INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan consists of three elements: i) a Mission Statement; (ii) Guiding Principles; and (iii) an outline of Objectives and of Approaches to Be Followed.

The Mission Statement explains why the Commission exists and the key roles it is meant to fill. It answers the question: What is this organization all about?

The Guiding Principles set out the Commission's values or code of ethics. It establishes the standards by which the Commission must judge itself and be judged by others.

The Objectives establish five strategic goals directed to sustaining and enhancing the Commission's relevance and effectiveness, while the Approaches to Be Followed describe the path to reaching these goals and the sub-objectives to be met along the way.

The Strategic Plan is not an action or work plan but is intended to provide a foundation for such plans. Their development constitutes the next step in the Commission's planning process. While the Strategic Plan represents long-term commitments, it will nevertheless need periodic review and revision in the light of developments. To ensure its implementation, Commissioners will assess the progress made at least once a year.

MISSION STATEMENT

The International Joint Commission prevents and resolves disputes between the United States of America and Canada under the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty and pursues the common good of both countries as an independent and objective adviser to the two governments.

In particular, the Commission rules upon applications for approval of projects affecting boundary or transboundary waters and may regulate the operation of these projects; it assists the two countries in the protection of the transboundary environment, including the implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the improvement of transboundary air quality; and it alerts the governments to emerging issues along the boundary that may give rise to bilateral disputes.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The Commission gives full effect to the spirit and purpose of its mandate as expressed in relevant agreements and references.

2. As a binational institution, the Commission maintains strict impartiality in the performance of its duties.

3. Commissioners represent only the Commission and not the government that has appointed them. Advisers and staff members serve only the Commission and not their respective governments. Members of the Commission's boards or similar bodies serve on such bodies in their personal and professional capacity and not as representatives of the agencies or organizations that employ them.

4. While the Commission comprises two sections and maintains offices in Washington, Ottawa and Windsor, it remains a single integrated body working collegially in a spirit of openness, mutual trust and confidence, and in the common interest of both countries.

5. The Commission seeks to achieve consensus wherever possible, both in its own deliberations and those of its boards and similar bodies.

6. The Commission employs joint fact-finding as a foundation for building consensus and determining appropriate action.

7. The Commission affords all parties interested in any matter before it a convenient opportunity to be heard. It promotes the engagement of state, provincial and municipal governments and other authorities in the resolution of these matters.

8. While directing its advice and assistance to governments, the Commission takes account of the need to foster public awareness of the issue in question and ensure that the public is able to contribute to the consideration and implementation of its assessments by governments.

9. The Commission's advice must be not only independent and objective but also timely, well-founded, honest, and relevant.

10. In environmental matters, the Commission affirms the concept of sustainable development, the ecosystem approach, and the virtual elimination and zero discharge of persistent toxic substances. While emphasizing the importance of a sound scientific basis for its conclusions and recommendations, the Commission also recognizes that it may sometimes be necessary to adopt a precautionary approach and to act even in the absence of a scientific consensus where prudence is essential to protect the public welfare.

11. The Commission's rules of procedure must be in accordance with justice and equity.

12. The Commission adheres to the highest ethical standards in all its activities.

13. The Commission seeks to ensure the inclusion of appropriate expertise in the membership of its boards, while drawing that expertise from a diversity of sources on a non-discriminatory basis.
OBJECTIVES AND APPROACHES TO BE FOLLOWED

Objective 1:

Sustaining and enhancing the Commission's effectiveness and relevance in preventing disputes and resolving issues concerning transboundary water levels and flows.

Approaches to Be Followed:

1. The Commission reaffirms the importance of its role in passing upon cases involving the use or diversion or obstruction waters in keeping with the provisions of the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty.

2. The Commission will provide all necessary support for the work of its international boards with responsibilities for transboundary water levels and flows. It acknowledges the invaluable support provided to these boards by government agencies and others.

3. Subject to the terms of the Boundary Waters Treaty and other treaties as appropriate, the Commission will seek to apply the ecosystem approach in carrying out its responsibilities under its various Orders concerning transboundary water levels and flows, and in responding to future references and applications from the two governments on these matters.

4. The Commission must be prepared to address issues that may arise from pressures for reapportionments and additional water storage and diversions both within and beyond transboundary watersheds. To this end, and within its existing authority, the Commission will initiate a study of the management of water demand and supply (as proposed in its report on The IJC and the 21st Century).

