

Mayors, Business Leaders, NGOs Call for New Vision, Blue Print, for future of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region

Great Lakes St. Lawrence Advocates Meet with Key Ministers in Ottawa



Ottawa, ON October 27, 2016 – Today, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, the Council of the Great Lakes Region, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and leading NGOs including Freshwater Future, Strategies Saint Laurent, Alliance for the Great Lakes, Canadian Environmental Law Association, le Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec, and Environmental Defence Canada requested that the Government of Canada join with them and others in a collaborative effort to develop a common vision and roadmap to ensure the long-term health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River ecosystem and the vitality and competitiveness of the region's economy. The call was made at the first collaborative Great Lakes St. Lawrence Day on Parliament Hill.



“The region of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River is a vital trade corridor and ecosystem shared by Canada and the United States. In fact, it holds 84% of North America's surface freshwater and supports USD\$5.8 trillion in annual economic activity. Yet we do not have a shared vision and plan to build a strong economy in this region while preserving it for future generations,” said Mark Fisher, President and CEO of the Council of the Great Lakes Region.



The group of mayors, business leaders, fisheries advocates and environmental non-governmental organizations are calling on the federal government to work collaboratively with stakeholders to undertake strategic examination of programming related to the protection and promotion of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence environment and economy. This would be a step towards strengthening existing programs, implementing an approach that integrates economic and environmental sustainability and more fully addresses long-term issues the region is facing.



“By coordinating our efforts and our investments, we will transform the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region into a global leader in climate action, sustainability and economic performance,” said Denis Coderre, chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative.

At its first Parliament Hill Day, Great Lakes St. Lawrence advocates will meet with a number of ministers, parliamentary secretaries and opposition leaders, including the following:

- Minister Catherine McKenna, Environment and Climate Change
- Minister Marc Garneau, Transportation
- Minister Scott Brison, Treasury Board
- Minister Dominic Leblanc, Fisheries, Oceans and Coastguard
- Minister Jim Carr, Natural Resources
- Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, Parliamentary Secretary, Foreign Affairs
- Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
- Rhéal Fortin, interim leader of the Bloc Québécois
- Caucus members of the New Democratic Party, and
- Caucus members of the Conservative Party of Canada.

“Parliament Hill Day allows us to discuss a number of issues of concern with federal decision makers, including protecting the ecological integrity of the Great Lakes and St Lawrence River, reducing harmful algal blooms in our lakes, and safer transportation of hazardous materials on and near our waterways,” said Nancy Goucher from Freshwater Future, a nongovernment organization dedicated to Great Lakes protection.

Louis Charest, chair of Stratégies Saint Laurent, an organisation representing the committees of the Zones d'intervention prioritaires (ZIPs), added, “The proposed coordinated and consultative approach must serve to support the existing activities of organisations on the



environmental
defence



Canadian
Environmental Law
Association

ground, and provide additional support for work needed in the face of challenges threatening this immense and precious ecosystem.”

The threat of invasive species to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system and its \$C 8.3 billion commercial and recreational fisheries was underlined by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

“We must remain vigilant in our fight to control sea lamprey and redouble our efforts to keep any and all Asian Carp out of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence through full physical separation of the Great Lakes from the Mississippi River,” said David Ullrich, chair of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

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