PUBLIC MEETING

PUBLIC INTEREST ADVISORY GROUP
INTERNATIONAL LAKE ONTARIO - ST. LAWRENCE RIVER STUDY

MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: Thursday, July 14, 2005

TIME: 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Gananoque Emergency Hall
340 Herbert Street
Gananoque, Ontario

PARTICIPANTS:

Doug Cuthbert	Study Board Canadian Co-Chair
David Fay	Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group
Larry Field	Toronto Region Conservation Authority
Kathy Forde	Recording Secretary
John Hall	Public Interest Advisory Group
Elaine Kennedy	Public Interest Advisory Group
Sandra Lawn	Public Interest Advisory Group
Tom McAuley	IJC Liaison
Greg McGillis	IJC Staff
David Orr	Recreational Boating
Danielle Trudeau	IJC Staff
Paul Webb	Public Interest Advisory Group
Attending Guests	

1. **OPENING REMARKS**

   Paul Webb welcomed everyone to the public meeting. Members of the Study Team were introduced. 74 guests were in attendance. Comment cards and handout material were available for information.

   Mayor Garrah also provided opening remarks. It is recognized that competing interests exist around the mighty St. Lawrence. Meetings provide an opportunity for communication with the public. Interest groups and citizens in attendance were encouraged to express their concerns and ideas.

2. **STUDY PRESENTATION**

   Doug Cuthbert provided an overview of the study. The purpose of the study is to look at potential changes to the Orders of Approval for regulation of water levels in

Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River system. The current regulation plan was put into place when the seaway was built but has become dated. Development of a new plan is required to address current interests. Over 120 people including technical experts are involved in the study. Study Board members from both Canadian and U.S. jurisdictions are evenly appointed to ensure balanced representation.

Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River represent a complex system, which poses a challenge for balancing various interests. The natural climate is an unpredictable factor. Water levels in Lake Ontario have a dramatic impact downstream. A two-centimetre change in Lake Ontario can trigger a 30-centimetre change in Lac St. Lawrence and a 23-centimetre change in Lac St. Louis.

Over the last five years, sophisticated research has taken place. Experts have examined reference plans, studied implications and considered all interests to achieve balance in the development of various plans. External scientific and economic critics have reviewed the work in an attempt to reduce flaws and ensure a defensible result. Guidelines require that the plan contribute to ecological integrity, maximize net benefits, avoid disproportionate loss, be flexible in recognition of unusual or unexpected conditions, be adaptable to climate change and climate variability, be adaptable to future advances in knowledge, science and technology, and that decision-making be transparent and representative of various interests. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation was conducted. Plans not selected as candidate plans are being used for reference. Plan E, the natural flow plan, was designed as a benchmark for environmental issues. Three candidate plans most representative of various interests continue to be refined.

- **Plan A: Balanced Economic Plan** - Designed to maximize overall economic benefits, this plan provides some improvement for the environment particularly on the Upper St. Lawrence River. Losses would impact shoreline interests on Lake Ontario and the River. Benefits would be provided to the recreational boating community.

- **Plan B: Balanced Environmental Plan** - Designed to simulate more natural conditions and provide overall economic benefits, this plan improves the environment on the Lake and Upper River. Losses would impact shoreline interests with significant flooding potential around Montreal. Losses would also impact the recreational boating community, especially on the Lake.

- **Plan D: Blended Benefits Plan** - Designed for balanced performance with overall economic benefits and minimized losses, this plan has few changes from Plan 1958D with deviations for the environment. No overall losses for shoreline interests but some flooding potential. Provides recreational boating benefits.

Following summer consultations, final modifications will be made to the candidate plans. Results will be discussed with the IJC in the fall. Over the winter, the IJC will study results, conduct public hearings and hold government consultations to make a decision on the best plan for implementation. The closing date for public comments is August 05, 2005. Additional information is available at www.losl.org.

3. **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Sandra Lawn facilitated the question and answer session. PIAG is responsible for listening to the pubic and taking interests to the Study Board. It is important to make views known through written comment. Concerns were expressed related to the current regulation plan, shipping, diversion, data collection, environmental interests, candidate plans, monitoring and mitigation. Recorded questions, answers and comments are appended. Accuracy of speaker names was based on clarity during the session.

