeper channels, it will be recalled. Except at the Welland Ship Canal, the work would be done by the United States. This would be little more than a continuation of a development that has been going on for over a hundred years.

As matters now stand, the whole Seaway Project hinges on the development of the International Section of the St. Lawrence River. The boundary between Canada and the United States follows the 45th Parallel of Latitude until it strikes the St. Lawrence River near Cornwall, and thence westerly follows the middle of the stream to Lake Ontario. Below Cornwall the river is wholly within Canada, and the necessary works will be Canada's responsibility in any event. In the Great Lakes above, Canada can deepen the Welland Ship Canal, and the improvement of the other inter-lake channels could be left to United States action in response to the normal forces of progress. But some form of international co-operation is necessary for a satisfactory development in the International Rapids Section.

The logical action would be a joint enterprise undertaken by Canada and the United States, as contemplated in the 1941 agreement. However, continued delay in securing approval of that agreement is forcing Canada to proceed with an alternative, namely the all-Canadian Seaway. The possibilities in this direction are exemplified by the application in 1948 by agencies of New York and Ontario for authority to undertake a separate power development in the International Rapids. Given such a power development, by these or any other appropriate agencies, Canada could and would add the navigation canals on her own side of the river. The President of the United States, following an interview with the Prime Minister of Canada recently, has undertaken to give this Canadian project his full support, should Congress fail to take early and favourable action on the 1941 agreement.

It is in this context that the establishment of the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority is to be considered. The Authority has been created to complete the necessary works of the Seaway from Montreal to Lake Erie, and to maintain and operate the Canadian canals on completion. If the 1941 agreement is approved, the Authority will construct the works assigned to Canada in the joint venture. If the project proceeds on any other basis, the Authority will complete and operate the all-Canadian canals.

It is in this same context that the recent agreement with Ontario is to be viewed. This agreement anticipates an all-Canadian Seaway. If, in fact, the development is under the 1941 agreement, its terms will be reviewed in the light of those circumstances. But meanwhile, the Ontario Government undertakes to apply through established channels for approval of works to develop the power, concurrently with a similar application covering complementary works by an appropriate agency in the United States. The Canadian Government for its part undertakes to expedite the Ontario application and to facilitate the works in every way.

If the agreement with Ontario is consummated, the cost of all the St. Lawrence works necessary for a power development would be borne by the appropriate agencies in Ontario and the United States.

The cost of adding the navigation facilities from Montreal to Lake Erie would not much exceed \$250,000,000.

That sum of \$250,000,000 represents a very considerable Canadian expenditure, to be sure. However, the facilities would not be provided as a gift to anyone, least of all to the United States. The initial cost and the operating expenses would be covered by tolls on shipping. In other words, the expense would be borne by the users and the beneficiaries of the facilities.

Again, large as the expenditure is, it is well within our resources. In fact, the Project is no greater than others that have been undertaken in the past. Canada has already spent over \$300,000,000 in providing the Ship Channel below Montreal, the 14-foot canals into Lake Ontario, the Welland Ship Canal, and a lock at Sault Ste. Marie. Most of those expenditures date back to years when a dollar meant a great deal more than it does today, and when Canada was much poorer in material resources. The work and material that went into the Welland Canal alone would cost a good deal more than \$250,000,000 today.

Before closing, I would like to emphasize the great significance of the St. Lawrence Seaway Project for Canada. It holds incalculable promise for the economic development of the whole nation. At the same time, the fact that Canada is able and willing to undertake the development alone is evidence itself of the growth we have already experienced and the stature we have attained.

Finally, let me make it clear that we are not closing the door on United States participation in the Seaway. That participation is still the logical, the desirable choice. But it is results that count. Canada can no longer afford to rely on full United States participation as the only choice. The Canadian Government will pursue both alternatives, that is, action under the 1941 agreement and action for the all-Canadian Seaway, until it becomes clear which course will be first to produce results.

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