PUBLIC MEETING

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

MEETING SUMMARY

DATE:	Wednesday, September 01, 2004
TIME:	7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.
LOCATION:	Ramada Inn on the Bay 11 Bay Bridge Road Belleville, Ontario

PARTICIPANTS:

André Carpentier	Study Board
John Ching	Hydroelectric
Marie-Claire Doyle	Environment Canada
Stephanie Dumoulin	IJC Staff
Larry Field	Toronto Region Conservation Authority
Kathy Forde	Recording Secretary
John Hall	Public Interest Advisory Group
Connie Hamilton	Information Management
Marc Hudon	Public Interest Advisory Group
Elaine Kennedy	Public Interest Advisory Group
Wendy Leger	Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group
Tom McAuley	IJC Liaison
Greg McGillis	IJC Staff
Syed Moin	Hydrology & Hydraulics
David Orr	Recreational Boating
Attending Guests	(14 approximately)

1. **INTRODUCTIONS**

Larry Field welcomed everyone to the public meeting. Members of the Study Team were introduced. Handout material was available for information. Approximately 14 guests were in attendance.

2. **OPENING REMARKS**

Elaine Kennedy provided opening remarks. The focus of the Study concentrates on water levels and flows. In an attempt by the IJC to improve the current regulation plan 1958D, a stakeholder approach has been initiated through the Public Interest Advisory Group to ensure that users are not isolated in the new regulated plan. The intention is to produce a comprehensive plan that serves all interests. Public meetings provide a forum to communicate and report on progress. Conflicting viewpoints do exist. Although the system

is complex and natural impacts are unknown, regulations are needed. Public input is essential. Comments will be evaluated and incorporated into the study where possible.

3. **STUDY PRESENTATION**

Elaine Kennedy provided a presentation on the study. As a part of the Public Interest Advisory Group, the role of volunteer members is to represent various locations and interests concerning the International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study. The five-year study, initiated in 1999 by the IJC to review the regulation of outflows, is currently in year four. Both Canada and the United States are equally represented. On average, 85 percent of Lake Ontario water supplies come from Lake Erie outflow. The system is complex. Nature is unpredictable. The Ottawa River must be carefully considered when regulating flows on the St. Lawrence, particularly in the spring. Plan 1958D, implemented by the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control, was based on water supplies from the first half of the century. However, following a dry period in the mid-1960s and a wetter period in the 1970s deviations were needed. Deviation adjustments occur approximately 50 percent of the time to allow for changes in supplies, new interests and ice formation.

Technical Work Groups have been researching, collecting and studying data. The Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group has been running computer models to formulate potential plans for evaluation by the Study Board. Guidelines for ranking options include environmental sustainability, no disproportionate loss, flexible management, mitigation alternatives, climate change adaptability, transparent decision-making and adaptability to future technology. Based on input provided by stakeholders and scientists, the decision process includes plans, criteria/metrics and performance indicators. Details are being refined to develop a variety of plans to best determine the minimum and maximum water levels desired most often and to measure the environmental, social and economic benefits. For example, wetlands require higher lake levels (75.50 m / 247.71 ft) once every 20 to 25 years for about a three-week period. In contrast, wetlands also require a very dry period with low lake levels (74.7 m / 245.08 ft) every 20 to 25 years for two years in succession with a gradual return to higher levels during the succeeding two years. These are the preferred levels for healthy wetlands to produce a greater abundance and diversity of fish. The first week of April is also important for fish spawning.

Preferred minimum and maximum water levels were illustrated with respect to frequency, severity and duration along with the associated impacts. A small two-centimetre decrease on Lake Ontario creates a significant 23-centimetre increase downstream. Flooding has a considerable impact on the south shores of Lake Ontario. Diverse interests are expressed at various times for different reasons. Ideally, a smoother transition between levels is preferred. Work continues to integrate performance indicators and to evaluate criteria. Various issues and interests are being addressed. Comments will be incorporated where possible.

Based on operations and deviations experienced with 1958D, plans are being evaluated. Environment plans, considered the most important component, continue to be entered into the computer model (Shared Vision Model) along with economic benefit plans, stakeholder plans and baseline plans to improve and meet new demands. Work will continue over the winter to develop recommendations. In 2005, alternative plans based on science and stakeholder input will be presented for consideration. Meetings are tentatively scheduled in June and July. In the fall of 2005, a report will be submitted to the IJC for their decision process. Numerous stakeholders are participating in the study. Contributions of past and present PIAG and Study Board members were acknowledged.

