Leading Great Lakes advocates call for 10-year, $100M per year strategy

**What is Action Plan 2030?**

The Action Plan to Protect the Great Lakes (Action Plan 2030) is a 10-year, 100 million dollar a year strategy to protect the Great Lakes and those who live by them from four threats: climate change, toxics exposure, harmful algal blooms, and contaminated beaches.

Progress in protecting the Great Lakes is not keeping up with the intensifying impacts of climate change, population growth, and farming and industrial activity. A new approach is needed. By targeting sources of pollution having the worst impact and helping communities at greatest risk, the Action Plan proposes fifteen strategic and surgical interventions using new kinds of collaboration, technologies and big data.

Action Plan 2030 calls on the Governments of Canada, in collaboration with the Government of Ontario, to invest in and deliver these 15 critical actions to protect the Great Lakes and those who live in the region, and to commit to $100 million-a-year, for 10 years, to implement them.

**What will Action Plan 2030 Achieve?**

- **Protect Great Lakes shoreline communities** and ecosystems that are most vulnerable to high water levels by making them climate resilient;
- **Reduce our exposure to Toxics**, by actively identify, investigate and respond to human and environmental exposure to toxics and other harmful chemicals in the Great Lakes region, in the air, water, ground and in products;
- **Accelerate Nutrients Reduction that cause harmful algal blooms**, by harnessing the power of big data to identify hotspots and work to reduce phosphorus in areas and on properties that contribute the most.
- **Make Contaminated beaches clean and safe** by eliminating sources of untreated sewage and other sources of contamination.
15 KEY ACTIONS

Implementing these 15 key actions requires an investment of $100 million a year for 10 years. Protecting and restoring the Great Lakes provides immediate and long-term benefits to all Canadians. It is time for all levels of government to show leadership by committing to the necessary investments and in delivering on this innovative and bold action plan.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

Protect Shoreline Communities

1. The Governments of Canada and Ontario commit to establishing and funding Shoreline Resiliency Priority zones to identify and address significant threats from climate change (high water levels, stronger wind/wave energy, erosion, sudden spring thaws, ice jams) impacting natural and built infrastructure on Great Lakes shorelines, with an emphasis on naturalization and green infrastructure solutions, beginning with five shoreline priority zones:
   i. Central Western Lake Erie (Chatham-Kent, Leamington)
   ii. Central Lake Huron (Amberley to Grand Bend)
   iii. Central Lake Ontario (Toronto to Prince Edward County)
   iv. North Central Lake Superior (Fort William First Nation, Thunder Bay)
   v. Southeastern Georgian Bay (Penetanguishene, Tiny Township)

2. The Government of Canada create a climate data sub-portal for Great Lakes priority zones within the Canadian Centre for Climate Services portal.

3. The Ontario Government, through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and Conservation Authorities, invest further in the development of Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR), flood plain mapping, and monitoring/modelling data to benefit shoreline communities.

4. The Governments of Canada and Ontario offer ongoing guidance and funding (on a competitive basis) to all shoreline municipalities and Indigenous communities to support actions to make their shorelines more climate resilient.

Reduce Exposure to Toxics

5. The Government of Canada develop a targeted environmental and human health effects monitoring, human biomonitoring and surveillance program to provide early detection of unexpected effects in the Great Lakes basin that feeds directly into a regulatory and non-regulatory response plan to reduce exposure.

6. The Government of Canada develop guidelines to guide the generation and communication of data collected through the surveillance program and develop Guidance on the Appropriate Response to Exposure and Effects surveillance program data.

7. The Government of Canada introduce a Strategy to Promote Substitution of Harmful Chemicals in Products, including a Centre for Chemical Substitution, and a Chemical Substitution Recognition Program.
Accelerate Nutrients Reduction

8. The Governments of Canada and Ontario adopt a targeted, geographically specific approach to reducing nutrients entering the Great Lakes, employing precision conservation and stormwater optimization, to bridge the gap between farm scale conservation implementation and urban stormwater management with broader water quality impacts.

