

Minister of Foreign Affairs



Ministre des Affaires étrangères

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0G2

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June 12, 1997

Mr. Murray Clamen  
Secretary  
Canadian Section  
International Joint Commission  
100 Metcalfe Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 5M1

Dear Mr. Clamen:

I have the honour to inform you that the Governments of Canada and the United States of America have agreed to ask the International Joint Commission, pursuant to Article IX of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, and in consideration of the devastation of the flood of 1997, to examine and report on the causes and effects of damaging floods in the Red River basin, and to make recommendations on means to reduce, mitigate and prevent harm from future flooding in the Red River basin.

The Red River basin is a single drainage system which straddles both the U.S. (North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota) and Canada (Manitoba). The Governments recognize that measures to address future flooding must reflect the transboundary nature of the Red River basin. A cooperative approach is desirable for dealing with issues ranging from flood forecasting, emergency preparedness and response to long-term water management and flood reduction. The Governments, therefore, request the Commission to focus on cross-border cooperation of governments, agencies and communities in the basin in its inquiries under this reference.

The Governments also recognize that the flooding in the basin is the consequence of many complex factors. Out of the experience dealing with floods in the basin, there may be important lessons for the future, which should be included in your report. It is important to identify strengths and capabilities, to be able to identify vulnerable areas in effectiveness, emergency preparedness

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programs and in response planning, and other flood-related problems, and to point the way toward improvements in these measures. It is also important to recognize the costs to be avoided by prevention and planning for the future.

The Governments of Canada and the United States of America request the Commission to consider, examine and report on the following matters:

1. the history, extent, and effects of flooding in the Red River basin, with particular emphasis on the 1997 flood;
2. the relationship of the 1997 flood to past and anticipated future Red River floods;
3. the effects of flood control and other structures, changing land use and land management practices, and any other pertinent factors on flood conditions;
4. the current state of flood forecasting practices, capabilities and technologies, including the sharing of data between agencies;
5. policies, programs and mechanisms for emergency preparedness and response, and risk reduction, flood plain management and flood damage control;
6. the potential effects of weather variability on flood frequency, peak, and/or duration;
7. water quality issues associated with flood events;
8. other matters that the Commission deems relevant to the purpose of this study.

Based on these considerations the Commission should examine and make recommendations on:

1. remedial, restorative, protective or management measures that would help to mitigate the effects of flooding;
2. other innovative measures for flood reduction, damage reduction and future relief options, such as building design and construction, ring dikes, levee

setbacks, insurance, regulation of flood plain use, watershed management, basin storage, ecological restoration and land acquisition;

3. scientific and technical investigations, applied research or demonstration projects relating to enhanced flood protection and mitigation;
4. the relevant information base, including monitoring and alerting networks, and its integration with respect to the Red River basin;
5. the objectives, parameters, organization and structure of bilateral cooperation and measures for its improvement;
6. a plan or plans of cooperative flood management, flood forecasting, emergency response and flood mitigation;
7. any other matters that the Commission deems appropriate and relevant.

The Commission is requested to estimate the benefits and costs, including non-monetary costs, should there be any, to each country of implementing any recommended or currently proposed changes, including compensatory works or measures that might offset adverse impacts to interests affected. The Commission is requested to determine the costs of any recommended changes, indicate how such costs might be apportioned between the United States and Canada, and present the bases for determining these apportionments.

In conducting its work under this reference, the Governments urge the Commission to draw upon the expertise, data, relevant studies and technology available from the provinces, states and federal governments, tribal governments, communities, organizations, academic institutions, business and others. Both Governments will endeavour to promote the participation of departmental experts in this reference study. The Governments also urge the Commission to take account of the principles of sustainable development and ecosystem management. The Governments, subject to the applicable laws and regulations, shall make available, or as necessary, seek the authorization and appropriation of funds required to provide

promptly to the Commission the resources needed to discharge its reference obligations within the specified time period. The Commission shall develop, as soon as practicable, reference cost projections for the information of governments.

The Governments note that a variety of initiatives are underway on various matters pertaining to water or land use management, emergency preparedness and response and environmental data gathering and monitoring, and urge the Commission to draw upon these initiatives.

The Governments request the Commission to provide an interim report by December 31, 1997 describing progress of its work on evaluation of flooding in the Red River basin and identifying measures that could be implemented in the near term, and to make a full report, including recommendations of areas for further study, as soon as practicable before the end of 1998.

An identical letter is being sent to the Secretary of the United States Section of the Commission by the United States Department of State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lloyd Axworthy". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lloyd Axworthy