

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
HT-2, The Capitol
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
HT-2, The Capitol
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Rogers,

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2020 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you include language that would prevent the International Joint Commission (IJC) from using any funding to further implement the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Plan (Plan 2014).

In light of rising water levels and historic coastal flooding on Lake Ontario, serious evaluations are needed regarding the efficacy of Plan 2014. According to readings recently released by the International Lake Ontario- St. Lawrence River Board, water levels on Lake Ontario continue to stand well above the average for previous years. While we acknowledge a number of factors contribute to these levels, Plan 2014 has played a clear role in escalating the threat of severe flooding that now faces our region.

Unfortunately, the lack of a presiding quorum at the IJC has prevented any substantive response to the serious environmental and economic concerns raised by communities throughout our districts. Four of six commissioners are needed to constitute a quorum at the IJC, however, the three seats filled by Canadian appointees remain vacant and only two U.S. commissioners are seated pending confirmation of nominations made by President Trump. For our constituents, this represents an unacceptable lapse in leadership on issues that affect their livelihood and safety.

With a recent forecast from the Army Corps of Engineers projecting sustained high water levels throughout the year, immediate action is needed to mitigate the risk of catastrophic flooding on the coastline of Lake Ontario. Communities throughout our region were devastated by severe flooding in 2017, and a more responsive system is needed to help prevent such an outcome in the future. Absent leadership from the IJC or any suitable forum for local leaders to voice these concerns, the continued implementation of Plan 2014 places our districts at risk.

For these reasons, we request the following language be inserted into the FY20 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill:

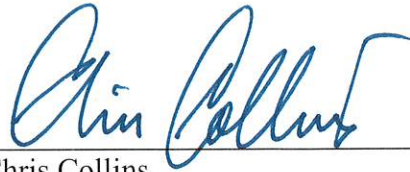
Sec. _____, None of the funds made available in the Act may be used to implement the International Joint Commission's Plan 2014.

Including this language would provide needed relief to coastal communities and allow for substantive conversations to be held on effective methods for monitoring water levels on Lake Ontario. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Katko", written above a horizontal line.

John Katko
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Collins", written above a horizontal line.

Chris Collins
Member of Congress