



2026 - SEAWAY NOTICE #3

General Notice

This notice cancels and supersedes all previous Seaway Notices and Regional Notices to Shipping issued prior to January 15, 2026.

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1 STANDARD TIME/DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

The Seaway entities will be operating on Eastern Daylight Saving Time from the opening of the navigation season. At 0200 hours on November 1, 2026, the operating time will revert to Eastern Standard Time.

2 SEAWAY DRAFTS

Seaway Notice No. 1 – 2026 outlines the maximum permissible draft for the Montreal – Lake Ontario (MLO) and Welland Canal sections respectively. Any changes to the maximum permissible draft are communicated in subsequent Seaway Notices.

It is the responsibility of the master to ensure that the permissible drafts are not exceeded. Overdraft ships create scheduling problems and are a source of delay to users, especially if discharge of cargo is required.

During hot weather, the masters must be aware of "hogging" conditions and allow for this within the permissible draft.

3 SPEED LIMITS

The speed limits indicated in Column III, of the Table of speeds in Schedule II, Seaway Handbook's Practices and Procedures, will be in effect as of the opening of the navigation season. A speed monitoring program will be in effect throughout the navigation season.

Mariners are reminded that speeds will be monitored carefully for ships loaded to a draft greater than 8.00 m :

- In the MLO Section, between St. Lambert Lock and St. Nicolas Island
- In the Welland Canal, between the upper entrance to Lock 7 and former Bridge 12 in order to reduce bank erosion in this area.

Any further speed restrictions will be communicated via Regional Notice to Shipping.

4 SHIP INSPECTION

Agents must provide to the Seaway Ship Inspectors by email (**email: inspecteursvm@seaway.ca and to vtc@dot.gov**) an initial notice of inspection of at least 120 hours (5 days) prior to the ship's arrival at CIP 2.



Agents/owners are reminded to give a 24-hour notice for inspection by email to a SLSMC Traffic Control Center **and a 2-hour confirmation for inspection** by voice communication to the SLSMC Traffic Control Center.

An inspected ship which has changed name, flag or more than 25% of its crew may require a re-inspection prior to transiting the Seaway. The agent / owner must advise the Seaway accordingly and in a timely manner so as not to cause undue delay.

Mariners are reminded to keep a copy of the ESI inspection report on the bridge in either electronic or paper format and accessible to the Seaway corporation and/or pilots.

Mariners are requested to notify the Traffic Control Centers of the height of the deck cargoes prior to transiting the Seaway or when departing from a Port or wharf.

5 SHIP EQUIPMENT

Accidents and potentially serious incidents have occurred due to malfunction of essential equipment and, sometimes, to the failure of ship's personnel to understand their equipment.

In the interest of safety, it is essential that Part VII Sections 81, 84 and 85 of the Seaway Handbook, "Reporting of Accidents, Impairment or other Hazards by Ships Transiting or Intending to Transit the Seaway" be strictly adhered to;

Mariners are reminded that:

- a. Sufficient numbers of generators for the normal operation of a ship as well as supplying power to winches and/or bow thrusters must be operating in parallel and on line at all times.
- b. Wrong-way propeller alarms, wrong-way pitch alarms and engine interlocks are essential safety devices that must be fully operational at all times during transit
- c. Mariners are advised that their AIS unit must be operational and must use a Satellite Augmentation System (SBAS) when transiting Seaway waters. Any malfunction must be immediately reported to the nearest Seaway Traffic Control Center. Refer to Section 20 of the Practices & Procedures in the Seaway Handbook for details on the AIS requirements.
- d. A gyro compass error greater than 2° must be serviced prior to transiting the Seaway and if noted during a Seaway transit, the gyro compass must be serviced at first opportunity.



