

January 13, 2012

Late ice allows larger outflows from Lake Ontario

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control (Board) recently reviewed conditions in the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system. The water over and above the amount specified by the Regulation Plan held on the lake since the summer was released in December. As mild weather conditions have delayed ice formation in the critical sections of the river, the Board decided to continue to release outflows above those specified by the regulation plan until ice cover formation begins or until a maximum of 8 cm (3.1 in) of water is removed from Lake Ontario relative to the Plan 1958-D level. As of January 13, 3.8 cm (1.5 in) have been removed. However, the Board may vary outflows to meet any critical hydropower, navigational or other needs if required in the near future.

The level on Lake Ontario as of January 10, 2012 was 74.72 m (245.14 ft), 65 cm (26 in) below the upper limit and 16 cm (6 in) above the long-term average for that time of year. Water levels on Lake St. Lawrence are well above average. Levels of the St. Lawrence River near Montreal remain below average. The level at the Port of Montreal on January 10, 2012 was 6.17 m (20.24 ft), 47 cm (19 in) below average. Due to changes in ice conditions, and the flow restrictions they cause, levels on the river in winter can change significantly from day-to-day.

The Board, in conjunction with its staff, continues to monitor the situation carefully and is prepared to take further action as required. The Board will review conditions in early February to determine an outflow strategy for the remainder of winter.

Water levels on both Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River can vary considerably from year to year. The Board urges everyone to be prepared to live within the full range of levels that have occurred. Although the Board strives to maintain the range of monthly mean levels of Lake Ontario below the upper limit of 75.37 m (247.3 ft) and above the lower limit (from April through November) of 74.15 m (243.3 ft) specified in the Orders of Approval, since regulation began in 1960, actual monthly levels have ranged from a high of 75.74 m (248.5 ft.) to a low of 73.82 m (242.2 ft) due to climate conditions outside the design range. Levels on the river tend to vary more widely. Furthermore, wind set up and wave rush may increase local levels on both the lake and river.

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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 http://ijc.org/conseil_board/islrbc/en/main_accueil.htm. 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. Join us on Facebook at [facebook.com/ISLRBC](https://www.facebook.com/ISLRBC)