

Transport Canada reaches deal on security standards for ships entering U.S.

By ALEX BINKLEY

OTTAWA – Transport Canada has reached an agreement with United States officials that will allow it to certify that Canadian-registered ships meet new American marine security requirements.

Under the agreement, the U.S. Coast Guard will accept Transport Canada's security certificates granting registered Canadian ships the right to enter U.S. waters when the new security regime comes into effect next summer.

Don Morrison, president of the Canadian Shipowners Association, said his members have been working with Transport Canada on what will be in the Canadian security requirement regime. They expect a final set of rules in December.

All commercial vessels of more than 100 tonnes, tug-barge combinations and ferries sailing to U.S. destinations will have to register a security plan with Transport Canada. Ports involved in shipping goods to the United States will also require security plans in place with Transport Canada.

Most of the freighters working on the Great Lakes are already registered with Transport Canada, Mr. Morrison added.

Under the agreement, American ships registered with the U.S. Coast Guard will be accepted in Canada.

"We have moved ahead with this action in response to input from stakeholders on the importance of a comprehensive security regime, our own assessment of the risks and threats in the marine sector, and our consultations with U.S. authorities," said Transport Minister **David Collenette** said.

"Moreover, Transport Canada and the U.S. Coast Guard are working closely together to coordinate and harmonize the marine security regimes of the two countries, so that Canadian-flagged ships that meet our security standards can enter U.S. harbours."

Fishing vessels and pleasure craft are exempt from the new rules.

Shipowners will have to conduct a security assessment and develop a security plan for submission to Transport Canada.