



Introducing the **International Joint Commission**

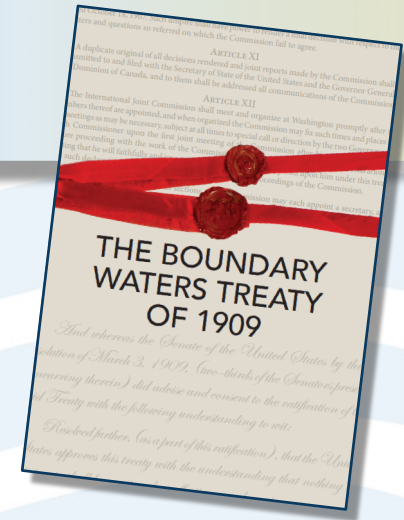
INDEPENDENT FIRST NATIONS / QUARTERLY MEETING

12 March 2020, Ottawa, Ontario

International Joint Commission *Origins*

The *Boundary Waters Treaty* of 1909

- Signed by the governments of the United States and Canada in 1909
- Intended to prevent and resolve disputes over the waters shared by the two countries, to benefit the people of today as well as future generations.



International Joint Commission

Origins



The International Joint Commission

- Was established in 1909 by the governments of the United States and Canada to help them administer the *Boundary Waters Treaty*.
- The IJC has 2 main responsibilities:
 - reviewing and approving projects that affect freshwater levels and flows across the boundary, and
 - investigating transboundary water issues, and recommending solutions.

International Joint Commission

Origins



The International Joint Commission *(continued)*

- Responds to requests (called 'references') from the governments of Canada and the United States to research, review, and/or make recommendations on specific water-related issues along the boundary.
- Although the IJC provides advice to governments, it is not empowered to negotiate agreements or to carry out the functions or obligations of federal governments.
- IJC liaison departments: Global Affairs Canada / United States Department of State

