



GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE
CITIES INITIATIVE
L'ALLIANCE DES VILLES
DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative to Host First-Ever Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup in Ontario

*Municipal Coalition Partnering with Six Communities on September 28 for Shoreline Cleanups
Along Each of Ontario's Great Lakes*

St. Catharines, ON – August 12, 2025 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is pleased to announce that it has secured a grant from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to host Ontario's first-ever Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. The Cities Initiative will receive \$85,000 through Ontario's Great Lakes Local Action Fund to host six shoreline cleanups for this inaugural event.

This World Rivers Day, September 28, the Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup will bring together more than 250 volunteers to collect up to 200 kilograms of litter at beaches, parks, and other shoreline areas along Lakes Superior, Huron, Erie, and Ontario, along with the St. Lawrence River. The Cities Initiative is partnering with six communities for this first multi-site cleanup: Thunder Bay, Chatham-Kent, Owen Sound, Collingwood, Cobourg, and Kingston. These municipalities will partner with local organizations to set up cleanup sites, provide supplies, and train volunteers.

Mayor Mat Siscoe, Co-Chair of the Cities Initiative and Mayor of St. Catharines: "We thank the Government of Ontario for their generous support, along with the six participating communities, to host the province's first Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. This investment shows the Province of Ontario's and these communities' engagement and passion for protecting our most precious freshwater resources. We hope this cleanup will be the first of a growing annual movement across Ontario and all the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River."

Todd McCarthy, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks: "Our government is proud to support the first-ever Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup – a fantastic community initiative to remove plastic and litter from local beaches, parks and shorelines across the province. By investing in this project led by the Cities Initiative, the Great Lakes Local Action Fund is making a lasting impact on the health of lakes and rivers in Ontario, contributing to stronger, healthier communities – now and for the future."

It is estimated that 22 million pounds of plastic enter the Great Lakes each year, a source of drinking water for more than 40 million Canadians and Americans. Shoreline cleanups help reduce pollution at the source, as well as raising awareness around the impact of waste and litter in our lakes and rivers.



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In addition to the Government of Ontario's generous support, the Cities Initiative recognizes financial and in-kind support provided by participating municipalities and Greenland Consulting Engineers.

Additional Quotes:

Mayor Darrin Canniff of Chatham-Kent and Board Member of the Cities Initiative: "Chatham-Kent is proud to be one of the founding communities of the Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. Our community understands the importance of protecting the Great Lakes, not just as a source of drinking water, but as a vital part of our local environment, economy, and identity. We're grateful for the Province's support and are excited to work alongside volunteers to make a meaningful impact on our shoreline this September."

Councillor Lauren Anderson of Chatham-Kent and Cities Initiative Board Delegate: "I'm honoured to be part of an organization that values our Great Lakes and recognizes their significance. As a board member of the GLSL, I'm proud of the dedication shown by fellow board members, staff, and our binational federal and provincial governments. Their commitment to initiatives like this Cleanup inspires me to continue supporting and protecting our Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River Basin. This event brings communities together—not only to celebrate these vital waters—but to show our gratitude by keeping our Great Lakes truly great."

Mayor Bryan Paterson of Kingston: "Kingston is proud to be one of the founding cities of the Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. Our community understands the deep connection between a healthy environment and a vibrant future. This initiative is a powerful way to bring residents together, raise awareness, and take real action to protect the Great Lakes shoreline. We're excited to roll up our sleeves and make a meaningful impact this September."

Mayor Lucas Cleveland of Cobourg: "I am incredibly proud that The Town of Cobourg has been selected as a partner in the first-ever Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. Cobourg is actively taking measures that align with this initiative, and our community of volunteers are eager to help the Cities Initiative raise awareness surrounding the impact that waste and litter has on our lakes and rivers. The Great Lakes represent the single most valuable natural resource in the world. It is imperative that we all do our part to protect this essential resource. In Cobourg we are taking measures to maintain our local harbour not only for the betterment of the environment, but to ensure Cobourg's economy can continue to thrive. I look forward to working with the participating communities and the Cities Initiative and am optimistic this will be the start of an initiative for years to come."

Mayor Yvonne Hamlin of Collingwood: "Collingwood is proud to be part of the inaugural Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. Our community values the health of our shoreline and understands the



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importance of collective action to protect it. With support from the Province of Ontario, this initiative empowers us to come together, take meaningful action, and help preserve the beauty and vitality of our Great Lakes for future generations.”

Mayor Ian Boddy of Owen Sound: "Owen Sound is proud to join this first-ever Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. As a Georgian Bay community, we know how vital these waters are to our environment and economy. This collaborative effort with five other municipalities shows what we can achieve when we work together to protect our shared Great Lakes heritage. Our volunteers are ready to make a real difference on World Rivers Day, fostering a culture of stewardship that will benefit future generations.”

Mayor Ken Boshcoff of Thunder Bay: “Thunder Bay is proud to stand with the Ontario Government and our Regional partners in launching the province’s first Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. This initiative reflects our shared commitment to protecting the health and future of the freshwater ecosystem that is vital to our communities, our environment, and our economy. We are honoured to take a leadership role in what we hope will grow into a lasting tradition of environmental stewardship across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region.”

Additional information:

- Learn more about the Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup and sign up to volunteer at: <https://glsicities.org/great-lakes-coastal-cleanup>
- [Sign up to volunteer](#) for the Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup
- Learn more about the Government of Ontario’s Great Lakes Local Action Fund: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/great-lakes-local-action-fund>

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About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a multinational coalition of municipal and Indigenous government executives representing communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region who are working to promote economic prosperity in our communities and protect our fresh water for the benefit of current and future generations. With more than 350 member communities, the Cities Initiative is leading the way in advancing the environmental, economic, and social health of the region by addressing issues impacting its residents.



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