

## Lake Ontario St. Lawrence River Board Public Advisory Group Update

Good afternoon all,

My name is Sarah Delicate, Founder and President of United Shoreline Ontario (USO), based in Canada.

As you know, we have aggressively challenged the current rules and operation of Plan 2014 since the 2017 flooding of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. Our actions included numerous rallies on the Ontario and New York shorelines, writing countless letters to elected officials, attending many meetings with stakeholders, federal departments and provincial ministries, countless media events and the creation of many learning videos and webinars to raise awareness of Plan 2014 and how it impacts us upstream.

We were thrilled in 2020 when the International Joint Commission (IJC) announced the Expedited Review of Plan 2014.

To this end, a Public Advisory Group (PAG) of 18 members was appointed for Phase One of the review. These 18 people represent various interest groups, such as hydro, shipping, farming, the environment, recreational boating, municipalities, emergency response, indigenous lands and upstream / downstream riparians. I was appointed as the representative of the Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River riparian perspective, upstream of the dam.

Phase One of the review has a singular focus: How to make balanced deviation decisions ONCE the H14 high water trigger (criterion) has been surpassed (this is required before deviations from Plan 2014 can occur). This mandate is primarily focused on the shoreline home-owner.

Phase Two of the review will challenge the rules of the Plan: Do the Triggers, F- and L-limits need to be changed (we believe yes).

I have just finished my 18th meeting with the PAG (we started in October 2020). These meetings typically run 4 hrs, while some have run all day. In addition to our PAG members, there are usually IJC, ILOSLRB and GLAM members, such that any given meeting could easily have 35 + participants. To date, much of our time has been focused on two things:

- being further educated on Plan 2014 by the IJC, the ILOSLRB and GLAM (doing a lot of listening), and
- sharing our lived reality (doing a lot of talking).

I am updating you today because **I am only now excited about our progress.**

In 2017, there was little data available to the ILOSLRB on the impacts of flooding on our shorelines, including our homes and families, our businesses, our farms, our municipalities, our tourism, and our recreation. We also had very poor representation. We believed this was out of balance, as there was tremendous data from navigation, shipping and hydro, as well as strong representation from those groups. Deviation decisions were not informed by well-rounded, balanced evidence and data. In 2019, deviations decisions appeared somewhat more informed, but were still seriously lacking in data and representation.

Today, the PAG is supporting the development of a Decision Support Tool (DST) that attempts to quantify the real impacts, costs and benefits of deviation decisions across all stakeholders, right down to geographic locations. The costs are not just financial, but also environmental and social (to include social vulnerability). In high water events, this DST will bring significant data to the table of the ILOSLRB when they are faced with making real-time decisions about deviating from the F-limit (protects downstream) and the L-limit (protects navigation). The DST uses sophisticated models to illustrate the impacts and benefits of different deviation strategies to all stakeholders. What happens if we surpass the F-Limit? What if we disregard the L-limit?

Today, we participated in a mock-scenario, using 2019 data and various supply scenarios. **I have left today's meeting finally feeling confident that the voices and the lived-reality of those upstream, including families, business and municipalities, have been heard,** and that the implementation of such a tool will eventually put us on a more balanced footing to the interests of downstream, shipping and hydro. This is a long process, so we don't expect changes overnight (good news: we won't hit high water levels this year, so we have some time). But we are definitely, finally, moving in the right direction.

Many thanks,

Sarah Delicate, United Shoreline Ontario (USO)

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