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CANADA AND UNITED STATES SIGN REVISED GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY AGREEMENT

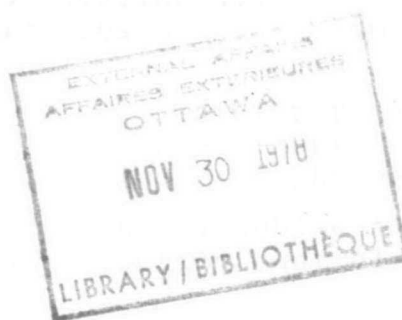
Secretary of State for External Affairs Don Jamieson and United States Secretary of State Cyrus Vance today signed a revised agreement between Canada and the U.S. on water quality of the Great Lakes.

The new Canada/U.S. Agreement reaffirms the determination of both countries to restore and enhance Great Lakes water quality. It was signed by Mr. Jamieson and Mr. Vance in a brief ceremony at the Lester B. Pearson Building, headquarters of the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa.

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, 1978, brings up to date the provisions contained in the original Agreement signed in Ottawa in April 1972. That Agreement has resulted in much progress towards improvement of Great Lakes water quality. Under its terms, a review was to be undertaken within five years to see how effectively it was working and where improvements could be made.

The review was carried out by Canadian and U.S. negotiators, with the advice and recommendations of the International Joint Commission, and with the involvement of the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, the eight Great Lakes States, and the public in both countries.

The new Agreement strengthens the 1972 Agreement by calling for various additional programmes and measures to meet problems in Great Lakes pollution which were not evident or fully understood at that time. It includes:



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-- programmes to strengthen and renew the commitment of both countries to control pollution from municipal and industrial sources;

-- more effective control of persistent toxic substances and other pollutants;

-- identification of air-borne pollutants entering the Great Lakes;

-- identification and control of pollution from agricultural, forestry and other land use activities;

-- better surveillance and monitoring mechanisms;

-- provisions aimed at further reducing phosphorus loadings;

-- placing new limits on radioactivity.

The valuable role of the I.J.C. in monitoring the implementation of the Agreement will be continued.

The Agreement was co-signed by Len Marchand, Canada's Minister of State (Environment), and Barbara Blum, Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Dr. Harry Parrott, Minister of the Environment of the Province of Ontario and representatives of the Province of Quebec also took part in the ceremony.

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.

The Agreement states the purpose of the two signatories to be a commitment to a maximum effort to obtain a better understanding of the basin ecosystem and to reduce or eliminate the discharge of pollutants into the system, with a prohibition on the discharge of toxic pollutants. This purpose is to be met through programmes which, as under the original Agreement, have general and specific objectives. General objectives are broad descriptions of desirable water quality conditions, while specific objectives are designations of maximum or minimum desired levels of a substance or effect, to protect the beneficial uses of the waters.

Among the general objectives, are keeping the waters free from:

- sewage discharges, oil and other debris,
- materials which adversely affect colour, odour, taste or other conditions, and
- materials which produce toxic conditions or provide nutrients for the growth of algae which interfere with the beneficial uses of the Lakes.

The lengthy list of specific objectives, detailed in Annex I of the Agreement, provides that specified levels or concentrations of persistent or non-persistent chemical and physical substances not be exceeded to the injury of property or health. Based on work done by experts in both countries under the auspices of the Great Lakes Water Quality Board of the International Joint Commission, the specific objectives of the 1978 Agreement are far more comprehensive and stringent than those of the 1972 Agreement.

The Agreement outlines a number of programmes which are necessary to meet the general and specific objectives. Among these are programmes which call for: -

- the preparation of an inventory of pollution abatement requirements, expressed as effluent limitations,
- controls to be placed on the use of pest control products to limit their input into the Lakes; control of pollution from animal husbandry operations and from the hauling and disposal of liquid and solid wastes; and other measures in connection with land-use activities in an effort to reduce this significant contribution to the Lakes' pollution.
- the establishment of measures to control pollution from shipping sources, including both oil and vessel waste discharges.

- the continuation of the joint pollution contingency plan for the Lakes,
- measures for control of pollution from dredging activities and the disposal of polluted dredge sediments,
- the institution of measures for the control of pollution from onshore and offshore facilities, such as materials transportation within the Basin, and gas drilling operations,
- additional protection for pollution from hazardous polluting substances and toxic chemicals,
- the introduction of measures for the control of inputs of phosphorus and other nutrients to prevent harmful algal growth,
- a programme aimed at identifying the contribution of airborne pollutants to the Lakes,
- the further implementation of a coordinated surveillance and monitoring programme to determine the extent to which the general and specific objectives are being achieved.

The International Joint Commission will continue to play an important role under the 1978 Agreement. It will assist Governments in implementing the Agreement by tendering advice, collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data, and undertaking public information activities. In addition, the Commission will send a full report to Governments on the progress toward achievement of the general and specific objectives every other year. The 1978 Agreement also specifies more precisely the terms of reference of the joint institutions established to assist the Commission in performing functions related to the Agreement.