

Groups Demand Moratorium on Access to Great Lakes by Ocean-Going Ships

“the health of the Great Lakes must not be held hostage when transportation alternatives exist”

(Buffalo, NY March 20, 2007)-The day before the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, conservationists and organized labour are demanding a moratorium on ocean-going vessel access to the Great Lakes until the U.S. and Canadian governments enforce ballast water regulations that protect the lakes from aquatic invasive species. The groups are building support for the moratorium online at www.saltfreelakes.org

“Invasive species are crippling our lakes, endangering our jobs and health, and burdening our economy,” said Jim Mahon, Canadian Autoworkers, Local 1520. “Until the Canadian and U.S. governments stand up and stop this onslaught, we endorse a moratorium on the handful of ocean vessels that currently enter the Great Lakes.”

Canadian Auto Workers Local 1520 and Great Lakes United contest that until regulatory solutions curb the influx of devastating invasive species, the door to the primary vector of introduction in the Great Lakes-the untreated ballast of ocean-going vessels- must be closed. During the moratorium international cargo bound for the Great Lakes region could be offloaded before reaching the lakes and moved via transportation options such as Lake-vessel, barge, rail or truck. The groups want the moratorium to last until the U.S. and Canadian governments adequately protect the Lakes from aquatic invasive species like the zebra mussel, which are regularly released by ocean-going vessels when they discharge contents of their ballast water tanks.

“Our call is a response to the negligence of the U.S. and Canadian governments to solve this urgent problem,” said Jennifer Nalbone, Campaign Director for Great Lakes United. “We will continue to work diligently in support of federal and regional regulations, but in the meantime the health of the Lakes must not be held hostage when transportation alternatives exist.”

Since the St. Lawrence Seaway System opened the lakes to deep-draft international shipping in 1959, 65 percent of the aquatic invasive species that entered the Great lakes were brought in by ocean-vessels. This includes invaders such as the spiny water flea, round goby, zebra mussel and quagga mussel. The cost to the Great Lakes economy from the zebra and quagga mussel invasions alone is estimated to be \$500 million a year over the next five years. Ballast is also implicated in the possible transport of the newly detected bloody red mysid and viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) fish virus. Research shows that the rate of discovery of invaders in the Great Lakes is correlated with shipping activity, and is amongst the highest rates for any aquatic system in the world. On average, one new non-native species is detected in the Great Lakes every 28 weeks from all vectors.

“The longer we wait for new legislation and take a ‘business as usual’ approach the worse the problem gets and the more costly the solutions,” said Derek Stack, Executive Director of Great Lakes United. “We will promote all alternatives that stop dirty ships from introducing invaders to the Great Lakes. Our economy and our quality of life depend on it.”

For more information contact:

Jim Mahon, Canadian Auto Workers Local 1520: (519) 851-5288 jimahon@ody.ca

Jennifer Nalbone, Great Lakes United: (716) 983-3831 jen@glu.org

Derek Stack, Great Lakes United: (613) 797-9532 drstack@glu.org

Support the call for a moratorium on ocean-vessel access into the Great Lakes until adequate regulations are enforced, online at: www.saltfreelakes.org