5. As the passage of time raises the possibility that there may have been fundamental changes in the circumstances on which some of the Commission's existing Orders were premised, and that they may no longer satisfy the requirements of the Boundary Waters Treaty for the protection and indemnification of interests, the Commission will, within its existing authority, review its Orders to determine whether any require amendment in the light of these considerations (as proposed in The IJC and the 21st Century).

Objective 2:

Sustaining and enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of the Commission's boards.

Approaches To Be Followed:

1. The Commission's boards are an essential part of the IJC system. The Commission will review their terms of reference and mandates in the light of the proposal to establish a system of international watershed boards. The
Commission, in consultation with the boards, will determine which of these bodies will continue in their present form and which may be subsumed within one of the new watershed boards. Board membership and priorities will have to be examined in the light of new mandates. (The mandates and priorities of the Great Lakes Water Quality Board, Great Lakes Science Advisory Board and the Air Quality Advisory Board are discussed separately.)

2. Boards will be allowed flexibility in their reporting cycles, with some reports being made annually instead of semi-annually. Special or interim reports may be prepared where appropriate. A team of board members and Commissioners and Commission advisers will be established to reassess the entire reporting process.

3. Commissioners will engage in an active dialogue with the boards in the development of board reports; they will review with them their findings and conclusions and take them into account in formulating their advice to governments. More generally, Commissioners will pursue greater interaction with the boards through attendance at board meetings, through board participation at the Commission's own semi-annual meetings, and through special sessions to be organized from time to time.

**Objective 3:**

Sustaining and enhancing the Commission's assistance to the Parties in the implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

**Approaches to Be Followed:**

1. The Commission reaffirms that its role under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement is clearly set out in Article VII and Annex 2 of the agreement, and is not limited by the injury test in Article IV of the Boundary Waters Treaty. It is both possible and desirable to combine the ecosystem approach with a particular focus on specific priority objectives such as persistent toxic substances.

2. While the Commission's role is clear, the Commission must establish the priority it will assign to the many and various components of that role. The Commission has for some time focused on evaluating and reporting on progress toward achieving the objectives of the agreement, including programs on Remedial Action Plans, Lakewide Management Plans, the development of indicators, and the virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances. The Commission must determine from time to time whether these remain the appropriate "priority roles". As a priority role, evaluating and reporting on progress would require the Commission to develop a long-term plan for a systematic review of all 17 annexes of the agreement.

3. Clarifying priority roles will facilitate the establishment of the biennial priority activities (generally referred to as "priorities"). The Commission will review the 1991 Criteria for Setting Priorities and update them where necessary. Lead Commissioners will be designated for each priority activity.
4. If, as proposed, the Water Quality Board is to provide the nucleus for, or become part of, an "international watershed board", this expansion of its role will have to be taken into account in the establishment of priorities. The Board's involvement in the proposed study of water quality and quantity must also be addressed.

5. The Commission will equally address the Science Advisory Board's participation in the proposed international watershed board for the Great Lakes basin and in the proposed study of water quality and quantity.

6. The Commission is currently reviewing its biennial consultation process and must decide on approaches that are manageable and productive, that generate public awareness and public confidence that the Commission is listening and acting impartially, and that encourage the development of binational consensus.

7. Biennial reports must focus on key issues relating back to Commission priorities. The greater the number of recommendations, the less likely they are to receive serious attention by governments. Reports should be issued in the first quarter following the end of the biennium concerned if they are not to lose their relevance. Board members will be advised of the content of reports before they are made public.

Objective 4:

Sustaining and enhancing the Commission's effectiveness and relevance in the protection of the transboundary environment from coast to coast.

Approaches to Be Followed:

1. The Commission will give high priority to the implementation of its October 1997 proposals on how best to assist the two governments in meeting the environmental challenges of the 21st century. These proposals form an integral part of the Commission's Strategic Plan and will extend the Commission's environmental reach from coast to coast.

2. The proposal involving the establishment of a continent-wide system of international watershed boards has been given approval in principle by the two governments and the Commission has been requested to identify a location for the first such board in consultation with the governments. The Commission is pursuing consultations on that site, while also pursuing consultations on the establishment of watershed boards in other regions at a later date.

3. The Commission will initiate the implementation of other proposals for which it requires no additional authority (studies on water quantity and quality, on air quality and on data and indicators; a review of existing IJC orders; and biennial reporting on the transboundary environment) following consultations with governments and the relevant boards and the completion of implementation plans now under preparation.
4. The Commission will encourage the development of common standards for water quality that restore and maintain the integrity of transboundary watersheds.

