



## United States Department of State

*Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20520-6258*

Dr. Charles Lawson  
Secretary, U.S. Section  
International Joint Commission  
1717 H Street NW, Suite 835  
Washington, D.C.  
20006

October 19, 2017

Dear Dr. Lawson,

Public concern about water quality in Lakes Champlain and Memphremagog is growing, in both Canada and the United States, with a particular focus on high phosphorus levels and the proliferation of algal blooms that can adversely affect recreation, human health, and ecosystems on both sides of the border. The Lake Champlain Basin Program, in its *2015 State of the Lake* report, noted that excess phosphorus is a concern in most segments of the lake and that algal blooms will continue to develop until concentrations are reduced. Studies of Lake Champlain's Missisquoi Bay, conducted by the International Joint Commission (IJC) in response to References from the governments of Canada and the United States in 2004 and 2008, identified nutrient loading issues in the bay such as frequent, harmful algal blooms of cyanobacteria.

The Province of Quebec and the states of Vermont and New York have undertaken extensive efforts to understand the sources of phosphorus and other pollutants entering the lake and eventually the Richelieu River. These entities, as well as federal and local governments, academic institutions and regional and local non-governmental organizations, have implemented a broad number of initiatives to improve water quality in the Champlain-Richelieu system. With the aim of strengthening these collective efforts and accelerating progress, in accordance with Article IX of the Boundary Waters Treaty, the governments of Canada and the United States request that the IJC conduct the following work:

1. Relevant to the reduction of nutrient loading and the causes of harmful algal blooms in Missisquoi Bay and the broader Lake Champlain and Richelieu River system, gather and review information from federal, provincial, state and municipal agencies, academic institutions, and other entities in the region on existing monitoring programs and measures being taken to address the aforementioned water quality concerns.
2. Based on the information collected, provide recommendations on how current efforts can be strengthened (e.g., summarizing gaps or opportunities, identifying possible approaches to strengthen collaboration, efficiency, or impact).

This work is to complement existing activities, and not in any way divert the IJC's funding for and work regarding flooding in Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River under the September 2016 Reference. Throughout this effort, our governments urge the IJC to take advantage of opportunities to share data, information, and expertise, and consult with basin entities. A report on the first portion of this work should be completed within one year, and a final report of the study within two years.

There are also similar concerns about water quality, particularly high phosphorus levels and algal blooms, in Lake Memphremagog. To address these concerns, the governments of Canada and the United States also request that the IJC conduct the following work:

3. In collaboration with relevant government agencies, academic institutions and other entities in the region, identify the range of nutrient loading issues that are of concern in the Lake Memphremagog basin and make recommendations on how current efforts can be strengthened, including consideration of management approaches being taken for Lake Champlain and Missisquoi Bay that may be applicable.

In conjunction with the work on Missisquoi Bay and the broader Lake Champlain and Richelieu River system, an interim report on this work should be completed within one year, and a final report of the study within two years.

The governments request that the IJC prepare initial workplans for the two elements of this Reference, Lake Champlain/Missisquoi Bay and Lake Memphremagog, within four months of receipt of this letter. The governments understand that the Commission can conduct the work under this Reference within its current budget and does not intend to seek additional funding. Submission of the final reports will constitute the Commission's completion of work under this Reference.

The governments look forward to the Commission's review and recommendations. An identical letter is being sent to the Secretary of the Canadian Section of the Commission by Global Affairs Canada.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Kierscht  
Director, Office of Canadian Affairs  
U.S. Department of State