

June 11, 1998

The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright
Secretary of State
2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Madame Secretary:

As Great Lakes organizations with a long-time interest in sustainable development in the Great Lakes Basin, we write to ask that you take immediate steps to protect the great water resource that is essential to the health and well-being of the people and wildlife of this region.

As you know, in April Ontario granted the Nova Group a permit to annually gather and export 600 million litres (more than 100 million gallons) of Lake Superior water. Despite the plan's enormous precedential natural resource and trade implications, the permit was granted with no public or interjurisdictional review. Although Ontario is canceling this permit, the incident has highlighted the inadequacies of existing international, federal, provincial and state arrangements for protecting our Great Lakes water resource from coming demands and stresses.

First, we urge you to place an immediate moratorium on all proposed Great Lakes diversions, including proposed water export plans, until the provinces, states and federal governments have implemented a long-term strategy to sustain and protect Great Lakes waters. The last comprehensive measures dealing with Great Lakes water diversion issues, the Great Lakes Charter and the pertinent U.S. Water Resources Development Act amendments, were effected in the mid-1980s and are inadequate to address the problems of growing global demands for water, growing domestic development, and climate change.

Second, we urge the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of State, in consultation with Great Lakes premiers, governors and Native nations, to immediately begin negotiating a treaty on water withdrawals and diversions. This treaty should use the Great Lakes Charter as its foundation. However, the provisions of the Charter should be strengthened to empower all affected jurisdictions – provinces, states, Native nations, and the federal governments – with the authority to approve all proposed diversions and withdrawals, including diversions and withdrawals of groundwater, for use

outside the Great Lakes Basin. We ask that municipalities and the public be involved in the negotiation of this treaty.

Finally, we urge you to initiate, on a parallel track, a multilateral process for developing a long-term water conservation plan for the Great Lakes Basin as a whole. Such a plan should address the impacts of increasing consumptive uses and large-scale conversions of groundwater to surface water as well as the predicted impact of climate change.

Clear trends in population growth, sprawling suburban development, and climate change suggest the likelihood of a long-term decline in Great Lakes water quantity. Last year, Great Lakes United and the Canadian Environmental Law Association published *The Fate of the Great Lakes: Sustaining or Draining the Sweetwater Seas?*, a comprehensive look at long-term pressures on Great Lakes water quantity. Please find this report enclosed for your review as you consider our requests for a moratorium on Great Lakes Basin diversion proposals, followed by a new treaty to protect the precious Great Lakes water resource, the economic and spiritual lifeblood of the Great Lakes human and ecological community.

Very sincerely,

Paul Muldoon
Executive Director
Canadian Environmental Law Association

Margaret Wooster
Executive Director
Great Lakes United

Mark Van Putten
President and CEO
National Wildlife Federation