Objective 5:

Sustaining and enhancing the Commission's effectiveness and relevance in the protection of transboundary air quality.

Approaches to Be Followed:

1. The Commission will actively pursue its coast-to-coast air quality mandate as established in a variety of agreements and references and set out in a memorandum of March 27, 1997 by the Commission's legal advisers and International Air Quality Advisory Board liaisons.

2. The Commission, in consultation with the International Air Quality Advisory Board, must determine priorities and time limits for the board's work on the special report on transboundary air quality and the air quality study proposed in the Commission's response to the charge from governments. In so doing, the Commission must take into account the board's continuing responsibilities in respect of atmospheric deposition under the Great Lakes Water Quality agreement.

3. The Commission reaffirms its commitment (set out in its report to the governments under the 1975 reference on air pollution in the Port Huron/Sarnia and Detroit/Windsor region) to continue tracking and reporting on air quality trends in the region and to monitor government regulatory and other initiatives aimed at reducing emissions of airborne toxics.

4. The Commission must define the International Air Quality Advisory Board's role in relation to the mandate of the proposed international watershed boards. The matter will be addressed in the implementation plan for the watershed boards.

5. The Commission will encourage the two governments to develop common or harmonized standards for transboundary air quality that restore and maintain the integrity of air crossing the boundary.

Objective 6:

Sustaining and enhancing the Commission's operational effectiveness and institutional capacity.

Approaches To Be Followed:

General

1. The Commission must concentrate its attention and energies, and develop its expertise, on issues that are of major significance in the context of its core
mission, bearing in mind, however, that it has certain non-discretionary functions and that it must be prepared to address any issue referred to it by the two governments (such as the recent Red River Reference).

2. Wherever possible, Commissioners will present major reports in person to senior officers of the two governments, preferably at the Cabinet level.

3. Commissioners and, where appropriate, advisers and staff will maintain adequate liaison with all relevant agencies of the two governments to ensure that the Commission and the governments are aware of their respective concerns and priorities, and particularly to encourage the governments to make full use of the Commission and respond to its advice. To the extent possible, similar contacts will also be pursued with state, provincial and municipal governments, as well as aboriginal authorities.

4. The Commission and its boards and similar bodies will give particular emphasis to the Commission's responsibility to alert governments to emerging issues that have the potential to generate disputes. Existing boards and the proposed international watershed boards must play a key role in this process, and resources must be dedicated for the production of such special reports as may be required.

Communications

1. The Commission will develop communications strategies and practices that stimulate public awareness of its work and encourage substantive responses to its advice to governments. Commission reports are to be professionally copy-edited and widely publicized as soon as possible, where appropriate. Boards are to get credit for their reports.

2. Commissioners must give greater attention to communications matters, under the leadership of the Public Information Committee. Particular attention must be given to FOCUS and the Internet and better use made of the forums they provide.

Relations Between the Three Offices

1. The two section secretaries and the regional director will consult regularly to ensure effective communications, teamwork and cooperation between the Commission's offices in Ottawa, Washington and Windsor. In addition, the two Co-Chairmen will also have periodic discussions with the regional director in person or by conference call.

2. The authority of the regional director in relation to the Windsor office is analogous to that of the two section secretaries in relation to the Ottawa and Washington offices respectively. As personnel in a binational office, however, the director and staff at Windsor take instructions from the Commission. To avoid confusion, Commissioners will coordinate their individual communications with the Windsor office and will issue only such instructions as are based on decisions by the Commission as a whole.
3. Advisers and staff from Ottawa and Washington will not, as a rule, attend meetings of the boards, unless they are members or secretaries of the body in question. Commissioners will be kept informed of board and council activities through reports and minutes and direct contacts with board secretaries or with the regional director. Washington and Ottawa advisers and staff may, however, assist Commissioners -- and the Co-Chairmen in particular -- to keep informed. This limited liaison function is to be seen as a normal and necessary part of their work.

Role of the Commissioners

1. Commissioners shall make decisions on a timely basis, establish clear priorities, define realistic deliverables, and maintain effective communications and interaction with all branches of the IJC family.

2. Representation by one Commissioner at a meeting, conference or workshop is representation of the Commission as whole, although there may be occasions where representation by more than one Commissioner and representation of both sections will offer some advantage. Where Commissioners speak for the Commission, they do so only on the basis of agreed Commission positions.

3. Commissioners will explore with the two governments the possibility of staggered terms of appointment in the interests of continuity.