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SKAGIT RIVER VALLEY TREATY:

CANADA AND UNITED STATES EXCHANGE INSTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION

The Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, announced that the Honourable John Fraser, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and His Excellency, Paul Heron Robinson, Jr., the Ambassador of the United States of America, today exchanged, on behalf of the Canadian and United States Governments, the Instruments of Ratification, which bring into the force of law in both countries the Treaty between Canada and the United States of America relating to the Skagit River and Ross Lake, and the Seven Mile Reservoir on the Pend d'Oreille River - better known as the Skagit River Valley Treaty. The Instruments of Ratification were exchanged at a small ceremony at the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa. Distinguished witnesses to the exchange included the Commissioners of the International Joint Commission, and representatives of the United States and British Columbia.

The exchange of Instruments of Ratification marks the successful resolution of a longstanding bilateral environmental issue involving Canadian concern over a proposal to raise the Ross Dam in the State of Washington to provide an additional electrical power supply for the City of Seattle. This proposal, which had been given international sanction by the International Joint Commission in 1942, would have resulted in the flooding of the Skagit River Valley in British Columbia. The Treaty, one of three documents of the Skagit Settlement package, was signed in Washington, D.C., on April 2, 1984. The other two documents, a British Columbia-Seattle Agreement and a Canada-British Columbia Agreement, were signed in Vancouver on March 30, 1984 and October 29, 1984 respectively.

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The Treaty, together with the related implementing Agreements, represents a Settlement that will be in force for a period of eighty (80) years and which will ensure that flooding of the Skagit Valley by the City of Seattle will not take place. In return, British Columbia will supply electrical power to Seattle equivalent to that which would have been generated had the Ross Dam been raised. As payment, British Columbia will receive payments from Seattle equivalent to the cost of constructing, operating and maintaining the Dam.

The Treaty was negotiated under the aegis of a Joint Consultative Group on the Skagit, chaired by Commissioners Olson (Canada) and Bulen (the United States) of the International Joint Commission. The Group included senior officials of the Governments of Canada, the United States and British Columbia, as well as the City of Seattle.

The Skagit Settlement coincides with the seventy-fifth (75th) anniversary of the International Joint Commission, and fittingly underlines the usefulness of the Commission in resolving important bilateral environmental issues and the role that it plays in supporting and fostering Canada-United States relations. The International Joint Commission, which was created under the provisions of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, has long been regarded as a valued tool by both governments for the cooperative management of boundary waters and for ensuring that close and friendly relations between the two countries are maintained.