



June 20, 2014

Hon. John Baird
Minister of Foreign Affairs
2249 Carling Ave, Suite 418
Ottawa, Ontario
K2B 7E9

Re: Plan 2014 for Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River

Dear Minister Baird,

Conservation Ontario and its member Conservation Authorities support the International Joint Commission's (IJC) Plan 2014 and its approach for managing water levels and flows of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. Conservation Ontario is a non-profit corporation that represents the network of 36 Conservation Authorities and their common interests at provincial and federal levels.

Conservation Authorities applaud the IJC for Plan 2014 proposing a more balanced approach to flow management that seeks to create more natural water levels in the lake and river while continuing to provide the basin community with substantial benefits. It is a major step forward for the health of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River ecosystem. This Plan will substantially improve wetlands, a key indicator for lake and river health. Healthy wetlands support birds, fish and other wildlife, while filtering pollutants and enhancing recreation for the human residents. The Plan will promote more natural conditions which results in higher average lake levels for the fall, winter and spring periods. Plan 2014 will transform and improve the diversity and productivity of the natural ecosystem (e.g. coastal wetlands), addresses species at risk legislation objectives, and represents an important step forward towards a level of ecological integrity that would otherwise be difficult to achieve.

Conservation Authorities do not anticipate Plan 2014 to have significant implications on flooding and erosion hazards as Conservation Authorities have been regulating and protecting areas prone to flooding and erosion hazards since 2006. Shoreline protection works, if designed according to provincially established standards and procedures and using accepted scientific and engineering principles, shall withstand flooding and erosion forces. To protect the

development, the shoreline protection works shall be combined with appropriate flooding and erosion allowances. Development setbacks are determined based on flooding and erosion hazard limits and are defined by the Conservation Authorities' regulations. Furthermore, Plan 2014 provides for "corrections" of extreme water level conditions if they exist.

Conservation Authorities support the implementation of Plan 2014. Conservation Authorities continue the implementation of existing shoreline regulations and strive to increase consistency among all CAs. CAs strongly support the Lake Ontario Adaptive Management Plan as a collaborative, integrated and adaptive approach to manage the shoreline today and in the future. Management of Lake Ontario fluctuating water levels can be successful only if implemented with appropriate adaptation measures. Lake Ontario Adaptive Management Plan Pilots are very important, and shall be implemented as soon as possible to initiate baseline monitoring to be able to identify and assess potential impacts of Plan 2014 and climate change effects, as well as to develop adaptation measures.

Conservation Ontario believes strongly that the monitoring priorities outlined in the Adaptive Management Strategy are correct. The proposal of Plan 2014 with its focus on improved environment in Lake Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence River, refinements in the deviations process, and shore protection structures, while maintaining and improving downstream interests, is the right plan. With a changing climate creating challenges across the landscape, the plan provides opportunity for alignment of projects and partners to develop increased knowledge and understanding in each of these areas along with high priority remedial work. We feel the projects will provide benefits that will help us to cope with the challenges and adapt to changing conditions.

As tools and datasets are developed and proven they would then be shared as other CAs and partner agencies undertake and continue similar projects in other lake basins. These combined efforts would be of tremendous value for the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Advisory Body that has been proposed in the Adaptive Management Plan in understanding the lake by lake issues and developing improved understanding of the functionality of the entire Great Lakes Basin.

Conservation Ontario and its members support the implementation of Plan 2014 as well as the utilization of an Adaptive Management Strategy. Collectively, the IJC, and our two nations all seek to protect and enhance the waters of our Great Lakes. We are in full support of moving forward together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Hibma', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dick Hibma,
Chair

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