

# Water issues between canada and the usa report examples

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

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1. [Current & potential Areas of conflict over Water](#) \n \t
2. [Water Issue & the NAFTA](#) \n \t
3. [Devils Lake Study: An Analysis](#) \n \t
4. [Canadian Jurisdictions](#) \n \t
5. [Canada's position on boundary waters](#) \n \t
6. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
7. [Works Cited](#) \n

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## Canada/U. S Cross-Border Water Issues: An Introduction

The cordial relationship between Canada and the USA has long been considered as a source of pleasure and satisfaction for both these countries. The USA is Canada's leading business partner, comprising about 90% of two-way trade. Over US \$400 billion in goods now move across the border per annum.

In the last couple of decades, Canada has become the top supplier of energy requirements of the USA, and thus has surpassed the Middle Eastern countries. The exports from Canada consist of uranium and hydroelectric power, in addition to oil and natural gas (Grafstein, 2004). Consequently, both these countries have built various methods for handling cross-boundary ecological issues. Especially, the policies concerning water supply have

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benefited much as a result of two-way environmental management.

Two bi-national accords namely The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and 2) the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 have proposed an outlined for joint enterprise. However, the signs of discord between Canada and the USA in trade and environmental relationships have surfaced between these two countries.

### **Current & potential Areas of conflict over Water**

The Great Lakes and St Lawrence River in North America are considered as world's largest reservoir of fresh water. They provide potable water to more than 45 million people, and help in sustaining 50% of US-Canada trade. The mainstream of Canadian industries and about 25% of its agriculture take place in the dividing line of the Great Lakes. The shippers carry about US \$80 billion worth of trade goods yearly through the lakes using the St. Lawrence Seaway. Whilst the water region of the Great Lakes is enormous, it is therefore significantly utilized. Urban and industrial development in the Great Lakes has caused a rise of water consumption. Especially, migration from water various places of the world has resulted in the phenomenal rise of population growth.

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between Canada and the USA is under the evaluation and supposedly offers an opportunity for the improvement in the organization of the Great Lakes. Nevertheless, in view of the USA's past aggressive record all over the world, there seemed to be a great pressure to twist the accord supporting the US interests.

At the critical time of growing environmental movements, about 70% of the

Canadians are against water export, a trend the analyst Lassi re termed as “hydro-nationalism” (Norman, Cohen, & Baker, 2013). The prospects for environmental harm from water export are believed to be enormous.

## **Water Issue & the NAFTA**

Prior to the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Canada was quite capable to protect its fresh water supplies. However, in 1988, the Canadian Government tabled the Canada Water Preservation Act to stop massive diversions and exports of Canadian water. The law was not ratified, and was never reintroduced. Yet, it appeared rational to see a clause to exempt water could have been introduced in the FTA when it was being outlined. Nevertheless, this was also not taken up, for motives that have not been clearly revealed. Because of such uncertainties, there is still much discussion over whether or not water exports are conditional on NAFTA policies (Boyd, 2003).

According to Boyd (2003), many water uses that were advantageous to the USA were already conditional on clauses in NAFTA. One such regulation is the creation of hydroelectric power, much of which is purchased by the customers in the USA. If the Canadians wanted to decrease exports to the USA of electrical energy, NAFTA would need a corresponding reduction in the Canadian power use.

Before the creation of NAFTA, Canada made deals that significantly helped the US interests. The Columbia River was dammed to provide electrical power mainly to the lower portion of the basin in the USA. However, the Canadians had to pay much of the cost of building of the basic infrastructure.

No damages were ever granted to Canada for the huge number of salmon fish that once accessed Canadian rivers. This renewable supply of fish for Canada has been lost forever, as a result of the dams. Moreover, much of the hydro-electrical power generated in Canada is supplied to the USA.

### **Devils Lake Study: An Analysis**

In 2004, the USA announced that it would continue to work for the Devils Lake diversion which is believed by the large population of Canadians as a threat to her aquatic systems. Briefly, the American policies concerning water have become quite hostile in its relationship with Canada. The conflict over water issues is expected to rise in the coming years.

The age-old conflict between both the USA and Canada and between North Dakota and Minnesota, against the ever-growing Devils Lake in North Dakota is a good case for such a complex trans-boundary dispute between the two neighboring countries. It would be quite hard to see a more intricate clash that engages so many diverse groups, powers, and the government laws. For over couple of decades, efforts to curb the development and flooding of Devils Lake have been a source of conflict for both governments (Rebuffoni 22A). Indeed, the accord between the two countries might directly lead to a short-term solution of the long-standing Devils Lake problem.

It is usually seen by all parties engaged in this conflict that the circumstances at Devils Lake has touched critical position. The incongruity is found in the anticipated consequences for this problem. On one side there existed the American State of North Dakota and the US Government in the form of the EPA. The other side comprises of the different US and Canadian

renowned groups, and the Minnesota.

The discord arises from the unfavorable parties' apprehensions that the Sheyenne River outlet would cause environmentally detrimental water into the river, which would consequently contaminate the river system, of the Hudson Bay. The Devils Lake holds a large amount of minerals “ that could produce critical digestive pain if used and could be harmful to marine life” (McKenna A27). Thus, the water quality in Devils Lake is perhaps much poorer than the water condition in the Lake Winnipeg, and there are concerns that the water quality limit exceeds appropriate water quality standards.

Moreover, there is an apprehension concerning the chances of biota movement from Devils Lake to the Red River basin, mainly as a result of signs that there has been no major swap of water between the Devils Lake and the Red River basin for about 2 millenniums.

A large number of issues had continued to be discussed until the August 2005 accord between Manitoba and North Dakota. Those resisting the outlet claimed that the adding of Devils Lake water into the Red River system created a possible danger to trade and sport fisheries linked to the Hudson Bay basin.

The apprehensions over water quality are valid, yet the solutions to those issues must be evaluated to safeguard the people. On the other hand, the debate over how to suitably balance North Dakota's utilization of its police powers to assist its people is considered strongly against the focus of such parties to safeguard their waters from contamination.

## **Canadian Jurisdictions**

In the case of Devils Lake dispute between Canada and the USA, the relevant international agreement law is the BWT of 1909. This law was established through an agreement between the USA and Britain, which also comprised Canada. The law states that both the countries must work amicably towards the solution of all international trans-boundary discords as regards pollution and contamination in all “ navigable waters.” As well, the BWT helped in the creation of the International Joint Commission, the controlling international administrative organization to oversee all trans-boundary water conflicts between Canada and the USA. It has been applied to help solve many trans-boundary water disputes between these two countries since its launching; nevertheless, in the Devils Lake case, the IJC has not, been asked to analyze the case.

## **Canada’s position on boundary waters**

Of late, the Canadian government seems to be yielding many of its Canada-US water responsibilities. The issue of water diversions is clearly the responsibility of the Canadian Government. Yet the government has decided to bargain it with the USA.

All the water diversions in the near future are expected to take place on the US side of the basin. This would give the USA significant advantage over water-related issues in Canada. Hence, it would harm Canada’s capability to safeguard Canadian interests under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909.

## Conclusion

The relationship between Canada and the USA has normally been cordial. However, with the emergence of the water issue that has been vital for both these countries, there is a new chapter of the future relationship between the two countries.

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