

GLSS – Passage through the Welland Canal **Between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario**

Purpose: This document provided information about passage through the Welland Canal between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. If you reside in a lake on the opposite side of Niagara Falls from the Solo Challenge you want to participate in this tells you how to get to the other side.

Discussion: The Welland Canal is 26 NM long and involves passage through 8 locks. Passage is neither simple nor cheap and does require some preparation. These locks are owned by shipping companies and the commercial vessels have the priority. One can expect to spend between 12 and 18 hours making the passage. ***The Saint Lawrence Seaway Pleasure Craft Guide linked below is a great reference. You will be given a copy at Lock 3 (a bit late!) but get a copy referenced by the link under references and read it before your trip.*** The second link "[THE WELLAND CANAL SECTION OF THE ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY](#)" is an interesting historical read but not necessary for passage. A map of the canal and some pictures are provided at the bottom of this document. Another option to avoid the Welland Canal altogether is to trailer a boat between the US and Canada. For the Lake Ontario Solo Challenge one can have Port Credit Yacht Club launch your boat. Port Credit Yacht Club launch ramp can be very busy on small boat regatta weekends so an alternate launch location is Port Credit Harbour Marina just to the west of Port Credit Yacht Club. Contact information for both is listed below.

General Description: The Welland Canal is 26 NM long. It includes 8 locks, numbered starting from the Lake Ontario side from 1 to 8. Lock 8 has a lift of only a few feet and one will motor very slowly through while it is filled or drained. The other locks have a lift of about 40 feet and one will tie up to the walls with lines provided by the

Cost: One can purchase a ticket online at the link below and the cost will be \$200 per passage through the 8 locks. Alternately one can purchase tickets in a booth that looks like a telephone booth located at either end of the canal at the small craft tie up area but the cost will be \$240 and one must use either a VISA or Master Card.

Fenders & Lines: Make sure you have lots of sturdy fenders. The passage through the locks up bound from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie is very rough as the water enters the locks. Lines will be provided by the lock personnel. Be careful that the fenders do not get caught in the cracks in the lock walls. Tires are not allowed.

Crew: You must have a crew of at least 2 (counting skipper) going down bound from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario and a crew of at least 3 going up bound from lake Ontario to Lake Erie. This might seem silly until one has made the passage but the flow of water in and out of the locks is quite turbulent and the lock walls are rough so the crew is needed to fend the boat off the walls. One can bring one's own crew along. Alternately one can have crew come to the small craft dock at either end of the canal and park at that end. After passage through the canal one can take a taxi back to the parked car at the other end. Taxi phone number is listed below. If you do not have crew one can ask for help finding crew from the

GLSS Race Chairman for the Lake Ontario Solo Challenge or alternately contact the Sugarloaf Marina at the St Catherine end of the Canal. Hired crew from the area may be helpful for your first passage but expect to pay about \$200. One should offer to at least pay expenses for other crew from the area who offers to help.

Communications: The Seaway uses VHF working Channel 14. If you monitor this channel you will be able to track what is going on with the freighters. Contact Seaway Control from the ticket / phone booth phone at either end of the canal near the pleasure craft tie up areas to initiate your contact and start your passage. During passage one may motor very slowly waiting for freighters to go through or one may be instructed to tie up to the wall. I found it helpful to periodically contact Seaway Control and ask when I would be allowed to pass, sort of remind them respectfully that I was still there.

