

N.Y. ballast restrictions nixed

By Dave Hall, The Windsor Star March 14, 2012

Lobbying efforts by Canadian chambers of commerce and shipping industry leaders have convinced New York officials to shelve new ballast water restrictions which could have had a major negative impact on shipping throughout the Great Lakes.

The standards proposed by New York would have required all ships discharging ballast water in New York State and ships transiting state waters to have the ability to clean their ballast water to a standard that is 100 times greater than International Maritime Organization standards.

But lobbying efforts by the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, shipping companies and maritime associations successfully convinced New York State officials to shelve the regulations which were scheduled to come into effect in January.

"We are very pleased with this decision," said David Cree, a member of the local chamber's transportation committee and CEO of the Windsor Port Authority, "and hope it will lead to a binational solution to the ballast water issue."

In the meantime, New York officials said they would adhere to federal regulations covering ballast water inspection instead.

According to the port authority, the proposed ballast water requirements would have impeded almost \$11 billion in business revenue and threatened up to 72,000 jobs in both Canada and the U.S.

"The regulations would have had a very negative impact on existing port activity and threatened the significant growth we are projecting for the next five years," said Cree.

Designed to prevent the spread of invasive species, such as zebra mussels which are often carried into domestic waters in ballast tanks, the regulations would have prevented ships from passing through New York waters unless they attained the standards.

And since two locks on the Great Lakes system are in New York waters, the regulations would have essentially shut down the Great Lakes shipping fleet.

Ports in New York and New Jersey would have been exempt from the regulations.

At the moment, there is no ballast water treatment technology in existence which would have met the water quality standards mandated by the regulations.

According to a media release from the local chamber, "environmental factors are important to Canadians, however, and the country does have in place strong rules and regulations to reduce the risk of aquatic species invasions.

"The U.S. and Canadian governments stop, inspect and test every foreign ship entering the Great Lakes in Montreal and since these regulations were put into place in 2006, there have been no new discoveries of aquatic nuisance species in the Great Lakes," according to the chamber.