



**Canadian Committee of Advisors
to the
Great Lakes Fishery Commission**



Representing Aboriginal, commercial, recreational, academic, and public fishery interests in the Great Lakes

July 10, 2008

Commissioner Herb Gray
Chair, Canadian Section
International Joint Commission

Ottawa, Ontario

Commissioner Irene Brooks
Chair, U.S. Section
International Joint Commission

Washington, D.C.

RE: Proposed new Order and Plan 2007

Dear Commissioners Gray and Brooks,

We are writing to express our objection to the IJC's proposed new Order and Plan 2007 and to state our support for Plan B+ in the *Options for Managing Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River Water Levels and Flows*.

We are the Canadian Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. One of our tasks in this role is to consider "matters which the Advisors believe are of concern to the Great Lakes fisheries, whether environmental, biological, or social" [Terms of Reference, Revised June 2007]. Clearly, decisions regarding flows through the Moses-Saunders hydropower dam near Cornwall-Massena fit within this category. Therefore, we have reviewed the IJC's proposals for future regulation of water levels and flows in the Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.

Since the Moses-Saunders dam was put in and the flow regulated by the IJC fifty years ago, the focus has been on reducing the fluctuations in levels above the dam along the shores of Lake Ontario and in the upper St. Lawrence River. The IJC's International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study Board concluded that, as a result of this significant reduction in the natural fluctuations in this area, "there has been a 50% reduction in meadow marsh and in emergent-floating vegetation since regulation was implemented in the late 1950s. During that same time period, there has been a 29% increase in cattail-dominated emergent marsh area" [*Options for Managing Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River Water*

Levels and Flows, March 2006, p. 16]. These conditions have meant deterioration in critical habitat for fish. Because the focus of the IJC's current flow regulations is on protecting property along the shores of Lake Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence River, more natural fluctuations in water levels have continued to occur downstream of the dam in the lower St. Lawrence River. As a result, fish in the lower St. Lawrence River have not suffered the same negative impacts as a result of changes in water flows.

This loss of biodiversity and well-being of the fish communities has already occurred. It is essential that corrective action be taken as quickly as possible to return to a more naturally fluctuating system – especially above the dam in the upper St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario – to allow more natural conditions to return, which will result in healthier, more diverse fish communities.

The IJC's Study Board with its Environmental Technical Working Group developed a Plan B+ option aimed at "returning the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence system to a more natural regime, with conditions similar to those that existed prior to the St. Lawrence River Hydropower Project, while at the same time attempting to minimize damages to present interests" [*Options for Managing Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River Water Levels and Flows*, March 2006, p. v]. We are disappointed that, while stating that the IJC sees the adoption of Plan B+ as "highly desirable" [*Your Guide to the IJC's Proposed new Order of Approval and Plan 2007*, p. 4], the IJC is proposing a less environmentally protective Plan 2007.

We reject the IJC's proposal to adopt Plan 2007. Instead we must move forward as rapidly as possible to restore natural conditions after fifty years of such severely disruptive human decisions. In addition, we fear that, although the IJC says that they hope to move on to a plan similar to Plan B+, there is no assurance that this will occur. Therefore, we urge the IJC to immediately adopt Plan B+.

Yours sincerely,



John Jackson, Chair [Environmental issues]

Peter Meisenheimer, Vice-Chair [Commercial fishery]

Terry Quinney, Secretary [Recreational fishing]

John Casselman, Member [Public-at-large]

Perry MacLeod Shabogesic [Aboriginal community]

Tom Whilans, Member [Academia]

CC: Commissioner Robert Hecky

Commissioner Robert Lambe

Commissioner Peter Wallace

Commissioner Wendy Watson-Wright

Chris Goddard