Passage: Passage times will be between 12 and 18 hours based on my experience. I have usually started initial contact very early in the morning but not always got started until several hours later. The canal is typically quite busy but it is usually easy to maneuver around the freighters if necessary. Passage speed is 6 Kts through the canal. Usually Seaway Control will try to group pleasure boats together so one may go through with several other pleasure boats. There are several bridges along the way and they will open without the need to signal. One will pass through Lock 8, the first one on the Lake Erie side motoring very slowly. For the other locks the lock will provide two lines for the boat. One needs a line tender at bow and stern but do not tie lines off but turn around a cleat or use a snatch block and then a turn round a winch or cleat. Line tenders should also be prepared to fend the boat off the walls which are very rough and may catch a fender if one is not careful. One will tie up on different sides of the different locks; this is spelled out in the Small Craft Handbook referenced below.

| Welland Canal | Lake Ontario to Lake Erie | Lake Erie to Lake Ontario |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Lock 1 | starboard | port |
| Lock 2 | starboard | port |
| Lock 3 | port | starboard |
| Lock 4 | port | port |
| Lock 5 | port | port |
| Lock 6 | port | port |
| Lock 7 | port | starboard |
| Lock 8 | starboard | port |

At lock 3 one must present a ticket indicating payment for the passage and one will be given a copy of the Saint Lawrence Seaway Pleasure craft Guide, at a point I might add where one should have already read it. So be sure to get a copy before the trip and read it first. It provides additional information about the lights and other canal procedures. One must obey the lights allowing entry to the locks and exit from the locks. The Seaway Control will tell one when to proceed but be sure to follow the lights at the locks. If you get confused or have questions contact Seaway Control. If several pleasure boats are passing through the largest may tie to the wall and the smaller tie outboard to the larger but both boats may be asked to tie to the wall.

Marinas: There are marinas at both ends of the canal but I would not recommend the marina at the St Catherine end as it is very shallow. The Sugarloaf Harbour Marina at the Port Colborne end of Lake Erie

is an excellent marina with fuel, pump out, and other services. This marina also has some shallow spots so be careful. One can also tie up at the pleasure boat transient docks at either end of the canal while waiting for passage. These are on the port side of the canal as one enters the canal. Even though freighters pass quite near these docks they are going quite slow and produce little disturbance.

Conclusion: Finally remember to download the Saint Lawrence Seaway Pleasure Craft Guide – it will provide more detailed and up to date information on a Welland Canal passage!

References:

