

Report on Great Lakes

In an interim report entitled *Protection of the Waters of the Great Lakes*, tabled in mid-August 1999, the International Joint Commission (IJC) recommended that the federal, provincial and state governments in Canada and the United States not authorise any new bulk removals or sales of surface or ground water that might threaten the integrity of the water in the Great Lakes basin.

The recommendation calls on these governments to exercise caution about consumptive uses of this water, in accordance with the *Great Lakes Charter* and present legislation in both countries.

In its preliminary conclusions, the IJC notes that there is never a surplus of water in the Great Lakes basin ecosystem; that removals of water from the system

reduce its resilience and ability to cope with unpredictable future stress; that there is uncertainty and inadequate information about removals of groundwater; that actual future demand for water is uncertain; that mounting evidence of potential climate change makes the future water supply and thus the level and flow of water in the Great Lakes increasingly uncertain; and that the *Great Lakes Charter* criteria on significant proposed diversions and consumptive uses are not strict enough.

The IJC will hold public hearings in order to hear comments on its interim report, and will fully consult governments and other stakeholders on the report and the IJC's activities during phase two, scheduled for completion in February 2000. □