

BACKGROUND

Provincial and Municipal Great Lakes Partnerships

June 1, 2010

Great Lakes protection is a shared responsibility

All levels of government share responsibility for protecting the Great Lakes water quality and aquatic ecosystem. Increasingly, the role that municipalities play is being recognized as crucial to the joint efforts to protect the Great Lakes.

Municipalities provide drinking water, manage sewage and storm water outflows, develop pollution prevention and control plans, operate local beaches and marinas, oversee waterfront development, protect wetlands and natural areas, build and maintain transportation systems, and engage communities in conservation and environmental protection.

Current municipal and provincial Great Lakes partnerships

It is critical that Ontario and municipalities work together to develop and deliver programs to protect and restore the Great Lakes. There are many existing Great Lakes partnerships between Ontario and a number of municipalities. Since 2007 Ontario has:

- Provided \$653 million to help municipalities to upgrade municipal wastewater infrastructure that will improve the quality of treated water going into the Lakes and the health of beaches and coastal areas. This investment is in addition to \$900 million in annual municipal spending for wastewater infrastructure.
- Provided more than \$1 million in grants to municipal partners to help 14 different Great Lakes projects from sediment cleanup to pollution control planning for sewage and wastewater treatment projects.
- Partnered with 13 municipalities and other partners to implement 15 projects to protect and restore Great Lakes aquatic habitats and native fish and wildlife species. Municipalities have contributed more than \$650,000 and more than 2,500 staff hours to these projects.
- Engaged municipalities in three projects involving municipal drainage, watershed planning and stewardship education. Municipalities provided \$65,000 cash and \$3,000 in-kind to these three projects. Ontario provided \$185,000 for these projects.

The Canada-Ontario Agreement Memorandum of Cooperation

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative signed the first Canada-Ontario Agreement Memorandum of Cooperation with Ontario in 2008. The memorandum committed the Cities Initiative to build collaboration between Ontario municipalities and the provincial signatories to the Canada-Ontario Agreement.

The purpose of this Memorandum of Cooperation is to outline the areas of cooperation among the Parties in communications and engagement in support of the existing Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem and a new agreement.

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

Established in 2003, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a bi-national coalition of over 70 mayors and other local officials that works actively with federal, state, tribal, First Nation and provincial governments and other stakeholders to advance the protection, restoration and promotion of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin.

At the 2009 Great Lakes Mayors and Ministers Summit, Ontario mayors identified five areas of cooperation in their “At the Shoreline: a Mayors’ Collaborative Action Plan to Protect the Great Lakes”:

- Create a municipal-provincial-federal Great Lakes table to coordinate effort and share vital information
- Improve and promote beaches and shorelines
- Attack nuisance and toxic algae
- Reduce untreated sewage and stormwater discharges
- Build a business case to drive investments in the Lakes.

Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem

Ontario works with the federal government and other partners to identify specific goals, results and commitments for Great Lakes environmental protection and restoration, and helps Canada to meet its commitments under the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

On March 31, 2010, Canada and Ontario extended the Canada-Ontario Agreement by one year. This extension allows Canada and Ontario to continue their important work to protect and restore the Great Lakes basin ecosystem while Canada and the U.S. negotiate a renewal of the binational agreement.

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