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Slaughter Gives Remarks at the Boundary Waters Treaty Centennial Celebration

Niagara Falls, NY - *Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today gave the closing remarks at the Boundary Waters Treaty Centennial Celebration at the Rainbow Bridge. □ The International Joint Commission and the Niagara Region's ten municipalities hosted the event to celebrate the centennial of the Boundary Waters Treaty. Slaughter was an Honorary Co-Chair of the historic event.*

The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 is an important agreement between Canada and the United States that has enabled bi-national cooperation on an important shared natural resource for a century. The treaty established the International Joint Commission and provides principles for Canada and the United States to follow in using their shared boundary waters.

The following are the Congresswoman's remarks, as prepared, for the event:

Thank you all for joining us today in honoring the one hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Boundary Waters Treaty in 1909. As with many people who live along the U.S.-Canada border, we in Western New York do not think of the bi-national Buffalo-Niagara region as two separate countries, but rather as one community. Along most of the border, there is a common ground, here in Niagara Falls, there is a common river. We have shared principles and values, and rely on an intertwining economic relationship that is vital to our prosperity. It is imperative that all federal border policies recognize that the U.S.-Canada border is a vital channel for travel and commerce, and that both countries are each other's largest trade and tourism partners.

The U.S. - Canadian relationship is one of the most unique in the world. We share the longest unguarded border in the world - a demonstration of the spirit of trust and openness shared by our two great nations. That spirit has produced and sustained a thriving cross-border tourism industry and hundreds of billions of dollars in trade between our countries every year.

However, our strong friendship was not always a reality. In the War of 1812, the U.S. tried to conquer Canada amidst the frenzy of War Hawks and imperialists. In the early 1900's, the sharing of boundary waters between Canada and the United States was such a source of tension that farmers and ranchers in North Dakota and Alberta were building competing canals to divert the waters of the St. Mary's and Milk River for their own uses. Here in Western New York, the sharing of Niagara River for hydroelectric production threatened to leave no water for Niagara Falls itself. And yet, over time, the U.S. - Canadian relationship grew to become one of the most successful bi-national relationships of the modern world. This treaty is the symbol as well as the foundation for our remarkable cooperation. There have not been such inflammatory disputes over water since that time. Around the world, however, fresh water continues to become scarce. This treaty serves as an example to other nations and water basins across the globe of how a peaceful resolution can stand the test of time.

The agreement between Canada and the United States has enabled bi-national cooperation on our most cherished natural resource: the Niagara River. Establishing the International Joint Commission, the treaty provides principles for Canada and the United States to follow in using their shared boundary waters. It provides the mechanisms to help resolve disputes and to prevent future ones.

As the world's first environmental agreement and a model of bi-national governance, the

Boundary Waters Treaty continues to guide the governments of the United States and Canada in their joint stewardship of trans-boundary natural resources. The legacy of progressive cooperation for which the Treaty was negotiated will continue to inspire peace and rapport along our vast border.

As Niagara River is the central piece of the Boundary Waters Treaty, it is only fitting that we return to this location to recognize 100 years of cooperative sharing. Niagara Falls is one of the world's greatest treasures and I have had the honor of representing the area and its people for over twenty years.

Water is vital to the culture, economy and quality of life in the cross-border Niagara region. It is the centerpiece of our tourism, and a powerhouse of energy. To enhance understanding and appreciation for the significance of the region's abundant water resources, municipal jurisdictions in Western New York and the Niagara Region of Southern Ontario, we have designated 2009 as The Year of Our Shared Waters. Across Niagara, in an effort to stimulate businesses, cultural programs, environmental organizations, educational institutions, and government departments, are all invited to consider new and innovative ways of incorporating our most cherished resource, water, into their 2009 planning and programming. Thank you, and may the peace and prosperity that thrives along our border continue for another hundred years!

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