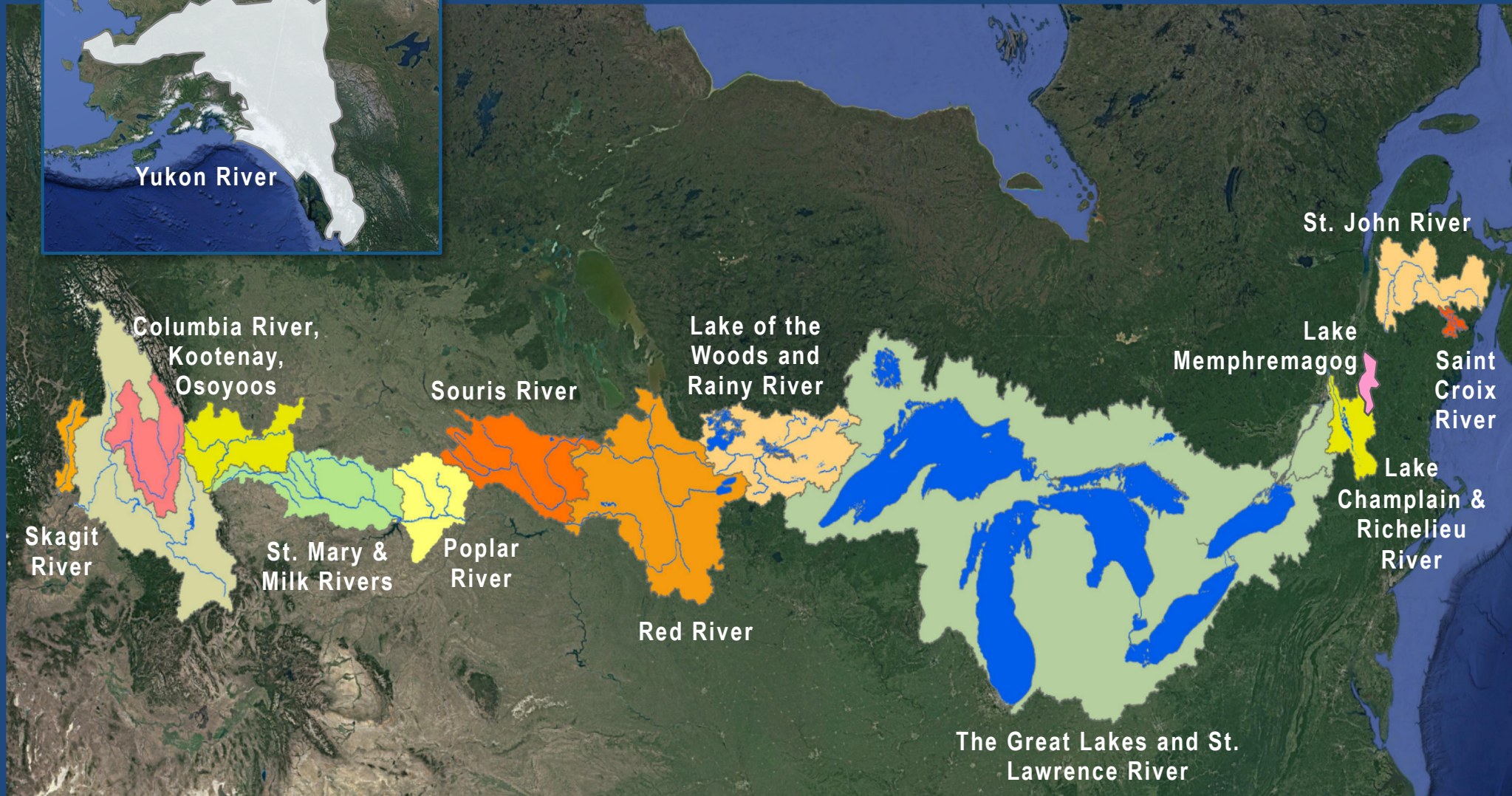


International Joint Commission

Major transboundary basins



Yukon River



St. John River

Columbia River,
Kootenay,
Osoyoos

Souris River

Lake of the
Woods and
Rainy River

Memphremagog

Saint
Croix
River

Lake
Champlain &
Richelieu
River

Skagit
River

St. Mary &
Milk Rivers

Poplar
River

Red River

The Great Lakes and St.
Lawrence River

The Commissioners



Robert Sisson
U.S.

Henry Lickers
Canada

Jane Corwin
U.S. Chair

Pierre Béland
Canadian Chair

Lance Yohe
U.S.

