

June 21, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Blvd.
Washington, DC 20006

Re: The regulation of Lake Ontario

Dear President Trump:

The International Joint Commission (IJC), a cooperative inter-governmental agency under the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty, has regulated Lake Ontario in a manner that has generally satisfied the collective needs of the various impacted interests in the US and Canada between 1959 and 2016. In the last weeks of the Obama administration, a new operational plan was initiated for Lake Ontario after a prolonged period of debate and evaluation. Plan 2014 was represented to be a minor enhancement of the prior plan, intended to mitigate the adverse environmental impacts of an overly narrow range of Lake Levels.

The presentations and analysis that were published during the public coordination of the 2014 plan indicated that slightly higher and lower levels would be experienced and for longer durations, but the analysis demonstrated that the change would not be so great as to make existing homes uninhabitable or destroy public infrastructure. The Plan 2014 fact sheet from the IJC website indicates, “... *compared to 1958DD, the increase in the maximum Lake Ontario level under Plan 2014 is six centimeters (2.4 inches)*”.

The current flood event, which began in early April and continues today, has resulted in the destruction of several homes, and the risk of further loss is expected to continue for several weeks. Meaningful damage assessments for this unprecedented event cannot be undertaken until the floodwaters recede, which is likely to be in the early fall. Additionally, the level of risk of future recurrence remains unclear.

Please be advised that the actions of the Commission with regard to the regulation of the level of Lake Ontario has resulted in substantial damage and associated adverse impacts in this Town and across the entire Southern shore of the Lake. The regulation of the Lake this spring has damaged hundreds of homes, displaced many people and has cost businesses and municipalities millions of dollars and has endangered thousands of people.

We understand that some portion of this current condition can be attributed to the unusually wet conditions of this spring, but we want more information on the effects of IJC Plan 2014.

Please require the IJC to answer the following questions:

- Is the current condition the result of following Plan 2014 or could better decisions have been made that would have resulted in lower lake levels this spring?
- In the fall of 2016, Lake Ontario was slightly below the long-term average, but all the other Great Lakes were above their long-term averages, so it was reasonably projected that even with average precipitation the levels would be likely to rise beyond the long-term average. As late as early December, the Corps of Engineers projected the Lake level to closely follow the long-term average. Did the IJC anticipate the change of plan in January by limiting Ontario outflow prior to the official effective date of Plan 2014?

The stakeholders along the Southern shore of Lake Ontario would like to understand why record floods are occurring and what assurances can be offered to prevent these flooding conditions from reoccurring with unacceptable frequency and duration beyond that which occurred between 1958 and 2016. The current flooding is either the result of intention malfeasance or is a mistake that requires corrective action.

If the meteorological conditions of this spring were so extraordinary that they were not anticipated in the development of Plan 2014, the plan should be re-evaluated to accommodate this and other possible conditions that were then unanticipated but now clearly possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W.D. Reilich', with a stylized flourish at the end.

William D. Reilich
Town Supervisor