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Collaborative ramps up phosphorus reduction project

Farmers and Cities team up to help meet 40 per cent target

Woodstock, Ontario – The Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative (PRC) is moving into the next phase in developing practical ways to reduce the amount of phosphorus getting into local waterways from agricultural and municipal drains.

“We have involved a lot of skilled people who are eager to do their part to improve local water quality and help resolve this issue,” said Randy Hope, Mayor of Chatham-Kent and the project’s co-chair. “What we need is financial backing so we can get on with the job.”

The PRC steering committee met in Woodstock on February 23rd to determine the project’s priorities. They approved the proposed implementation plan, budget and financing strategy. Most notably, the PRC will proceed with 9 demonstration projects, subject to financing, including:

- Three edge of field phosphorus removal projects
- Three in-field blind inlet phosphorus removal projects
- Three treatment technologies in the municipal drain system

Phosphorus in stormwater collected in municipal drains from agricultural lands, contributes to the growth of toxic algal blooms in downstream water bodies. The western basin of Lake Erie has experienced several algal bloom incidents in recent years, disrupting the ecosystem, causing the closure of beaches and even, in Toledo, Ohio a ban on city drinking water for two days. Lake St. Clair, which is an indirect pathway, has also been experiencing problems with near-shore algal blooms, and last year, they were discovered in the Thames River at Chatham.

The Canada-U.S. International Joint Commission recently released a [report](#) urging bold action to identify and implement approaches to restore the health of Lake Erie.

The PRC is among the principal voluntary initiatives included in the [Canada-Ontario Action Plan](#) released yesterday. The Action Plan is aimed at meeting the 2016 commitment between Canada and the U.S. to a 40 per cent reduction in the total phosphorus entering Lake Erie. There is also a commitment among Ohio, Michigan and Ontario to reduce phosphorus to the western basin by 40 per cent by 2025.

“As farmers, our commitment to taking care of the land and water is strong, which is why we’re working collaboratively to find and use the best, most affordable and practical drainage and water management solutions,” said Mark Reusser, co-chair of the PRC and Vice-President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

The PRC represents agricultural organizations, municipalities, conservation authorities, First Nations, drainage professionals, and environmental non-governmental organizations. It is dedicated to developing a suite of effective land management and drainage solutions for agriculture, in cooperation with partners, for reducing phosphorus and improving water quality in the Thames River. Details of the collaborative, its work and a full listing of steering committee members is at www.thamesriverprc.com

The PRC is administered by the [Ontario Federation of Agriculture](#) and the [Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative](#).

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