

FINAL REPORT ON THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF CANADA COMMON PROGRAM ON WATER 2006/2007

In my call to action in the Fall of 2005 I noted that members *“may have had some of these (among others) media headlines in mind, when choosing **Water** as our Common Program Theme:*

- *“Walkerton disasters foreseen across Canada” - Globe and Mail January 2001*
- *“The Great Lakes -death by a thousand straws”-Globe and Mail September 20th 2004*
- *“Water growing scarce report says-Only Americans use more of this vital resource than Canadians” -Globe and Mail, December 4th 2004*
- *“ PM raises Devil’s Lake issue with Bush” -Winnipeg Free Press, July 12th 2005”...*

As we end our NCWC common Program on water, many of the same issues (with some twists), and others, have been in the headlines:

- *“Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board receives expanded mandate” -press release Manitoba Minister of Water Stewardship, February 14th 2007*
- *“Water, It’s cheap. It’s clean. And, we take it for granted. Are we in for a rude awakening?” -St. Catharines Standard February 16th, 2007*
- *“Selling water on the agenda at three-way talks-Canada, U.S and Mexico to discuss future trade in precious resource”- The Ottawa citizen, April 13th, 2007*
- *“Lack of funding putting Ontario’s water at risk -Many municipalities unable to meet new standards for drinking systems, task force says” -Globe and Mail June 2, 2007*
- *“Growing green, Reusing water -don’t throw out the bathwater”-CBC news July 11th 2007.*
- *Could climate change herald mass migration? Concerns raised as the U.S. southwest grapples with historic drought, water supply depletion and a creeping sense that things can only get worse.” - Toronto Star July 22nd, 2007*
- *“Water’s clear , blue look hides unhealthy truth Zebra mussels clean Great Lakes, but robs other aquatic life in the process” - Toronto Star July 23, 2007*

These and many other articles were passed along to NCWC Affiliates over the past year, as we continued monitoring significant water-related issues such as the future of the Great Lakes; the Great Lakes Annex Treaties and the ongoing issue of potential water diversions to water-hungry areas of the US; Lake Winnipeg- a lake under extreme stress; the Lake Erie “dead-zone”; and, the need for ground water protection .

What follows is a brief synopsis of our many activities this past year. The sources of the information are in brackets for Local and Provincial Councils.

PROVINCIAL COUNCILS OF WOMEN

British Columbia

British Columbia Provincial Council of Women again monitored water issues such as the exemption of the US Navy being from the provincial ban on conducting sonar tests off the coasts of BC and the significant damage to fish from large container ship pollution. (Rosemary Mallory and Florence Irwin)

Manitoba

Manitoba Provincial Council of Women continued to keep a close eye on water issues, particularly Lake Winnipeg, as evidenced by the excellent article in its November 2006 newsletter : **Lake Winnipeg: Responses to a Lake Under Stress** , by Diane F. Malley and Jennifer V. Lukovich . The article is replete with good references, such as the web sites for the excellent report, '**Restoring the Health of Lake Winnipeg**', by the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium group, and the report from a March 2006 Lake Winnipeg Environmental Forum, '**Saving Lake Winnipeg**'. The article also notes the "*increased attention by politicians and scientists as well as rising public awareness on the critical state of*" Lake Winnipeg as the 10th largest freshwater lake in the world. (Mary Scott)

Ontario

Provincial Council of Women of Ontario continued to monitor the state of the Great Lakes and many other water issues. They reported the passage of Provincial legislation, The Clean Water Act , to ensure clean water sources for Ontarians- a critical outcome of the highly reported Walkerton, Ontario tragedy. As noted in the above media headline, Zebra mussels are a seemingly intransigent threat to the Great Lakes and how to keep the ocean going ships from bringing these types of exotic aquatic species into the lakes, continues to be a subject of debate. A new potential problem has arisen regarding one of the Great Lakes, as Ontario Power Generation proposes to bury low and intermediate level non-fuel nuclear waste near the shores of Lake Huron. NCWC sent a letter to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission opposing these dubious plans . PCWO incoming President Thelma McGillivray also attended one of several important meetings regarding the future of the Great Lakes, hosted by Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, Gordon Miller and Pollution Probe. These were held in Kingston, Hamilton, Thunder Bay and Windsor. Thelma passed along a Pollution Probe report '**Towards a Vision and Strategy for Water Management in Canada**', which was a result of Pollution Probe's research and its '**Water Policy in Canada National Workshop Series**' meetings across Canada, which featured over seventy water experts. The report is available at www.pollutionprobe.org. A report from the Hamilton meeting will be available at the same site. (Gracia Janes and Thelma McGillivray)