4. **CLOSING REMARKS**

Paul Webb thanked everyone for expressing comments and concerns. The study is a monstrous task. It is essential to be heard. Participants were encouraged to join an organization and share ideas on these issues that will impact people now and in the future.

All ideas are an important aspect of the transition from the study to the Control Board. Further comments can be expressed in writing or by contacting Communications Officer, Greg McGillis directly. Public comments are due by August 05, 2005.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

PUBLIC MEETING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Current Regulation Plan

Q1. Given the fact that the current plan was put in place without consideration for the environment and was tweaked considerably for shoreline interests, erosion and flooding in Montreal, is it fair to say that 1958DD has inherently disproportionate loss to the environment if you consider water levels as the baseline? (Carl Larson)

A1. Yes, certainly. With Plan 1958D compared to Plan 1958D with deviations there is a significant difference. It comes back to the question of what is significant in comparison to disproportionate losses. The argument is obvious. (Doug Cuthbert)

Q2. I disagree with the statement that deviation occurs 50 percent of the time. Over the last two years, we have deviated less than 5 percent. Comments? (Jim Bernier)

A2. If not 50 percent of the time, deviation has been frequent. Statistics are kept on a quarter-monthly basis. It would depend on the period of time analyzed. Under average conditions as experienced over the past few years, the Board has not deviated that much at all. (Doug Cuthbert/David Fay)

Q3. Is the dam the only control point? (Douglas Everhart)

A3. Yes. (David Fay)

Q4. Is the amount of outflow at the Moses Saunders Dam the only variation? (Al Rickerton)

A4. Yes. The control we have is dependent on how much is being let out. (David Fay)

Shipping

Q5. The dam helped to build the shipping industry downstream in Montreal. Comments? (Henry Dean)

A5. Yes, that is true but it also helped to build the hydropower systems, which benefit us all. When the Ottawa River peaks in the spring, the flow is cut back to reduce the flooding problems in Montreal. If you basically suggest removing all areas that could get wet, it is not easy to do. (Doug Cuthbert)

Q6. What were the shipping problems before the dam down at Montreal? Why do they need dredging and more water when we have all these fluctuations? What do they do during the highs and lows? Are they trying to pawn their dredging problems off on the rest of the nation? What has happened? (Henry Dean)

A6. During the highs they got flooded and during the lows the commercial shipping industry suffers. The container shipping industry into Montreal harbour has changed significantly over the years. The infrastructure is quite different. If we reverted to what nature provided, there would be many problems. The balance is how to stick handle around it. (Doug Cuthbert)

Diversion

Q7. What would be the long-term effect if and when the U.S. plans to divert massive amounts of water to the mid-west? What would the overall effect of massive water diversion be on the Gananoque area? (Ron Byers)

A7. This is a common question. In response to a proposal 10 years ago to take water from Lake Superior by tanker and to build pipelines, the Commission recommended that this issue not be supported. The Canadian government passed legislation not to divert water and an accord has been signed. Currently a series of public meetings is underway with respect to Annex 2001. Any proposal to divert water out of the Great Lakes system will almost always be rejected. Concerning the bottled water industry, as much water that is imported is exported. Regarding municipal use of water, the return water basically goes back into the same watershed as it is taken from. Only five percent is lost to the system from evaporation, which is a very small amount so is not an issue. (Doug Cuthbert)

Data Collection

Q8. Even though it is reported that there is a 95 percent return in to the basin, are the 100-year statistics skewed by the use of water related to hydro projects, specifically inflows from mid-northern Ontario where water was being intercepted? (Jeff Hobbs)

A8. I do not believe any data would be skewed from hydroelectric use. The size of reservoirs in Northern Ontario is relatively small compared to Lake Ontario. For water to get from to Sault Saint Marie through the outlet of Lake Superior to Lake Ontario, the full effect takes 2 ½ years so storage on the small reservoirs is not significant. (David Fay)

