



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senator Helming Calls IJC to Task Over Rising Lake Ontario Water Levels

SENATOR PAM HELMING May 13, 2019

| ISSUE: **LAKE ONTARIO FLOODING, LAKE ONTARIO**

GENEVA – Citing rising water levels on the southern shoreline of Lake Ontario, Senator Helming once again called on the International Joint Commission to abolish Plan 2014 and assist local communities. Many areas are already bracing for flooding, and New York State has deployed sandbagging machines and emergency response resources.

In February, Senator Helming and Assemblyman Brian Manktelow, joined by several other regional representatives, wrote a letter to U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer, notifying them the water level must be stabilized or risk future flooding. They also urged an immediate vote on the appointment of new IJC board members, who will work with local stakeholders to prevent flooding. To date, this vote has not taken place in the U.S. Senate.

“How much longer do we need to wait for the IJC to step up to the table and do something? They continue to sit on their hands as thousands of local residents prepare for the worst. They have refused every effort to reform Plan 2014. This is irresponsible and endangers the health, safety, and property of thousands of people. The IJC bureaucrats hold the fate of our communities in their hands, and their lack of communication on the developing flood situation is alarming. Since the flooding in 2017, we have tried time and again to work with

them to no avail. There needs to be an immediate change on the IJC board, and that starts with the U.S. Senate appointing new commissioners who will do their jobs and consider the safety of our local communities,” said Senator Helming.

In 2017, the Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River shoreline was devastated by flooding. New York State provided more than \$85 million in direct recovery assistance to homeowners, businesses, and communities. Area businesses and local municipalities sustained tens of millions of dollars in damages, much of which they will never be able to recover. As communities continue to rebuild and prepare for the long term, we owe it to our residents and business owners to prepare for the future and do all we can to prevent this from happening again.

Plan 2014 was passed in December 2016 as then President Barack Obama was leaving office. It was a well-known fact that the new thresholds established in Plan 2014 would flood and devastate low-lying communities like Sodus Point, Fair Haven, and Irondequoit Bay. Despite having this knowledge, the plan was approved and federal bureaucrats did nothing to assist local communities with resiliency planning.