



## **2024 Canadian Priorities for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin Communities**

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The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative calls on the Canadian federal government to support the following priorities for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin communities. For more information, please contact Eamonn Horan-Lunney, Senior Canada Policy Director, at [Eamonn.hl@glslcities.org](mailto:Eamonn.hl@glslcities.org).

### **Ensure Equitable Investments in Water Infrastructure and Increase Local Revenue Streams**

- Convene federal, provincial, territorial and municipal officials to identify potential programming and financing options that will provide dedicated, predictable and sustained funding to municipalities for water and climate adaptation infrastructure projects, focusing on identifying the actual cost of climate adaptation to governments, businesses and individual landowners in communities across the basin
- Create more revenue sources for municipal infrastructure, allowing local governments to access funding that is within their control and not based on property values or user fees but rather on economic activities. Some options include sales tax, vehicle registration tax or taxing other services for residents and companies
- Incorporate water-related costs into the new program design and funding, with federal infrastructure programming up for renewal in 2025-26
- Gather municipalities and First Nation communities to discuss, share best practices and develop action plans regarding equitable water access, i.e., ensuring clean, safe and affordable water; drinking and wastewater capacity for housing stock growth and reconciliation with indigenous communities

### **Facilitate Economic Transformation in Basin Communities**

- Develop a national, evidence-based plan to attract green and blue businesses and industries, including skills development and infrastructure needs
- Collaborate with local governments to develop regional and local policy and funding opportunities to harness clean, accessible waterfronts as drivers of economic revitalization; implement clean and renewable energy sources and expand sustainable, integrated, water-borne commerce, mobility, and tourism – all while protecting the basin's freshwater ecosystem
- Leverage the next generation of federal infrastructure programming to empower local governments to incorporate climate adaptation and economic transformation into local projects between 2025 and 2035
- Support a robust, sustainable shipping industry on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, including by increasing the number of Canadian icebreakers to facilitate year-round shipping and promoting short-sea shipping containers as a green and blue alternative to address supply chain issues
- Confirm Canada's support for the passenger rail connection between Detroit and Windsor to link Chicago and Toronto through the Amtrak-Via Rail corridor as part of a broader push to develop and promote low-carbon mobility options for residents and visitors throughout the basin

### **Promote Ecosystem Restoration and Protect Water Quality**

- Provide \$1B in new funding for the **Freshwater Action Plan** (FAP) as we work closely with the newly created **Canada Water Agency** (CWA) leadership and staff to ensure the local government voices are incorporated into their operations and that programming is successfully implemented

- Ensure the transitioning of federal programs, such as FAP, to the newly created CWA is successful and incorporates local governments in the new operations and programming. Specifically, the federal government must:
  - Ensure that early programs and funding successfully demonstrate the value and need of this new agency to the rest of the government and encourage additional program funding
  - Work with all orders of governments and relevant stakeholders in developing and implementing water-themed programming and policy across all departments
  - Provide adequate funding to the CWA and empower the agency to deliver on its mandate

### **Bolster Coastal Resilience and Prevent Urban Flooding**

- Participate in the development and implementation of the ***National Adaptation Strategy*** (NAS) announced in 2023, ensuring it is underpinned by evidence-based costings, new dedicated funding, and measurable targets while imposing future-proof requirements on construction. Close coordination with NAS leadership and staff is necessary to ensure the local government’s voices are incorporated
- Engage in meaningful collaboration with the Climate Proof Canada coalition to leverage the NAS work to guide the next generation of programming, policy and funding. Specifically, the federal government should:
  - Work with the provinces to ensure that the \$41 million in new funding through the Climate-Resilient Coastal Communities Program is delivered effectively to municipalities and local actors to implement coastal resilience projects in key areas
  - Ensure that the Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program (FHIMP) empowers local communities to make evidence-based decisions to better protect their community against climate risks
  - Improve intragovernmental coordination between the Canadian government and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on its Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to guarantee Canadian access to the data and solutions coming out of the study

### **Address Nuisances and Pollutants Affecting the Quality of our Precious Freshwater Resources**

- Continue to expand what pollutants (e.g., untreated sewage, phosphorous, microplastics/fibers, PFAS/PFOA, etc.) are tested for and measured in Canada’s environment and, where appropriate and consistent with evidence-based science, harmonize our measurement standards with the United States or European Union
- Monitor the launch of the CWA to safeguard current freshwater quality programming – with funding levels, program execution and stakeholder engagement remaining constant in 2024 – as the agency takes ownership of current federal programming and policy development on water quality issues while also promoting municipal engagement in agency decisions and implementation
- Fully fund basin-wide programs and initiatives that address invasive species and protect indigenous species’ healthy populations

### **About the Cities Initiative**

The Cities Initiative is a multinational coalition of local governments led by mayors and chief-elected officers working collaboratively to safeguard the economic, environmental and social health of communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. It is committed to stewarding the basin’s freshwater and ensuring that all residents have access to clean, safe and affordable water as the foundation for sustainable, vibrant, inclusive and resilient communities.