



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

June 17, 2010

Charles A. Lawson, PhD
U.S. Section
International Joint Commission
2000 L St., NW, Suite 615
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Lawson:

The International Joint Commission (IJC) has a long and successful history of engagement in the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River system. Concern over fluctuating water levels on Lake of the Woods led governments to refer the matter to the IJC in 1912, resulting in the Lake of the Woods Convention and Protocol in 1925 and the establishment of the International Lake of the Woods Control Board. The IJC has been regulating water levels in the Rainy and Namakan lakes since 1938 and overseeing the water quality of the Rainy River since 1965.

In order to ensure the long-term ecological and economic vitality of Lake of the Woods and the Rainy River Basin, the governments of Canada and the United States are fostering trans-jurisdictional coordination and collaboration on science and management activities to enhance and restore water quality in the basin. A review of the bi-national management of the basin would complement these activities and will contribute to any future approach to addressing new and emerging water quality issues and water management needs.

In accordance with Article IX of the Boundary Waters Treaty and further to the reference letters from governments on November 19, 1998, concerning the International Watersheds Initiative, the governments of Canada and the United States request that the IJC examine, and make recommendations regarding, the bi-national management of the international waters of the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River system and the IJC's potential role in this management.

These recommendations should address potential structures and mechanisms for governance, as well as priority issues or activities to be addressed by or through such mechanisms.

The examination and recommendations should be in line with the IJC's International Watersheds Initiative, the aim of which is to facilitate watershed-level solutions to transboundary environmental challenges by promoting communication, collaboration and coordination among the various stakeholders and interests using an integrated, ecosystem approach. The recommendations must, of course, respect existing treaties, orders and jurisdictional authorities already in place in this region.

The Commission is requested to produce a final report of its work in response to this reference within eighteen months from the date of this reference. The governments request the Commission to pursue its activities and examinations expeditiously, and to make periodic reports to the governments, as appropriate. Reporting should include IJC plans for engaging with the federal governments and relevant provinces, First Nations, tribes and states, as well as the wider body of stakeholders and the public.

The governments further request that the Commission undertakes this work as part of the International Watersheds Initiative with respect to funding any activities required, drawing upon the resources provided by the governments to the Commission for this program annually.

Based on the recommendations of the Commission and after consideration of input provided by the relevant provinces, tribes, and state, the governments may consider a follow-up reference to expand IJC's role in addressing water quality issues in Lake of the Woods.

A similar letter is being sent to the Secretary of the Canadian Section of the Commission by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Sincerely,



Velia M. De Pirro
Director, Office of Canadian Affairs