

Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Government of Canada
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Hon. Steven Guilbeault
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Government of Canada
ministre-minister@ec.gc.ca

Dear Ministers,

Following passage of the attached resolution, I am writing in support of the request of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and other organizations across Canada that your government commit \$1 billion over the next five years to invest in freshwater and interior water restoration and stewardship activities.

From blue green algae and biodiversity loss to microplastics and other chemicals of emerging concern, the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence River, and their tributaries continue to face significant pollution and ecological degradation. Climate change is further exacerbating water quality issues across the region and testing our community's resilience.

In fact, in our municipality, we... [option to include a local anecdote or local evidence of water quality issues, investments made by your municipality to improve source water quality (e.g., remediating Areas of Concern)]

Nearly half of Canada's population lives in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin and as the country's population continues to grow rapidly, much of that settlement will take place in the region. This growth will in turn intensify property development and growth in the agriculture sector, resulting in greater land and resource use pressures that will further contribute to water availability and quality issues. We therefore need to invest now to ensure that we have the source water necessary to sustain this population growth.

In 2021, your party committed to investing \$1 billion into a strengthened Freshwater Action Plan. That commitment was signaled once more by the Prime Minister in the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's mandate letter. To date, however, that commitment has not been put to paper in a federal budget. We urge you to make this critical investment in freshwater and to accelerate that funding over five years.

The Great Lakes are a shared responsibility with the United States and for the last half decade, our neighbours have put a significant amount of money to clean up this treasured freshwater resource. Since 2017, the US has invested US\$1.8 billion in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative; that funding will accelerate with the passage of the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*. Our investments, on the other hand, have come nowhere near to matching American commitments through Canada's Great Lakes Protection Initiative and other programs.

I recognize the difficult task before the government to tame inflation and find savings. As a municipality, we are left to make similar difficult choices. On the other hand, we also understand the consequences of not making strategic investments that are essential to our economy, environment and citizens' wellbeing. **There is nothing more fundamental to our social, environmental and economic wellbeing than clean water.**

Now is the time for Canada to step up with a once-in-a-generation commitment to stewarding the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin and other major fresh water sources across the country – and keeping them healthy. We cannot afford to take an essential resource like fresh water for granted.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
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CC: Terry Duguid, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change,
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[Local MP]