- e. All ships bound for the Seaway must test the main propulsion machinery, ahead and astern no more than 24 hours before entering at CIP 2 or CIP 16. A record of this test must be maintained on board;
- f. Mariners are reminded to override their Engine Power Limitation or Shaft Power Limitation in Seaway waters or shift upward any main engine limitation, between CIP2 and Cape Vincent and in the Welland Canal if their ship is so-equipped.
- g. Mariners are reminded that during winter conditions, gangways, ladders and other means to access decks should be clear of ice and/or well salted for the safe embarking/disembarking of personnel. Also, a crew member is to be present to assist.
- h. Mariners are reminded to protect “soft lines” from the elements so that they do not freeze on mooring drums as this can result in an unsafe condition for ship’s crew as well as lock personnel.
- i. Ships equipped with an approved Draft Information System (DIS) and planning to use it must comply with the following:
 - i. DIS must be on and crew must be trained on its use. A trained Officer on the use of DIS must be on the bridge.
 - ii. AIS is accurate, i.e. accuracy=1
 - iii. The DIS license must be active.
 - iv. DIS confirmation checklist submitted and reviewed by SLSMC.
 - v. Electronic charts and high resolution charts must be up to date.
 - vi. Ships must be equipped with an operational bow thruster.
 - vii. DIS documentation must be available for audit

If for any reason the DIS, AIS or bow thruster becomes inoperable or malfunctions while the ship is transiting at a draft greater than the maximum permissible draft in effect at the time, the ship must notify the Seaway Traffic Control Center immediately. The Seaway will be conducting random audits on ships equipped and approved to use the DIS in order to verify DIS requirements, performance, user knowledge and training.

6 WIND ASSISTED PROPULSION SYSTEM



Mariners are advised that wind assisted propulsion systems are not to be used in Seaway waters, MLO Section of the Seaway between CIP2 and Cape Vincent and the Welland Canal between CIP15(Port Weller) and CIP16(Port Colborne).

7 OVERALL SHIP DIMENSIONS

In recent years the design of ships has changed considerably and as a result, the bridge wings, antennas, masts and, in some cases, the samson posts or store cranes could be outside the limits of the block diagram as indicated in Appendix 1 of the Seaway Handbook and could override the lock wall. Masters and pilots must take this into consideration and exercise extreme caution when entering or exiting locks to ensure proper alignment so that the ship does not contact any of the structures on the lock.

Masters are reminded that when bridge wings are folded inboard for Seaway transit, the chains and / or portable stanchions must be the same height as the ship's bridge wings.

Certain requirements must be met by ships 222.5 meters or greater in overall length:

- i. Ships must have a rounded stem bar.
- ii. Ships must be equipped with adequately powered self-tensioning and self-rendering winches and fairleads at an approved location.
- iii. Mariners must comply with special mooring instructions and procedures when proceeding through the locks.

Prior review and approval of ship plans are necessary for all ships in excess of the current maximum dimensions before permission to transit will be granted.

For further information regarding the transit of ships with dimensions in excess of the current maximum permissible dimensions, please direct inquiries to:

Marine Services
The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation
202 Pitt Street
Cornwall, Ontario
Canada K6J 3P7
Tel:(450) 672-4110 ext. 2306 or ext. 2158
Email: slsmcmarineservices@seaway.ca

8 COMMUNICATIONS



Ship-to-shore and ship-to-ship communications must be carried out on the designated VHF channels, as outlined in Section 8 of the Seaway Handbook's Ship Transit and Equipment Requirements. The use of personal electronic devices for communication between ships or with traffic control should be limited to necessity.

Please note that communications into the Traffic Control Center may be recorded for quality assurance and training purposes.

Mariners are reminded to verbally acknowledge all instructions provided by the Seaway over VHF channels.

- a. At the locks, the initial communication with the ship will occur when ship is at the inbound L/A. The ship shall verbally acknowledge
 - i. the spotting instructions whether given by Lock personnel or by Vessel Self-spotting radio.
 - ii. all instructions related to Hands-Free mooring (i.e. do not use engines/pads will attach, pads attached/lockage to begin, pads detached/exit lock)
- b. At the bridges, ships may acknowledge being advised of the bridge being lowered once the ship is through the bridge draw. The ship must also confirm a ship list if required for passage under a bascule bridge.

9 REPORTING TO TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER

For reasons of safety and the scheduling of ship traffic, it is important that ships report their location to the appropriate Traffic Control Centre when at the **actual** established calling-in point, and prior to departure from a Port or Anchorage.

10 DROPPING ANCHOR - LOCK APPROACHES

In several lock approaches, underwater air bubbling equipment is installed. These installations are identified on hydrographic navigation charts as well as by signs located on the approach walls. Masters are reminded that, unless there is an extreme emergency, the dropping of anchors must be avoided in these areas in order to prevent damage to this equipment.