4. **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Marc Hudon facilitated a question and answer session following the presentation. Belleville was connected simultaneously with the meeting in Henderson, New York for an interactive audio session. The teleconference was intended to exchange comments and concerns between competing interests around the lake. As a consensus building process, public input and interests are extremely important and will be considered in the study. Concerns focused on water levels, water supply, water usage, hydropower, dams, shoreline erosion, wildlife, available information, accountability, mitigation alternatives, communications and progress. Appreciation was extended to all participants for their knowledge and insight to various concerns. Recorded questions, answers and comments are appended. Accuracy of speaker names was based on audio clarity.

5. **CLOSING REMARKS**

Larry Field extended thanks to everyone for participating in the meeting. Public input is extremely important to the study. Although it will be difficult to please all people at all times, ideally the need to develop a plan to satisfy most of the people at most times is essential. The Public Interest Advisory Group will visit again in 2005. Comment cards were provided to gather additional comments and to stay in touch. Study information is available at www.losl.org.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

PUBLIC MEETING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Water Levels

Q1. I am interested in the highs and lows of the 20-year cycle needed for the environment. As a shoreline property owner, I too am interested in hitting the low levels, which would also benefit wetlands. Comments? (Henderson - Lily Plessler)

A1. Low lake levels have been studied for over three years. Recommendations demonstrate that low lake levels will support this community. Having wider beaches is one recommendation. Low levels are being addressed and recommended for future plans. (Peter Zuzek)

Q2. In May we had a lot of rain. Holdback made things worse. Why do we hold water back? (Henderson - Lily Plessler)

A2. Lake levels are abnormally low. The current plan strives for average levels but when supplies are low water is held back. The reason we are here is to remedy water levels. Tools and methods are evolving to assist in Control Board operations. Work is promising. Within five years we hope to be able to provide better forecasts for the entire basin. (Study Board member/Gene Stakhiv)

Water Supply

Q3. With respect to the current plan, the Board of Control indicates that we do not know

what the future supplies will be. Comments? (Henderson - Unidentified Speaker)

A3. The Florida storm could dump extra, unexpected water. This, today, is unknown. (Doug Wilcox)

Water Usage

Q4. As a sailor for 77 years, I value the water. A valuable world commodity is being wasted. We are only doing a minimal job in producing a paper to indicate that with some changes the water will be readily available in greater quantity. Pipes 20 feet in diameter can do more with the water than is currently being done. It means spending some money. In Perth, Australia the water table is higher now after spending money for improvements. We are sending too much water down the St. Lawrence River into the ocean. Let's make better use of the heritage available to us. Comments? (Belleville - Bill Fental)

A4. In terms of water diversion and its influence on fish, outflows into the ocean are important for attracting American eels. Eels are an important resource and their numbers are decreasing. Protein in fish production is important. Many aquatic organisms require water. Careful evaluation of water flow is important, particularly the outflow. (Study Board member)

Hydropower

Q5. Ontario Hydro has diverted two rivers in Northern Ontario, taking water from Hudson Bay and delivering it into Lake Ontario to provide power. Niagara Falls gets credit for that extra water used by Ontario Hydro. However, Cornwall does not get credit for the power delivered equally between Canada and the United States. The water should be divided equally. Comments? (Belleville - Mr. Turley)

A5. The diversion mentioned goes from James Bay to the Great Lakes. At that time, Niagara negotiations occurred during wartime. Credit depends on negotiations between the two governments. There is a lot of division, political interest and negotiation regarding water usage and credit. (John Ching)

Q6. It seems a lot of money is being lost at Cornwall. Why are we not giving credit to Cornwall? (Belleville - Mr. Turley)

A6. There is no known reason. To augment population production during the war efforts in the 1940s, the Moses Saunders project was initiated to divert water. However, since credit is not always given equally we can only assume that the American contribution might have seemed to be so great at the time not realizing the future impact. (Tom McAuley)

Dams

Q7. In the American magazines I read, it seems they are getting rid of many dams (almost monthly) and the rivers are coming back to their original state but in Canada we are doing the opposite. We do not need so many dams. The dams are stopping the fish, the animals and the use of the river. Every river and dam in Canada is being misused on a regular basis. Why are we doing this? (Belleville - Bernie Grey)