Environmental Interests

Q9. You refer to environmental people so I would assume that reference implies that there are also non-environmental people. Is there a plan to turn non-environmental people into environmental people? That would make it alot easier. Comments? (Mayor Garrah)

A9. One gentleman in Belleville said he was concerned about the environment but also had $100 thousand invested in his house so where tradeoff was an issue the environment was his second priority. It is like people who drive SUVs but are concerned about air quality. It is all about balance and tradeoffs. (Elaine Kennedy)

Candidate Plans

Q10. From the three plans proposed, Plan A and Plan B appear to have some significant negatives for some interest groups in certain geographic areas. Does that eliminate them from actually meeting the specified criteria considering there are to be no significant losses to any particular area or region or interest group? This would result in a default to Plan D although it is not much different than the current plan. After spending $20 million, defaulting to Plan D is a big disappointment and does not seem appropriate. Comments? (Randy Lee)

A10. You are correct. If we had no losses, Plan D would apply. However, depending on who you speak to you will find different interests and views. We need to know what tradeoffs are acceptable and how to incorporate these into the plans. (Doug Cuthbert)

Q11. I understand that environmentalists wish to meet the best environmental conditions for the river and lake once every 17 years, which basically meets the criteria that environment groups desire. An extremely steep high would take the water level up to 248 feet once every 17 years and then down to 243 feet once every 17 years. Plan B supports this significantly so recreational boaters and businesses will be impacted and must understand the implications and consider concerns very seriously. Comments? (Randy Lee)

A11. To push the system in one direction you have to give in another area. You have to consider tradeoffs. Total economic effect as a percentage of total shoreline property or economic impact can be one to two percent or less. The question is the degree of overall significance. To gain environmental benefits, others will experience some degree of negative impact. Can we change land use patterns on shorelines when periods of highs and lows are experienced? Environmental groups have indicated that these rare high and lows are needed. Tradeoffs are needed. (Doug Cuthbert)

Q12. This is not your river or your lake it is our river and our lake. Do not forget they belong to the people. I am not a marine biologist or marine engineer but with a college background some graphs and terms are hard to understand. Clayton, New York is a tourist town 10 weeks of the year. The seaway operates from March to December. I am concerned about that. I would like to see Plan E back on the table. We need to ensure that the river stays as natural as possible for future generations. Can I see slides on the ebb and flow of the river before and after to see how the natural flow of the river would be affected by the various plans? The flow is very important. (Douglas Everhart)

A12. With respect to Plan E, members of the Study Board and PIAG voiced strong views in both directions. Returning to more natural conditions is desirable but the difficulty is with society's development of the shoreline and considerable problems related to flooding issues. As a result, Plan E could not be supported in the short-term but should be considered for longer-term implementation. The major concern relates to problems with the shorelines. Changes to land use plans and controls would have to be considered. In Ontario, through the Conservation Authorities, some strict development

restrictions have been implemented. Montreal is sensitive to high flows in the spring, which can cause significant flooding. Municipal storm drains would have to be changed. Plan B is a step towards that. (Doug Cuthbert)

To analyze various scenarios and develop best estimates, plans were run through 100 years of outflow and input data. Diagrams and spaghetti graphs were again illustrated to explain variations and the analysis that was conducted for achieving the best estimates. (David Fay)

Q13. To consider the last 50 years as a baseline, which has inherently disproportionate loss, if we say Plan D has slight improvements for the environment and that Plan A and Plan B continue a pattern of degradation to the ecosystem which effects our fish, waterfowl, water quality and ecosystem, we need to acknowledge that fact then to strive for a healthier river we need to start with Plan B and move towards Plan D as an eventual goal. Comments? (Carl Larson)

A13. Thank you. Your comments are very useful. (Doug Cuthbert)

Q14. Since Plan B has higher levels in winter and Plan A has higher levels in the spring and summer, would you consider combining these two plans in order to help the environment? (Anne Ward)

A14. It would be nice to take parts of plans but it does not work that way. These plans work in continuum. You would have consequences if you took parts away. (David Fay)

