

Farther north the Northern Transportation Co. Ltd., a Crown corporation, operates marine transportation services on the Athabaska River and Mackenzie River, the Western Arctic Coast and in the Keewatin District of Hudson Bay.

13.5.5 St. Lawrence Seaway

The St. Lawrence Seaway Authority, constituted as a corporation by act of Parliament in 1951, undertook the construction (and subsequent maintenance and operation) of Canadian facilities between Montreal and Lake Erie to allow navigation by vessels of 7.9 m draft. At the same time, construction of similar facilities was undertaken by the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corp. of the United States. The seaway was opened to commercial traffic in April 1959 and officially inaugurated in June 1959. Included in the seaway system and under the seaway authority's jurisdiction for operation and maintenance is the Welland Canal.

The seaway is the world's longest canal system measuring 3 769 km from the Atlantic Ocean to the western end of Lake Superior. A vessel rises 177 m as it moves from the lower St. Lawrence River to the lakehead. Nearly 100 m of that rise occurs as it bypasses Niagara Falls. This seaway enables an ocean-going ship to penetrate North America close to mid-continent.

During its first quarter-century, the seaway together with developments in water transport changed the size and function of a number of ports on its waters. At St. Lawrence River ports such as Port-Cartier, Montreal and Quebec City, grain is unloaded from lakers and loaded on other vessels for the Atlantic crossing. The port of Thunder Bay accounted for well over 90% of the total wheat tonnage loaded for ports along the canal system during 1984 and 1985. Montreal and Quebec City were the principal destination ports with over 40% of the total. Baie Comeau accounted for almost 18% of the total domestic wheat tonnage unloaded in 1985, following a 5% increase over 1984.

Iron ore shipments originating from Sept-Îles and Pointe-Noire accounted for a solid two-thirds of the total tonnage loaded during these

two years, followed by Point Cartier which registered a 21% share in 1985, an increase of 5% over its 1984 share. Over 75% of the domestic iron ore shipments were destined for Hamilton during both years. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom were the principal foreign destinations with 27% and 35% of the total for 1984 and 1985, respectively. Ports along the US East Coast and gulf region were also important destinations for international iron ore shipments with a cumulative share of approximately 15% of the total. Shipping activities at ports along the canal system are a function of their efficient system in handling wheat and other bulk cargo.

Seaway traffic. Table 13.23 provides a summary of traffic statistics for the Montreal-Lake Ontario and Welland Canal sections of the seaway.

13.5.6 Canadian Coast Guard

The Coast Guard fleet includes icebreakers, aid and supply vessels, search and rescue vessels, specialized vessels for ship channel maintenance and submarine cable operations, and fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.

Through its radio stations and other communications facilities linked to domestic telephone and telex lines, the Coast Guard provides 24-hour, ship-to-shore safety and commercial communications, and regularly scheduled weather and navigation information broadcasts to all vessels. In some areas, particularly busy harbours, this network is supplemented by local systems which monitor and direct ship movements.

On average, more than 1,700 ships a year receive icebreaker support either singly or in convoy or are routed through the ice. Since 1970, ports in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and as far inland as Montreal on the St. Lawrence River have been accessible throughout the year. During summer, some icebreakers take part in the annual Arctic resupply operations. The icebreakers escort a fleet of government-chartered tankers and dry cargo vessels which deliver the bulk petroleum, building supplies, food, clothing, furniture and other products needed by the residents of remote settlements and military installations.

Source

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