11 AIDS TO NAVIGATION



Mariners are cautioned not to rely solely on buoys for navigational purposes. Buoys should be used only as approximate markers defining channel limits and hazards. Mariners are urged to refer to current hydrographic charts, Sailing Directions and Notices to Mariners.

12 FLOW PATTERNS

The power entities at the Moses-Saunders Power Generating Station may be conducting peaking operations whenever the flow in the upper St. Lawrence River is below 7,930 m³/s (280,000 cfs). These operations may cause some variations in the normal current patterns and velocities in the vicinity of Iroquois Lock, Copelands Cut Light 46 and downstream of Snell Lock. Mariners can view flow information via AIS signals or consult our website for up-to-date data on [flow and for currents](#) modelling.

13 VERTICAL CLEARANCES

The maximum permissible height acceptable for transit of the Seaway from CIP 2 to CIP 16 is 35.5 metres above the ship's water line.

Masters are reminded that when antennas and/or masts are required to be hinged down, it must be for the entire Seaway transit.

14 TAKING STORES OR LANDING GARBAGE

Ships permitted to take on stores or land garbage at locks must do so in a safe and expeditious manner, so as not to delay other traffic in the system. It is the Master's responsibility to ensure there are sufficient number of ship's crew to attend mooring lines at all times when the ship is in the lock chamber and additional crew is available to receive stores or land garbage.

The ship's navigation bridge and VHF radios must be manned at all times.

15 WATER BALLAST MANAGEMENT

As outlined in Part III, 30 (1) & (2) of the Seaway Handbook, ships must comply with ballast water management practices to obtain clearance to transit the Seaway.

Every ship entering the Seaway after operating beyond the economic exclusive zone must comply with the United States Coast Guard ballast water management practices under 33 Code of Federal Regulations Part 151 Subpart C. Further information can be obtained by contacting the USCG MSD Massena at 315-769-5483.



16 REPORTING DANGEROUS CARGO

Mariners are reminded that all ships carrying dangerous cargo, as defined in Part V (72) of the Seaway Handbook, and all tankers carrying liquid cargo in bulk, and all ships carrying grain under fumigation* are required to file a copy of the current load plan prior to transiting any part of the Seaway system. (A cargo load plan example can be found in the Seaway Handbook, Ship Transit & Equipment Requirements, Section 28.)

Note: *All ships carrying any quantity of grain under fumigation must provide to traffic control the name of the chemical (fumigant) used and the cargo hold(s) affected.

Tankers, in ballast, and which are not gas-free, must report the previous cargo of each hold on a load plan.

Failure to comply with this requirement may result in unnecessary delays or transit refusal. The load plan and other information can be transmitted via email twenty-four hours a day, to any of the following Traffic Control Centres:

- St. Lambert, Quebec Email: cdo@seaway.ca
- Massena, N.Y. Email: vtc@dot.gov
- St. Catharines, Ontario Email: nrerie@seaway.ca

17 PILOT EXCHANGE

Masters are to ensure that the pilot exchange occurs in a safe and efficient manner.

18 SECURITY AT THE CANADIAN LOCKS

Mariners are advised that all Canadian locks are remotely monitored for security from the Operations Control Center with the exceptions of Iroquois Lock in the Maisonneuve Region.

a. Cruise Ships in the Seaway

The Canadian Marine Transportation Security Regulations require that a Declaration of Security (DOS) be entered for interfaces involving cruise ships.

- i. The DOS form can be found on the following internet page: [Seaway Security - Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System \(greatlakes-seaway.com\)](http://greatlakes-seaway.com).



- ii. On the DOS form, please indicate the following under Activities and relevant details:
Transit through all Seaway Locks.
- iii. Once the DOS form is complete, please send to: cdo@seaway.ca.

19 MANOEUVRING INSIDE LOCK CHAMBERS

Hands Free Mooring (HFM) is installed at all locks (except Lock 8 in the Welland Canal). Extreme caution is to be exercised when maneuvering inside the lock chamber to avoid contacting the HFM units. As per Seaway Practices and Procedures 40. (4) No ship shall use thrusters when passing a lock gate or a HFM unit.

