



Save The River®

Upper St. Lawrence RIVERKEEPER®

Protecting the St. Lawrence River through Advocacy, Education and Research since 1978
...now and for generations to come.

Request for Delayed St. Lawrence Seaway 2020 Opening

December 2, 2019

Dear Governor Cuomo,

As the 2019 St. Lawrence Seaway shipping season moves towards a close, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River levels remain significantly above seasonal averages. In spite of three requests by Save The River to the Seaway to take action such as patterning or an early closure of the 2019 shipping season, there has been no response on the part of the Seaway or shipping to help alleviate the extreme high water levels that have caused so much pain for riparians and businesses along the shoreline.

We have heard that one of the industry's concerns about these proposals was the disruption it might cause to supply chains in the Great Lakes. Therefore, we are proposing that the Seaway delay the spring 2020 opening until the beginning of Ottawa River freshet. According to members of the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Board (ILOSLRB) and others who attended a recent meeting on water levels in Ogdensburg, this is the best opportunity that remains to continue to lower water levels to seasonal averages.

As you know, the Great Lakes remain at historical seasonal highs going into the winter season. Our River and Lakeshore businesses and homeowners cannot withstand another year of extreme high water resulting from the potential of high precipitation this winter and spring. We believe that the losses and damages sustained by the region's riparians and businesses are at least equal to, or greater than, the loss that shipping may sustain by a delay in next spring's opening. While there are environmental benefits to minimally higher seasonal water levels in wet years, the extreme high levels and long durations of 2017 and 2019 were much higher than were needed to be beneficial to the environment.

On behalf of Save The River's members and all of the Upper St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario riparians and businesses, we ask you to use your powerful and effective voice to request that the Seaway delay the opening of the spring 2020 shipping season to allow the ILOSLRB to lower the water levels to at least the seasonal averages. Making this request now, rather than later in the winter, would allow shippers to adjust their schedules and businesses to make arrangements for alternative modes of transportation for time sensitive deliveries of critical materials.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this very crucial situation.

Sincerely,

John Peach
Executive Director, Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper

Cc: Senator Patty Ritchie
Assemblyman Mark Walczyk
Representative Elise Stefanik
Senator Schumer
Senator Gillibrand

Save The River envisions a healthy Upper St. Lawrence River that provides safe drinking water, is home to a thriving range of indigenous species, and supports sustainable economic activity.

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