Merrell-Ann Phare
Canada



International Joint Commission

Who we are, and how we work

6 Commissioners



Lance Yohe
US

Rob Sissons
US

Jane Corwin
US Co-Chair

Pierre Béland
CAN Co-Chair

Henry Lickers
CAN

Merrell-Ann Phare
CAN



**> 200 people working on IJC boards,
committees, and advisory groups**



Ottawa
Canadian Section



Windsor, ON
Great Lakes Region



Washington, DC
US Section

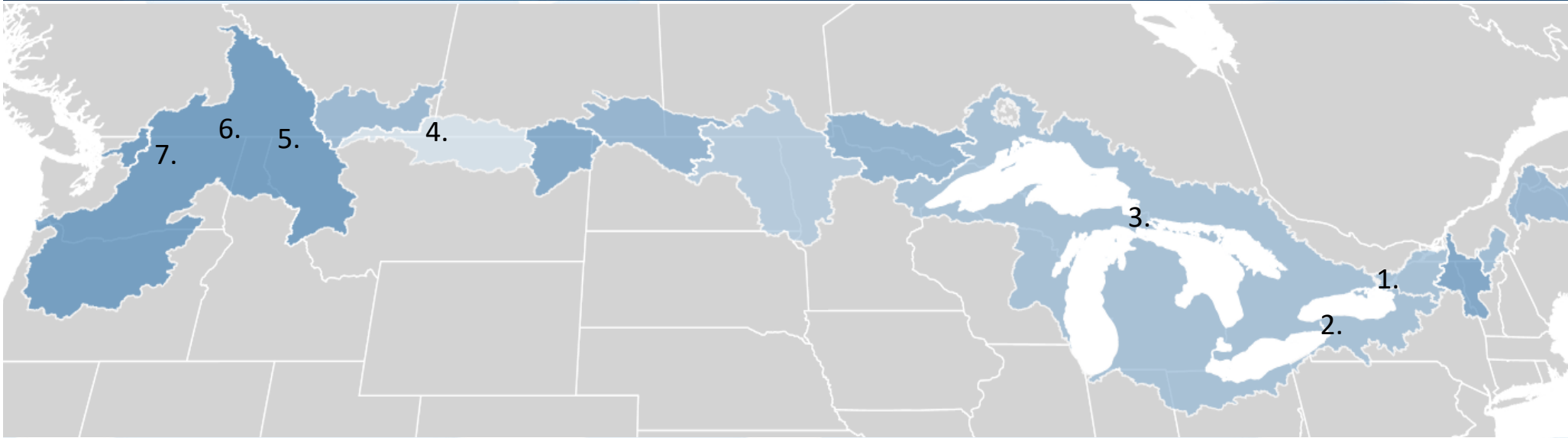
3 offices with IJC staff

IJC Boards, Committees, Advisory Groups

The IJC currently has **18 boards** that assist it in undertaking its mandated responsibilities. The boards have varying functions, and each board's specific responsibilities are set out in a mandate or directive:

- 7 Control Boards (e.g. Dams / Orders of Approval)
- 4 Watershed Boards (IWI)
- 2 Great Lakes Advisory Boards (GLWQA)
- 3 Study Boards (*time-limited, usually watershed-specific*)
- 2 Others (*Health Professionals Advisory Board; Great Lakes Adaptive Management*)

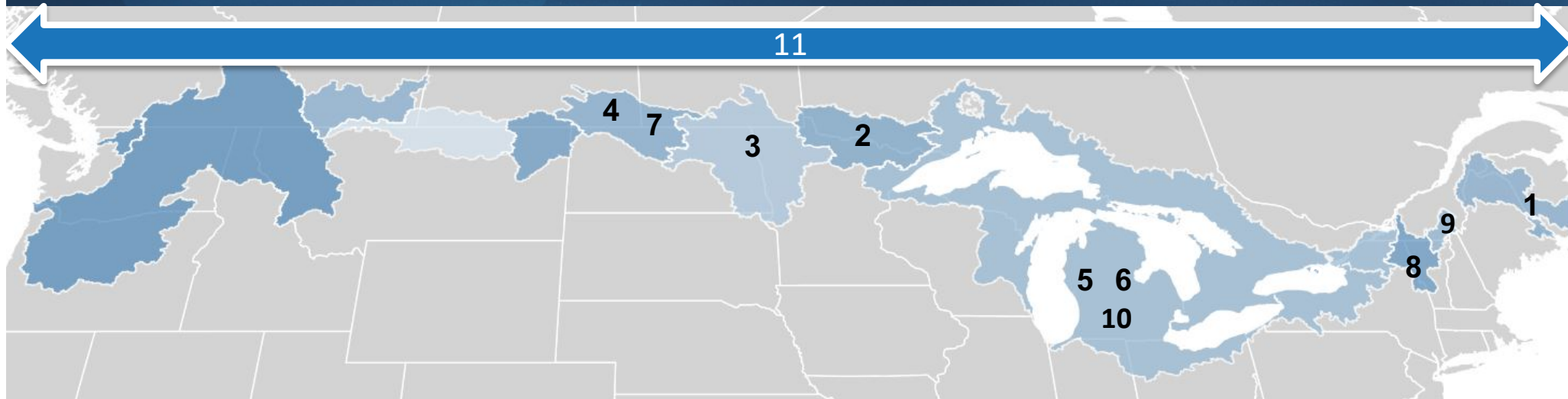
Where do IJC Boards operate?



Control Boards (Water level regulation)

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Board | 6. Columbia River Board of Control |
| 2. Niagara Board of Control | 7. Osoyoos Lake Board of Control |
| 3. Lake Superior Board of Control | |
| 4. Accredited Officers of the St. Mary-Milk Rivers | |
| 5. Kootenay Lake Board of Control | |

Where do IJC Boards operate?



