



August 9, 2013

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq
Minister of the Environment (Canada)
Les Terrasses de la Chaudiere
10 Wellington Street, 28th Floor
Gatineau QC K1A OH3

The Honourable Jim Bradley
Minister of Environment (Ontario)
77 Wellesley Street West
11th Floor, Ferguson Block
Toronto, ON M7A 2T5

Dear Minister Aglukkaq and Minister Bradley,

Re: Status of Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem

We are writing to you to express our concern regarding the delays in finalizing a new *Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem* (COA). The previous COA signed in 2007 expired on June 24, 2012. The revised COA is now over a year late. We are concerned that the delayed negotiations have hindered the restoration, protection and conservation of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin as well as full implementation of the Canada-United States *Great Lakes Water Quality Protocol of 2012*, which came into force on February 12, 2013 (per exchange of diplomatic notes).

With both levels of government involved in the protection of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, the COA should establish an action plan, and clear roles and responsibilities between federal and provincial ministries. It should outline the interests and responsibilities that each government has in the Great Lakes. Federally, the Agreement is critical in the implementation of the *Great Lakes Water Quality Protocol of 2012*, and provincially, COA is necessary for meeting the goals in Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy.

Under the previous COA, Ontario's Ministry of Environment worked with more than 240 partners on 200 projects across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. Expiration of the current COA is delaying the continuation of much of that important work as it creates uncertainty around the future of partnership programs, and legislative policies related to Great Lakes protection.

Since 1971, Canada and Ontario have worked together under a series of Great Lakes agreements that have guided efforts to improve the water quality and aquatic ecosystem health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin and contributed to meeting Canada's obligations under the Canada-United States *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement* ("GLWQA").

Canada and the United States signed an amended GLWQA, the *Great Lakes Water Quality Protocol of 2012* on September 7, 2012 to modernize the agreement so that it addresses existing and emerging threats. We are currently awaiting the COA to meet Canada's obligations under the *Great Lakes Water Quality Protocol of 2012*.

Both the provincial and federal governments must agree to a new Canada-Ontario Agreement framework as soon as possible to continue to work together to restore, protect and conserve the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin ecosystem. We request that a complete draft of the COA be released for public comment as soon as possible, prior to the signing of the agreement. The Great Lakes are vital in supporting our environment, our economy, and our society. We appreciate continued commitment to protect and improve our shared Great Lakes.

For more information or to request a meeting, contact Nancy Goucher at Environmental Defence at ngoucher@environmentaldefence.ca or 416-323-9521 ext 257.

Yours Truly,



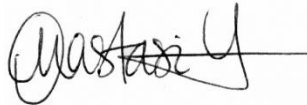
Sarah Winterton, Acting Executive Director
Environmental Defence



Terry Rees, Executive Director, Federation of
Cottagers Association



Fe de Leon, Researcher, Canadian
Environmental Law Association



Dr. Anastasia Lintner, Economist and Staff
Lawyer, Ecojustice



Cheryl Kallio, Associate Director,
Freshwater Future



Norm Brandson, Chair, Forum for Leadership
on Water (FLOW)