



PRESS RELEASE

Under embargo until March 10, 2020, 9 a.m.

\$1 billion needed to protect the St. Lawrence River

QUEBEC CITY, March 10, 2020- *The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative* today released *Action Plan 2020-2030 for the Future of the St. Lawrence* at Salon des technologies environnementales du Québec (Salon des TEQ). The Action Plan calls for an investment of \$100 million per year over 10 years by the Federal Government to better protect the Saint-Laurent region, its quality of water and the health of its residents from the impacts of climate change and toxic substances.

Action Plan 2030 was initiated by five organizations in Quebec and Ontario and co-led by Jean Cinq-Mars, former Commissioner for Sustainable Development of Quebec, and Gord Miller, former Ontario Commissioner of the Environment. The work, undertaken over a 9-month period with the involvement of 80 experts, stakeholders and First Nations representatives, resulted in 12 key recommendations to address four challenges facing the Saint Lawrence river:

1. repeated flooding, coastal erosion and the vulnerability of communities along the Saint Lawrence as a result of climate change;
2. loss of nutrients like phosphorus used in agriculture that contribute to the growth of harmful algal blooms and the creation of areas of hypoxia;
3. bacteriological contamination from untreated wastewater and agricultural sources that pollutes beaches and reduces public access to the St. Lawrence;
4. the release of toxic substances and other harmful and emerging pollutants into the St. Lawrence, Quebec's principal source of drinking water.

Among the twelve recommendations, the Collaborative calls on governments to provide municipalities with technical assistance and outreach to assist them with adapting and building resiliency to impacts associated with climate change. Furthermore, the Action Plan recommends a significant improvement to wastewater treatment infrastructure to more effectively remove nutrients and toxic substances. There is also a need for the Federal and Quebec government to work together with farmers to ensure their competitiveness in food production while at the same time better protecting water resources.

"Our government is committed to protecting the St. Lawrence River. Its basin contains a population of nearly five million Canadians and abundant biodiversity. However, it now faces many challenges - including warming waters and declining biodiversity caused in part by climate change. Our government is committed to meeting the zero net emissions target by 2050 and ensuring the conservation of Canada's land and oceans. I look forward to reviewing their 12 key



recommendations to help protect this important ecosystem for generations to come.”

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change

"This is a momentous occasion in environmental management history in Canada and Quebec, that such a impressive gathering of experts and citizens from different disciplines and backgrounds, have come together to produce a strategy of such a scale to protect the Saint Lawrence River.”

Jean Cinq-Mars, Co-chair of the Expert Panel and former Quebec Commissioner of Sustainability.

"Protecting an ecosystem as vast and precious as the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence requires an ambitious plan, innovative approaches, stakeholder engagement, expert input, significant sustained budget investment and inspiring leadership. We are very proud to table this important action plan today that is meant to be turnkey solution for governments.”

Gord Miller, Co-Chair of the Expert Panel and former Ontario Environment Commissioner

“The people and communities along the St Lawrence River are facing unprecedented challenges to their homes, business and core infrastructure. A coordinated response by all governments to take action today will protect our communities tomorrow. The U.S. Government has created a national program, the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#), that provides financial support directly to Great Lakes communities. We in Canada need a comparable program to protect this incredible resource”

Michelle Morin Doyle, Chair of the Great Lakes St Lawrence Cities Initiative.

“The collaboration amongst partners who are already involved in the protection of the Saint Lawrence, as well as the innovative approaches proposed in the Action Plan 2020-2030 for the Future of the Saint Lawrence, are the foundation to achieve real results and significant progress.“

Jacques Durocher, chair, Strategies Saint Laurent.



About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative (GLSL) brings together experts and representatives from various stakeholders (e.g., First Nations, scientists, industries, non-governmental organizations, associations from the mayors, etc.), all committed to making the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region a world leader in water protection.

Five organizations — Strategies Saint Laurent, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Alliance, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Freshwater Future Canada and Council of the Great Lakes Region — came together to propose to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to undertake a process led by experts and stakeholders to find new and innovative solutions to protect the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River.

To view the report: www.westbrookpa.com/glslcollab

-30-

For more Information, contact:

Nicola Crawhall
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative Secretariat
Cell: 416-407-5880
Email: nicola.crawhall@westbrookpa.com