Watershed, Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, & Other Boards

Watershed and Pilot Watershed Boards:

1. St. Croix River Watershed Board
2. Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board
3. International Red River Board (pilot)
4. Souris River Watershed Board (pilot)

Study Boards:

7. Souris River Study Board
8. Lake Champlain-Richelieu River Study Board
9. Nutrient Loading Impacts in Lakes Champlain & Memphremagog

GLWQA Boards:

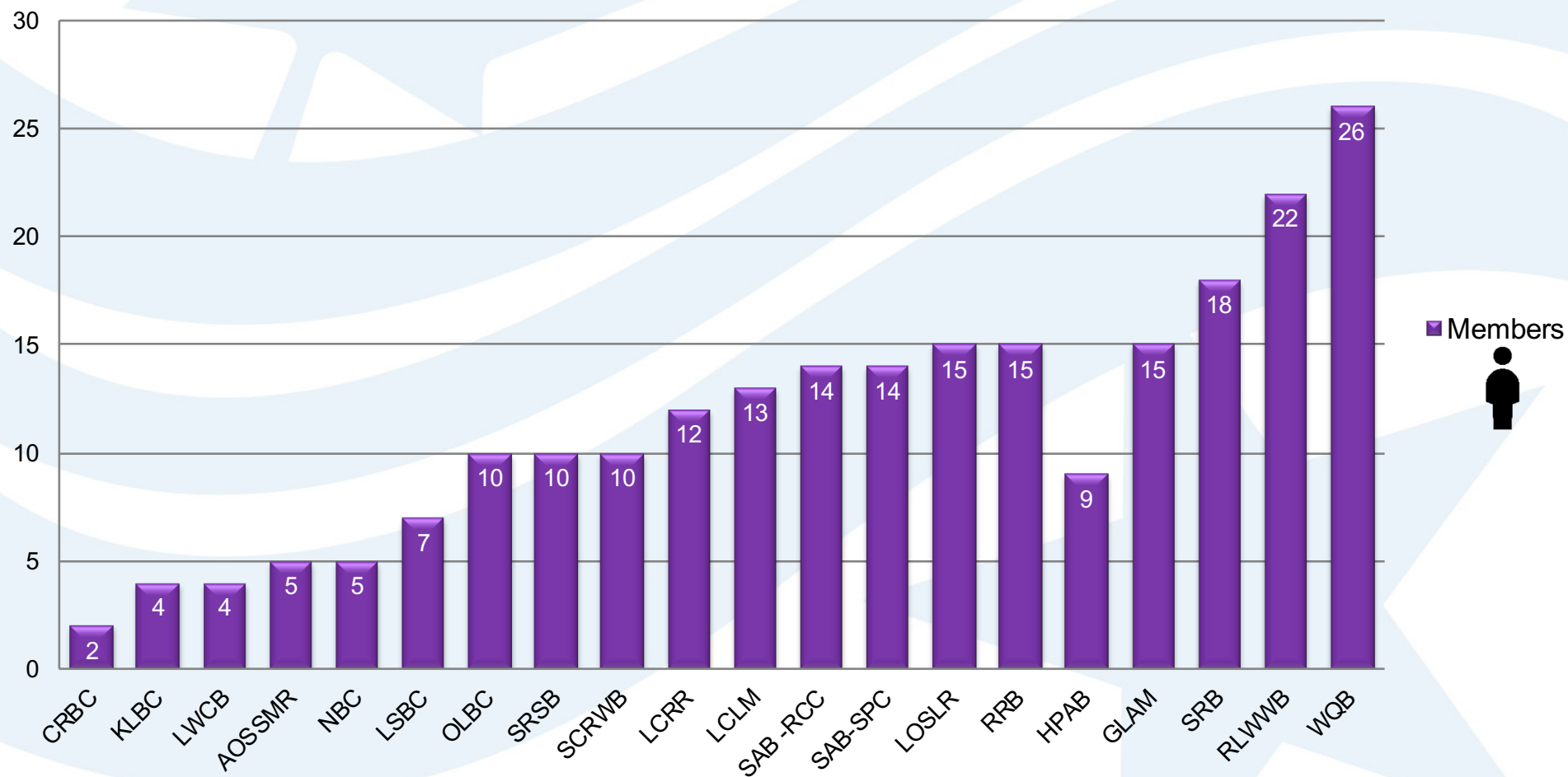
5. Great Lakes Water Quality Board
6. Great Lakes Science Advisory Board