LOCAL COUNCILS OF WOMEN

Hamilton and District Council of Women

At the 2006 Provincial Council of Women of Ontario Annual General Meeting , in Hamilton local Aboriginal women's advocate, Elize Hartley spoke about Women Power and that women are keepers of Water. As she said *"This gift was given to women by the Creator. We are bound by our instructions from the Creator to protect water from pollution and do all in our power to bring attention to our lakes and oceans. A group of Aboriginal women walked around the Great Lakes to get the attention of the media. They walked every year, in the summer, around one of the Great Lakes. They finished this year with Lake Ontario.."* (Thelma McGillivray)

Edmonton Council of Women

Dr. Suzanne Bayley, professor of biology at the University of Regina, whose expertise is wetlands and watersheds, spoke to the Edmonton Council regarding the work she and her husband, renowned water expert, Dr. David Schindler, have done to document the erosion of glaciers and the drying up of lakes throughout the prairie provinces. With comprehensive, detailed, statistics and pictures Dr. Bayley showed the dramatic changes in glaciers and lakes over a 20 year period. Edmonton Council members asked her what individuals could do to make a difference. Her answer was to become informed, conserve water ourselves, and put in a good word for the scientists and organizations that are trying to convince governments at all levels to be more responsible regarding water resources, including the "gobbling up of wetlands for urban development." (Joyce Blackstrom)

Ottawa Council of Women

Ottawa' Council's speaker on water this year was Meredith Brown, of the Ottawa Riverkeeper, a group that is part of the Riverkeeper Alliance, founded by Robert Kennedy. Its mandate is to protect and enhance the ecological health and integrity of the Ottawa River . Ms. Brown spoke of the importance of the Ottawa River watershed, which is the second largest in eastern Canada, and, having 1,271 kms of watershed, the largest tributary of the St. Lawrence River.

Over 1,670,000 people live in the watershed in more than 250 communities , from shining Tree, Ontario in the west, to St. Jerome Quebec in the east; from Westport, Ontario in the south, to Launay, Quebec in the north. Its governance is a jurisdictional quagmire, as it runs through dozens of municipalities , two thirds of them in Quebec, and one third in Ontario. The most populous sub-watersheds are in the lower valley.

There are nine dams generating electricity and eight pulp mills on the river, but the greatest source of pollution is partially-treated municipal waste water. The most polluted

water is observed in the lower 150km stretch from Ottawa/Gatineau to the confluence with the St. Lawrence river. Heavy metals, radioactive waste and agricultural run-off also add to further deterioration as does urban development in the flood plain and the destruction of wetlands.

As a result of Ms. Brown's enlightening presentation, many Ottawa Council members bought the Ottawa Riverkeeper's report , or took out memberships in the Riverkeepers Organization in order to support its worthwhile work. (Denise Mattock)

St. Catharines and District Council of Women

St. Catharines Council has continued to be concerned regarding the impact of waste management, particularly the interest by some municipalities in incineration. Therefore its first speaker of the year was John Jackson, a well known waste management expert, who noted the dangers to our waterways of the outflows from highly toxic fly ash, and the need for very secure landfill sites for both the fly and bottom ash . St. Catharines also monitored the new provincial regulations for the Clean Water Act, and their emphasis on the protection of water sources. (Gracia Janes)

Vancouver Council of Women

Being on the Pacific Ocean, with the Fraser River to the south and the Burrard Inlet to the north, Vancouver is at the centre of water-related issues and Council of Women meetings frequently featured water topics. Council concerns these past two years were flooding, depletion of fish stocks and pollution. Re the latter, last year Vancouver had the first ever boil-water advisory; and experienced major wind storms , where the majority of trees in Stanley Park were destroyed. As President Rosemary Mallory notes " The global climatic changes will affect the water situation in Vancouver, and we may not always have the best water in the world, as we do now. " A featured speaker for Council in 2006 was Dr. Hans Schreier, Professor at the Institute for Environment at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. He gave an outstanding lecture on water i.e. "All you ever wanted to know about water-other than, Is it safe to drink?" Dr. Schreier's research focuses on watershed management and his work is featured on several web sites (just google his name.) (Rosemary Mallory)

