

FLASH SHEET # 12 The Great Lakes **-Gracia Janes Environment Convener**

Over the past several months, the Great Lakes have been in the centre of complex and challenging public discussions and hearings, which will set the course of their protection, or lack of same, for the foreseeable future. These are 'shared' waters between Canada and the United States and both countries have a huge stake in the outcomes of the many dialogues now taking place around such issues as the possible widening and deepening of the lakes, rivers and canal for shipping; the Great Lakes Quality Agreement now up for review; the potential renewal of the Federal Great Lakes Program funding in 2005, and most recently agreements related to ongoing threats of water diversions and withdrawals.

Canal & St. Lawrence/St. Clair River Widening/Renewal of Federal Great Lakes Program Funding/ Great Lakes Quality Agreement Review

In preparation for these emerging issues, National Council of Women of Canada passed an update to 1998 policy, at our 2004 AGM in Edmonton: The following are excerpts from the rationale for the policy and the recommended government actions:

“Whereas 1998.2 NCWC Policy urged the Government of Canada, to:

- a) Not open the Great Lakes Water Quality for re-negotiation,
- b) Ensure that the commitments made in 1978 and the 1987 Protocol to fulfill the vision of the Agreement for a clean and healthy Great Lakes ecosystem are met, and
- c) Recognize the commitments of Annex 2 of the Agreement on Remedial Action Plans (RAPS) for Areas of Concern (AOC) and for Lakewide Management Plans (LAMPS) and,

Whereas: funding and monitoring of the Great Lakes Quality Agreement and the 1978 and 1987 Protocols have been unpredictable and limited, and only partial solutions have been implemented over the past thirty years, with some limited success,

Whereas: given the new and growing threats to the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence eco systems long term sustainability e.g. a predicted widening and/or deepening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, increased amounts of toxins, the Lake Erie 'dead zone', and invasive species, there is a need for a strengthening of the Agreement and for a comprehensive long term plan for its restoration;

Whereas The International Joint Commission (IJC) has called for swift action to protect the Great Lakes from the onslaught of aquatic invasive species from ballast water,

Whereas: Basin government leaders are finally considering a significant investment in Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River restoration, and environmental groups who have worked closely with IJC and United States and Canadian governments to implement the Great lakes Water Quality Agreement and Protocols, are developing plans for the comprehensive restoration of the Great Lakes,

Therefore be it resolved that:"

"2. National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to

a) support the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, its 1978 and 1987 Protocol Commitments, and the Annex 2 Commitments on Remedial Action Plans for Areas of Concern, through funding and strong legislation and enforcement and strengthen the Agreement through new Protocols where necessary,

c) fund and support with legislation, the development of comprehensive long term plans to fulfill the vision of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement for a clean and healthy Great Lakes ecosystem and,

d) act swiftly upon the International Joint Commission's recommendations to protect the Great lakes- St. Lawrence River from invasive species, and

e) oppose any proposals to widen or deepen the St. Lawrence Seaway"

Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway Management Study

As the NCWC Environment Convener, I used this policy to make comments at a June 8th public meeting regarding the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Seaway management study, undertaken by Federal Ministry of Transportation and the US Corps of Army Engineers. This was followed by a letter which stated in part "**Overall, NCWC believes that a healthy environment is key to a healthy economy and in this respect we would have preferred that environment, rather than trade, be the lead indicator in this study**". The US Congress had also expressed environmental concerns and directed that the study team address them. As a result, NCWC was able to ask that the study parameters be adjusted to add the following: "**to assess future environmental impacts of future navigation activities related to the system**". We noted that this additional clause, along with their stated intent to define an appropriate methodology for assessing the environmental impacts of future navigation related activities in the system, would surely "**rule out any future suggestions that the Seaway be widened and deepened.**"

Being practical, we added that by doing the above "**you will also put the emphasis on ways to maintain optimum Seaway use, without compromising the environment upon which we rely for sustainability of our eco-systems and trade**

