

**Administrator Betty Sutton
Remarks for
Great Lakes District Council
International Longshoremen's Association
Sixth Quadrennial Convention
March 21, 2015
Tampa, Florida**

- Thank you, Mike and John, for the invitation to speak today.
- It's a pleasure to be here in Tampa with so many of you who are my long-time friends and acquaintances.
- Big things are happening in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System and I welcome this opportunity to touch on some highlights for you.
- Before I begin, I want to take a moment to applaud the productivity and the quality of the longshore workforce at our Great Lakes ports.

- As an integrated system, we rely on the hard-working people at our ports and terminals who play a significant role in determining our collective success.
- The strong, steady, and dynamic leadership of the Great Lakes ILA is representative of a world-class skilled workforce that we are fortunate to have established in our region.
- The Great Lakes Seaway System is known throughout North America and the world for its hard-working longshoremen and their commitment to moving cargo safely and efficiently.
- I want to extend my personal thanks to all of you who have done so much to elevate the maritime industry through your efforts to generate a growing public awareness about the importance of commercial navigation and Great Lakes shipping.
- The Great Lakes Seaway System offers geographic and natural advantages uniquely suited for maritime transportation.
- While everyone in this room already knows that, this remains an essential message to deliver in the United States, Canada, and abroad.

- Our marine highway is more relevant today than ever.
- Our message is clear - maritime transportation is the most fuel-efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally-friendly way to move goods to and from the heartland of North America.
- And I am happy to report that we saw that reflected in a highly successful Seaway navigation season last year.
- The Great Lakes Seaway System realized a 7.6 percent tonnage increase from 2013 to 2014. It's the first time since the 2008 navigation season that we've hit the 40 million metric ton mark.
- That strong post-recession rebound was due in large part to increased shipments of our core commodities - grain as well as iron and steel products - as well as large volumes of road salt necessary to replenish inventories that were very low after last winter.

- Dozens of cities and towns across the Great Lakes region depend on the Seaway to provide road salt, keeping streets safer in hazardous winter weather and permitting people access to their jobs and schools.
- The way **this** winter is going, perhaps salt will continue to play a starring role in the tonnage figures again in the 2015 season!
- To further highlight a successful season, we saw more ocean vessels transiting the Seaway System this past year than we have in recent history.
- There were 158 more ‘salties’ trading in the System in 2014 – a strong 22 percent increase over 2013.
- With a slow start to the 2014 season, each month from May through December showed an increase in tonnage compared to the 2012 to 2014 three-year monthly average.
- The strong finish to the Seaway’s 2014 navigation season reflects the increasing strength of the overall economy and supports a positive outlook for increasing use of maritime transportation to move goods throughout the region.

- As maritime stakeholders, our shared commitment to increasing trade on the Great Lakes Saint Lawrence Seaway System helps support the growing import and export trends we are realizing.
- I am encouraged by these very positive results and aim to further expand the reach and role of the SLSDC across the Great Lakes region, which I like to call North America's "Opportunity Belt".
- The "Opportunity Belt" moniker compliments our shared vision of the Seaway System as a marine highway.
- The waterway provides global access to the cities, states, and provinces in the heartland of North America, where opportunities abound.
- Over the past year and a half, I have sought to communicate as widely as possible that while the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation does an excellent job of safely, efficiently and reliably operating our locks and maintaining the infrastructure, we also do more.
- Significantly, we have a trade and economic development mission.

- Helping the Great Lakes Region - our cities, states, and provinces realize further economic growth and productivity via our binational waterway is the overarching point.
- To that end, I am pleased to announce that the SLSDC has just launched a new Great Lakes Regional Outreach Initiative.
- This initiative will support and encourage greater economic development opportunities for the people and businesses throughout the Opportunity Belt that utilize, or could utilize, maritime transportation on the Great Lakes Saint Lawrence Seaway System.
- To enhance the SLSDC's trade and economic development mission, a full-time Great Lakes Regional Representative is providing on-the-ground assistance to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System stakeholder community.
- Adam Schlicht, a member of the SLSDC staff, is leading this new initiative as the Great Lakes Regional Economic Development Representative, coordinating closely with governmental, nongovernmental, and industry stakeholders across the region.

- And, if Adam has not already done so, I know he wants to meet with your leadership.
- Through this focused outreach program we are working with and supporting Great Lakes/Seaway ports, terminals, shippers, carriers, and labor to increase maritime trade.
- We are meeting with federal, state and local elected officials to offer our assistance.
- We are coordinating with other regional Federal entities, Great Lakes state transportation officials, and regional economic development agencies to ensure Seaway System maritime transportation is understood and prioritized in regional planning.
- Through this outreach initiative, we are also serving as a resource to provide information about federal maritime transportation and funding assistance programs.
- Our Great Lakes Regional Economic Development Representative will also be leading future SLSDC regional activities and programs that directly assist Great Lakes ports, labor, businesses, the public and other stakeholders.

- The SLSDC Regional Initiative complements the SLSDC's existing economic development and policy work in Washington DC as well as our lock operations and marine services in Massena, NY.
- It also enhances our joint trade development and marketing efforts with the Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation through the binational Highway H20 program.
- Highway H20 is the path - the Opportunity Belt, with all it has to offer, is the destination.
- This is an exciting and dynamic time for the Seaway System and the Great Lakes region and the absolute right time to bring a new focus to our economic development role.
- Frankly, the Seaway exists for economic activity in the region, connecting North America's 'Opportunity Belt' to the world.
- And you all know that as well as anyone –

and you know that you are a critical component of the success we are seeing in Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System shipping.

- I believe it is critical that the SLSDC have a direct presence in the region.
- I am confident this approach to trade and economic development will advance the SLSDC's efforts to effectively support the Great Lakes region, increase commercial trade through the waterway, and provide increased tangible benefits for the economies of both the United States and Canada.
- When I spoke to you last year, I cited the fact that the Great Lakes region, if it were a country, ranked as the **fourth largest economy in the world**, behind only the U.S., China, and Japan.
- I have some breaking news; the updated numbers are in and the Great Lakes region has now moved up to the number **three** position, behind just the U.S. and China.
- The region's GDP in 2013 (the last full year of data available) was \$5.3 trillion, surpassing that of Japan.

- This is excellent news and speaks to the continued economic importance of the region in the global marketplace.
- The Great Lakes region possesses the manufacturing resources, skilled workforce, and world-class transportation infrastructure that are making this resurgence possible.
- And the maritime industry has a significant role to play in this revitalization.
- The SLSDC, together with the Canadian Seaway, is fully committed to realizing the potential of our binational waterway.
- We want our waterway and the entire Great Lakes Seaway System to grow.
- We want our ports to expand and our terminals to be productive.
- We want American companies using and investing in U.S. ports and U.S. jobs.

- As we gather here less than two weeks before the Seaway opens on April 2nd, I suggest we focus on the positive forces in play today:
 - The economy is growing;
 - Both the public and the private sector are reinvesting in the Seaway System;
 - Manufacturing, the automotive industry recovery, and energy development in the Midwest are spurring growth in the region;
 - The positive public image of Great Lakes shipping is becoming more widespread;
 - and lastly, the OPPORTUNITY BELT is replacing the 'Rust Belt' as a way of thinking about our region.

- We must all continue working closely together to keep our maritime industry strong and always moving forward. Thank you.