A7. Although it is a good question and similar interests have been raised, this has nothing to do directly with the water levels on Lake Ontario and does not fall within the mandate of the study. The study takes into account the Ottawa River and some of the other

smaller tributaries but not to the extent of issues raised concerning dams. (Elaine Kennedy/Marc Hudon)

Shoreline Erosion

Q8. I live on the lake at Rainbow Shores Road and the water level is too high. A lot of damage has been experienced. Much erosion has occurred. Beaches no longer exist. High winds have wiped out the dunes. The channel has been wiped out. Comments? (Henderson - Unidentified Speaker)

A8. Your point is understood. The lake is high due to supply (rain) and Mother Nature but is only eight centimetres higher than average. The water level is within the specified four-foot range. Regarding riparian concerns, conditions at Rainbow Shores have been studied for close to three years now. Unfortunately, the prognosis is not good. Erosion is a natural process. When the lake level increases due to storms or high supplies, short-term problems are accentuated. Your problems are a natural process. Homes built too close to the lake will also experience problems. The study focuses on future water levels and what we can do with them. We want to hear about problems and damage. We are trying to develop a plan to meet new needs and interests. (Andre Carpentier/Peter Zuzek)

Q9. We have built 100 feet back on the property but since the 1940s the shoreline continues to erode. Comments? (Henderson - Unidentified Speaker)

A9. This is not uncommon. Erosion is a natural process around the perimeter of the Great Lakes. It is not good news but it is a natural process and is not due to the control of water levels. It would be useful to look at the history of lake levels. You came in during very low lake levels. Over the past 50 years we have entered into a different regime of water coming into the lake system, noticeable since the 1950s. Levels are a function of natural processes. Levels would have been even higher without any control at all. (Peter Zuzek/Gene Stakhiv)

Q10. Since the 1950s, are water levels supposed to be higher or lower with the regulation plan? Erosion keeps occurring. Comments? (Henderson - Unknown Speaker)

A10. Water levels peak about every 150 years. We have gone through a period of high supplies. If a period of low lake levels occurs the beaches will have an opportunity to rebuild. (Study Board member)

Q11. Is sediment infiltration a concern? With glacial rebound, sediment enters into the lake. Does this affect the volume of water in the lake or the lake bottom with respect to erosion? (Henderson - Unidentified Speaker)

A11. Glacial rebound crushed the landscape like a cushion although not uniformly. The volume of water is still dictated by supply. It is quite slow to see any real consequence. (Doug Wilcox)

Wildlife

Q12. I am concerned with the impact of fluctuating water levels on muskrat. In earlier trapping years, I followed the water levels. Now, traps are washed away in the marsh and after the boating season when water levels dry up the muskrats are confused. The muskrat population is being wiped out. Mortality rates are high. Wildlife habitat must be given more consideration. Comments? (Belleville - Roger Witner)

A12. Water levels are kept high during various times of the year but when levels go down muskrat houses are left dry. Cattails are the preferred food although degradation of

cattails is occurring. The problem with muskrat is variability. A more gradual decline of levels might be helpful. A muskrat study is underway although results are unknown at this time. (Doug Wilcox)

Available Information

Q13. I could not locate water level information on the web. How can I access that information? (Belleville - Mr. Turley)

A13. Information on water levels and flows is available. An Environment Canada master sheet listing all related websites will be provided to you following the meeting. Handout material is also available. (Syed Moin)

Q14. More information is needed to follow along. Perhaps the presentation slides could be posted on the website since they are not available as handouts. Availability of information is important. Comments? (Henderson - Cindy Davis)

A14. We will do our best to post the presentation on the website. (Study Board Member)

Accountability

Q15. If this study says, for example, that the best level will be at 245 feet, what is the possibility of implementing and controlling this? What is the error rate of measurement? (Henderson - Chuck West)

A15. Our ability to control the lake is limited. Natural changes in supply overpower man's ability to keep the lake at a certain level. We cannot stop the very highs or extreme lows but we can adjust a little bit. Water levels would be much higher without controls. (Bill Werick)

Q16. I live on the river across from Brockville. Severe fluctuation is not necessary. Stability is the biggest concern. I am fearful there is no written or legal mandate to implement regulations. What is the obligation to achieving required levels? Micromanagement is not good enough. It creates too much of a delay between decisions and actual changes that are noticed. Attentive action is required. It seems the Board of Control has the authority to do as it chooses. Comments? (Henderson - Sam Regan)

