

On January 9th, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada released the report on its investigation into the August 11, 2001, incident involving the Paterson bulk carrier WINDOC (ii) and Welland Canal Bridge 11 at Allanburg. The investigation was very extensive, and although it was not intended to assign fault or determine civil or criminal liability, it produced six findings as to cause and contributing factors and five findings as to risk. Most notable amongst the findings were that the WINDOC was visible from the bridge control room at the time the operator started to lower the bridge, and that the operator's performance likely was impaired at the time. Other findings related to the monitoring of the fitness for duty of Seaway workers, the lack of any backup system to ensure the way is clear before bridges are lowered, the Seaway's ad hoc response to the emergency, and problems with the efficacy of firefighting efforts. The only finding directly relating to WINDOC herself was one of risk, in that the burning of combustible structures to which they were attached caused the sprinkler pipes in the accommodations to collapse. The Seaway Management Corporation had already implemented a number of procedural changes before the Safety Board's report was delivered.

Last issue, we noted the damage sustained by the salty NOGAT on her way out of the lakes late in the season. It was reported that repairs to the ship were to have been completed by Davie Industries at Levis after she was unloaded at Sorel-Tracy, but instead the ship proceeded outbound and was drydocked at Halifax.

While the former Bob-Lo steamer STE. CLAIRE was been undergoing restoration at Toledo, her former running mate, the 1902-built COLUMBIA has been rotting away at Ecorse, where she has been lying for more than a decade. The Detroit preservation group which owned the steamer had been unable to come up with sufficient resources to fund the restoration of the ship. Because the steamer is a National Historic Landmark, the National Trust Loan Committee has been involved, and it recently voted to transfer ownership of COLUMBIA to a New York based preservation group which plans to restore the ship and put her into active service on the Hudson River. The National Trust apparently feels that the efforts of the New York group represents the best interests of the venerable steamer. COLUMBIA will remain at Ecorse for the winter but will go to Toledo in the spring for the extensive repairs needed before she is moved to New York. It will be a shame to see COLUMBIA leave the lakes, but better she be operating at New York than mouldering away at Detroit.

Everybody seems to be getting on the cross-lake ferry bandwagon these days. In addition to the Rochester-Toronto service which we have been reporting, another group (headed by the man who led the first and unsuccessful attempt to get a Rochester service going) wants to run a Toronto-Niagara service using three catamarans. Meanwhile, a concern known as LEF Corp., of Grand Rapids, has said that in the spring of 2003, it will commence a passenger-only service from St. Joseph, Michigan, to Chicago and Waukegan using the 1999-built, 108-foot catamaran VOYAGER III, which is now running in the New York City area but previously was used for whale-watching excursions.

While she winters at Port Stanley, Lower Lakes Towing's CUYAHOGA is receiving considerable work on her port tunnel; the tunnel is being sand-blasted and painted, and new belt and rollers are being installed.

When Algoma Central's self-unloader ALGOWAY arrived at Owen Sound to lay up on January 1st, she was sporting a five-foot-wide hole in her port bow above the waterline. ALGOWAY suffered the damage whilst making the dock at Meldrum Bay, where she had intended to load a stone cargo for Windsor. Plans were changed, and the motorvessel proceeded to winter quarters at Owen Sound, where repairs will be put in hand over the winter.