Other Boards:

10. Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Adaptive Management Committee
11. Health Professionals Advisory Board

IJC Boards and Committees: *Bringing together the knowledge of many*

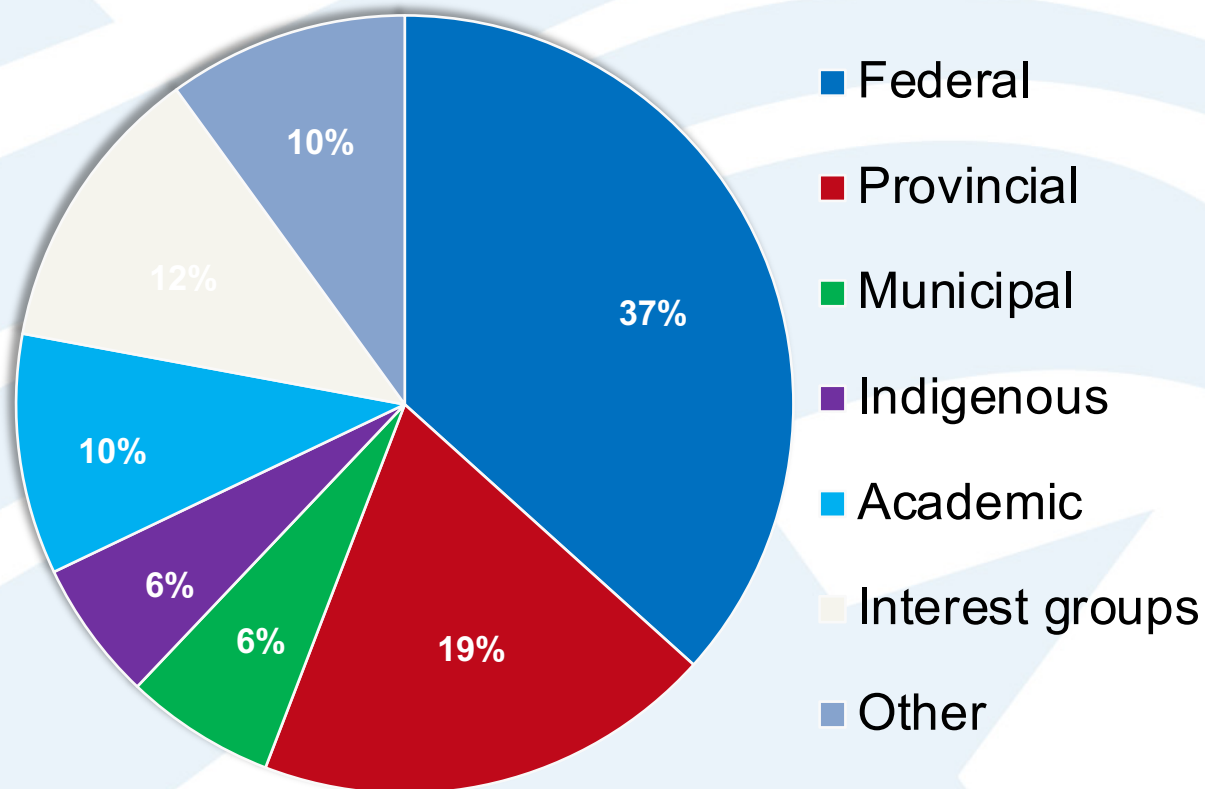
There are currently over 200 people from diverse backgrounds working on the IJC's 18 Boards and Committees.



IJC Boards, Committees, Advisory Groups

Current Board Composition

Members do not represent their agency or organization, but strive to provide impartial institutional, professional, and/or traditional knowledge and expertise.





