

October 3, 2010

Control Board continues following regulation plan

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control (Board) recently reviewed conditions in the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system. The Board has decided to continue to release outflows in accordance with the regulation plan as much as possible. Outflows may be adjusted to avoid extreme water level conditions downstream, or to meet critical hydropower and navigation needs.

The supply of water received by Lake Ontario was about 95% of average during the March – August time period. Very low supplies in early spring led to Lake Ontario levels falling well below average, but still well above the lower regulation criterion. Heavy precipitation in late spring brought the levels back to average. In April, May and June the Board released more water than specified by the regulation plan to meet critical needs in Lake St. Louis. This extra water was offset by late summer.

Lake Ontario's level peaked the last week of July and has been close to average since then. The level peaked at 75.01 m (246.10 ft), about 6 cm (2.4 in) above average for that time of year, 36 cm (1.2 ft) below the upper water level criterion, and 86 cm (2.8 ft) above the lower water level criterion. The level is presently at 74.64 m (244.88 ft), about 4 cm (1.6 in) below average. There is almost no risk of Lake Ontario reaching its upper level limit in 2010; there is a small risk of low Lake Ontario levels in the fall. The Board urges everyone to be prepared to live within the range of levels specified in the Orders of Approval. Water levels on Lake St. Lawrence have generally been near average since March, except for June and July being well above average.

Levels near Montreal have been extremely low since March until last week. Record low levels were experienced in Montreal Harbour in May and June. Record low outflows from the Ottawa River contributed to low levels in the Harbour and in Lake St. Louis. Levels in the Harbour were also below chart datum for almost the entire May – July time period. The freshet of the Ottawa River was extremely small so the Board did not need to reduce Lake Ontario outflows to prevent flooding downstream. The level at the Port of Montreal is presently about 1.73 m (5.7 ft) above chart datum, and 1.05 m (3.5 ft) above average. Under average conditions, the level in the Harbour would slowly rise through the fall.

The Board, in conjunction with its staff, is monitoring the situation carefully and is prepared to take action if required. The Board will assess the situation again in about 4 weeks, or earlier if there is a significant change in conditions.

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The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control was established by the International Joint Commission in its 1952 order of approval. The Board's main duty is to ensure that outflows from Lake Ontario meet the requirements of the IJC order; it also develops regulation plans and conducts special studies requested by the IJC. For more information, visit www.ijc.org (> Boards > International St. Lawrence River Board of Control). To receive a weekly e-mail about water levels and flows in the Lake Ontario–St. Lawrence River system, please send a blank e-mail message to stlaw-L-subscribe@cciw.ca, with the word 'subscribe' in the title and body of your message.