

Seaway Task Force Calls for New Lock at the Soo

Labor and business representatives of the Seaway Task Force toured the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on September 24 to get a better understanding of how important the facility is to the U.S., Canadian and global economies.

The trip to the locks is part of the task force's public relations efforts to have a new lock built to make sure commerce will flow unimpeded on the Great Lakes. As the group discovered during its tour, the newest of the locks – MacArthur – was built in 1943, while the Poe Lock was rebuilt in 1968.

Although there actually are four locks within the Soo Locks complex, only the Poe is capable of handling the largest Lake vessels, the 1,000-footers. The MacArthur can handle smaller commercial vessels. The Davis Lock (built in 1914) is operational for even smaller crafts while the Sabin Lock (built in 1919) is no longer in service.

Task Force Chair Lynn Tucker stated the need for a new lock that can handle the larger ships on the Lakes is vital. Tucker, who also serves as the MTD Executive Board Member for the Machinists, noted how the local economy was adversely affected earlier this year when the Poe Lock was out of commission for three weeks.

“We need to make sure commerce can flow freely on the Great Lakes,” Tucker said. “When a lock is out of service, it's not a problem just for workers in the United States and Canada, but for workers around the world. A new lock at the Soo is important for global competition, national security and jobs.”

The task force has been calling upon members of Congress in the Great Lakes region to make construction of a new lock an infrastructure priority. The group has proposed using the footprint of the existing Davis and Sabin locks as the base for the new channel.

The MTD has been an affiliate of the task force since its origin five years ago. Earlier this year, the Michigan and Toledo port councils issued resolutions calling for a new lock.

Joining Tucker in the tour were MTD Executive Secretary-Treasurer, AFL-CIO Metal Trades Department President Ron Ault, Machinists Canadian Vice President Dave Ritchie, Lake Carriers' Association President James Weakley and about a dozen others.

In addition to fighting for a new lock, the Seaway Task Force stands in support of the Jones Act, the Title XI Shipbuilding Loan Program and good jobs. More information about the task force may be found at www.seawaytaskforce.org .