



**The Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Seaway System**  
*Le réseau Grands Lacs - Voie maritime du Saint-Laurent*

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## **AWARD TO ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY DISTINGUISHES 2001 OPENING DAY**

(Montreal, March 23, 2001) – The St. Lawrence Seaway opened for the 2001 navigation season this morning, the earliest opening date in its history. ***The M/T PETROLIA DESGAGNÉS***, the first ship of the season, passed through the St. Lambert lock at 11:00 a.m., on its way to deliver fuel oil to Morrisburg, Ontario, from St-Romuald, Quebec.

Guy Véronneau, President of the Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, declared the Seaway officially open at a binational ceremony attended by Albert S. Jacquez, Administrator of the U.S. Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC), shipowners and other interested parties. Ms. Judith Mueller, President of the American Public Works Association and Mr. Wally Wells, President of the Canadian Chapter of the APWA, presented plaques to both Seaway heads to mark last year's award to the Seaway as one of the top 10 public works projects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

"The outlook is good for the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 2001 navigation year," said Mr. Véronneau. "Regardless of the softening of the North American economy, goods still need to be moved, and marine transportation remains the most cost-competitive and environmentally friendly way to do so. This season marks an important milestone in our use of new technology to improve customer service, as well. We are implementing a new automatic vessel identification system, which will make Seaway navigation even safer and more efficient, and by September, we will offer full e-business capacity on the joint Web site developed by ourselves and the SLSDC."

"In addition to the steady flow of cargo through the Seaway, we expect the number of cruise vessel transits through the waterway to more than double, with about 14,000 passengers sailing the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway in 2001," added Mr. Jacquez.

The Seaway, along with its stakeholders, continues to tackle the challenges of competition through improved service and creative use of new technology. Last year, for the first time in Seaway history, all the maritime interests in the Great Lakes basin – commerce, tourism, environmental protection and government – formed the Waterway Strategic Issues Forum to develop a strategic plan for the future of the system. The Forum issues a final report early this year. Some earlier decisions, like the “virtual waterway” concept, one-stop e-business shopping, and a sophisticated automatic vessel identification system, are already being implemented.

A new Binational Web site ([www.greatlakes-seaway.com](http://www.greatlakes-seaway.com)), being developed in three releases, will be the single most comprehensive source of navigation, commercial and environmental information about the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System. By September 2001, the site will be fully interactive and offer cargo matching, cost calculation and full e-business capacity.

The Seaway automatic vessel identification system (AIS) becomes operational this summer. In 2002 all commercial vessels transiting the St. Lawrence Seaway will be required to use AIS. AIS is a broadcast transponder system that, combined with Global Positioning System (GPS) technology and a computer display screen, shows the exact location of vessels, their speed and heading on a “virtual Seaway” at the Seaway’s Traffic Control Centres and aboard ships. An additional display includes lock availability, wind speed and direction, water levels, ice conditions, and safety-related messages that will provide ships’ captains with all the data needed to navigate the Seaway safely.

While low water levels in 2000 affected traffic in the upper Great Lakes, they did not hinder Seaway traffic to any great extent. The Seaway was able to maintain its full draft of 26 feet 3 inches for virtually the entire 2000 navigation season. The Montreal-Lake Ontario (MLO) section passed 2,978 vessels carrying 35.4 million metric tons of cargo through its locks last year, and 3,351 ships used the Welland Canal to deliver 36.6 million metric tons. Traffic was down slightly from the 1999 totals, but remained within the average for the past five years.

“The Seaway’s annual winter maintenance program, most of it compressed into an 11-week schedule, was completed on time and on budget,” reported Mr. Véronneau. “We spent \$25 million (Canadian), as part of our regular major maintenance and asset renewal plan to ensure the reliability of the system.”

The U.S. concentrated its work on Snell Lock. The SLSDC continued working on its five-year maintenance plan, refurbishing lock-operating equipment, replacing concrete, removing asbestos-containing control wires and replacing them with non-asbestos materials. Repairs also addressed recommendations made by a recent U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report. Repairs were completed on time and within budget.

North America’s heartland is now open to the entire world for another navigation season. The Seaway will provide 24-hour navigation for the next nine months from Thunder Bay and Duluth to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

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