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INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION

APPLICATION
OF
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

RE

RICHELIEU RIVER REMEDIAL
WORKS

Ottawa, Canada
April 1, 1937



Ottawa, April 1, 1937.

To-

The International Joint Commission,
Washington, United States of America, and
Ottawa, Canada.

Gentlemen,-

1. The Government of Canada has the honour to submit an application under Article 4 of The Boundary Waters Treaty, 1909, requesting such approval of the Commission as may be necessary in respect of the construction and operation of certain works in the Richelieu River.

2. The Parliament of Canada, at its last session, appropriated the sum of \$500,000 under Vote 408, S.S.E. 1936-37, as follows:-

"Richelieu River - improvement of river and Chambly canal system - \$500,000."

This vote is for the purpose of the construction of remedial works for the reclamation

and protection of low lands in St. Johns, Iberville and Missisquoi counties, in the Province of Quebec.

3. The question of remedial works in the Richelieu River has been under consideration for many years. As early as 1887 a project for the improvement of St. Johns rapids and the construction of a movable dam by private enterprise, was under consideration, but it was not proceeded with.

In 1902 flood conditions in the Richelieu River were investigated by the Department of Public Works, and in 1907, the matter was submitted to the International Waterways Commission, which approved by resolution the construction of a movable dam at St. Johns, with a system of flood control.

No formal agreement with the Government of the United States was concluded as a result of the resolution of the International Waterways Commission. The question of remedial works and flood control was, however, made the subject of international correspondence in 1914 and 1915, but no work was undertaken at that time.

Since the date of the appropriation referred to above, surveys have been made and the present project is now ready to be proceeded with, subject to such approvals as may be necessary.

4. The Lake Champlain and Richelieu river watershed comprises a total area of some 8,990 square miles in the states of New York and Vermont and in the Province of Quebec, draining into the St. Lawrence river at Sorel, Quebec, some 46 miles downstream from the city of Montreal.

Lake Champlain is a long narrow body of water extending practically due north and south for 112 miles from Whitehall, N.Y. at its head to its outlet to the Richelieu river near Rouses Point, N.Y. It varies in width from about 1/2 mile along its southerly extension to about 9 miles in the main body of the lake and comprises an area of about 436 square miles of which about 17 square miles, located in Missisquoi bay to the east of the outlet, are situated in Canada. The New York-Vermont State boundary line follows the lake from its head to its outlet at the international boundary line.

The Richelieu river rises in Lake Champlain in the vicinity of Rouses Point, N.Y. and the international boundary line. It flows practically due north for a distance of 81 miles to enter the St. Lawrence river at Sorel, Quebec. In this distance it descends about 80 feet from the level of Lake Champlain to that of the St. Lawrence river at Sorel.

5. The construction of the project will be undertaken by the Department of Public Works. The Department proposes to construct and operate remedial works in the Richelieu River, whereby extreme flood stages of Lake Champlain and of the Upper Richelieu River may be minimized, and recurrent damages to property obviated.

The project entails the excavation and enlargement of the river channel through the natural barrier or weir in the vicinity of St. Johns. As a compensating feature, a control dam at Fryer's Island is to be constructed, which will permit the maintenance of a minimum level on the lake. The capacity of the river for the passage of flood waters will be greatly increased and by regulation of flow a material reduction in flood levels at and above the point of channel enlargement, will be insured.

The proposed works will be entirely within the Province of Quebec. The character of the works is shown in the plans which accompany this Application and the general nature of the project is indicated by the plan hereunto annexed.

6. The natural barrier across the river at St. Johns has an average crest elevation of 91. Excavation through this barrier will be carried to elevation 79 for a channel width of not less than 400 feet.

This excavation will extend from Station 30, Plan 4, to Station 96, Plan 3 (see accompanying plans) or over a distance of approximately 12,600 feet. The extent of this work is also indicated on the annexed general plan.

The control dam which is to be constructed is shown on Plan No. 1. It will have a sill elevation of 83 and provide 31 sluiceways, each of 30 feet in width, the opening in each sluiceway being controlled by electrically operated steel sluice gates of the Stoney type, providing a minimum vertical opening of 11 feet. Adequate discharge capacity to cope with any possible flood conditions will thus be insured.

7. The effect of the operation of the proposed works will be to lower in all years the extreme flood stage on the reach of the Richelieu River between St. Johns and Lake Champlain and of the lake itself. This will permit the reclamation of extensive areas of land in both countries now subjected to recurrent and prolonged flooding and soakage. The location of the lands on the Canadian side which will thus be protected from flood conditions is indicated on the general plan hereunto annexed.

The removal by excavation of the natural control at St. Johns, if not compensated for, would result in lower lake and river levels than have ever occurred in the past. In order to

protect all interests concerned, a control dam, as described above, will be constructed at Fryer's Island.

By the operation of the control dam, any detrimental effect to any interest in the United States of America, can be obviated, and the water level above the dam can be maintained at any desired stage. It is the intention of the Government of Canada that during the navigation season the water level above the dam will be maintained at or above the present ordinary minimum elevation of 92.5 and within the ordinary range of summer levels and that during the balance of the year, the natural level of waters will not be raised on the United States side of the international boundary line.

8. The project has been designed to avoid prejudice to any existing waterway projects presently under consideration by the Commission.

9. The foregoing project is not designed to prejudice the existing position or rights of any interest on either side of the international boundary line. It is possible that the project, technically, may not require the approval of the Commission. On the other hand, the control dam would be capable of being used in such a manner as to raise water levels on the United States side of the international boundary line and, in these circumstances, it is the view of the

Government of Canada, that the Commission should be asked to give its approval to the construction of the works and to a scheme of regulation, in order that the matter may be beyond controversy.

Accordingly, the Government of Canada asks that approval may be given to the project, and that the Commission may approve a scheme of regulation.

10. The present communication will, it is thought, be found by the Commission to contain all of the necessary information regarding the facts upon which the application is based and the nature of the order of approval desired, and it is presumed that it will be regarded by the Commission as fulfilling the requirements of Paragraph (a) of Rule 6 and Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure adopted by the Commission. The required additional copies are being furnished in due course.

11. This matter is, accordingly, being submitted to the Commission by the Government of Canada, and it is hoped that the Commission, in view of the need for protection against flood conditions, will expedite matters so that construction can be commenced at an early date.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. Macdonald', written in a cursive style.

Secretary of State
for External Affairs