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Date: Mon, 28 Apr 2003 12:48:07 -0400

To: jen@glu.org

From: Jennifer Nalbone <jen@glu.org>

Subject: Toledo Blade on Seaway lobby group

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Thanks to Tim Eder, National Wildlife Federation for this forward.

<http://www.toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2003104250139>
<<http://www.toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2003104250139>>

Article published April 25, 2003

GREAT LAKES SHIPPING

Port board may back St. Lawrence Seaway fix-up

Nearly two years ago, the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority took what it saw as a momentous step to boost Great Lakes shipping: It pledged \$500,000 over five years to lobby the cause if other ports joined it. Nobody did, and the idea fizzled.

Now, the agency's board of directors must decide whether to pledge cash again, this time for a coalition that's begun to push the cause: enlarging the St. Lawrence Seaway in the United States and Canada.

Talk of expanding the St. Lawrence Seaway was part of a broader discussion that dominated the nearly three-hour board meeting yesterday on developing the economy in a region that's seen its economic clout drop in the last 20 years.

"The real issue is, we have to infuse passion in the process," board member Ken Dobson said at the end of the meeting. "There has to be a greater sense of urgency."

The meeting began with an effort by a relatively new coalition, Seaway Emergency Committee to Unite, Revive, and Innovate for Transportation Excellence, or Securite.

The group was begun last year by some business, labor, and port officials, including Toledo's port authority president, James Hartung. The group, run by David Sanders, a former U.S. seaway director, aims to get the St. Lawrence Seaway upgraded by 2020 to the point it can handle most trans-oceanic vessels, perhaps even through the winter.

Such an upgrade would cost an estimated \$10 billion and anger environmentalists.

U.S. Rep Marcy Kaptur (D., Toledo) told the board the upgrade is needed for a seaway that was built too small 43 years ago. Since then, she said, intense lobbying from non-seaway ports and railroads has led the federal government to shun seaway improvements.

She said groups like Securite are needed to push the agenda.

The port authority has given \$20,000 in the last two years to Securite, which is run out of Mr. Sanders' Washington lobbying firm, PRI Strategy Management. To complete Securite's agenda, Mr. Sanders wants at least \$50,000 more this year, which he said would match the spirit of the agency board's 2001 vote. It would boost Securite's budget to about \$120,000.

Port authority officials aren't sure how many extra jobs would result from an expanded seaway. They estimate about 5,000 local workers now indirectly trace their jobs to the local port.

Talk of jobs remained the meeting's centerpiece discussion beyond the seaway.

Board member Carty Finkbeiner handed out a Pennsylvania economic research firm's ratings of metro Toledo's economy. Out of 325 metro areas rated by the firm, Economy.com, Toledo rated 225th in economic vitality, 248th in job growth since 2001, and 262nd in projected job growth by 2006.

While experienced factory workers still earn good money, the firm said the area lacks economic diversity and will continue to shed such jobs.

"[Metro Toledo] faces dismal demographic trends, and a turnaround is sorely needed if economic growth is to prove sustainable," the report said.

The ratings come as the port authority and other agencies are trying to retool their efforts.

A consultant will soon be hired to help improve and streamline the myriad area economic-development groups. Local researchers are completing a study of the new technologies the region can pioneer to create a new generation of companies with high-wage jobs. And local

officials are beginning a venture fund that can lend money to those companies.

But Mr. Finkbeiner and Mr. Dobson told their peers process alone won't solve Toledo's problems. They said local leaders in the public and private sector must be convinced of the need to change. "We have to change our mindset," Mr. Dobson said.

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