



**GREAT LAKES AND
ST. LAWRENCE**
CITIES INITIATIVE



June 2023

A Resolution Submitted by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake



Strengthening Canada's Stewardship of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin

WHEREAS the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and its members support protecting source water protection, planning for climate change impacts and shoreline resilience, ensuring safe and affordable water services for all our residents, and building up a sustainable blue economy in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin; and

WHEREAS ensuring healthy communities and a strong economy for Canadians depend on securing Canada's source water, which includes addressing water quality issues, contaminants, and pollution, supporting biodiversity, and reversing wetland and fish and wildlife habitat loss and improving community knowledge to empower citizens to safeguard this essential resource; and

WHEREAS a Freshwater Action Plan and the Great Lakes Protection Initiative it supported, were first announced in the 2017 Canadian federal budget with a \$44.84 million investment over five years; and

WHEREAS the Freshwater Action Plan has combined science and action to address priorities in the Great Lakes such as preventing toxic and nuisance algae, enhancing the resilience of coastal wetlands in the Great Lakes, restoring Great Lakes Areas of Concern, and supporting Canada's commitments under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, among other priorities; and

WHEREAS a commitment was made by the Liberal Party of Canada in the 2021 federal election to strengthen the Freshwater Action Plan with an historic investment of \$1 billion over ten years to restore and protect large lakes and river systems starting with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin; and

WHEREAS the federal Budget 2023 committed \$650 million over ten years, to support monitoring, assessment, and restoration work in the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake of the Woods, St. Lawrence River, Fraser River, Saint John River, Mackenzie River, and Lake Simcoe, and that the Prime Minister announced on March 24, 2023 that \$420 million of that funding would be for Great Lakes protection and restoration; and

WHEREAS the federal Budget 2023 also committed more than \$22 million to support better coordination of efforts to protect freshwater across Canada and \$85.1 million over five years and \$21 million thereafter to support the creation of a Canada Water Agency; and

WHEREAS the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative welcomes the federal government's historic investment in protecting the Great Lakes and other major water systems in Canada; and

WHEREAS the United States has invested \$1.8 billion in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) since 2017 and will see accelerated funding with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act; and

WHEREAS a 2018 University of Michigan study shows that for every dollar of federal spending on GLRI projects between 2010 and 2016, yielded \$3.35 in additional economic activity; and

WHEREAS nearly half of Canada's population lives in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin, a region that will continue to see accelerated growth, resulting in greater land and resource use pressures that will further contribute to water availability and quality issues; and

WHEREAS the Stockholm Resilience Centre recently identified the importance of wetlands as carbon sinks and fresh water's role in climate mitigation; and

WHEREAS the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Collaborative outlined 30 recommendations to Environment and Climate Change Canada as part of a ten-year, \$2.2 billion Action Plan 2020- 2030 to protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence (Action Plan 2020-2030), addressing shoreline erosion, outdated infrastructure, invasive species, exposure to toxins and beach contamination, following an 18-month consultation with First Nations, NGOs, academics, and other experts; and

WHEREAS the recommendations outlined in Action Plan 2020-2030 should serve as the basis of programming for strengthened federal action in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin through its strengthened Freshwater Action Plan; and

WHEREAS the newly established Canada Water Agency should play a role in accelerating the rollout of funding made available through a strengthened Freshwater Action Plan; and

WHEREAS Freshwater Action Plan funding should largely be directed to community groups, local governments, and First Nations to ensure that investments made will have the biggest local impact and empower action at the local level, rather than being held back for federal administration and operations; and

WHEREAS it is critical for the federal government to rapidly implement the funding commitments in Budget 2023 and ensure that project funding begins in 2023-24; and

WHEREAS the newly-established Canada Water Agency should play a leading role in developing and disbursing the aforementioned funding as part of its mandate to consolidate and coordinate federal water efforts and support provinces and territories in addressing systemic issues impacting the viability of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin and the communities dependent upon the region's source water.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative calls on the federal government to:

- Fully commit \$1 billion in funding over ten years for a strengthened Freshwater Action Plan and provide a plan for achieving the existing funding gap;
- Guide its supplemental Freshwater Action Plan funding to implement recommendations in the Action Plan 2020-2030;
- Make municipalities eligible for future funding in programs announced under the strengthened Freshwater Action Plan; and

- Study potential revenue tools based on the polluter pays principle to help finance the \$1-billion Freshwater Action Plan commitment and ensure sustainable funding for freshwater programming beyond the ten-year outlay of funding that is budgeted.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution will be distributed to the federal Deputy Prime-Minister and Minister of Finance; the Minister of Environment and Climate Change; the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (responsible for the Canada Water Agency), and local Members of Parliament in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin.