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Saturday, November 1, 2014

# THE TRIBUNE

Serving South Niagara

SEAWAY: Workers could walk Monday

# Strike deadline moved

KARENA WALTER  
QMI Agency Niagara

It's smooth sailing on the Welland Canal — for now.

A strike deadline that could have shut down St. Lawrence Seaway shipping Friday afternoon has been extended to Monday.

The union representing 460 employees of St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. in Niagara, other parts of Ontario and Quebec is continuing talks through the weekend with the company.

"Any time the two parties continue to talk, I think there is reason for optimism," said Andrew Bogora, spokesman for St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp.

Unifor rescinded a 72-hour notice to strike before the 12:15 p.m. Friday deadline and members can now take strike action beginning Monday at 5 p.m. Talks are taking place in Cornwall under a media blackout.

"The fact that there's a blackout is also, from the union perspective, good news because it means talks are continuing, people are still committed to the process of trying to reach a deal," Unifor Communications national representative Stuart Laidlaw said. "We just don't want to be negotiating in a fishbowl."

Collective agreements for unionized employees expired on March 31.

The main issue is the corporation's new hands-free mooring system — already installed at Lock 3 in St. Catharines but not in operation — which it wants to roll out at all of its locks. The union said the technology will eliminate employees and create safety issues.

The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. said the new technology will be safer for ships and employees, as the tie-up lines being eliminated are responsible for most employee injuries.

The hands-free system, which uses vacuum pads to secure ships, has been operating at a lock in Beauharnois, Que., since shipping season



The ship Resko makes its way through the Welland Canal at Lock 3 in St. Catharines on Friday.

BOB TYMCZYSZYN/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

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Unifor Communications national representative Stuart Laidlaw

opened March 28. Since that time, Bogora said 1,460 ships have been successfully processed through the lock without incident.

The yellow pads have been

installed in two other locations in Quebec, but are not operational yet.

Traditionally, the Seaway has three people per shift at each lock to work the tie-

up lines. Now, the company wants to create roving, flexible teams that would tend to locks and monitor security in areas where they are required rather than being in a fixed location. On the Welland Canal, teams would travel the seven locks that are close together, but Bogora said Lock 8 in Port Colborne is remote and would have staff there 24 hours a day.

Bogora said the technology will mean a net job reduction of 67 positions over four years, but he said the vast majority, if not all, will be absorbed through attrition.

Sheri Laekeman, president of Unifor Local 4212, which represents workers along the

Welland Canal, wrote on the union's blog last week that having no personnel at the lock leaves ships "vulnerable to mechanical failure and the real possibility of an environmental disaster."

Laekeman was in negotiations and unreachable Friday, but wrote in the blog that workers at the locks do much more than just secure ships in place with ropes and wires. "They are the eyes and ears that keep watch for a potential crash, ready and able to act fast when needed," she wrote, explaining when engines cut, the ships' momentum keeps them moving.

But Bogora said people

will continue to be physically present on the ground every day but will be working in a more flexible manner.

He said ship arrester cables are currently in place to stop ships and that will not change with the new technology.

Ten to 12 ships transit the Welland Canal a day, carrying approximately a quarter million tons.

"That's certainly a substantial amount of cargo," Bogora said. "That cargo is vital to any number of industries, so it's safe to say it's in everyone's best interest to reach a negotiated settlement."

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## COLUMN

# Documentary The Candidate debuts Monday

It's an exciting time to be a part of the news media, especially in Niagara where we continue to explore new ways of storytelling.

From our live election shows and debates to our year-long focus on poverty, we are constantly pushing the bounds of traditional print journalism.

We're doing it again. On Monday, The Standard will present its first documentary news short film.

The Candidate offers a behind-the-scenes look at how



ERICA BAJER

St. Catharines' mayor-elect Walter Sendzik spent election day.

We are there with him first thing in the morning, as he makes his children breakfast. We capture all of the emotion as he campaigns around town,

casts his own vote and nervously waits for the election results.

The documentary is something we are very proud of and can't wait to share with our online readers.

The Candidate will debut Monday afternoon on the websites of The St. Catharines Standard, Niagara Falls Review and Welland Tribune.

"We don't see ourselves as just a newspaper company, we see ourselves as a cross-platform media outlet," group publisher Mark Cressman

said. "Our goal is to tell the stories of the community, and to push the limits of how we do that."

On the heels of our most successful election coverage to date — with more than 45,000 views — we are launching what we hope will become a regular feature of short documentary films.

"No other newspaper our size is being as innovative and experimental in online journalism," Cressman said, pointing to our live broadcasts and upcoming launch of podcasts.

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