

It would appear that construction of a new lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, which was ratified by the U.S. Congress back in 1986, may finally commence shortly. The Michigan Transportation Commission recently placed \$4.7 million in a dedicated reserve fund which, over fifty years, will cover the state's \$14.1 million share of the \$225 million cost of the project. The work will see one new Poe-sized lock constructed on the site of the current and smaller Davis (used only sporadically in recent years) and Sabin (not used at all in many years) Locks. Federal funds will pay for the majority of the work and seven other states bordering on the Great Lakes also will contribute. The actual construction likely will commence late in 2003. The addition of the new lock will alleviate shippers' fears of the consequences if the Poe Lock should become disabled for any reason, as it is the only other lock capable of handling the largest lakers. The MacArthur Lock, which will remain in place, cannot handle the largest vessels now in operation.

As the weeks have passed, the news emanating from Rochester concerning the proposed fast ferry service across Lake Ontario to Toronto has seemed more like a soap opera than the development of a transportation service. Last issue, we mentioned that Canadian American Transportation Systems had let to Austal Ltd., of Australia, a contract for the construction of the 40-knot, 282-foot catamaran ferry to be used on the service. Since then, there has been much jockeying by the various players (including several layers of government) involved in the matter to line up the enormous amount of funding necessary to build the ferry and complete the infrastructure necessary to service the ferry at Charlotte. It is said that the ferry's start-up cost will be something in the area of US \$57.7 million. Then, on October 16th, it was announced that, as a result of failure to receive \$14 million in New York State funding, Canadian American Transportation had missed a \$5 million payment due to the shipbuilder on September 25, and that as a consequence, Austal Ltd. would cease work on the ferry. Despite assurances from state authorities, the funds still had not been released by the time of this writing, and construction of the boat was in limbo. To add to the ferry's woes, although there is solid support for the ferry from the Canadian side of the lake, no Canadian authority has yet agreed to provide any funds for the service. We really would like to see a ferry running between Toronto and Rochester, but we think it will take nothing less than a major miracle to have the operation running by the planned start-up date of August 2003, and miracles seem to be in rather short supply these days.

In previous reports in these pages, we have mentioned the deep-sea tug AKHTIAR which this year handled the overseas scrap tows of MANITOULIN and CANADIAN VOYAGER. We were, however, in error when we described the tug as being of Russian ownership. In fact, AKHTIAR is registered in Sevastopol and she flies the flag of the Ukraine.

An interesting accident, about which we know very little, occurred around the beginning of October when the Interlake Steamship Company's 1,000-foot self-unloader MESABI MINER suffered damage in a grounding in the Straits of Mackinac. As far as we know, no details of the accident have yet been published anywhere. The MINER went to the Sturgeon Bay yard of the Bay Shipbuilding Corporation but it was feared that she might be out of service for the rest of the season as no drydock space was available for her. Inventive shipyard crews placed a cofferdam around the affected part of the MINER's hull, which allowed repairs to be completed without drydocking. After little more than two weeks at the yard, the MINER was able to re-enter service.

As a result of decreased demand for tanker tonnage in Canada during the autumn, Rigel Shipping Canada Inc., of Shediac, New Brunswick, has sent two of its three 406-foot to European waters for winter service. EMERALD STAR and DIAMOND STAR cleared Canada during the first half of October, but JADE STAR remains active in the lakes and St. Lawrence River trades and apparently will continue to do so. It is not clear when the other two will return.