

# SHOAL LAKE NO. 40 FIRST NATION

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## PRESS RELEASE

November 6, 2014. 9:30 AM

### **International Joint Commission to Canada: Please Look Into Non-Compliance with Permit Conditions on Winnipeg's Diversion of Shoal Lake Water**

In a detailed letter to the governments of Canada and the United States, the International Joint Commission expresses concern that Winnipeg may not be in compliance with the conditions of their water diversion permit. The letter -copied to both Winnipeg and Ontario- asks the governments to make a "determination regarding the City of Winnipeg's compliance with the provisions of the 1914 [IJC] Order, specifically regarding the use of water and compensation for damages." The IJC's 1914 Order allowed the Greater Winnipeg Water District utility to divert water out of Shoal Lake and Lake of the Woods in Ontario "for domestic and sanitary purposes", however that Order stipulated, among other conditions, that "full compensation would be made to all private parties whose lands or properties were taken, injuriously affected, or in any way interfered with by the Shoal Lake diversion." That appears not to have been the case.

The IJC has become increasingly concerned about the "harm done to the First Nations' members and lands due to the water diversion from Shoal Lake by the City of Winnipeg." That concern prompted the Commissioners to travel to Shoal Lake this summer to see the situation for themselves. It seems they were not pleased with what they saw. Among the 'injurious effects' their letter details was the fact, "that the City of Winnipeg's removal of a secure land connection to First Nation No. 40 has directly led to the deaths of nine First Nation members."

Chief Erwin Redsky expressed satisfaction that after 100 years the IJC is finally monitoring the consequences of Canada's expropriation of Shoal Lake 40 reserve and the imposition of Winnipeg's interests in the traditional territory of the Shoal Lake First Nations.

*"Winnipeg's water diversion interferes with every facet of our lives and our economy and Canada and Ontario enable that interference. Our living Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations demonstrates in detail how Canadians don't live up to their word, so it's really refreshing to have treaty commissioners –men and women of international stature who know the importance of keeping your promises –to have them come and see how our rights have been ignored and then have them hold Canada, Winnipeg and Ontario to account. We welcome international oversight because despite their fine words, Canadians have proven incapable of policing themselves. We look forward to the IJC's process of accountability."*

**Background:** The harm to Shoal Lake #40 First Nation from the City of Winnipeg's water diversion has been recognized by Amnesty International, the Council of Canadians and the international media. The story detailing the terrible human cost of Winnipeg's water diversion is to be formally acknowledged in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which uses Shoal Lake water in their building.

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