



STATEMENT ON ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY STRIKE

23 October 2023

The Shipping Federation of Canada is urging the government to use every tool at its disposal to resolve the strike in the St. Lawrence Seaway and bring this untenable situation to an end as swiftly as possible.

Although the Federation respects the collective bargaining process, the impacts of this labour disruption are simply too extensive and far-reaching to allow it to continue any longer. Since the Seaway closed at midnight on Saturday, shipments of essential commodities such as grain, iron ore and potash, as well as fuel for transportation, fertilizers for next year's crops, gypsum and cement for construction, and salt for winter road maintenance have all come to a standstill, with no prospect of resuming until the dispute has been resolved. In addition, the 66,000 Canadian jobs that the Seaway supports, and the millions of dollars in economic activity it generates every day, have all been placed at risk, with that risk increasing each day the strike is allowed to continue.

The strike is occurring during the Seaway's busiest shipping season, when multiple vessels seek to enter and exit the system as they seek to fulfill their contractual commitments to customers before the waterway closes for the winter at the end of December. Many of these vessels, a significant number of which are laden with import cargo such as steel and manufacturing inputs, now find themselves literally locked out of the Seaway, leaving them with no choice but to wait at anchor until the strike is resolved and the system reopens. Many others find themselves stranded in the Seaway, having entered shortly before the strike began but with insufficient time to exit before service was withdrawn.

In addition to the massive economic impacts and potential safety and environmental concerns this creates, the sight of ships being once again blocked from trading at Canadian ports sends a terrible message about the reliability of Canadian gateways to our international trading partners, which will ultimately play out in the form of lost competitiveness and economic opportunity.

The St. Lawrence Seaway plays an absolutely essential role in enabling Canadian producers and exporters to access world markets at competitive prices and facilitating the import of critical manufacturing inputs and other goods. Every day this strike continues represents another day of multi-million dollars losses for Canadian business and industries which imperil the economy as a whole. Given the foregoing, it is absolutely imperative that the government use every tool at its disposal to resolve this dispute and bring this untenable situation to an end as swiftly as possible.

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