International Joint Commission *Challenges for today and tomorrow*



Key challenges for today and tomorrow:

Adapting to a changing climate

- *Managing water levels and flows*
- *Maintaining ecosystem health*



Sea lamprey on L. Huron salmon (M. Gaden / GLFC)



Field sampling L. Ontario (CWF/GLAM)



Lake Champlain flooding 2011 (IJC)



Wild rice, Kathio State Park, MN (Brett Whaley)



The International Watershed Initiative (IWI)

- The IJC's International Watersheds Initiative (IWI) recognizes that solutions to transboundary watershed problems often emerge from local communities.
- Given appropriate assistance, local communities are usually best-placed to achieve solutions. This approach operates on an ecosystem focus, recognizing that ecosystems function as whole entities, and should be managed as such, rather than being bound by traditional political boundaries.
- **The IJC funds projects through the IWI to better understand and resolve problems in transboundary watersheds.**



The International Watershed Initiative (IWI) Principles:

- Integrated ecosystem approach
- Binational collaboration
- Involvement of local expertise
- Public engagement
- Balanced and inclusive board representation
- Open and respectful dialogue
- Adaptive management perspective

Indigenous engagement



- The *Boundary Waters Treaty* requires the IJC to give all interested parties the opportunity to be heard in matters before the Commission.
- As rights-holders, Indigenous Peoples' interests are important to seek out, understand, and consider when studying watersheds and making recommendations about their future management.
- Indigenous and local knowledge brings important insight to the current understanding of the environment, and guides the creation of new knowledge.

Indigenous engagement *(continued)*



- For the first time in its 110-year history, in May 2019 the government of Canada appointed an Indigenous Commissioner to the IJC (Dr. Henry Lickers)
- Indigenous members serve on the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board and Committees; the Great Lakes Water Quality Board; and other IJC Boards and Committees.
- The current IJC Commissioners have made increased engagement with Indigenous Peoples a key priority for the Commission.
- Greater incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into IJC-related watershed science is a core objective.



The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

1960s: Significant and shared concerns regarding the quality of water in the Great Lakes



The Cuyahoga River on fire in 1969.



Severe Eutrophication of Lake Erie

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

Signed in 1972, the purpose of the Agreement is *“to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem”*

It has been amended a number of times since, most recently in 2012.

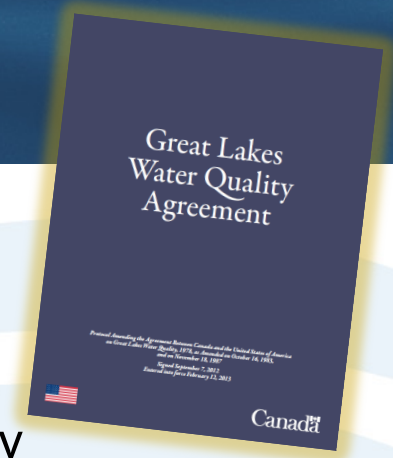


President Richard Nixon and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau signing the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (1972)



EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and Minister of Environment Peter Kent sign Agreement Protocol (2012)

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement



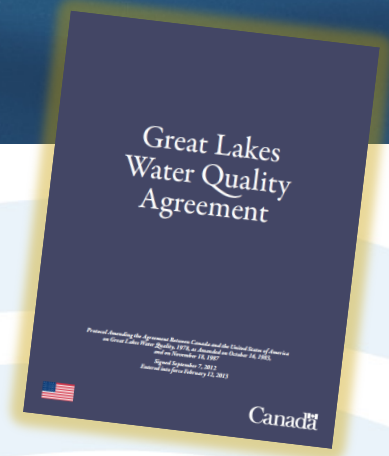
9 General Objectives for Great Lakes Water Quality:

1. Be a source of safe, high-quality **drinking water**;
2. Allow for **swimming and other recreational use**, unrestricted by environmental quality concerns;
3. Allow for **human consumption of fish and wildlife** unrestricted by concerns due to harmful pollutants;
4. Be **free from pollutants** that could be harmful to human health, wildlife or organisms;
5. Support **healthy and productive wetlands** and other habitats;
6. Be **free from nutrients** originating from human activity that cause overgrowth of algae and cyanobacteria;
7. Be free from the introduction and spread of **aquatic invasive species** and **terrestrial invasive species** that harm water quality;
8. Be free from the harmful impacts of **contaminated groundwater**; and,
9. Be free from **other substances, materials or conditions** that may negatively impact the waters of the Great Lakes.

