



June 19, 2008

Members of the International Joint Commission and other Honored Guests:

Thank you for coming to the North Country and for allowing us all to present testimony as you finalize your plans for water level regulation.

I represent the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, which, in turn, represents over 700 member businesses, all located in St. Lawrence County, many in communities along the St. Lawrence River. The Chamber is also the designated Tourism Promotion Agent in St. Lawrence County, charged by the Legislature with helping member businesses create attractive and profitable tourist destinations along the waterway and throughout the rest of the county.

We understand that the International Joint Commission is examining two plans to regulate future water levels on the St. Lawrence River. One of these plans is known as "Plan 2007," the other is "Plan B+."

Both plans have been carefully studied by our members; information on both has been sought by all of us in order that we make an intelligent recommendation to you as you move forward in your deliberations.

Calls, emails, letters from, and conversations with Chamber members and others indicate that unless the IJC adopts what is known as "Plan B+," both the river's ecosystem as well as business and recreation interests throughout the North Country will be adversely impacted.

The Chamber understands that there is pressure on the Commission to protect the financial interests of homeowners elsewhere, but as Executive Director, I submit to you that it is our members' livelihoods that are at stake here, not just damaged sea walls and soggy front yards.

We are concerned about our members' ability to make a living on the river, whether as fishing guides or by attracting tourists to destination points in the region. The per capita income of St. Lawrence County is under \$17,000; every dollar counts here for our people and their families.

The St. Lawrence River has been a welcome asset to our business and social community for decades, longer than the existence of the Seaway, longer than the existence of the Commission.

Our members are terrified that unless Plan B+ is adopted, North Country communities will be left high and dry during the summer months, our peak – and only – season to make a living on the water. Such an event would be catastrophic to the already burdened budgets of our people.

In addition, the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce is concerned about the environmental impact of not just high water and low water, but the benefits of restoring the river as close to its natural flux as is possible. We are the ones whose communities lie underwater; we are the ones whose International Rapids have disappeared. We are the ones who struggle to make a living in an isolated but beautiful land. We have already seen the negative impact of capricious water levels on the ecology of the region. The environment and economics go hand in hand for the North Country. What's good for the river is good for our economy; we cannot take another hit.

Therefore, the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce urges the International Joint Commission to adopt "Plan B+" for water regulation on the St. Lawrence River.

Thank you.

Patricia L. (Pat) McKeown, Executive Director
St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce

Canton, NY