



**The Honourable Omar Alhabra, Minister of Transport
Government of Canada
Remarks on the occasion of the 63rd Opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway
Monday, 22 March 2021, St. Lambert Lock, Montréal, Canada**

Good morning.

Bonjour madame la ministre Rouleau, monsieur Bowles, monsieur Middlebrook et monsieur Martel.

I am pleased to join all of you and my American colleague, Secretary Buttigieg, for the official opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway shipping season.

I look forward to working with you, in my new role as Canada's Minister of Transport.

And I wish I could be there in person to thank everyone involved for helping to keep grain, steel, and other vital commodities flowing throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic.

As an engineer and as a Canadian, I take great pride in the Seaway.

And now, as Minister of Transport, I am impressed by the critical role it plays in maintaining Canada's supply chains.

In the face of uncertainty and unprecedented challenges, the St. Lawrence Seaway has shown remarkable resilience.

It was one year ago when COVID-19 began to affect shipping traffic and the movement of goods through the Seaway.

Yet, by the end of 2020, the amount of tonnage that moved through the Seaway was down less than two percent from the previous year's total.

This was no easy feat, but thanks to this great community, we did it.

The Seaway's strength as a trade corridor should come as no surprise to anyone in this virtual room.

After all, it has played an important role in Canada's economic success for more than 60 years.

The Seaway is a vital part of North America's transportation system, serving two Canadian provinces, eight U.S. states and more than 100 ports and commercial docks.

It links to more than 40 provincial and interstate highways and 30 railway lines.

Over the years, it has moved almost 3 billion metric tons of cargo with an estimated value in excess of 450 billion dollars.

Trade along the Seaway supports 60,000 jobs in Canada.

And it contributes over 9 billion dollars to our economy.

The Seaway helps Canadian firms compete in the global marketplace.

Indeed, aside from our trade with the United States, 95 percent, by volume, of all Canada's exports travel by sea to other countries.

As we look to a brighter future and building back better, we are also looking at how the Seaway can contribute to a cleaner, more sustainable economy.

On that note, I want to thank all of you for what you are doing to reduce your carbon footprint.

And I know that some of you will step up even more.

Last month, I had the pleasure of meeting virtually with Secretary Buttigieg and we agreed to work together in a coordinated fashion to reduce carbon pollution and to support green transport infrastructure along our shared border.

Efficient maritime navigation of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway system helps reduce pollution and strengthens our mutual fight against climate change in the transport sector.

It is also a cost-effective way to ship clean energy materials, such as wind turbine parts, as we shift to a greener economy.

In short, the St. Lawrence Seaway will be vital to Canada's economic recovery and a cleaner future.

Marine shipping is a cornerstone of Canada's economy, creating thousands of middle-class jobs.

The Seaway will continue to help Canadian manufacturers, farmers, and miners reach global markets.

Our bi-national stewardship of this system will ensure the North American economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am confident that by working together, we can keep the Seaway strong and competitive.

Our government will remain a proactive partner in ensuring the Seaway continue to be a source of pride for all.

And the opening of the Seaway also signifies the coming of spring and brighter days ahead.

The *Baie St. Paul* is standing by to be the first vessel to enter the Seaway this year.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I want to wish the Seaway a successful season, and all of you a healthy and prosperous rest of the year.

Thank you. *Merci.*