



A TRIBUTE TO OUR WORKFORCE

A long list of unseen service spans decades and careers

As we prepare to close out on another successful Seaway navigation season, I want to take this opportunity to celebrate the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation's (SLSDC) dedicated and hardworking employees. They deserve our thanks for the work they do each and every day. The men and women who work at the SLSDC take pride in the performance of their duties, and while they may not always realize it on a day-to-day basis, they are contributing to a mission that benefits the entire nation.

When I arrived at the SLSDC, I was told about our dedicated and highly motivated workforce. I have now seen first-hand those characterizations consistently exhibited by our employees at all levels. As public servants, they assume their responsibilities with professionalism and constantly deliver the services needed to accomplish our mission.

We were all witness to a great example of this dedication during the end of last year's navigation season as we were preparing to close the system. One of the SLSDC's primary missions is to commission and decommission aids to navigation in the U.S. sector of the St. Lawrence Seaway. The 2013 decommissioning process was challenging, to say the least, due to extreme weather and ice conditions taxing both Seaway personnel and floating plant resources. The SLSDC's tug, *Robinson Bay*, is utilized for these operations.

Near the end of December during the decommissioning operations, while standing security watch onboard the *Robinson Bay* as it was docked in the Port of Ogdensburg, New York, two SLSDC marine crewmembers detected smoke in the engine room ceiling area. While making immediate notifications to local emergency units, they undertook quick and decisive action to secure the area and used their maritime firefighter training to contain the fire. They were able

to extinguish the fire without any personal injuries or further damage to the vessel. Their bravery, dedication and commitment to duty were again instrumental during cleanup and repairs, allowing the vessel to safely get underway to complete the decommissioning program. This extraordinary action, undertaken in difficult winter weather conditions, was heroic, to say the least. The employees were publicly recognized in Washington by the Department of Transportation with an award presented by Secretary Anthony Foxx, a well-deserved acknowledgement of their efforts.

The challenging winter many of us experienced last year was equally challenging on the Seaway. Our employees perform difficult winter maintenance projects on the U.S. locks, often in harsh conditions. They do this without complaint and I admire their determination. Neither the weather nor the work is easy, and I appreciate their commitment to getting the work done safely and efficiently in time for the season opening each spring. This work is critically important; it's what makes it possible for the Seaway to carry tens of millions of tons of cargo each year and it's what makes it possible for the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway system to support 227,000 jobs and \$34 billion in annual revenue for the region. As the navigation season brings hundreds of ships laden with cargo through our system, we all realize the tremendous dividends that accrue from that hard work.

Another outstanding achievement reflecting the collective efforts of many of our employees who work on the financial matters of the SLSDC involved a recent award of a clean, unqualified financial audit for FY 2014. This marked the SLSDC's 51st consecutive clean audit, a remarkable accomplishment in and of itself. The SLSDC audit team's dedication to the job, attention to detail and willingness to go the extra mile,

combined with the strong financial internal controls put into practice over the course of many years, allowed for this outcome.

I recently participated in a SLSDC workforce awards program to acknowledge our employees who have attained various years-of-service milestones, both with the Seaway and with the federal government. I was struck by the commitment of this amazing group of individuals. The mission of the SLSDC is to serve the marine transportation industry by providing a safe, secure, reliable, efficient and competitive deep draft international waterway, in cooperation with Canada. SLSDC employees, in some cases, have dedicated their entire careers to this specific mission. Others have seen the next generation of their families come to work for the Seaway. That is a testament to a workforce that shares common goals and core values and has invested themselves in a strong, positive culture, one where their contribution matters and is appreciated.

Our workforce is our greatest resource. The quality of our employees, their professionalism and their work ethic, is first class. I am so grateful for their commitment to the SLSDC, to our customers and stakeholders and to the American people for whom they provide an often unseen service. Most Americans will probably never know about the people working behind the scenes to keep ships moving through the system, providing things they need and use in their daily lives. The men and women who work at the SLSDC serve our country with distinction. I hope you will join me in saying thank you for their service. ■

Betty Sutton

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