

Canadian and United States' officials met this week in Ottawa for an exchange of views on the first annual report of the International Joint Commission on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. The officials also outlined steps underway to control and abate pollution from municipal and industrial wastes, vessels, and other sources. The agreement signed in 1972 by President Richard M. Nixon and Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, commits the Governments of Canada and the United States to co-ordinated programmes of action for restoring and preserving the Great Lakes. The two sides noted with satisfaction the International Joint Commission's conclusion that despite the short period of time covered by the report there has already been an indication of beneficial effect on water quality from activities under the Agreement. This bodes well for the future as these activities are now gathering full momentum.

Present at today's meeting of Canadian and United States' officials were representatives, on the Canadian side, of the Department of External Affairs, Environment Canada, Department of Finance, Treasury Board, Department of Public Works, Department of National Health and Welfare, Ministry of Transport, Department of Agriculture, and officials from the Ministry of the Environment of the Government of Ontario. On the United States' side, led by Mr. Fitzhugh Green, Associate Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, were representatives of the State Department, the United States' Environmental Protection Agency, the United States' Coast Guard, the Great Lakes Basin Commission, the United States' Corps of Engineers and the United States' Department of Agriculture, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Department of Commerce, the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration, the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, and officials from the state governments of Minnesota and Illinois.

The two sides examined the report of the International Joint Commission and the various recommendations contained therein. In particular they examined measures to assist the Commission in discharging obligations under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to monitor and report on progress being achieved in Canada and the United States to meet the objectives specified in the Agreement. The two sides welcomed the efforts made to date by the International Joint Commission in this regard and agreed that the two governments will make every effort to respond positively to the recommendations contained in the International Joint Commission's annual report. Further, the two sides noted the International Joint Commission's concern in its report that adequate staffing and funding has not, as yet, been provided to the International Joint Commission regional office in Windsor, Ontario. However, the two sides were pleased to learn that some further progress has been achieved with respect to staffing. They agreed to explore together ways by which further necessary support can be provided to the International Joint Commission. A small working group has been established composed of Canadian and United States' officials to draft a joint reply to the International Joint Commission's annual report. Finally, the two sides concurred that a further stocktaking meeting should take place in approximately six months' time as a part of the continuing assessment process.