

Date: 7 September 2011



City Council Committee Report

TO: Mayor Canfield & Members of Council

FROM: Rory McMillan, City Councillor

RE: Request for letters advocating for communication from the IJC and; retention of the Lake of the Woods Co-ordinator Position with the Ministry of the Environment Ontario

Recommendation:

That the Council of the City of Kenora draft correspondence to the International Joint Commission (IJC) requesting that they consider the comments provided at the August 20, 2011 Forum and integrate them into the International Lake of the Woods and Rainy River Watershed Task Force Report (Task Force Report); and further

That the Commissioners be requested to provide a summary of the recommendations that will go forth to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada and the United States Department of State; and further

That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Municipalities and First Nations within the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River Watershed seeking their support and requesting they forward similar correspondence; and further

That the City of Kenora Council requests the Ministry of the Environment to retain the position of the Lake of the Woods Coordinator, slated for termination; and further

That a copy of the resolution be forwarded to the Municipalities and First Nations within the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River watershed seeking their support and requesting they forward similar correspondence.

Background:

There are two issues being addressed within this report and both impact upon the water quality of the Lake of the Woods. Firstly, the City of Kenora has been actively engaged in the development of a recent IJC initiative addressing water quality and quantity issues and water management governance strategies within the Lake of the Woods. A final report has been completed by the Task Force assigned to recommending a governance structure and the public forums have occurred seeking input into the final recommendations that will be forwarded to both Canada and the United States by the IJC in December 2011. The concern is ensuring that the comments shared and recommendations put forth are integrated into the final report and that the final recommendations are communicated back to the local level.

Secondly, at the present time, a contract position does exist with the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) with the primary focus being on the development and implementation of a Watershed Stewardship Strategy for MOE that would respond to growing public concerns for water quality on Lake of the Woods and allow the Ministry to

co-ordinate efforts with Manitoba and Minnesota re water management. This position came into being in 2008. There is still work to be done particularly with respect to the potential recommendations that will come forward from the IJC Report.

The following are bullet points that address both an update to the IJC Task Force report and the Lake of the Woods Coordinator position presently with the Ministry of the Environment Ontario.

IJC Update

- final report of International Lake of the Woods and Rainy River Watershed Task Force submitted to IJC Commissioners on July 15, 2011 (attached)
- recommendations focus on: development of an IJC Watershed Board that would monitor aquatic ecosystem health within the entire watershed, including Lake of the Woods (including algae issues, impacts of development, climate change issues, invasive species, etc.); review of water level regulation on LOW; inclusion of First Nation members on IJC boards and within watershed governance; additional support from governments to continue research on nutrient issue on LOW; holding a summit whereby the science is presented and decisions around mechanisms for joint water management with the U.S. are discussed (e.g. MOU, binational agreement, an Act for LOW, etc.)
- IJC held public hearings at 6 locations in August; Kenora's hearing was August 20 - 180 people in attendance with very heartfelt submissions on the importance of water quality preservation
- next steps - Commissioners will review Task Force report and consider what they heard at the hearings as well as comments made during public meetings of the Task Force - they will make any changes to the Task Force report they deem necessary and submit to the Dept. of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada) and U.S. Dept. of State by Dec. 17/11
- those two governments will then consider the IJC's recommendations and decide what to go forward with (may be by spring 2012)

Lake of the Woods Coordinator position

- Coordinator has developed a strategy for Lake of the Woods water quality preservation that considers MOE's core inspection/compliance component together with needed science, outreach/education, international cooperation and partnership building
- considerable interaction locally with LOWDPOA, LOWWSF, First Nation communities, City of Kenora and other municipalities/townships, private landowners regarding stewardship initiatives, all with a focus on the importance of preserving water quality and its economic ties to City of Kenora and other municipalities' futures, linkages to other initiatives throughout the watershed and determining cumulative impacts and best management strategies
- LOW Coordinator also is the local voice on the IJC's International Rainy River Water Pollution Board (as an Alternate Member), on the LOW Water Quality Forum Organizing Committee (for the past 9 years), on the International Multi-Agency Working Group and the Technical Advisory Committee (formed in 2009 between 9 U.S./Cdn. entities with common goal to preserve water quality on LOW/Rainy River by way of a signed Arrangement) and acts as an advisor/guest at City of Kenora's Environmental Advisory Committee meetings
- LOW Coordinator has been a contract position since 2008 and this contract will not be extended past December 2011 - this position and the implementation of MOE's Watershed Stewardship Strategy has opened doors to collaboration across the

U.S./Canada border that didn't exist before; it has kick-started initiatives locally that had not been focused on previously such as the nutrient monitoring of tributaries to LOW and the Rainy River (to understand what is causing algae and where it is coming from), focused inspections of sewage systems at tourist resorts, outreach and education at FN community schools, general public and with municipal governments, enhanced collaboration amongst ministries and within MOE, brought attention to Lake of the Woods within the government

- the local MOE office will continue its efforts on LOW to the best of its ability, but without this dedicated position, the participation on international committees, the outreach effort, the coordination of joint science, research and goal setting with Manitoba and the U.S. will be very difficult - all staff are extremely strapped already and this will be a huge additional effort for the staff to undertake

LOW Coordinator also served during 2010/2011 as Canadian Secretary to the IJC's International Lake of the Woods and Rainy River Watershed Task Force as the local voice on this international group tasked with reviewing and making recommendations on binational governance mechanisms for this watershed

Budget: N/A

Communication Plan/Notice By-law Requirements:

Affected Municipalities and First Nations; International Joint Commission; Ministry of the Environment