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STATEMENT ON MOTIONS BY
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
THE HONOURABLE MITCHELL SHARP,
IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 1971

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL
JOINT COMMISSION ON POLLUTION
OF LAKE ERIE, LAKE ONTARIO
AND THE INTERNATIONAL SECTION
OF THE SAINT LAWRENCE RIVER

Mr. Speaker:

I would like to table herewith the report of the International Joint Commission (I.J.C.) on pollution of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the international section of the Saint Lawrence River. This report is also being released in Washington today by the Government of the United States.

The final report represents the culmination of six years of work following upon a request in October 1964 as supplemented by a further request in 1969 to the I.J.C. by the two governments for an inquiry into the extent, causes and locations of pollution in these waters.

The breadth and scope of this report shatters all precedents. It deals with the most extensive water pollution study undertaken anywhere to date. The report provides guidelines that can be an inspiration to the peoples of Canada and the United States in the critical period ahead to deal with the Great Lakes pollution problem. It provides a basis for the concrete action that is now already under way with the assistance of the interim reports that the Commission has made to the two governments over the period of the entire study.

In this report the I.J.C. states that:

- 1) The waters are being seriously polluted on both sides of the boundary to the detriment of both countries to an extent that is causing injury to health and property.
- 2) The polluted waters are lake-wide in extent; the principal causes are wastes discharged to the boundary waters and their tributaries by municipalities and industries.
- 3) Urgent remedial measures are required; these are set out in specific recommendations for action by the two governments and all responsible jurisdictions in both countries. Programmes to be agreed upon to meet the water quality objectives are set out in the report. These are aimed to bring about immediate reduction of the phosphorus content in detergents, the prompt implementation of vigorous programmes to treat municipal and industrial waste, and the reduction of phosphorus inputs into these waters. The report also contains programmes to deal with problems caused by oil spills, mercury, radioactive substances and other hazardous material entering these waters.

The need for urgent action is based on the Commission's findings that Lake Erie, particularly its Western Basin, is in an advanced state of eutrophication, and that accelerated eutrophication is taking place in Lake Ontario.

The report recognizes that governments will have to enter into agreements for the carrying out of programmes and of measures and schedules to achieve them. The report recommends that the Commission be given the authority, responsibility and means for co-ordinating and ensuring the necessary surveillance and monitoring of water quality and of the effectiveness of pollution abatement programmes. It further recommends that the reference of October 1964 be extended to authorize it to investigate pollution in the remaining boundary waters in the Great Lakes system and waters flowing into it.

A meeting with the United States at the ministerial level in Ottawa last June initiated discussions which are now continuing between the two countries aimed at more effective co-operative action to control pollution and water quality in the Great Lakes.

The June meeting, at which Canada was represented by members of the Federal and Ontario governments, established a joint Canada/U.S.A. working group to study various ways of creating a more effective basis for co-operation to deal with Great Lakes pollution in light of the findings and recommendations to be contained in the final I.J.C. report as now presented.

The joint working group met in Washington in September and organized ten sub-groups to examine in detail particular aspects of the problem. On the Canadian side, some 100 experts from several Federal Government departments and from Ontario Government departments and agencies are involved, together with a corresponding number of officials from United States Federal departments and Great Lakes States governments.

The joint working group will report to a second ministerial meeting on Great Lakes pollution planned to take place later this year. Decisions taken at this second ministerial meeting will provide for concerted programmes aimed to achieve agreed water quality objectives and the means to put such programmes into action. These programmes will include a commitment to implement other recommendations contained in the report and to establish effective mechanisms to perform the necessary surveillance functions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the many people in Canada and the United States who have contributed to the work behind this important report. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Christian Herter, Chairman of the

United States Section. As members will know, the Chairman of the Canadian Section for the past eight years was the late Arnold Heeney. His contribution to the work of the I.J.C. was perhaps the crowning achievement of a life devoted to the public service of Canada.

I would also like to acknowledge with appreciation the help and support of the public in both Canada and the United States by participation at the Commission's public hearings and in other ways. Without such public support this great undertaking, to overcome the Great Lakes water pollution problem, cannot succeed.