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CANADA/U.S. STOCKTAKING MEETING  
ON GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY AGREEMENT

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DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

The Department of External Affairs announced today that the Honourable Jeanne Sauvé, Canada's Minister of the Environment, opened a meeting of United States and Canadian officials in Ottawa on October 2 to review the progress in implementing the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement signed by the two countries on April 15, 1972. This was the fourth such meeting for the two countries and focused on the conclusions and recommendations of the second annual report of the International Joint Commission (IJC) on water quality in the Great Lakes.

Madame Sauvé reminded those present that they had a duty not only to the population around the Lakes but to many others in different countries who were watching with interest the progress of the world's first major international pollution abatement agreement. In recalling the high hopes associated with the signature of the Agreement by the United States President and the Canadian Prime Minister, she expressed her satisfaction at the long term outlook for water quality in the Great Lakes but warned that the world thrust in the field of environmental protection would be greatly affected by the future rate of progress of the programs under the Agreement.

"Cleaning up the Great Lakes is becoming the greatest environmental achievement in the history of this continent," said Fitzhugh Green, Associate Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and United States delegation chairman. "On the United States side alone, it will require the efforts of thousands of dedicated environmentalists at the three levels of government - federal, state and local - and billions of dollars. Russell Train, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, asked me to express his personal satisfaction at this stocktaking that both countries are on schedule and living up to the Agreement signed by the heads of our two Governments."

The Commission's report stated that 98% of the sewered population on the Canadian side of the Lakes would have adequate treatment by the Agreement's target date of December 31, 1975. Canadian and Ontario officials emphasized their intention to maintain this pace of construction and reported that steps were underway to expand the Canada-Ontario Agreement which was signed in August 1971 in anticipation of the Canada-United States Agreement. This expansion entails the provision of substantial additional funds by the Canadian Government's Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and by Ontario to meet rising costs of constructing municipal sewage treatment plants.

The Commission estimated that 60% of the sewered population in the United States portion of the Basin would have adequate treatment by the end of 1975, and called upon the United States Administration to release currently impounded United States federal grant funds for sewage treatment plant construction to avoid possible delays in future construction. The United States side expressed doubt that impoundment would lead to future delays and expressed confidence that if it appeared that such delays were likely to occur, sufficient funds would be released.

United States officials reported substantial progress in the United States municipal waste treatment construction program since the May 22 meeting of the governments in Washington, D.C. At that time, \$495 million had been granted to 156 projects in the Great Lakes system since signing the Agreement. Total costs for these projects, including federal, state and local funds was \$776 million. During the period May 22 to September 20, additional federal grants totalling \$245 million were awarded to 73 Great Lakes Basin projects, which involves a total expenditure of \$323 million. Since the signing of the Agreement, \$740 million in federal funds have been awarded to 221 projects in the Great Lakes system representing a total cost of over \$1.1 billion.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that during the May to September period, 51% of the \$480 million awarded for projects throughout the Great Lakes states went to projects in the Great Lakes Basin. This rate is considerably above the historical rate of 31%. To date, about 38% of the total Federal funds awarded in the Great Lakes states under the 1972 Water Pollution Control Act have been in the Great Lakes Basin.

Since the previous stocktaking meeting, Ontario reported that seven projects have been completed bringing the level of adequate sewage treatment facilities to 85% for the population served with sewers. Eighty-two per cent of the sewered population are now served with secondary treatment or equivalent facilities.

Both sides took satisfaction from the Commission's conclusion that the rate of increase in the historical degradation of the Lower Lakes, particularly Lake Erie, appeared to have been halted and that the phosphorus loading reductions called for in the Agreement were so far being met on both sides of the Basin.

Of the 466 municipal waste-water treatment facilities requiring phosphorus removal in the U.S. portion of the Great Lakes Basin, 218 are now providing phosphorus removal. By the end of 1975, it is anticipated that 300 will be providing phosphorus removal in accordance with objectives of the Agreement. During the same period, about 200 sewage treatment plants in Ontario are expected to employ phosphorus removal.

In response to continued United States concerns over the use of NTA as a substitute for phosphorus, both sides exchanged results of recent research in this area.

Both sides recognized that there was validity in the IJC's call for improved analysis of water quality data and undertook, with the aid of the Board structure established under the IJC, to increase the use of common procedures among the jurisdictions concerned and to place additional emphasis on data analysis. Both sides emphasized the importance of documenting the improvement of the Lakes both from the standpoint of ensuring that each country meets its commitments and in recognition that the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement is the first major international pollution abatement activity ever attempted anywhere in the world.

United States EPA announced that its Chicago office has established a Great Lakes Surveillance Branch to analyze and interpret Great Lakes water quality data. The new branch is staffed by 8 professionals, and 7 additional staff positions will be added by the end of the year. The branch will work closely with the Chicago office's 33-man regional laboratory, which is primarily responsible for sample analysis and quality control.

Both sides outlined steps they were taking to respond to the Commission's conclusions regarding water-borne viruses and persistent contaminants. They expressed appreciation that the Commission in this area was drawing the Government's attention to future requirements in order to ensure maximum protection for the public.

The two sides discussed at length the Commission's comments on the need for compatible vessel waste regulations. The Canadian side emphasized the importance of having such regulations in place well before the target date in the Agreement and reported their readiness to promulgate existing draft Canadian regulations calling for high quality treatment. United States officials pointed out that the 1972 amendments to the Water Pollution Act require EPA to promulgate a regulation delineating procedures that would result in no discharge of sewage into some or all of the waters of a state following certain statutory actions by the state and EPA. In preliminary actions taken jointly with the Coast Guard, EPA is reexamining the vessel waste management program and the regulations that have been and must be promulgated to respond to the Act. Although no final decisions have been made, explorations are underway to focus on the compatibility of standards between the two governments. The United States EPA expects to propose a regulation on vessel waste soon.

The meeting took particular note of a number of specific recommendations arising out of the Commission's on-going study of pollution from land-use activity. It was recognized that these would require careful examination by the various jurisdictions concerned.

United States officials also pointed out that EPA's Chicago office is encouraging the development of sediment control legislation by conducting state level sediment and erosion control conferences jointly with the National Association Conservation Districts. This effort responds to the IJC recommendation that the governments enact effective sediment control legislation with emphasis on urban and suburban areas. To date in the Great Lakes Basin, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania have enacted such legislation. Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, New York and Wisconsin are now drafting such legislation.

Also discussed at the meeting were current efforts to refine the objective for radioactivity contained in the agreement, Canada-United States consultations aimed at developing an agreed list of hazardous substances and the recent promulgation of Canadian regulations designed to increase vessel safety on the Great Lakes.

At the close of the meeting both sides expressed satisfaction with the long term outlook for the Lakes in response to remedial programs being undertaken by both countries under the agreement.

Robert Funseth, Counsellor for Political Affairs, United States Embassy and Fitzhugh Green, Associate Administrator for International Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, were co-chairmen of the 22-person United States delegation representing federal and state agencies concerned with the implementation of the Agreement, including the United States Department of State, Environmental Protection Agency, United States Coast Guard, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Great Lakes Basin Commission, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Canadian delegation included representatives of the Departments of External Affairs, Environment, Transport, Health and Welfare, and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. Observers from both the Canadian and United States sections of the International Joint Commission also participated.