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Canada, U.S. eyeing St. Lawrence Seaway expansion

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DETROIT - The 44-year-old, 3,700-kilometre Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway could be in for a multi-billion dollar facelift to open the route up to oceangoing freighters.

Canadian and U.S. officials are currently mulling over a proposal to rebuild locks and dredge channels – a project that could cost \$10 billion to \$20 billion US.

Current oceangoing freighters have grown so big they cannot navigate the Seaway, which handles 200 million tonnes of cargo every year.

Proponents of expansion of the link argue the Seaway is a vital commercial link.

"To do nothing is to sound the death knell before long," Steven Olinek, deputy director of the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority, told *The Detroit News* in a story that appeared in Tuesday's editions.

"We're in danger of becoming the next Erie Canal unless we find ways to become more competitive," he said.

Opponents of expansion say rebuilding the Seaway could damage the Great Lakes environment.

"You don't alter nature in such a radical way and threaten the most important fresh water body on the planet," Tim Eder, director of the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes Natural Resource Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan, told the newspaper.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is to spend the next two years studying the cost of maintaining the Seaway's existing locks. Expansion of the waterway will require additional study to determine a firm cost.

Written by CBC News Online [staff](#)

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