

# Shared Priorities for the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence: *Advancing Equitable Restoration, Revitalization and Resilience*

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The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River are an integral part of Canada, and North America's economy, culture, and history. More specifically:

- Almost 20 per cent of the world's surface fresh water is found in the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin;
- This basin is invaluable as the source of drinking water for more than 40 million people in Canada and the United States;
- The basin directly generates more than 1.5 million jobs and \$60 billion in wages annually and is the foundation of a \$6-trillion regional economy, which would be one of the largest in the world if it stood alone as a country;
- Recreation in the basin's waterways – including world-renowned boating, hunting, and fishing opportunities – generates more than \$52 billion annually for the region; and
- The area is home to over 3,500 plant and animal species, some of which are found nowhere else on Earth.

Issues affecting the health of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and their surrounding communities therefore have serious economic, social, and environmental impacts on a broad segment of Canadians. For that reason, it is imperative for all levels of government, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence organizations, communities, and residents in the region to collaborate closely to tackle complex issues, such as: invasive species, toxics and other harmful pollutants, nutrient levels and bacteriological contamination, the safety of our beaches and climate change impacts on water and shoreline infrastructure.

In the interest of protecting and restoring these treasured freshwater resources, our organizations are committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders towards the goal of making tangible progress to enhancing the state of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and the quality of life they sustain and advancing the following priorities with the Government of Canada.

## **Improve cross-border dialogue and collaboration between agency and government sources involved in water governance.**

- This includes the newly formed Great Lakes St. Lawrence Task Force functioning within the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

## **Enhance coordination and governance of domestic freshwater management to better address the impacts of climate change and other stressors**

- Establish a Canada Water Agency with a mandate focused on sustainable freshwater management in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin.
- Leverage efforts to review, retool and strengthen the 50-year-old Canada Water Act to remain relevant and reflective of our new freshwater realities.

### **Increase funding to complement investments made into Great Lakes restoration by the United States**

- Implement the federal government's commitment to invest \$1 billion over 10 years to protect and restore large lakes and river systems, with a priority focus on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.
- Launch a Canadian "Great Lakes Restoration Initiative" that would permanently fund and support restoration work throughout the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin.

### **Strengthen vital water and shoreline infrastructure across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin.**

- Expand investments in shoreline infrastructure renewal to support coastal communities adapting to the impacts of climate change
- Create a dedicated funding stream for water and wastewater infrastructure and help ensure equitable access to safe drinking water, including the permanent removal of boil water advisories in Indigenous communities.
- Ensure the region receives an appropriate share of federal funding for infrastructure investments that improve trade, water quality, habitat protection and shoreline resiliency.
- Support knowledge building and project implementation of nature-based solutions and green infrastructure across the region

### **Put forward adequate protections for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin from aquatic invasive species**

- Provide necessary funding for programs like the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's invasive sea lamprey control program and the Invasive Carp Action Plan
- Build in consideration of negative externalities when expanding trading opportunities in the basin.

### **Take active measures to reduce pollution and improve water quality across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin**

- Develop and implement Phosphorous Reduction Action Plans and Algae Mitigation Strategies for all Great Lakes
- Dedicate additional resources in the next Agricultural Policy Framework to support farmers working to improve water quality and protect wildlife habitat

### **Lay the foundation for a prosperous Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River "Blue Economy"**

- Bolster efforts by the public and private sectors that advance marine transportation, including port modernization and upgrading locks and maritime navigation systems
- Engage Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River groups to develop a freshwater pillar of the national Blue Economy Strategy to support growth and investment in sectors to bolster innovation, expand workforce development, and increase employment opportunities for individuals to enter high-wage and in-demand occupations throughout the region.

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DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT

