

A two-stage international approach has been developed to speed up water quality improvement in the St. John River Basin. This was announced today by the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Environment Minister, the Honourable Jack Davis.

To help control and prevent pollution in the international section of the St. John River and its tributaries crossing the border, a joint Canada-United States Committee is being created. Further, the International Joint Commission is to review the findings of this Committee and submit to the two governments its recommendations for action.

The new Committee on Water Quality in the St. John River will consist of an equal number of members from each country. They will represent the Governments of Canada, United States, New Brunswick, Quebec and Maine, and also include spokesmen for the St. John River Planning Board and the Northern Maine Regional Planning Commission.

A programme of river basin planning to improve water quality is already being carried out co-operatively by the Governments of Canada and New Brunswick, with a parallel programme in the State of Maine. The new Committee will review progress in improvement of water quality throughout the international section of the St. John River and provide for exchange of information, consultation and co-ordination of activities. In addition it will make recommendations to the appropriate authorities for the improvement of water quality in the basin.

This is a further important step in the joint Canada-United States battle against pollution in boundary waters. The use of the International Joint Commission, established by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, in combatting pollution has been increasing in recent years. An important example of its efforts was the lengthy study which formed the basis for the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, signed at Ottawa in April of this year by Prime Minister Trudeau and President Nixon.

The St. John River is also receiving special attention from the NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society. Within this committee Canada is the leader of a pilot project on the control of inland water pollution. The new arrangements announced today will be presented to the NATO committee as an example of international co-operation in water quality management.

These arrangements were brought about through an Exchange of Notes between Ottawa and Washington and the submission of a reference to the International Joint Commission by the two governments on September 21.