9. The Ontario Government, with support from the Government of Canada, develop a data management strategy and tools to support the precision conservation approach and to facilitate the collection and use of datasets (e.g. elevation, soil type, property boundaries, land use) needed to prioritize properties, and best practices, and to coordinate monitoring and modelling data at a watershed level.

10. The Governments of Canada and Ontario, together with partner universities, Indigenous communities, and relevant organizations, create a Centre for Water Quality and Nutrient Management to generate and coordinate information to support precision conservation and stormwater optimization approaches in the Great Lakes Basin.

11. The Governments of Canada and Ontario designate a dedicated network of extension workers that receive standardized training and provide consistent technical advice to farmers.

12. Where subwatershed modelling and monitoring identifies urban areas as significant contributors of phosphorus loading, the Government of Ontario require the relevant municipalities in consultation with conservation authorities to develop an urban stormwater optimization/prioritization plan with steps to achieve measurable phosphorus reductions.

Clean up contaminated beaches

13. The Ontario Government introduce a new risk-based categorization system for Ontario beaches, and require actions of owners of ‘impaired’ beaches that have chronic bacteriological contamination issues.

14. The Government of Ontario create and maintain a central portal with beach quality information, including information on the ‘status’ of the beach (based on four categories: impaired, fair-good, good-excellent, under CSO advisory)

15. The Government of Ontario amend the Public Health Ontario’s Public Beach Water guidance on test methods for E. coli to allow for alternate testing methods other than membrane filtration as per Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) guidance on drinking water testing methods.
WHY INVEST IN GREAT LAKES PROTECTION?

The Great Lakes are the largest freshwater system in the world, containing over 20% of the world’s fresh water, and 84% of fresh water in North America. The waters of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence and the basin’s many rivers and streams play a critical role in sustaining the health of aquatic, riparian and terrestrial ecosystems, supporting more than 3,500 of plants and animals, including one-fifth of all fish species in North America. Home to one in three Canadians, the Great Lakes Region drives Canada’s economy and exports to the U.S and around the world, accounting for 30% of combined Canadian and U.S. economic activity and employment.

Investing in Great Lakes protection is an investment in our home, our quality of life, and our prosperity.

Leading Great Lakes advocates behind Action Plan 2030

Action Plan 2030 is the product of a nine-month, intensive study and consultation process. With funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada, five leading Great Lakes and St. Lawrence organisations, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, the Council of the Great Lakes Region, Freshwater Future Canada, and Stratégies Saint Laurent, convened the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Collaborative, a stakeholder-led process to find new and innovative ways to protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Action Plan 2030 for Great Lakes Protection is the first part of the Collaborative’s work. Action Plan for St. Lawrence Protection will follow in early 2020.

Action Plan 2030 was prepared under the direction of an Expert Panel co-chaired by two esteemed environmental specialists, Mr. Gord Miller, former Environment Commissioner of Ontario, and M. Jean Cinq-Mars, Québec’s former Sustainable Development Commissioner.

Working closely with over 75 experts, stakeholders, and indigenous advisors, they studied new approaches to tackle four complex challenges facing the Canadian portion of the Great Lakes – climate change, toxics and other harmful pollutants, nutrients that contribute to harmful algal blooms, and bacteriological contamination of beaches.

What we need from our Governments

Implementing Action Plan 2030 will require substantial, sustained investment. The Federal Government should lead the charge by providing $100 million per year over ten years, leveraging contributions from other levels of government and other sources of financing.

Action Plan 2030 is inspired by the U.S Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a federal program which has delivered over $2 billion in funding over the last decade for restoration on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes. GLRI is supported by both major political parties in the United States.

The Canadian side of the Great Lakes needs an equivalent level of financial investment and political commitment from all parties to ensure the long term protection of the lakes on both sides of the border.

To learn more about Action Plan 2030:

To see the full Action Plan please go to:
www.westbrookpa.com/glslcollab

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