

**VERNON "SAM" BURNS
ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY LEGISLATOR
DISTRICT 1**

**Statement to the International Joint Commission
Thursday, June 19, 2008
Massena, New York**

Members of the Commission,

I would like to start out by thanking you for holding this hearing in St. Lawrence County. It is only fitting that those of us that live on the "River" and will be most affected by this proposed "Plan 2007" have been given a public forum in our backyard.


My County Legislative District's northern border is the St. Lawrence River. Within my Legislative district is the Port of Ogdensburg, the Oswegatchie River, and the ice boom that is placed across the river each winter.

I remember the "River" before invasive species, before wide swings in the water level, and before the "experts" told us what was best for the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence. All of this before several species of native fish have died or have some rare disease, before spawning grounds access has been denied, before our camp and home owners could not use their docks to provide access to their boats because too much water had been taken out of the river.

How can it be "the right proposal" if Plan 2007 continues the same problems that have plagued our region for so long? The 1956 Order of Approval was to protect the resiliency of the wetlands and biodiversity on the St. Lawrence River; to maintain safe velocities for navigation and minimize spill at the hydropower plants; and provide consistent flows so as to benefit recreational boating. Plan 2007 does not do that in my opinion!

What do I tell my grandchildren when they ask why there are such strange swings in the water levels of their river? How do I answer them when they ask why the hydropower dams produce less electricity and why we must import needed energy to power our homes and businesses? What do I say to the local fishermen and environmentalist when native species die in the wetlands and tributaries of the St. Lawrence because of Plan 2007?

I have taken an oath of office to represent the residents of County Legislative District 1, in the City of Ogdensburg and all of St. Lawrence County. I now speak for them and urge the members of the Commission to drop Plan 2007 and adapt Plan B+. The residents of the River's shores and St. Lawrence County will not stand by for another 50 years while the life of our river is taken away from us. If Plan 2007 is enacted I will be forced to author a resolution to the St. Lawrence County Legislature that we take legal action to stop the implementation of such a disastrous regulation. Our river must be protected!



Vernon "Sam" Burns

Ogdensburg, New York