

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First-Ever Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup Brings Together Over 415 People to Remove Litter Along Shorelines Across Ontario

Six Communities Across the Province Partnered on World Rivers Day for Shoreline Cleanups to Remove Over 1.5 Tons of Litter Along Each of Ontario's Great Lakes

St. Catharines, ON – October 2, 2025 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative successfully completed its first-ever Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup this past weekend on World Rivers Day, September 28. Funded by the Government of Ontario through the Great Lakes Local Action Fund, and supported by Greenland Engineering and Presteve Foods, the event mobilized communities across Ontario to remove shoreline litter and raise awareness about protecting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

Across six Ontario communities – Chatham-Kent, Cobourg, Collingwood, Kingston, Owen Sound, and Thunder Bay – volunteers came together to collect litter from beaches, parks, and waterfront areas. **More than 415 volunteers came together across 11 sites** to help clean up these vital areas. Over 30 partners, including local environmental groups and community organizations, supported local efforts in the six participating communities.

Across all locations, **volunteers collected roughly 1,600 kg of litter** — equivalent to the weight of a pickup truck or a small sailboat! Common items collected included cigarette butts, food wrappers and packaging, plastic bags, and plastic fragments. These results highlight the ongoing challenge of litter pollution in the Great Lakes. Each year, an estimated 10 million kilograms of plastic enter the Great Lakes, a crucial source of drinking water for roughly 60% of people in Ontario.

Mayor Mat Siscoe, St. Catharines and Canadian Co-Chair of the Cities Initiative

“From Lake Superior to the beginning of the St. Lawrence River, communities across Ontario rolled up their sleeves and made a real difference during the first-ever Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup. The Cities Initiative is delighted to have led this project with six communities that came together to protect our shared waters. We hope this year's event is just the beginning. We're excited to build on this momentum and make the Coastal Cleanup an annual tradition that grows stronger with every community that joins in.”

The Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup marks the beginning of a growing movement across Ontario to take action at the community level to protect our fresh water. With measurable results in its inaugural year and strong engagement from residents, the Cities Initiative intends to expand the program in 2026 to include additional municipalities and cleanup sites.

Communities, organizations, and residents who would like to join this growing effort are encouraged to connect with Phil Murphy-Rhéaume, Canadian Managing Director of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, at phillipe.murphy-rheaume@glslcities.org. Together,



we can build on the success of this year and create an even greater impact for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

For more information on the 2025 Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup please visit glslcities.org/great-lakes-coastal-cleanup.

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 communities represented, 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:

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