20 MOORING AND CASTING OFF AT THE LOCKS

a. Hands-Free Mooring (HFM)

The primary means of securing ships in the locks is by way of the Hands-Free Mooring (HFM) system. Ships being moored by HFM must have a minimum of one well rested crew member on deck during the lockage to assist the Bridge team.

b. Lockages without Mooring Lines

Single tugs, tug/barge combinations, and small ships (<160m) that are not eligible to use HFM are to be processed without lines at the Canadian locks with the exception of upbound lockages at Locks 4, 5 and 6 in the Welland Canal.

- i. When the ship is at the L/A2, the lock operator will communicate with the Captain/Pilot to confirm that no mooring lines will be deployed for the lockage and to provide the ship's final stop position in the lock.
- ii. The ship must proceed to its final stop position and maintain its position along the tie-up side of the lock.
- iii. Once the ship is in position, the operator will notify the Captain/Pilot that the lockage will start.
- iv. All upbound lockages without lines will be done as a slow fill.
- v. Once the outbound gates are fully open, the operator will advise the Captain/Pilot to exit the lock.

c. Lockages with Mooring Lines



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If a need is identified to use mooring lines at the Canadian locks equipped with HFM, an advance notification identifying the need shall be provided.

- i. If the need is identified by Seaway personnel, traffic control will advise the ship.
- ii. If the need is identified by the ship, then the ship is to advise the traffic control center as early as possible, preferably before entry into the MLO Section or Welland Canal in order to establish an optimum arrival time. In the event ships are not able to arrive at the prescribed window of time, they may be asked to go to a designated anchorage area until resources become available to secure the ship with lines at the locks.

Masters of ships transiting the Seaway are advised that they must have sufficient competent crew members on deck to properly handle the mooring lines and winches during the lockage operation. Inadequately trained crew are not to be assigned to locking through duties.

Note: It is important that moorings be rigged in accordance with Seaway Handbook and that instructions provided on the ship's Ship Inspection Report be adhered to (page 1 of the inspection report should be posted on the bridge and available for Masters/Pilots use). Masters must ensure that crew members are alert and attentive to all phases of the lockage procedure since the improper operation of mooring winches and the careless handling of mooring lines can result in serious injury to lock and shipboard personnel. Masters are required to note the following practices:

- i. During downbound lockages, release the tension of the mooring lines quickly at castoff;
- ii. Following the castoff signal, **do not take in mooring lines prematurely**; in the downbound direction, wait for the eye of the mooring wire to come over the coping before starting to take in the mooring wire;
- iii. Ensure that lines are coiled properly on the winch drums to avoid pinching and backlash;
- iv. Ensure that the slack of mooring wires is taken up **only after the appropriate signal has been received from the lock crew** during the initial mooring of the ship. Thereafter, the proper tensioning of the lines during the lock fill or dump operation is the responsibility of the ship crew;
- v. Ships are required to maintain their position in the lock during the raising and lowering operations. Winches or hand-held mooring lines shall be properly attended to avoid the necessity of engine or thruster maneuvers during the locking operation. Care must be taken to ensure the ship does not back up past



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the "STOP" sign at the stern of the ship when preparing to depart the lock after raising or lowering;

- vi. Mariners are advised that the white light located at either end of a lock (Canadian Locks) and which is activated when the end of the lock is fully open **is not to be used** as a signal to cast off. (These lights serve only as indicators for lock wall personnel).

The ship is to remain secured until the Seaway officer in charge of the mooring operation gives castoff instructions. When a ship is instructed to cast off, the mooring lines are to be slackened and the Master must ensure that they have all been cast off and clear of the bollards before commencing to heave the lines inboard.

The ship must not exit the lock at such a speed that the mooring lines are not completely inboard before passing the lock gates. Failure to do so can result in injuries to personnel and damages to both Seaway and shipboard installations.

- vii. In Canadian locks, the stern lines of an upbound ship in Locks 1 to 4, Montreal/Lake Ontario section, and 1 to 7, Welland Canal, will be secured first, when requested by the Master through the appropriate Traffic Control Centre, provided the overall length of the ship is 185 metres or less (regardless of the beam) or the overall length of the ship is greater than 185 metres, but the beam is 20 metres or less.

March 18, 2026