A16. These are important questions. It is recognized that the system is dynamic and difficult to maintain. Supplies have varied year to year over the past 100 years. Tremendous variation has been experienced within the past year. The lake has a seasonal cycle of about 18 inches from the summer high towards January. The stage of natural decline is now underway. The Board of Control is not a loose cannon. It operates under specific orders and follows 1958D. Delineations are permissible if helping critical uses without hurting other users. Criteria are followed. At the end of the study, the Board of Control will only administer Orders as adopted by the IJC. Transition is expected around 2006. (Tom McAuley)

Many people like stable water levels. The new plan will hopefully deviate less frequently. To keep the river stable, we would need to absorb lake levels. The Board of Control tries to appease as much stability as possible. However, nature is variable within the whole ecosystem Please continue to provide comments. We are interested. We will make corrections if needed. (Bill Werick)

Seasonal peaks occur and variation changes the way the river operates. On the upper part of river natural stability is not possible. No matter what you do on the lake consequences will be experienced down river. (Doug Wilcox)

Q17. New regulations will only be as good as the model that is tested. My concern is after implementation. Is there a follow-up plan to evaluate what has been done and to identify any gaps? (Henderson - Frank James)

A17. Good point. There is a lot of strong scientific hypothesis. We are considering how to keep the model alive after the study to see how new plans fair. Study Board guidelines provide a good reference. A follow-up plan will cost money to alleviate some of the gaps that are discovered along the way. Costs are a political issue. The system will not heal itself immediately. (Bill Werick/Doug Wilcox)

Mitigation Alternatives

Q18. To what degree are mitigation alternatives under the Study Board guidelines being studied? Are mitigation costs being measured or weighted? (Belleville - Herb Steinbeckers)

A18. We are just starting to review mitigation measures. Details will be available over the next year. (Bill Werick)

Q19. In 2000, when marinas were facing low water, the federal government was successfully lobbied for $15M for dredging. We would like to see more financial support for dredging and shoreline owners to alleviate the pressures experienced from extreme water level situations. (Henderson - Unidentified Speaker)

A19. We cannot regulate the lake to satisfy one person. It is too early to determine mitigative measures beyond the obvious shore protection and dredging. Canadian and American governments are very different. Engineered solutions, at a cost detrimental to thousands of others, are still in question. Stakeholders experiencing problems can perhaps approach their local politicians. (Bill/Werick/Study Board member)

Q20. Complaints from the marinas, which are 90 percent manmade, seem to be more significantly heard than those from the shoreline owners who simply want to put in riprap. Comments? (Henderson - Unidentified Speaker)

A20. IThe most controversial issue concerns natural resource management. Nature is unknown. Assistance for people hurt by natural disasters, like homeowners who build close to the shore for example, remains controversial. In the U.S., individuals must take responsibility. (Bill Werick)

Communications

Q21. Can a speaker be invited to address business people in Belleville? (Belleville - John Vaviant)

A21. Yes, the PIAG is available and welcomes that opportunity. (Elaine Kennedy)

We would be pleased to address specific concerns in your local community groups. (André Carpentier)

Progress

Q22. How do Study Team members and PIAG members feel about the process? Are we making progress? (Belleville - Unidentified Speaker)

A22. I am impressed with the intensity and commitment of the study groups, PIAG outreach and development of the Shared Vision Model to develop the complexities of the system. The plan must be adaptable and flexible so that Mother Nature and climate

change can be reasonably incorporated. (Larry Field)

With respect to validity, after talking with Technical Work Group members and following many meetings and presentations, I am convinced that we are using good science. Answers are provided in a sensible format with logical content. Quality is considered worthy. The study is good. PIAG is effectively communicating in both directions. (Elaine Kennedy)

A lot of common ground has been established through many public sessions. The study has provided the link to communicate common ground issues and common understanding, with respect to long-term management of the entire system. Connectivity is the key. Tremendous efforts have been made between two countries sharing conflicting interests working towards the benefits for all concerned. All questions have been good and have provided insight to the limitations of people, budgets and governments. (Marc Hudon)

Comments

- Shoreline owners must be heard. The economic impact of shipping versus the economic impact of shoreline owners is a concern. Shoreline owners provide economic impact too.

- In addition to marinas, channel access must be considered.

- It is impossible to keep water levels constant. As a marina operator, it is important to dredge during low water rather than respond to disasters. Poor management and lack of maintenance dredging is the reason for low levels at marinas.

- Shoreline owners must also protect themselves and can lobby the government for money.

- Appreciation was expressed for the many efforts and commitments supporting the study and for clarity of the presentation.