

International Joint Commission Hearing
on the Lake Level Proposal for Lake Ontario

June 11, 2008 – Town of Greece

Lake Shore Fire District

Presented by Fire Chief Jared Meeker

Good Evening, my name is Jared Meeker. I am the Fire Chief of the Lake Shore Fire District. The Lake Shore Fire District provides and protects the lives and property for seven miles of shoreline on the south shore of Lake Ontario in the Town Of Greece in the state of New York. This shoreline is the home to hundreds of permanent year around families. This equates to thousands of residents who depend on our Fire District for protection against fire and to provide emergency medical services.

The purpose for speaking here tonight is to address the Fire District's concerns with the plan to maintain a Lake Level at or near the 248 foot mark.

Recently my predecessors who were the Fire District leadership during the Greece shoreline Flood of 1973 have expressed to me great concern of what I can expect if the level of Lake Ontario approaches the 248 foot mark. They have educated me on what I and our firefighters can expect if this plan becomes a reality. They reminded me that I and my Firefighters and Officers of the Lake Shore Fire District will be the "front line" of defense in a disaster along the lake shore, not you.

Since 1973, many homes have built protective break walls from high lake levels and large waves. However, at a level of 248 feet, storm waves can easily exceed 4 feet high. With this in mind, remember Lake Ontario merges with its nearby ponds at a level of 251 feet. You do the math.

On February 12, 1973, town leaders along with Lake Shore fire district officials began preparing for a disaster along the shoreline of Lake Ontario. At that time, the prediction was that the Lake level was going to reach 248.3 feet. The town brought together these officials to develop a formal disaster plan. They were convinced that this level would surely cause a severe damage and destruction of homes. Their prediction was correct and a Nor Eastern storm occurred on March 17th ultimately resulting in a declared federal disaster area in the Town of Greece. Again, do the math $248 + 4$.

In the development of this disaster plan some of the preparations that were put in place were as follows:

- Fire District equipment was adapted to withstand constant use.
- Additional equipment had to be purchased.
- The Town welded all sanitary sewer covers shut.

- RG&E and the Water Authority came thru the neighborhoods and marked all shut off valves to prepare for evacuation of homes.
- Additional town highway equipment was put into readiness mode.
- Plans were made for evacuation for hundreds of families.
- Plans were made of housing the thousands of residents.
- Projections were made of unanticipated costs to local budgets.
- Plans were made of additional staffing for emergency crews.
- Projections were made for long term recovery.

In the 70s' the Lake Shore Fire District had a volunteer force of 110 members responding to 150 alarms annually. Many of these firefighters were at that time residents of the south shoreline. Like many volunteer organizations today things have changed. In 2008, our Fire District only has a membership of 45 volunteer firefighters supplemented by 5 paid firefighters answering over 1200 alarms.

My predecessors also have reminded me this is not a short term period to plan for. We can expect a 3 – 4 months of response and recovery efforts.

In 1993 when the lake reached 248, the road was blocked at Dewey and Edgemere. The lake and pond met. The sanitary sewers on Old Edgemere Drive were overflowing raw sewage into the roadway and catch basins to Buck Pond. Many homes had their windows boarded up. Some families had to be evacuated.

The Lake Shore Fire District over the past 50 years has dealt with many, many storms on the Lake Ontario. However, with a lake level at or near 248 feet, we can easily predict a disaster will occur for our residents and neighborhoods. Homes will suffer severe damage. Families will be evacuated.

We can also predict that our emergency resources will be stretched beyond our limits, As in 1973 and 1993, many of our volunteers will be home protecting their own homes. With all this in mind I can only suggest to our residents that they must take some action now. They should develop a contingency plan.

In closing, representing the Lake Shore Fire District and as Fire Chief I go on record strongly objecting to any plan that jeopardizes the lives and homes of our Fire District residents.

It is our position that raising the level of Lake Ontario at or near the 248 foot mark is a reckless act by any governmental body or individual.

Thank you for listening.