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF CANADA

Letters to Government

As a direct result of the Common Program and our heightened awareness two letters were sent to the Prime Minister in the first half of 2007. The first letter was sent the day before World Water Day, and stated, among other things "***May I take this opportunity to stress, on behalf of the many thousands of National Council of Women members , the need for your government to join many other governments world-wide in recognizing that water is a fundamental right for people the world over.***

May we also urge your government to act quickly to address the many threats to Canadian waters.” We further commended the governments’ investment of \$400 million for a Great Lakes water clean up, but went on to state that “ ***the most important issue is the crises facing our Canadian waters- above and below ground, in lakes, rivers and oceans. Unfortunately, budget cuts over the past several years have severely curtailed federal water programs. This is well documented in the Senate Report of 2005, Water in the West:Under Pressure. For example, there have been cutbacks in investments in ;longitudinal water studies, the National Water Research Institute, the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Program and the mapping of aquifers.***”

A second letter was sent as a direct result of a resolution at the Regina June 2nd Panel on Water at our 114th AGM, which asked the President to inform the Prime Minister of our support for the development of a national water strategy. The letter stated that “ ***in passing a letter of support unanimously we are responding to significant information collected over two years during our Canada-wide Common Program on water, which built on long-standing NCWC policies, such as the need for conservation of water resources, a safe drinking water act, a national river basin management policy, ground water protection, federal action to prevent water diversions and continued protection and restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystems.***”

The letter went on to say “ ***This important data , which clearly illuminated the many and varied threats to Canada’s water, was verified and underscored by a panel of speakers at a plenary session during our AGM.. These well respected experts dealt with such issues as drought, climate change and adaptability, urbanization, pollution, water diversions, industrial abuse of water in the west, water and the law and the urgent need for a comprehensive water strategy.***”

We also noted that many other groups and individuals such as KAIROS, the Sierra Club of Canada, the Council of Canadians, the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, , Ontario’s Environment commissioner Gordon Miller, have been speaking out on the “*need for immediate action*” and that “***we feel it is increasingly important that your government take the lead immediately to develop a water strategy, working closely with the Provincial, Territorial and municipal governments, , water experts and the Canadian public to ensure that this vital resource- its quantity, quality and sustainability- is protected for generations to come.***”

Panel on Water at the 114th NCWC AGM Meeting in Regina

The Panel on Water at our 114th AGM in Regina, was a particularly suitable and very successful conclusion to our two year Common Program on Water. The program was funded by the Duncan and Walter Gordon foundation, and over 60 delegates, plus members of the public, heard six water experts from across Canada: Susan Howatt, ,

water campaigner from the Council of Canadians, Tim Morris, water campaigner Sierra Club of Canada, Dr. David Sauchyn expert on drought from the University of Regina, Margot Hurlbert, water and the law expert, University of Regina, KAIROS water campaigner Dick Peters and Darrin Qualman , Environmental Society of Saskatchewan, speak on a huge diversity of serious water issues facing Canadians. Information from the Panel may be found at the following links on our web site - a report from Elizabeth Fleming, NCWC Environment Convener, who, in an article in the *June 2007 newsletter from Manitoba Provincial Council of Women* succinctly outlined the main points from each presentation; and, speaker presentations (as they become available).

RELATED BACKGROUND MATERIALS (* Materials underlined are linked to site)

- Leaflet.. Watching Over Our Transboundary Environment from Coast to Coast. International Joint Commission Canada and United States.@ 519-257-6700
commission@windsor.ijc.org www.ijc.org
- A River Runs North - Managing an International River.Gene Krenz.Jay Leitch. Red River Resources Council.1993.Addendum Prepared by the Red river Water Resources Council 1998
- Revised Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1978, as Amended by Protocol, signed November 18th 1987 and Consolidated by the International Joint commission , United States and Canada. .Reprint 1994
- Water : No Time to Waste (L'Eau: Pas De Temps a Perdue) -A Consumers Guide to Water Conservation. Environment Canada.1990.1995 . ISBN 0-662-23049 . @ 1-800 668-6767
- BLUE GOLD, The Global Water Crisis and the Commodification of the World's Water Supply. A special Report issued by the International Forum on Globalization. Maude Barlow. Council of Canadians. June 1999 @ 1-800-387- 7177
- The Great Lakes Green Book. Summary of a Citizen's Action Agenda For Restoring the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem. Co-ordinated by Great Lakes United .June 2003. @ glu@glu.org or www.glu.org
- U.S Leaders comit to Great Lakes restoration.Great Lakes News.Summer 2003.@www.glu.org
- GBA UPDATE.GBA gets meeting with IJC Commissioners after U.S. Chair sees impact of low water. The Georgian Bay Association.Fall/Winter 2003/04.@ 416-507-2151
- Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Study Background Document. Transport Canada and U.S. Corps of Engineers. May 2004. @Marc Fortin@ 613 998-1843
- Final Report to the International Joint Commission . International Missiquoi Bay Task

