

Oct. 19, 1987

Statement on Protection of Lake Champlain

Governor Madeleine Kunin and Mayor Bernard Sanders today announced a tentative agreement between State government and the City of Burlington for a financial package which would enable the City of Burlington to eliminate raw sewage from entering Lake Champlain.

This pollution abatement project, which is the most expensive environmental project in the state's history, will cost \$52 million and extend over a 5-year period. Under the proposed agreement, the state will provide the City with a \$13 million grant; the City will put \$13 million directly into the project; and the State will provide a \$26 million zero-interest loan to the City which will be repaid over a period in excess of 20 years.

Mayor Sanders said, "the city and the State have been negotiating this issue intensely for the last several months. I am delighted that we have finally come to a reasonable agreement that I can present to the Board of Aldermen.

"It is my view, and I believe the view of State government, that there is no environmental issue more important to the State of Vermont than the preservation of Lake Champlain as a clean, and environmentally-sound body of water. Lake Champlain is the source of our drinking water; it's where we swim, fish, boat, and where we and visitors to our state spend our leisure time," said Mayor Sanders. "Obviously, the Lake is a central part of the economy of our entire State."

Under this agreement, the residents of Burlington will be putting more money, per capita, into a major pollution abatement project, than almost any community in New England. The result will be, over a period of years, significantly higher wastewater bills for Burlingtonians. However, state government will also be contributing a very significant amount of money toward this project. In future years, as the wastewater facilities of other Vermont communities are enhanced in the same fashion, we expect that they also will be making similar financial commitments.

Up until this point, I am delighted by the non-partisan nature of the discussions which have been taking place. It is clear to me that the governor, her administration, and the Democratic leadership in the Legislature understand the enormous importance of this project--and are prepared to help solve it. I am delighted that the Republican Party has also made the cleanup of the Lake their number one environmental priority and I thank them for their concern. On the Burlington Board of Aldermen, all three political factions, Progressives, Republicans and Democrats, have worked together on this issue in excellent spirit of non-partisanship.

As this agreement will require Legislative approval, both City government and State government intend to move as quickly as possible to win widespread and non-partisan support for it.

Said Mayor Sanders, "I have been deeply impressed by the enormous amount of concern that the people of this region and this State have for the environmental quality of Lake Champlain. I am absolutely confident that with State government, and City Government working together, with Democrats, Republicans and Progressives working together, we are going to have widespread support for this program which will forever preserve the most valuable natural resource in our State."

force for development in this state, rather than the needs of the citizens of our State.

Let me give you an example: if you were to go out to the people of Chittenden County today, and I believe every county in this state and say to them: "Would you prefer a development policy which would create 2,000 new units of desperately-needed affordable housing so that all of our people in chittenden County could live in decent housing without having to spend up to 50% of their income for it?" Or, "Would you prefer a development policy which would build 150 new boutiques and fancy shops, which many of our citizens could not afford to shop in, and in the process create serious economic problems for the established urban centers of this state while creating traffic jams, air pollution and solid waste and water problems for our rural areas?" And if we were to ask the people which type of economic development policy they would prefer, I think they would be overwhelmingly in favor of a policy which provided us with affordable housing, child care centers, and jobs which paid us decent wages rather than the service-type jobs offered in shopping malls.

Let me simply conclude now by saying this: the issue of growth and development is extremely complex and it is clearly going to have to involve a close relationship between local, regional and state government, as well as the private sector. The major point that I wish to make now however, is to emphasize as strongly as I can, that when we consider growth and development we cannot simply be reactive and defensive, but we have to be pro-active and forceful in developing a public policy and funding mechanisms which will not only prevent the type of development we don't want but which will provide us with the development that we do want.