



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Cities Initiative applauds trailblazing Montreal declaration calling for action on microfibres, PFAS and federal funding to protect our fresh water**

**Montreal, QC – March 22, 2023** – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) applauds an important declaration adopted this week by one of its members, the City of Montreal, highlighting emerging contaminants that are threatening our waters and public health and calling for immediate action by the Quebec and federal governments to address them.

“As a binational coalition of municipal leaders, we are proud to cheer on our members, like Montreal, who put a spotlight on threats to our vital freshwater resources and put forward solutions,” said Gino Moretti, Mayor of Saint-Anicet and Vice-Chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. “Whether we live in Quebec, Ontario or any of the eight Great Lakes states, water pollution is putting our quality of life in peril and all levels of government need to take it seriously.”

On the occasion of World Water Day, Montreal is calling for three concrete measures that will help protect Quebec’s and Canada’s waterways.

#### **Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)**

Montreal is calling for the prohibition of the sale of goods and products containing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances PFAS in Canada.

“The idea is to eliminate PFAS, these forever chemicals, at the source,” said Maja Vodanovic, Mayor of the Borough of Lachine, member of the city’s Executive Committee (responsible for water) and Montreal’s representative to the Cities Initiative. “Prohibiting the manufacture of these chemicals is one thing, but we must also ensure that these products containing them are no longer sold in Canada”

These substances have been in production since the 1950s and are used in a variety of consumer products, including textiles, cosmetics and in food packaging. Adverse environmental and health effects have been observed for some of these chemicals. The Université de Montréal recently [published a study](#) which found these substances to be present at concerning levels in drinking water across Quebec.

“As governments across North America consider more stringent drinking water standards for PFAS, it will be key to collaborate with partners to develop new rules in Canada to prohibit the sale of products that contain these chemicals to eliminate them at the source,” added Ms. Vodanovic. “Installing new equipment in our water treatment facilities is not only expensive, these solutions also require dedicated space in treatment plants which may not be possible in all

cases, without even touching on the question of how to dispose of leftover residues. These are all important to consider.”

### **Plastic microfibres**

Building on work done by community organizations like the [GRAME](#) in Quebec to highlight the prevalence of microfibres that are ending up in waterways from washing machine discharges, Montreal is also calling for appropriate legislation that will ensure that new washing machines come equipped with filters to collect fibres that break off from clothing and textiles during the wash cycle.

“During our research project on textile microfibers and the use of filters as a retention solution, we implemented a citizen science project, where 31 people tested the microfiber filters over a six-month period. The contents were then sent to Professor Dominique Claveau-Mallet's laboratory at Polytechnique Montréal for analysis,” explains Catherine Houbart, Executive Director of the GRAME. “Her team concluded from their analysis of the samples provided that a potential of 12 tons of microfibres per year could be retained throughout Montreal by installing filters on the washers. This is huge! We are therefore hoping for ambitious bills regarding the integration of filters in new washing machines on the market, as has been adopted in France.”

The Cities Initiative has been calling for similar measures since a [resolution](#) was adopted by its members in 2021. Following the adopt of the Montreal declaration, the Cities Initiative hopes to see rapid action to tackle this important contributor to microplastics in lakes and rivers at the source.

### **Freshwater Action Plan**

Finally, Montreal is joining more than a dozen municipalities in Quebec and Ontario, including the Communauté métropolitaine de Québec and the MRC de Vaudreuil-Soulanges, who have passed motions calling on the federal government to accelerate its commitment to invest \$1 billion over five years in programs that will clean up lakes and rivers, restore habitat and wetlands and allow for more Quebecers and Canadians to safely drink, swim and fish in our waters.

The Cities Initiative hopes to see more details on the strengthened Freshwater Action Plan by the Government of Canada in its budget to be unveiled March 28.

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*The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a binational organization led by a coalition of mayors working collaboratively to promote the environmental and socioeconomic health of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin for the benefit of current and future generations. With more than 230-member municipalities, the Cities Initiative is the largest municipally-driven organization in the basin.*

### **For more information, contact:**

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