

Maritime Magazine

THE SEAWAY JOURNAL BY RICHARD CORFE

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As it entered its 44th navigation season, the St. Lawrence Seaway was in excellent shape to continue its long tradition of safe, reliable and efficient service. It's a season of many new beginnings for the waterway.

The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC) starts its second five-year mandate with a new business plan, a new President at the helm, and a new navigation tool in place — AIS (Automatic Identification System) is now part of our daily life.

For the associations representing our main users, the Shipping Federation of Canada and the Canadian Shipowners Association, it's a new start to a second 100 years. All up and down the system there are new players, new outlooks and a new sense of optimism about marine transportation. The Seaway intends to play its part in these new beginnings, optimizing our operations in the short term, while planning for the longer-term needs of the system.

The new business plan provides a stable platform for us to do this and incorporates some changes that reflect current

operational challenges. While weak economic activity and aggressive competition in recent years has cut into cargo, a 1% toll reduction was integrated into the tariff structure for 2003 and an upturn in traffic is projected this season. Throughout the remaining four years of the plan, annual toll increases will be capped at 2%.

We are continuing work on optimizing draft throughout the system and on optimizing the length of the navigation season. In the meantime, we continue to

innovate and improve service. With the opening of the 2003 navigation season, all large commercial and passenger vessels transiting the Seaway require an International Maritime Organization (IMO)-certified AIS transponder, making us the first waterway in the world to incorporate this new standard in navigation technology. And we have launched a

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A GLOBAL E-BUSINESS GATEWAY THAT PROVIDES MARITIME COMMERCE THROUGH A TOTALLY INTEGRATED, SEAMLESS AND EFFICIENT GREAT LAKES ST. LAWRENCE WATERWAY

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SEAWAY NEWS
Canada & U.S. sign memorandum of cooperation

The bi-national Web site (CGVMSL et SLSDC) has become the most comprehensive source of information and on-line business services for commercial navigation in North America's heartland.

major project on the Welland Canal to convert all the lock gates, lock valves and ship arrestors to modern hydraulic drives over the next six years.

Our bi-national Web site has become the most comprehensive source of information and on-line business services for commercial navigation in the heartland of North America, attracting users from 85 different countries, at a rate of more than 100,000 requests for information each month.

Planning for the future is an integral component of our strategy, and a prime example is the recently announced agreement between Canada and the U.S. to complete the Great Lakes/ St. Lawrence Seaway System Review. Close attention paid to maintenance and asset renewal has ensured us an extremely reliable system, with the Seaway's uptime increasing from 99.75% in 2001/02 to 99.79% in 2002 /2003. However, in view of our aging infrastructure, we will increase our maintenance expenditures by some 36% over the next years. This amount will be reviewed by 2005, when the initial baseline information from the Review will be available.

The Seaway has a lot going for it. New technology is improving traffic management, safety and service.

But we have to do more. We have to promote the advantages of marine transportation, and the Seaway in particular, especially the environmental benefits of reducing pollution and congestion. We have to grow our business by providing new delivery methods and attracting new cargoes; and we have to work with all our partners, including government, to ensure that enlightened decisions are taken for the future of transportation across the country.

As we serve today's customers, we have to look to the future — a future that is worth planning for and investing in. The Seaway helps power the economies of both Canada and the United States. For individual ports, it has brought billions of dollars in capital funds and industrial growth. Every 10,000 tonnes of cargo handled by a Great Lakes port contributes more than half a million dollars in local economic benefits each year. Safe, reliable, efficient, ecologically sound — our Seaway is a sterling asset to central North America.

I will welcome the opportunity in future issues to expand on some of these topics and keep you updated on initiatives as they unfold.