



CANADA

No. 96

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 17, 1971

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SKAGIT RIVER

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced today that the Canadian and United States Governments have received and are making public a report prepared by the International Joint Commission on the consequences of the proposed flooding of the Skagit River Valley in British Columbia. The report is being tabled in the House of Commons today.

Background

On April 7, 1971, the Governments of the United States and Canada asked the International Joint Commission to investigate and report to Governments on the environmental and ecological consequences of raising Ross Lake, at present almost entirely in the United States, to an elevation of 1725' above sea level which would have the effect of flooding the Skagit River Valley in British Columbia. The need for this study arose because the City of Seattle which draws power from Ross Dam, had applied successfully to the International Joint Commission for permission to raise the height of the dam by 122½ feet. An important requirement set out in the Commission's order of approval, issued in 1942, was met when Seattle and British Columbia concluded an agreement of compensation in 1967. However, since that time there has been growing concern over the possible environmental and ecological consequences of the flooding and the request by Governments to the International Joint Commission to conduct this study was a reflection of that concern.

Further Action

The Commission's report is currently under careful study by federal officials concerned and is being passed to the Government of British Columbia as a prelude to discussions with officials of that province. It is understood that in the United States the report is being passed to the Federal Power Commission which will take it into account in its consideration of Seattle's application.