

**Summary Report**  
**Public Meeting on the Great Lakes**  
**Your Voice: Sarnia**



**Wednesday, March 22, 2017**  
**Lochiel Kiwanis Community Centre**  
**Sarnia, Ontario**

## Introduction

The International Joint Commission visited Sarnia, Ontario as part of public meetings in six communities in the spring of 2017 to gather public comment on the Canadian and US governments' Progress Report of the Parties (PROP) and the IJC's draft Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP) report.

During an afternoon public roundtable meeting, three presentations outlined key successes and challenges in the St. Clair River Region related to the St. Clair River Area of Concern, Chemicals of Mutual Concern and health, and the importance of sustainable agriculture to reduce nutrient runoff and harmful algal blooms. Nearly 80 area residents from both sides of the border attended the meeting and nine participants provided Commissioners with their comments about Great Lakes water quality concerns. Among the attendees in at the Sarnia meeting were Walpole Island First Nations, Aamjiwnaang First Nations, Sierra Club, Sarnia Environmental Advisory Committee, St. Clair Binational Public Advisory Council, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority, Friends of the St. Clair River, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, National Farmers Union, Lambton Federation of Agriculture, Council of Canadians, elected officials (regional director for Michigan Senator Gary Peters, councilor of Point Edward), and concerned citizens.

During the roundtable discussions participants discussed, among other topics, Areas of Concern, Chemicals of Mutual Concern and human health, and agriculture and nutrients. A range of other issues were raised during the public comment sessions. Summaries of these discussions follow.

The IJC will take these findings into account as part of their assessment report on Agreement progress and hopes that these conclusions and recommendations provide direction to residents of the St. Clair River region for cooperative strategies to deal with unique issues facing their watershed.

IJC representation at meeting:

Gordon Walker, Canadian Chair

Lana Pollack, US Chair

Benoit Bouchard, Canadian Commissioner

Trish Morris, Director, IJC Great Lakes Regional Office (GLRO)

Antonette Arvai, Physical Scientist, IJC GLRO

Raj Bejankiwar, Physical Scientist/Deputy Director, IJC GLRO

Kevin Bunch, Writer- Communications Specialist, IJC US Section

Mark Burrows, Physical Scientist, IJC GLRO

Sally Cole-Misch, Public Affairs Officer, IJC GLRO

Jeff Kart, Videographer/Editor, IJC US Section

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Allison Voglesong, IJC Michigan Sea Grant Fellow

Cindy Warwick, Policy Advisor, IJC Canadian Section

## Sarnia Public Roundtable: March 22, 2017

### Main Themes of the Roundtable Discussions

- Accessible, consistent public education
- Lack of funding for Areas of Concern progress
- Nuclear waste dump; Deep Geological Repository
- Microplastics and microbeads
- Protect Great Lakes water against bottled water companies
- *Phragmites*
- Chemicals of Mutual Concern
  - Need permanent task force to identify Chemicals of Mutual Concern
  - More Chemicals of Mutual Concern need to be identified
  - Radionuclides need to be identified as Chemical of Mutual Concern
  - Issue of pharmaceuticals in water
- Funding needs to stop and prevent invasive species
- Nutrients
  - Education needed on best management practices
  - Need to reduce phosphorus loading levels in the Great Lakes
  - Bureaucracy getting in the way of getting money into the hands of farmers
  - Ample regulatory nutrient management in place; farmers want voluntary programs involved
- Improve sewage treatment infrastructure
- Adopt best practices for dredging
- Issue of aging oil pipelines infrastructure – lines 5 and 9
- Air pollution affecting human health

### Key Messages

#### Nuclear Waste (Deep Geological Repository)

Participants expressed concern for the binational threats posed by the transport and storage of nuclear waste and radioactive products. Specifically, the potential impacts of the Deep Geological Repository (DGR) in Kincardine, Ontario and of the transportation of nuclear waste crossing over waterways and bridges between Canada and the United States. Participants expressed the need for accessibility to information on the threats posed by the transportation of nuclear waste, the DGR and nuclear waste and how they can affect the drinking water.

#### Chemicals of Mutual Concern

Many participants expressed that the governments have taken a long time to identify only eight Chemicals of Mutual Concern (CMCs). There are always new chemicals that are emerging and thus more CMCs should be identified quickly. Some participants recommended identifying radionuclides as a CMC. Appropriate scientific information should be disseminated on the potential impacts of these chemicals, and a permanent task force established to identify future CMCs. Concerns were also raised about pharmaceuticals making their way into the water from wastewater treatment discharges and posing threats to human health, as they are endocrine disruptors.