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

Annexes

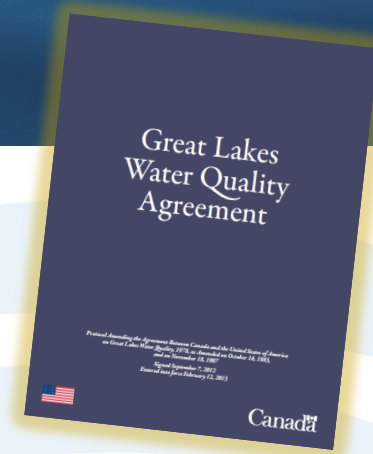
1. Areas of Concern
2. Lakewide Management
3. Chemicals of Mutual Concern
4. Nutrients
5. Discharges from Vessels
6. Aquatic Invasive Species
7. Habitat & Species
8. Groundwater
9. Climate Change Impacts
10. Science



Agreement Responsibilities

Although an agreement between federal governments, overall responsibility for implementation of the Agreement rests with:

- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- ...with the participation of many other federal, state/provincial governments, First Nations, Tribal and Metis governments, municipal governments, watershed management agencies, and other local public agencies.



Learn more at: www.binational.net



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement also assigned additional responsibilities to the IJC



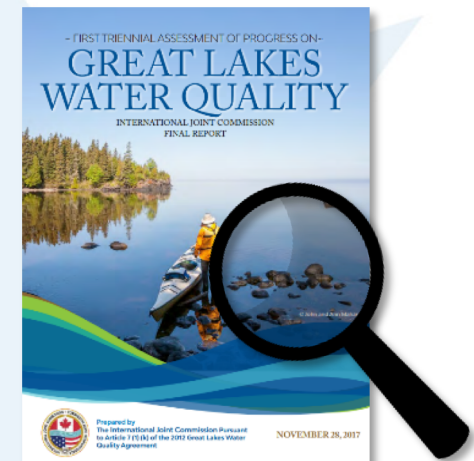
- IJC opened its Great Lakes Regional Office in 1978 (Windsor, Ontario)
 - Almost exclusive focus on GLWQA
 - Director, 7 Scientists, 1 public affairs staff, support staff
 - Includes both United States and Canadian staff
- The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement assigns three primary roles to the IJC:
 - Offer advice to the governments
 - Assess the progress of governments every three years
 - Public outreach

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement also assigned additional responsibilities to the IJC



Every three years, the governments of Canada and the United States issue a report documenting their progress toward meeting the objectives of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

The IJC conducts its own review of this progress report, and seeks feedback from public, private, and Indigenous organizations in compiling information. **The IJC's 2020 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement *Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP)* Report is expected in Spring 2020.**



IJC's Great Lakes Advisory Boards

Water Quality Board (http://ijc.org/en_/wqb)

- **Serves as principal advisor to the Commission on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.**

Recent projects and areas of focus:

- Climate change impacts and adaptation in the Great Lakes Basin
- Great Lakes wetlands protection and enhancement
- Oversight of animal feeding operations for manure management in the Great Lakes basin
- Decommissioning of nuclear facilities

IJC's Great Lakes Advisory Boards

Science Advisory Board (http://ijc.org/en_/sab)

- Provides advice on scientific matters referred to it by the Commission or the Water Quality Board
- Comprised of two committees:
 - Science Priority Committee – academic/pure science focus
 - Research Coordination Committee – applied/operational science focus

Recent projects and areas of focus:

- Analysis of sources of nutrients to Lake Erie (supplemental)
- Potential impacts of unrefined hydrocarbons on water quality
- Declining offshore lake productivity
- Interacting stressors
- Modelling platform for groundwater-surface water interaction
- Great Lakes connecting channels
- Developing a Great Lakes Early Warning System
- Great Lakes Science Plan

Issues and Challenges

- Water levels and Impacts on Water Quality
 - How to we adapt to a changing climate?
 - Resiliency and Adaptive Management Approaches
- Nutrient loading/Runoff and Harmful Algal Blooms
- Aquatic Invasive Species
 - Develop Binational Management Plan for Dreissenid Mussels (Zebra and Quagga)
 - Tench
 - Asian Carp Prevention and Grass Carp Management
- Need for Collaborative Basin-wide Decision-making
 - Integrated Ballast Water Management
 - Great Lakes Science Planning and Monitoring



Thank You