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CITIES INITIATIVE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cities Initiative to Pilot Innovative Water Monitoring and Citizen Science Program in the Niagara Region

4R Waters project to improve Lake Ontario water quality supported by the Canada Water Agency

St. Catharines, ON – September 11, 2025 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) is proud to announce the launch of *Using Community-Based Science and Remote Sensing Data in Lake Ontario*, a new four-year project aimed at citizen engagement, data collection, and testing out remote sensing technology to improve the health of Lake Ontario in the Niagara Region.

The Using Community-Based Science and Remote Sensing Data in Lake Ontario (more commonly known as *4R Waters*) pilot project is supported by a \$430,000 investment from the Canada Water Agency's Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative. The Cities Initiative will partner with the City of St. Catharines, the Town of Lincoln, and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, to deliver the first pilot cohort of 4R Waters in the Twelve Mile Creek and Twenty Mile Creek watersheds—areas facing challenges related to sediment, nutrients, and winter road salt.

Mayor Mat Siscoe of St. Catharines, ON, Co-Chair of the Cities Initiative: “Clean water is essential to Niagara Region’s health, economy, and future prosperity. Municipalities are on the front lines of protecting our lakes and rivers, and we can’t do it alone. The Government of Canada’s investment in innovative programs like the Cities Initiative’s 4R Waters will help us better identify pollution sources, engage residents, and take meaningful action to improve water quality across our communities.”

Mayor Sandra Easton of Lincoln, ON: “The 4R Waters program will leverage cutting-edge science to address our local water quality challenges, while reconnecting people to our lakes. This project is about creating a shared sense of responsibility and action across our watershed. We’re grateful to the Government of Canada for investing in freshwater solutions across the Great Lakes, and I’m proud that the Town of Lincoln will help lead the way through this important partnership with the Cities Initiative.”

John Metcalfe, Chair of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority: “Healthy waterways are the foundation of resilient ecosystems and thriving communities. As a key

Commented [SC1]: The project title was changed from the information included on the application. The approved title name likely should be included in the news release, but I have included the 4R Waters title as well, below.



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partner in the 4R Waters pilot, NPCA brings decades of watershed management expertise and a strong commitment to protecting Lake Ontario and its tributaries. Through monitoring, restoration, and community engagement, we work every day to safeguard the health of local creeks, rivers, and shorelines. This partnership with the Cities Initiative and support from the Canada Water Agency allows us to deepen that impact and advance innovative, collaborative approaches to freshwater protection.”

The \$430,000 investment in 4R Waters is part of a broader \$93 million investment in 26 projects from the Canada Water Agency to support freshwater solutions across the Great Lakes Basin, announced earlier this month.

The Cities Initiative has been a longtime champion and advocate of the creation of the Canada Water Agency and enhanced funding for the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative. The project an example of public-private sector collaboration supported to make Ontario and Canada more water secure.

Additional facts:

- Community-based science programs have improved the coverage of monitoring efforts, helping researchers track water quality changes including detecting harmful algal blooms. A key component of community-based science is empowering communities. Citizen scientists are pivotal to collecting data, sharing knowledge, and finding solutions. Collaboration unlocks the power of science to drive meaningful change.
- Great Lakes restoration efforts lead to positive impacts on our waters and communities, including improved water quality and ecosystems, remediating Areas of Concern with severe environmental degradation, and stimulating economic investments and tourism in shoreline communities across the region.
 - A [study](#) on a similar program in the United States, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, shows that for every dollar spent on the program, it stimulates at \$3.35 in economic activity.
- [Projects funded under the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative](#)

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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



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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 communities represented, from Western Lake Superior to the Gulf of the St. Lawrence, the Cities Initiative is leading the way in advancing the environmental, economic, and social health of the region by addressing issues impacting its residents.

For more information, please contact:

Mélanie Lanthier | Leliken Public Affairs | m.lanthier@leliken.com