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**Water Organizations and Advocates Ask International Joint Commission to Declare the Great Lakes a Public Trust While Continuing to Assess Persistent Threats**

**Detroit, MI** – Flow for Water, a coalition of several national and state organizations, Council of Canadians, and On the Commons are excited to announce participation in Great Lakes Week in Detroit from October 12 – 14. Specifically, the Joint Great Lakes Town Hall Meeting on October 12 at the International Joint Commission’s (IJC) Biennial Meeting will offer our organizations and other water rights activists the opportunity to speak openly with key administrators and advisors from the United States and Canada on the global water issues facing the Great Lakes and beyond.

Flow for Water Chair, Jim Olson alongside Emma Lui, Water Campaigner of the Council of Canadians, will present on the overarching principles for integrating water pollution concerns from the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with the Boundary Water Treaty’s treatment of flows, levels, and quantities. This is one step in the campaign to address the need for providing lasting protection of our waters in the form of a public trust.

A Great Lakes Basin commons would reject the view that the primary function of the Great Lakes is to promote the interests of industry and give them preferential access to the Lakes’ boundaries.

“We need overarching twenty-first century principles to address massive twenty-first century threats that transcend an obsolete twentieth century legal framework,” said Jim Olson, a leading U.S. water law expert and Chair of Flow for Water. “The International Joint Commission took the lead when it addressed pockets of pollution in its landmark

1972 Water Quality Agreement. It can take the lead again by looking to adopt a broad framework of principles, like commons and the public trust, which will assure rights of shared use and duties of shared respect for the Great Lakes for generations to come.”

As part of the overall effort to save the Great Lakes from the myriad threats from the past and this century, we are asking that the International Joint Commission consider the Great Lakes a commons and public trust and in doing so, acknowledge the threats facing the Great Lakes and its ecosystem and take steps to reenvision the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement as was done when it was enacted as a landmark step in 1972.

“The threats facing the Great Lakes and our waters and communities, like climate change, fracking oil and gas, mining tar sands in Canada, are compounded by the global water crisis,” said Maude Barlow, renowned water activist, author, and National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians. “Our right to water, health, economy, and environment depend on the integrity of the water and Great Lakes ecosystem as a shared living commons.”

The public trust principles are about a broader picture for the health of our waters and citizens and the IJC has an opportunity to acknowledge that.

“In today's ever more privatized world, the Great Lakes are seen as up for grabs. We see them as a living commons that belongs to all, whose waters must be equitably shared and vigorously protected for the generations to come,” said Alexa Bradley, Program Director of On the Commons.

The organizations say that a comprehensive approach will protect the Great Lakes as a whole from abuse and threats by powerful outside interests, while leaders, scientists and citizens address specific problems, like healing our waters from past harms, invasive species, or climate change.

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*Council of Canadians is the largest citizens' organization working to promote policies on fair trade, clean water, energy security, public health care, and other similar issues. For more information please visit [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org).*

*Flow for Water is an organization working to ensure that the Great Lakes Basin remains in the public trust. For more information please visit [www.flowforwater.org](http://www.flowforwater.org).*

*On the Commons is an organization that draws attention to the importance of the commons in the modern world through solutions that help achieve environmental restoration, social justice and global cooperation. For more information please visit [www.onthecommons.org](http://www.onthecommons.org).*