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July 10, 2008

The Secretary, United States Section
International Joint Commission
2401 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Fourth Floor
Washington, DC 20440

Re: Options for Managing Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River Water Levels and Flows

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I represent New York's 47th Senate District which includes all of or portions of three counties in central and northern New York. In fact, the St. Lawrence River forms the northern boundary of my district. I submit this correspondence to be included in the official record of comments regarding proposed changes in the plan which governs water levels in the Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence River ecosystem.

I have become intimately familiar with the significance of this great waterway and the dramatic impacts its condition has on the lives and livelihoods of my constituents. In short, we love our river and want to do everything possible to keep it as healthy and viable as possible.

I write to express my concern with the IJC's plan to impose Plan 2007 on the lake and the river. I am opposed to this plan as put forth and agree with my many constituents who have told you and the other Commissioners, that Plan 2007 will have drastically negative impacts on a number of interests who use the river.

Like others who testified at the numerous IJC hearings, I am shocked that the IJC would ignore the findings and recommendations put forth in the \$20 million study it commissioned in 2006. That report clearly stated that Plan B+ was the plan that would best sustain the health of the lake and the river, while at the same time maintain adequate water levels and flows to meet the needs of international shipping and hydropower generation.

Similarly, it appears that the vast majority of those testifying at your hearings are opposed to Plan 2007, and that they're confident that Plan B+ is by far, the best course of action for the largest number of interests involved.

I have long held that government and its agencies cannot go wrong when they seek to take action that is widely perceived as positive by the largest and broadest number of constituencies being served, and that is precisely what Plan B+ accomplishes.

Moreover, it appears as if the IJC itself realizes that Plan 2007 has serious shortcomings and will adversely impact a significant number of those who utilize this great natural resource. At the IJC hearings, the Commission for the first time ever has sought to engage the public in discussions regarding possible “compensation” for the interests who will be negatively impacted. In fact, at several of the hearings, it was the Commissioners themselves who raised the topic of possible compensation.

Certainly, if the IJC were confident in its stance that Plan 2007 is the best possible alternative, there would be no real need to discuss compensation. The fact that it was the Commissioners themselves who first broached this subject strongly suggests the IJC realizes Plan 2007 is seriously flawed and caters to one very narrow constituency at the expense of the other majority interests who rely on the river’s steady and adequate flow for their commercial, recreational and quality of life assets.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my opposition to Plan 2007 and strongly encourage the IJC to do the right thing by the largest number of users of the Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence River waterway. In this instance, the right thing has been identified as Plan B+ by the majority of those testifying at your hearings and, ironically, by the scientific study you commissioned.

Please adopt Plan B+ and help us improve and maintain the highest possible quality of what is perhaps our greatest natural resource – our freshwater ecosystem.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO
State Senator