

# Maritime Magazine

THE SEAWAY JOURNAL BY RICHARD CORFE

AS PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 30, SEPTEMBER 2003

While the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC) is a non-profit organization, managed for the benefit of Seaway users – we're all business when it comes to the health and prosperity of the waterway.

Over the last several months, we have been actively working to paint the picture of the future that we would like to see. We talked to employees and are considering the interests of Seaway users and stakeholders, in order to develop a consensual Vision 2012. This is still a "work in progress." But it points out the need for the SLSMC, among other strategies, to become more active in market development, working with our partners to develop and sell new and better services.

We recognize that a profitable Seaway needs to have a diverse client base, so that tonnage volumes grow over the course of the next 10 years, and toll charges remain as low as possible. To achieve this, we are keeping an eye on the potential for new customers. Shortsea shipping, new niche markets, new types of vessels, less traditional and smaller cargoes all offer the promise of increased and more varied traffic for the Seaway. And we are beginning to seek them out.

We will also devote more energy to promoting marine transportation as a whole. Marine

transport can and should play a leading role in moving cargo in a world that needs both economic and ecological balance. Our job, as an industry, is to ensure that decision makers, both in government and in society, place higher priority on the marine mode in their planning.

There are some encouraging signs that the benefits of marine transportation are beginning to be taken more seriously, at least by government. Transport Canada's new vision for Canadian transportation, *Straight Ahead*, commits the government to investing in transportation infrastructure, and to exploring opportunities to promote shortsea shipping. When speaking

about the Memorandum of Cooperation on shortsea shipping signed between the U.S. and Canada in July, Transport Minister Collenette referred to a "commitment to working ... to enhance marine transportation as a safe, efficient and reliable component of our transportation system." Shortsea shipping is seen by the two governments as a possible option



Transport Minister David Collenette and U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta signed a memorandum of cooperation on May 1, 2003 to ensure the ongoing viability of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

Transport Canada Transport

for reducing border freight congestion, as well as improving air quality – two of the many advantages of marine transportation that we in the industry have been talking about for years.

The long-term Great Lakes-Seaway System study, sponsored by both the Canadian and U.S. governments, is now underway and will have a decisive effect on future investments in the Seaway – Great Lakes system. Input is being requested from stakeholders and other groups and organizations involved in studies of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, and important study milestones and findings will be publicized as they occur. In another initiative, Transport Canada and Fisheries and Oceans have now started work on a study aimed at streamlining and co-ordinating the work of the multitude of agencies that regulate and serve shipping on the Seaway and Great Lakes. We at the SLSMC support the call of the marine associations for the establishment of guiding principles and an agreement on the overall objectives for this important

study - we also believe that we are well placed to significantly contribute to the outcome.

The Seaway and its partners – shipping companies, ports, and the many others that make up the marine transportation industry – face significant challenges in today's highly competitive global economy. But I think we are adopting the correct strategies to deal with them. We have formed, and are consolidating, close and ever-growing partnerships; we are making effective use of appropriate new technologies; and we are learning to speak with one voice on matters that affect us all. We all seek greater efficiency in our operations and to provide better service to our customers.

What benefits one part of our complex industry will ultimately benefit all of us. We need to continue on this course and expand on it, strengthening our “one system – one message” approach among ourselves and forming closer links with the origin and destination hubs of our shipping customers.