

Draft letter to recipients of water report

Date

Address of recipient

Dear

In view of your interest in the management of Canada's water resources, I would like to bring to your attention an important report prepared by a study group of the National Capital Branch of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs entitled "The Transboundary Water Resources of Canada and the United States", a copy of which is enclosed. The report can also be found on the Internet under www.ciiia.org, clicking on *What's New*.

The Canadian Institute of International Affairs (CIIA) was formed in 1928 to promote a deeper understanding of international affairs and Canada's role in a changing world by providing interested Canadians with a non-partisan nation-wide forum for informed discussion, analysis and debate. It has branches in many Canadian cities and the National Capital Branch has always been one of the most active. In addition to hosting speakers and arranging seminars on various topics, the Branch from time to time forms small study groups within its membership to pursue specific topics in greater depth. One such group recently prepared the attached report. While there have since been developments with respect to the two specific cases mentioned in the paragraph below, important longer term issues remain in these cases, as well as more generally.

As the report points out for two cases, decisions regarding the shared waters along the border could flare up quickly into problems for Canadian-US relations. One is North Dakota's diversion of waters from Devils Lake into a tributary of the Red River in Manitoba. The other is the current proposal under the so-called Annex 2001 of the Great Lakes Charter to take water from the Great Lakes to meet the needs of municipalities just outside the Great Lakes basin. The report calls on the Governments of Canada and the United States for timely referral of these matters to the International Joint Commission for expert assessment and action.

These are immediate problems, but there are also long-term issues which, if not addressed now, could cause serious tension in Canada-United States water relations. These include: the pressures of continuing population and economic growth on both the quantity and the quality of the shared water resources; the significance of non-visible groundwater flows in border areas, our knowledge of which is sorely inadequate; the effect of climate change and climate variability on water resources along the border; and the potential detrimental impacts of the invasion of non-native aquatic species into