

NDP Response: Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

Question 1: If your party forms the next Government of Canada, what actions will you take to ensure that a regional and bi-national consensus is reached with our American partners by the end of 2015 on short, mid-term actions and along term solution to this threat to our shared waters?

NDP Response: For more than 50 years, Canada and the US have collaborated, through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, to conduct the world's largest ongoing invasive species control program which is aimed at suppressing sea lamprey in the Great Lakes. The program has contributed to the restoration and support of both commercial and recreational fisheries in the Great Lakes. These activities have contributed \$1.2 billion to the Canadian economy alone. Canada must do its fair share to maintain this program and other initiatives to help manage invasive species in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence, and in other water bodies. It is essential that organizations, experts and the public are engaged in setting priorities for action, and that cross-border coordination is facilitated to ensure that our efforts are efficient and effective.

Question 2: If your party forms the next Government of Canada, will you commit to further strengthening safety measures for the transportation of oil by rail, particularly in the five following areas:

- i. Expediting mandatory scheduling for introducing enhanced standards for new and existing tank cars and phasing out old, unsafe tank cars;
- ii. Requiring the mandatory use of electronically controlled pneumatic brakes on all cars transporting crude oil;
- iii. Adjusting speed control regulations to all situation requiring risk management, not only in highly populated areas, where speed limitations are already part of operations;
- iv. Requiring more frequent inspections of rail lines and tankers;
- v. Imposing heavy fines for violations of the above rules.

NDP Response: The NDP would make rail safety a top priority. We would work to enforce newer standards, improve communication with municipalities, increase inspections and audits of rail companies, and make sure that trains are travelling at safe speeds. Public and environmental safety is a core responsibility of government, and must remain a top priority.

The Conservative Government still does not understand the need to immediately put new resources into improving the safety of our transportation system - their mismanagement of transportation safety and oversight continues to be a serious concern. Government documents show millions of dollars of cuts to safety and security across all modes of transportation at a time when we need more inspections, more audits and improved oversight. While the transport of dangerous goods by rail has increased by more than 300% since 2009 and while there has been an alarming rate of train derailments, no new staffing positions for rail safety and enforcement has taken place to address these growing concerns.

Canadians need a better plan to phase out dangerous tank cars for transporting dangerous goods, and we need better communication and a full evaluation of alternative routes to remove dangerous goods from residential neighbourhoods.

The Transportation Safety Board has been very clear that the government's current timeline to replace the DOT-111 and CPC 1232's rail cars is too slow and existing standards are not good enough.

Question 3: If your party forms the next Government of Canada, will you commit to the expedited targets in the Western Lake Erie Collaborative Agreement, as adopted by the States of Michigan and Ohio and the Province of Ontario, to reach 20% phosphorus loading reductions to Western Lake Erie by 2020 and 40% reduction by 2025?

Will you expedite the review of Health Canada's microcystin drinking water standard and protocol, particularly with respect to its application to children?

NDP Response: New Democrats are committed to working with the provinces and territories to encourage research and develop strategies to minimize the proliferation of blue green algae, and the establishment of strict regulations on pollution, and standards for drinking water.

We will support provincial and municipal governments by providing national and international leadership to prevent the proliferation and counteract the harmful effects of blue green algae.

The NDP introduced the Blue-Green Algae Proliferation Prevention Act which, if adopted, would provide compensation to agricultural landowners for expanding "buffer zones" along waterways in which they are prohibited from using harmful nutrients, and promote guidelines and best practices for home and cottage owners and for farmers. We remain committed to these goals, and will work with our domestic and international partners to ensure that ambitious targets, like those of Michigan and Ohio, are established and enforced.

Furthermore, we will establish mandatory drinking water standards, and will expedite the review of the microcystin standard, taking into consideration the most vulnerable, such as children.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to these important issues.

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