



**GREAT LAKES UNITED**

**News Release**

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**For More Information call:**

**Philip Weller (716) 886-0142  
(Monday/Tuesday) (519) 973-7019**

**ACTIONS OF CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES UNDERMINE THE  
INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION**

**Windsor/Detroit -** In a report released today, Great Lakes United accused the federal governments of Canada and the United States of undermining the ability of the International Joint Commission to fulfil its mandate to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. "The role of the International Joint Commission as a watchdog and monitor over Great Lakes environmental problems is being severely compromised by the actions of the two federal governments," said Great Lakes United President, John Jackson.

"For over eighty years the IJC has symbolized the U.S. and Canadian cooperation in working out binational problems, especially mutual Great Lakes problems and threats to the citizens of both countries", stated Philip Weller, Executive Director of Great Lakes United. "The reduction of U.S. and Canadian support for the IJC puts into question the governments' commitment to resolving these binational problems," he said.

The nine-page report, **The IJC Under Threat: Time For Action** details the subtle, symbolic, obvious and substantive ways in which the governments have been undermining the ability of the Commission to fulfill its mandate. The mandate of the Commission, as established by the U.S.-Canada Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, includes evaluating and auditing progress under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, recommending ways to implement the Agreement, and making information available to the public about the conditions in the Great Lakes ecosystem.

The report cites the following evidence of undermining:

- 1) The governments have withdrawn support from the IJC by reducing the amount of government staff time given to the Commission through their participation on IJC Boards and committees;

An international organization dedicated to <sup>more</sup> conserving and protecting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River  
State University College at Buffalo, Cassety Hall • 1300 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14222  
(716) 886-0142

Canadian Address: P.O. Box 548 Station A • Windsor, Ontario N9A 6M6

2) The governments have failed to ask the IJC to comment on a host of significant new government activities such as the Lake Superior Initiative, Ontario's Municipal Industrial Strategy for Abatement (MISA), and the U.S. Great Lakes Great Water Quality Initiative; and

3) The governments are conducting a series of bilateral activities that parallel and compete with IJC activities;

4) The governments have failed to raise IJC budgets to meet growing needs of the Commission, which among other consequences has resulted in a decision of the Commission to close its library in Windsor.

"Over the past decade, the International Joint Commission has played an invaluable role in pointing out problems in the Great Lakes and at detailing new, truly effective long-term solutions to these problems," stated Jackson.

"Citizens in the Great Lakes are deeply concerned about the trend of the governments to emasculate the Commission and to diminish its ability to perform its important role", said Jackson.

**The IJC Under Threat: Time For Action** recommends that the Governments re-establish their commitment to the IJC and that they place a top priority on responding to and implementing IJC recommendations. The report also recommends that the federal governments provide sufficient funds to maintain the Windsor library and that the Commission be given funding to hire additional staff to replace the in-kind service the governments have withdrawn from the Commission.

The report also recommends that the Commission strongly reinforce the role of the Windsor office as that of an evaluator and critic of government programmes and as a major source of scientific expertise on Great Lakes water quality.

Great Lakes United is a binational coalition of over 180 environmental, community, labour, sporting, governmental and research organizations dedicated to the conservation, protection and rehabilitation of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River ecosystem.