Q15. Plan D does not meet the needs of recreational boaters. Are these boaters not aware of shoals and things like that? Are we supposed to protect them from steering their boats aground? (Henry Dean)

A15. Recreational boaters and environmentalists have conflicting interests. A person with both interests needs to understand and be willing to accept the tradeoffs. (Doug Cuthbert)

Q16. In the summary of economic benefits, the net difference between Plan D and Plan A is $4 million. This amount is pocket change. In terms of significance, couldn't you interpret this as zero economic impact from one plan to the other? (Pat McEwen)

A16. Yes, that is a good point. (Doug Cuthbert)

Q17. Plan A and Plan B talk about significant shoreline losses. Is that from flooding and high water or does that also consider low waters where you cannot reach your shoreline or dock? (Paul Turney)

A17. The coastal factor looked at flood damage and erosion damage. It did not look at impact of low water levels on property values. However, that was a factor in terms of recreational boating. (David Fay)

Q18. My boathouse floor has just dried out for the first time since last fall. If you implement Plan A or Plan D, how much water can I expect throughout July, August and September? I cannot interpret the graphs into inches. Two plans say I'm going to have high levels until September. I already have wet boathouse floors. How high should my rubber boots be? (Miller Wright)

A18. I would want to know the level of your boathouse floor. The level now is approximately 74.95 metres. With Plan B you would get more variability. With Plan A and Plan D and the existing regime it is more compressed. (David Fay)

Q19. With respect to deviation occurring about 50 percent of the time, what assurances do you have that Plan A, Plan B and Plan D would not be varied 50 percent of the time when these new plans are presumably rock solid? (Alan Bickerman)

A19. The objective of a new regulation plan was to considerably reduce the need for deviation. The ability for short-term deviation, which occurs due to power outages or

major flooding problems, should not change. Longer-term deviation should not be necessary in the future with design of a new plan. (Doug Cuthbert)

Q20. Are the economic impacts related only to the shoreline or are they actually both positive and negative impacts on communities as a whole? Some communities that do have impact on recreational boating and water levels are not always directly on the shoreline. Comments? (Eugene Sommers)

A20. Primarily, those are direct economic impacts. We did look at a whole sequence of impacts. The person who moves away and no longer goes to the grocery store we did not consider. We did not use a multiplying factor but we did consider how much money people would be spending when boating on the river. We did not survey motel profits or losses. (Doug Cuthbert/David Orr)

Monitoring

Q21. When you make your decision, what kind of monitoring will take place to ensure that environmental interests and other interests are met? (Anne Ward)

A21. We will be recommending to the Commission that monitoring take place. It is anticipated that the Commission will speak to agencies on monitoring the performance of a new plan for the first few years to ensure it is reacting as expected and then also for long-term monitoring again because it takes a period of time. (Doug Cuthbert)

Mitigation

Q22. From a municipal view, no ultra high or ultra low levels are desired for ferry operations, which are critical to the islands. The provision of water through shore wells to the residents as a water source is essential. Extremely low water levels could jeopardize the provision of water to residents. Walking out to your dock on dry land would also be a concern. Are there any opportunities for mitigation by the Board of Control or IJC issuing advisory notices recommending depths to be used for setting shore wells and for dock heights? Perhaps Natural Resources would allow cracking of rocks to allow sufficient water flow for shore wells during low levels. Even if the plan selected is not as conducive as desired to interest groups in this area, perhaps these mitigating factors should be considered. It would allow for better planning and building of docks. Comments? (Jeff Hobbs)

A22. Comments are noted as an excellent observation and will be taken under advisement. These suggestions are excellent examples of mitigation for individual property owners. Knowledge is an important factor for mitigation. (Doug Cuthbert)

Comments

- Thanks for coordinating the meeting. The information is extremely useful. However, if the study costs $20 million then a bigger meeting room should have been booked to accommodate the large crowd. Also, a person at the Town Hall meeting location would have been appreciated to provide redirection to the Emergency Hall.

- The graphs illustrate a complex problem and should continue to be used for reference.

- Public meetings are important.

- Plan B should be a first step with plan D as a long-term approach.
- Plan E is the best for the natural environment and should be reconsidered.