

THE GREAT LAKES ANNEX AGREEMENTS: STILL LEAKING!

COUNCIL ACTIVISTS MOBILIZE TO DEMAND NO DIVERSIONS, NO EXCEPTIONS

The second draft of the Great Lakes Annex 2001 Implementing Agreements continues to threaten the health of the Great Lakes and significantly weakens Canadian sovereignty over these shared waters.

The Annex agreements were originally intended to stop water diversions from the Great Lakes, and while the second draft of the agreements is substantially improved, it still leaves the Great Lakes unprotected.

Here are four reasons why the second draft of the Annex agreements is still full of holes:

IT ALLOWS FOR DIVERSIONS FROM THE GREAT LAKES

While the second draft allows for “no diversions” from the Great Lakes basin, it makes certain “exceptions.” The agreements grant special rights to communi-

ties and counties that straddle the Great Lakes. Communities that are exempted from the “no diversions” clause are not required to return a minimum amount of water to the Great Lakes basin, if at all. These exceptions – along with the infamous Chicago diversion – allow for vast and ever-growing amounts of water to be removed from the Lakes.

IT THREATENS CANADIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE GREAT LAKES

The International Joint Commission (IJC) is responsible for overseeing and arbitrating conflicts over water issues between Canada and the U.S. The second draft of the Annex agreements empowers a separate body parallel to the IJC, in which Canada is not fairly represented, to settle disputes over the Great Lakes. By allowing another body to do the work of the IJC, the agreements will make the IJC irrelevant, therefore restricting Canada’s ability to act as responsible steward of the future of the Great Lakes.



Illustration: Natascha Geerts

IT DOES NOT PROTECT FIRST NATIONS’ RIGHT TO WATER

The agreements make vague references to First Nations’ rights to water and lakebeds, but fail to acknowledge Aboriginal people’s rights to use, protect and conserve the water in the Great Lakes. First Nations groups say they were not adequately consulted during the negotiation of either draft of the Annex agreements.

IT OFFERS LITTLE OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC INPUT

The agreements were released mid-summer, but this time with only 60 days for public comment. More problematic, the meetings were limited to a two-week period in five cities (though the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources eventually bowed to public pressure, agreeing to add three cities, over another three weeks). The Council of Canadians, along with our allies from the United States, formally requested that the Council of Great Lakes Governors extend the public consultation period until November 2005, release a third draft of the agreements that address our concerns, and convene a final round of public consultations.

To learn more about the Great Lakes Annex Implementing Agreements, visit www.canadians.org, and click on “Save the Great Lakes,” or call 1-800-387-7177, for more information.

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CHAPTERS AGAINST THE GREAT LAKES ANNEX

Chapters Against the Great Lakes Annex (CAGLA) was formed late summer 2004 as a way of bringing Council activists in Ontario and Quebec together to coordinate efforts to fight against the Great Lakes Annex Agreements. Chapter members from Montreal, Kingston, Brockville, Peterborough-Kawarthas, Toronto, London, Niagara, Windsor and Grey-Bruce worked closely with staff members from the Council’s national and regional offices to raise awareness of, and opposition to, the agreements.

Thanks to the tremendous work by CAGLA members, the Council’s concerns about the Great Lakes Annex were featured in dozens of community newspapers. Officials from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources conceded that Council chapters played a significant role in getting people out to the public meetings. We can only hope that in the end, the future of the Great Lakes will be all the better for their efforts.