



## International Upper Great Lakes Study



# MPs Briefed on Status of International Upper Great Lakes Study

MPs from the Upper Great Lakes and staff from both the House of Commons and Senate were briefed recently by members of the International Upper Great Lakes Study Board. The binational, independent study is examining whether possible physical changes in the St. Clair River may be a cause of low water levels and whether the management of outflows from Lake Superior might be improved by taking into consideration changing interests and changing climate.

Key items for discussion were the recent decision to expedite the Study to produce a report a year ahead of schedule, the extensive work that is already underway on the St. Clair River, the plans for broad outreach to include the public, and the limitations on the mandate of the study to address the question of immediate mitigation. The Study Board also stressed the importance of both the U.S. and Canada providing funding after the Study to operate and maintain gauges in the connecting channels that measure water levels and flows.

“We were encouraged by their receptiveness to our focus on sound science and appreciate their offers of help to further the aims of the study,” said Ted Yuzyk, Canadian co-chair of the Study Board. “We especially want to thank Senator Jerry Grafstein for hosting the event and offering to help address any jurisdictional barriers that may impede the Study progress.”

“The Study is overdue. There have been too many reasons to say no for years. There have been too many reasons not to fund the monitoring that would support these studies about one of the most important water systems to Canadians. I want to help in whatever way I can to get the obstacles out of the way of this work. Let’s get people saying yes. We all want to help the Study get its work done as soon as humanly possible,” said Senator Grafstein (Liberal, Ontario)

Member of Parliament Joe Comuzzi (Conservative, Thunder Bay—Superior North) focused his attentions on Lake Superior, where low levels have created serious problems for cottagers, boaters, shipping and many others.

“I can see that these water levels rival those of the dirty thirties,” said Comuzzi, “but we need the facts, not the fiction, about what’s going on here. We have to get this right.”

Member of Parliament Tony Martin (NDP, Sault Ste. Marie) emphasized how important communication would be going forward. “People in my area are very concerned and the Great Lakes are a great international resource. While we hear many rumours, people appreciate the initial efforts of the Study, and they are anxious to see the next series of results”.

“I was pleased to see the real interest and concerns of MPs discussed openly and candidly,” said Jim Bruce, Study Board member and Canadian co-chair of the Study’s Public Interest Advisory Group. “Many had clearly been following the issue closely and had quite a few questions that our team was pleased to answer.”

The briefing also included a look at preliminary findings of the study, including video of the St. Clair River bed, showing there does not appear to be ongoing erosion in the areas under consideration.

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From left: Senator Jerry Grafstein, Hon. Joe Comuzzi, Geoffrey R. Hall, Rick Prashaw, David Lowe, Tony Martin