



www.georgianbay.ca

19 Edgewood Ave.
Toronto, ON M5N 2X1

September 12, 2002

The Hon. David Collette
Minister of Transport
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Collette:

Re: Need for Bi-National Body to Undertake Feasibility Study for Great Lakes Navigation System Review

Georgian Bay is unique on the Great Lakes and the recent low water levels have had significant impact ecologically and in terms of access to marinas and our mainly water accessible only properties. Our organization was formed in 1916 and we represent 22 local associations and over 4,000 families along the eastern and northern shores of Georgian Bay. Water levels are a major concern of our members and since there are no control structures at the outflow of Lake Huron, any deepening or widening of the channel at the outflow would have a major impact on the levels for Lake Huron/Georgian Bay.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is asking for \$10 million from Canada to conduct a Feasibility Study of the Great Lakes navigation system. We are opposed to giving Canadian funds to a partisan organization to study the Great Lakes navigation system for the following reasons:

1. Since the Seaway likely does need to be reviewed and any work would have to meet both countries' obligations under the Boundary Waters Treaty Act, it is only appropriate that a non-partisan bi-national organization be appointed to carry out the work. There is such an organization in the International Joint Commission (IJC); it would be much more appropriate for the IJC to carry out the review than the US Army Corps of Engineers, which has a conflict of interest.

2. Their existing Reconnaissance Study outlines 4 proposals all of which, we have been told by Environment Canada (EC), would result in at least as much permanent withdrawal of water from Lake Huron/Georgian Bay as when the Seaway was opened (15”).
3. The vast majority of the work they are proposing to do (including replacing the Welland Canal) would need to be done on Canadian territory.
4. With climate change having the most impact on the middle lakes, any activity that results in permanent withdrawals is a huge concern for the middle lakes. In particular, for Georgian Bay, the aquatic life forced out of wetlands by low water levels cannot find suitable habitat on the adjacent steep granite shorelines. (EC predicting a 100cm decline in the next 20 – 30 years compared to 40cm for Lake Ontario and Lake Superior.)
5. Our research has revealed that there has been shoreline alteration and dredging of the channel beyond the depths allowed by international agreements at the outflow of Lake Huron. As a result, we have requested an urgent Reference to the International Joint Commission to assess that impact and to consider mitigation measures to compensate for the loss of water. Any further work in this area must be overseen by an international body like the IJC.

We would be pleased to meet with you and any of your staff to help in understanding this complex issue. If we can be of any assistance, please contact Mary Muter, our Environment Committee Chair, at 416 489-8101 or by email mmuter@sympatico.ca.

Thank you for your interest in protecting this finite resource that we share in the Great Lakes.

Sincerely,

Pat Northey
President
MM/jm

- c.c.
- Hon. David Anderson, Minister, Environment Canada
 - Hon. Ernie Eves, Premier of Ontario
 - Hon. Bill Graham, Minister, Foreign Affairs & International Trade
 - Rt. Hon. Herb Gray, Co-Chair, International Joint Commission
 - Hon. Andy Mitchell, MP Parry Sound/Muskoka, Secretary of State Fed Nor, Rural Development
 - Brian Klunder, Special Assistant – Ontario, Ministry of Transport Canada
 - Councils of Town of Parry Sound, NEMI, and Killarney; and Townships of Georgian Bay, The Archipelago, Carling, Seguin and McDougall