

Submission to the International Joint Commission on Bulk Removal of Water from the Great Lakes

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The Canadian Pugwash Group supports the IJC in its interim report recommending a moratorium on bulk removals and sales of Great Lakes water. A policy response based directly on this report is appropriate for governments of both Canada and the U.S.

Canadian Pugwash is a non-governmental organization, part of the worldwide Pugwash movement, addressing issues affecting world peace and security, including a particular emphasis on nuclear disarmament.

It is our view that

- Bulk removal would compromise the self-restorative ability of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem, and introduce an unpredictable source of stress to the system.
- Information is not available on the potential effects of bulk removals of Great Lakes water on groundwater in the region. Since groundwater is a major source of water for many inhabitants of the Great Lakes basin, a falling water table or depreciated water quality would add to the already existing problems of overexploitation by some cities in the region.
- There is a general expectation that global warming will lower Great Lakes levels and outflows. This potentially serious situation should not be exacerbated by deliberate removal of water.
- Overall, problems generated by bulk removal will be much more expensive to remediate than to prevent.

UNEP's Global Environmental Outlook 2000 (GEO-2000) reports that " Water security, like food security, will become a major national and regional priority in many areas of the world" and " The declining state of the world's freshwater resources, in terms of quantity and quality many prove to be the dominant issue on the environment and development agenda of the coming century. " Further, the World Bank has predicted that wars of the next century will be over water.

Many regions live under conditions of water stress and water scarcity. Formerly viable freshwater sources have undergone irreversible deterioration. The Great Lakes must be protected. By 2025, two of three persons on earth will live in water-stressed conditions. There must be better use and protection of existing supplies of water, including use of modern agricultural methods and correction of leakage in water pipes. Regional solutions, based on environmental sustainability, are necessary. Global trade in water will not improve access of the world's poor to water, and indeed availability of bulk import of water from the Great Lakes and elsewhere could dampen the motivation of both developing and developed countries to sustainably resolve their water problems.