#### Nutrients and Dredging

Participants acknowledged the need to reduce phosphorus loading levels into the Great Lakes. They suggested that more education and training is needed on best management practices to reduce phosphorus loadings. Enhanced monitoring after rainfall to determine phosphorus and nitrate loading

was also recommended. Some participants, who work in the agricultural industry, expressed that ample regulatory nutrient management are already in place and that farmers favor more voluntary programs rather than mandatory restrictions.

Dredging was also discussed in terms of how it affects nutrient content of the Great Lakes. Dredging and the approaches being used to clean up and the importance of ensuring that we are using the most appropriate methods so we are not creating or exacerbating the problem at a local area and moving it downstream.

### **Lack of Funding for Areas of Concern progress**

Progress on Areas of Concern (AOCs) has been made because of the funding availability. Funds are vital to progress in cleaning up the listed AOCs and the lack of it would certainly impede progress. There was concern raised over the fact that in Michigan the funding of AOCs has gone to those that are close to being delisted rather than to the problems that have the biggest impact on Great Lakes health. There is also fear of loss of momentum and loss of advocacy after AOCs are delisted. Participants expressed that the St. Clair Region should never be delisted as an AOC. Other participants suggested that lessons learned from that AOC's habitat restoration projects should be captured and be made available to help in the advancement of other projects.

### **Public Comments (Click hyperlink of participant name to view video comments)**

[Murray Long](#): Nuclear waste is dangerous. There needs to be an organization that can explain to the public how dangerous it is and how it can be dealt with. Asian Carp is another problem that needs to be solved.

[Wanda Long](#): Bottled water is one of my biggest concerns. A few years ago we had really low water levels and I think a lot of water is being taken from our lake for bottled water. I'm concerned about water from the Great Lakes being taken by tankers to the south.

[Joe Hill, Sarnia Environmental Advisory Committee member](#): How do you know how safe drinking water is when water is being pumped into the lake from nuclear power plants? Nuclear power pumping systems have leaks and these leaks go into the water supply. The nuclear power we are using and generating in Ontario is total BS. We do not need nuclear power plants, they are far too expensive.

[Sandra Sahgaj, Thunderbird Water Panther Circle, Walpole Island](#): There is a plan for the St. Clair River to be dredged at Walpole Island. I don't agree with this plan. No more big ships on the St. Clair. I don't want any nuclear waste to be traveling through that water either. The community members of Walpole Island are still waiting for the IJC to come to the Island.

[Shawn Plain, Aamjiwnaang First Nations](#): When I participate in other forums I always wonder, where are the regulators? Where are the people that pose harm to the waterways, or pose harm to the land? Are they involved in these conversations? I have to go on record, for my First Nation, I can't speak for others; these meetings aren't consultation with First Nations. Meet with us directly. At 31 I was diagnosed with a rare form of kidney cancer. I asked my doctor if this is environment related or not and it could not be answered. This area has a lot of serious health risks. More studies need to be done on health risks associated from air pollution.

[Ken Bell, owner of water quality monitoring program on Rondeau Bay](#): I have conducted a water quality monitoring program on Rondeau Bay for about ten years. The United States has state-funded water quality monitoring programs that are watershed and citizen based where they publish all of

their data online. Ontario should follow suit and have programs where people take charge of their own communities and monitoring. Have communities conduct their own monitoring and work with the Conservation Authorities, MNR and the Ministry of the Environment to identify the problems and establish a baseline to help scientists.

[Henry Smallboy, Council of Canadians:](#) We have tankers taking water to Asia from our Great Lakes. Meanwhile, we have our own water crisis on our First Nation's reserves in Canada. Why is that water going overseas when it's needed in the northern communities?

[Corrine Tooshkenig, Thunder Bird Panther Circle, Walpole Island First Nations:](#) Water is life. There is a common goal to protect the water, the land, the red man's land, it's the mother earth of all the human beings. Water comes from the spirit world and from the ground of the mother earth. Its blood, our bloodline, the blood we need in order to survive. We are in crisis and our prophecies tell us that if we don't stop what we are doing, this nuclear power is going to threaten us as human beings. It's sad when I hear from industry that we are in a sacrificed zone of gas and oil lines. A prophecy 200 years ago told us of a black snake that would travel through our land. Another prophecy also told us of the hydro lines that go through our lands. These are man-made threats.

[Marina Plain, Aamjiwnaang First Nations:](#) Thank you for all the hard work you have done and for all the people who showed to share your concerns about the water. I just had a question. I know the Commission has an Aboriginal Annex, a First Nations Annex; I'm just wondering if there is ever going to be room for an aboriginal Commissioner on your board?