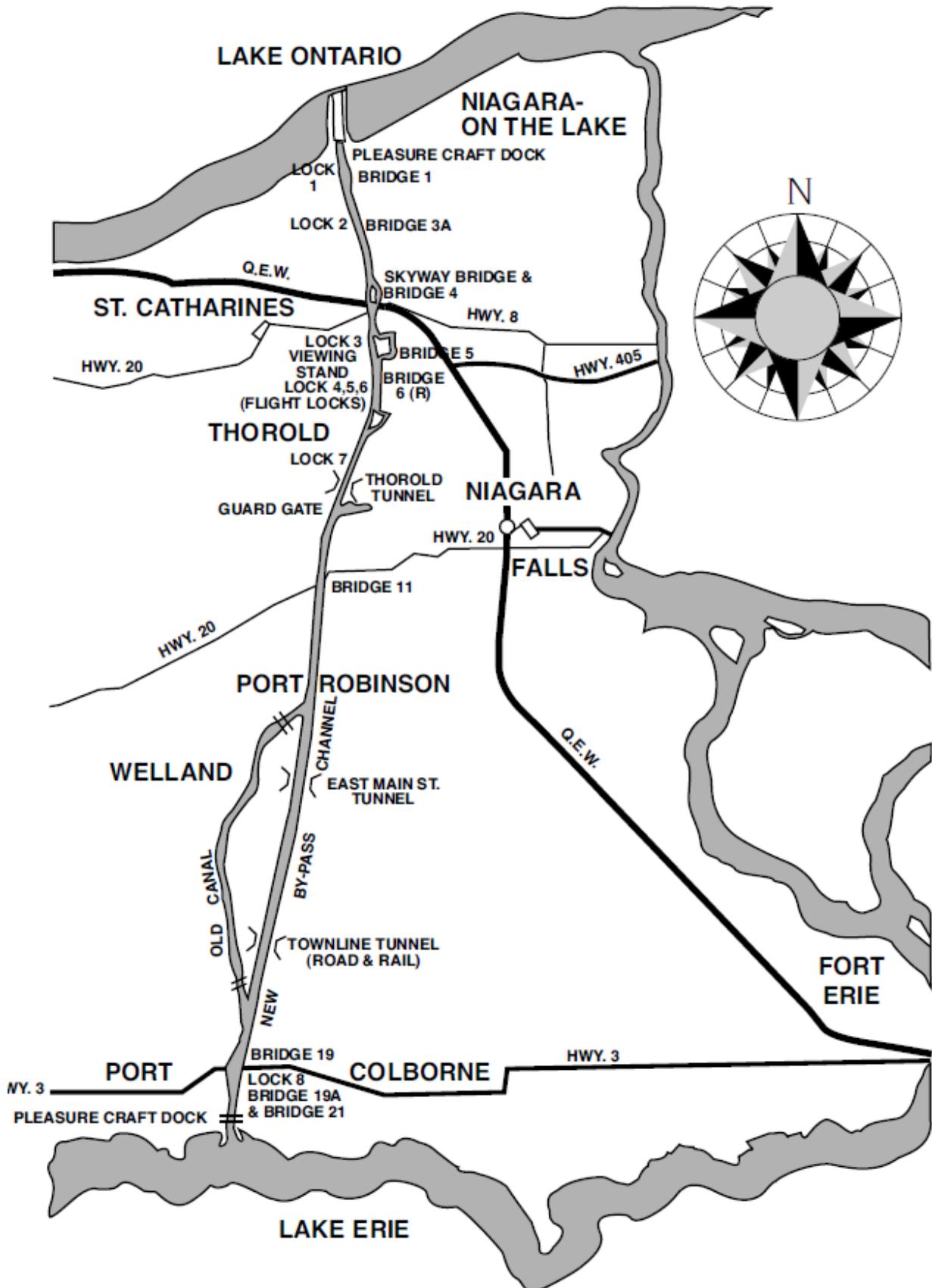
- [Saint Lawrence Seaway Pleasure Craft Guide Link](#)
- [Welland Canal Online Ticket Purchase](#)
- [THE WELLAND CANAL SECTION OF THE ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY \(Historical Background\)](#)
- [Seaway Handbook \(Above items and Commercial Vessel Handbook\)](#)
- Port Taxi (Port Colborne) 905-835-2424
- [Sugarloaf Harbour Marina \(web site link\)](#)
3 Marina Rd, Port Colborne, ON L3K 6C6, Canada
Phone: 905-835-6644
- [Port Credit Yacht Club Harbor Master \(website link\)](#)
115 Lakefront Promenade, Mississauga, Ontario L5E 3G6, Canada
Phone: 905-278-7911
- [Port Credit Harbour Marina \(website link\)](#)
1 Port St E, Mississauga, ON L5G 4N1, Canada
Phone: 905-274-1595

A short Story: The Ticket Machine

By Bill Tucker

In the summer of 2011 I participated in the Ontario 300. To get to the start at the Port Credit Yacht Club on the north shore of Lake Ontario I needed to pass through the Welland Canal and its eight locks. The cost for pleasure boat passage through the locks is \$200 each way. This is collected using a credit card through a ticket vending machine in a small booth located ashore at each end of the canal before you enter the first lock. As I approached the ticket machine on the Lake Erie side of the canal a lady ahead of me was attempting to obtain a ticket. She appeared to be struggling with figuring out how the ticket machine worked. As this was my second passage through the canal and I also had had difficulty figuring out the machine I offered to help. The lady agreed and I soon obtained her ticket for passage through the Welland Canal. The lady thanked me and explained that the ticket machine in the nearby booth for obtaining parking tickets was out of order. I then realized that I had helped her obtain a \$200 ticket for canal passage rather than a \$2 ticket for parking! I sheepishly explained the situation to the lady and suggested that she contact the credit card company for a refund. I am sure she wishes she had not accepted my assistance.

Prepared by: Bill Tucker
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**A few Pictures from
Welland Canal
Passage in 2011**

