

Department of External Affairs



Ministère des Affaires extérieures

Canada

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 1978 WATER QUALITY AGREEMENT

The 1972 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement represented significant progress in coordinated environmental management by Canada and the United States. Since its signature, both countries have devoted great effort and substantial resources to the restoration and enhancement of water quality in the Great Lakes. While much remains to be done, there is no doubt that benefits to both users of the water and the general public have been great. In its Fifth Annual Report on Great Lakes Water Quality, the International Joint Commission concluded that the continued degradation of the Lakes has been substantially checked, and that the development of coordinated programmes of research, surveillance and remedial measures has been a major accomplishment of the two Governments.

The 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement builds on six years of experience under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1972. Since it came into effect, there has been a significant improvement in understanding of the technical and scientific aspect of water quality, the presence and effects of toxic substances in the Great Lakes System and the extent of non-point source pollution. Thus the 1978 Agreement contains the following significant revisions or improvements over the 1972 Agreement:

- provision of revised and new water quality objectives, both general and specific,
- provisions to largely eliminate discharge of toxic substances into the Great Lakes and to establish warning systems which will point up those that may become evident,
- dates on which municipal (December 31, 1982) and industrial (December 31, 1983) pollution control programmes are to be completed and operating are set,
- improved monitoring and surveillance requirements to enable assessment of the effectiveness of remedial programmes,
- provisions for dealing with pollution from land use activities and for examining of air-borne pollutants,
- a definition of new, interim phosphorus loadings with provision for an eighteen-month review and new strategies for controlling phosphorus as necessary,
- provision for an annual public inventory of discharges and pollution control requirements.