Force. October 20, 2004

- Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Study. Report on Stakeholder Engagement. February, 2005. St. Lawrence Economic Development Council (SODES) and the Great Lakes Commission (**Note on page 36, there is a very brief synthesis of NCWC comments**)
- The Great Lakes beach walking case & Granhom's Water Legacy Act. GREAT LAKES. Magazine of the Michigan Land Use Institute. Bulletin. Issue 20. Spring 2005.
- Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Study . May 2005. @ www.glsls-study.com
- Red River Basin, Natural Resources Framework Plan. Red River Basin Commission.. May 2005. @ redriverbasincommission@shawcable.com
- Fact Sheets, Great Lakes Charter Annex Agreements . Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. June 30th, 2005 a) History of the Great Lakes Charter Annex Implementing Agreements b) Summary of the Revised Great Lakes Charter Annex Agreements c) Technical Fact Sheets: Enhancing Great Lakes Protections Through Revised Draft Charter Agreements d) How Decisions Would be Made on Proposed Water Uses e) Comparison of Draft Great Lakes Charter Annex Agreements Released in 2004 and Revised Draft Agreements Released in 2005 . @ www.mnr.gov.on.ca Paula Thomson, 705 755 1218
- Water in the West: Under Pressure. Fourth Interim Report of the Standing Senate committee on energy, the environment and Natural Resources. November 2005. @ 613-993-9021. <http://www.senate-senat.ca/EENR-EERN.asp>
- Restoring the Health of Lake Winnipeg, Canada's Sixth Great Lake. A report by the Lake Winnipeg Implementation Committee. November 2005
- Synthesis of Public Comment, on the forthcoming Review by the Federal Governments of Canada and the United States of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, a Report to the Governments of the United States and Canada. International Joint Commission January 2006. (page 63 Margaret Jennings, President LCW Windsor) Hard copy and disk available at commission@windsor.ijc.org
- News Release. Greencover Canada. On-Farm Funding for Climate Change and Water Supply Projects. Agriculture and Food Canada. September 20th 2006 @ Media Relations 613 759 7972 or 1866-345-7972
- Water Water Everywhere: but not a drop to drink. Arlene -Daffin Jones. Newsletter .Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba. April 2006. @ pcwm@mts.net
- Household Guide to Water Efficiency. Canada Mortgage and Housing @ www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca 1-800-668-2642 .

- Lake Winnipeg Foundation Newsletter. Vol. 2. May 2nd, 2006. @ P.O. Box 376 Matlock, Manitoba ROC 2B0.
- Niagara Watershed Report Card 2006. Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority @ 905 788 3135. www.conservation-niagara.on.ca Niagara Region @905 -685-1571 and www.regional.niagara.on.ca. Water Smart Niagara @www.watersmartniagara.ca
- Act for Canada's Water. Canada needs a National Water Policy. Council of Canadians 2006 @ 1-800-387-7177
- A Response To Water In The West: Under Pressure, by the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources. Canadian Water Resources Association. August 24, 2006
- Eau Canada-The Future of Canada's Water. A series of articles by water experts. Edited by Karen Bakker. UBC Press. 2007 @ 604-822-5959 or www.ubcpress.ca
- Towards a Vision and Water Strategy for Canada. Pollution Probe. April 2007 @ www.pollutionprobe.org
- Riverkeeper contacts in Canada : Petitcodiac River, New Brunswick- daniel.leblanc@petitcodiac.org; Ottawa - keeper@ottawariverkeeper.ca ; New Brunswick, Fundy Baykeeper- www.fundybaykeeper.org ; Canadian Detroit Riverkeeper- KenClout@mnsi.net ; Lake Ontario Riverkeeper- mark@waterkeeper.ca ; Georgian Baykeeper- mmuter@sympatico.ca ; Bow Riverkeeper- danielle@bowriver.org Fraser Riverkeeper- chapman@fraserriverkeeper.ca ; Gran Riverkeeper- cblake_rudkowski@hotmail.com
- Waterwoman. Reasonable and Urgently Needed Steps to Protect Water in Canada .Dr. John Bacher (Phd) June 2003 (for International Council of Women Triennial meeting) Updated September 1st, 2007, @jrjanes@sympatico.ca