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Smith Notes Progress on Lake Cleanup

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WINDSOR, Ont., Aug. 1 — The U.S. chairman of the International Joint Commission said Thursday that there has been "tremendous progress" by both the U.S. and Canada in efforts to clean up the Great Lakes.

Henry P. Smith III, former North Tonawanda congressman who now heads the U.S. Section of the IJC, said the commission will meet Sept. 29 in Ottawa to prepare its watchdog report on the Lakes program to the two nations.

The commissioner said, however, it may be a year from now before the IJC is able to say with any degree of certainty whether the two nations meet the Dec. 31, 1975 deadline for municipal and industrial remedial works to be "completed or in the process of implementation."

MR. SMITH said the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency takes the position that "the agreement will be substantially met."

The chairman said the federal agency contends that while not all of the construction will have been completed or even started, the funds have been allocated and the initial planning completed.

Asked if the IJC in its watchdog role will make assessment of the Status of compliance with the agreement, Mr. Smith said the commission may not have all the facts by Dec. 31 to make such an assessment.

He said the commission's position at this point is that there has been "a tremendous amount of progress made and a great deal remains to be done. The commission will certainly take the position that this effort should be continued . . . for as long as it takes to do the job."

Mr. Smith spoke to newsmen following a four-day meeting of the commission with the Great Lakes Water Quality Board and other advisory agencies involved in cleaning up the lakes.

HE SAID the EPA furnished the commission with a computer printout showing information on the status of some 292 of 312 major industrial dischargers on the Lakes, but the printout provides no information on the status of meeting industrial clean-up deadlines.

Mr. Smith told newsmen that the Water Quality Board had urged that the two governments "start national discussions on the problem of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) found in fish, noting that the levels exceed by 50 times those felt acceptable by the board."