



## **Backgrounder Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement**

### **Overview:**

- On June 13, 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lawrence Cannon announced the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement will be renegotiated.
- The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) is the main agreement between US and Canada governing water quality in the Great Lakes.
- The Agreement falls under the US-Canada Boundary Waters Treaty, signed in 1909, now 100 years old. The original Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement dates from 1972.
- The purpose of the Agreement is “to restore and maintain the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem.” The Agreement contains 15 Articles and 17 Annexes which describe the goals, objectives, programs that the two countries will carry out.
- The Boundary Waters Treaty and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement have been regarded as models for two countries to work together on shared waters. The recent announcement to review the Agreement reflects the growing consensus to update the Agreement to reflect the new challenges facing the lakes, including climate change, emerging chemicals and urbanization. Many of the concepts, objectives and priorities require updating.
- The negotiation and implementation of the Agreement need to involve the Mayors of the Great Lakes, recognizing the major role that local government plays in the protection of the Lakes. Mayors will be calling for a mechanism to reflect local governments’ voice as the negotiations progress.
- Local governments are investing over \$15 billion annually to protect and restore the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence resource, based on a Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative / Great Lakes Commission survey of 2006 investments.

### **History:**

- 1972 GLWQA has been updated to reflect changing concerns through amendments three times: in 1978 ( added ecosystem approach/ virtual elimination of persistent toxic pollutants), in 1983 (phosphorus limits) and 1987 (annexes focusing on non-point

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contaminant sources, contaminated sediment, airborne toxic substances, contaminated groundwater, and associated research and development).

- There have been calls to update GLWQA for many years, and the governments did limited reviews in 1992 and 1999. A major review of the Agreement was undertaken by both U.S. and Canadian governments from 2004-2007, and involved over 350 experts, including the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, and public consultation.
- Review report concluded: There is a need to update the Agreement, and made specific recommendations including “The Agreement should recognize the critical role and essential participation of other orders of government, including: (1) Tribes and First Nations, (2) states and province and (3) local governments and authorities. These entities should be included in the revision and implementation of the Agreement.”
- For more information about the agreement see [www.on.ec.gc.ca/greatlakes](http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/greatlakes)

### **Why Are the Great Lakes Important?**

- According to World Business Chicago, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region is the second largest economy in the world representing a regional economy worth over \$4 trillion. Investing in this region will drive national economic recovery in both countries.
- The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region is home to 40 million Canadians and Americans.
- The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence system is the most significant source of fresh drinking water not only in North America but in the world and is estimated to contain 20 percent of the world’s surface freshwater resources. As water resources continue to dwindle in other parts of the world, the region will become an even more attractive place to live and conduct business.
- With a declining manufacturing base and a strong research community, the region has an available trained workforce and innovation capacity to transform itself into a world leader in the development and application of green technology and environmentally sustainable public infrastructure.
- The Brookings Institution calculated that the return on investment in protecting and restoring the Great Lakes could be at least 2:1.

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## Backgrounder Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products

### Overview:

There is growing evidence that the improper disposal of pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs) may have an adverse affect on human health and the health of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River ecosystem. PPCPs can include prescription and over the counter medications, veterinary drugs, pet products, cleansing agents, nutritional supplements and skin care products.

### Background:

- PPCPs that are disposed of by flushing or in the garbage can find their way into water bodies through various means, including outflow from wastewater treatment plants, sewers, commercial animal feeding operations and aquaculture, landfill leachate and septic tanks.
- Improper PPCP disposal not only poses a potential environmental risk, but can also lead to accidental ingestion of PPCPs and illegal use and/or theft.
- A 2002 U.S. Geological Survey monitoring study that analyzed 139 streams in 30 U.S. states found contaminants in 80% of these streams; 82 contaminants were identified and many were pharmaceuticals (Koplin, D.W. et al. 2002. "Pharmaceuticals, hormones and other organic wastewater contaminants in US streams, 1999-2000: A National Reconnaissance." *Environmental Science & Technology*. 36(6): 1202-1211).
- Large amounts of prescription drugs and personal care products are being used. In the U.S., the number of prescriptions purchased increased 72% from 1997 to 2007, and the average number of retail prescriptions per capita increased from 8.9 in 1997 to 12.6 in 2007; in Canada it has been estimated that pharmacists in the ten Canadian provinces filled 453 million prescriptions in 2008, up 7.1% over the previous year and for 33.2 million Canadians, that's an average of nearly 14 prescriptions per citizen.
- Currently, there is no federal legislation in the U.S. on the proper collection and disposal of PPCPs from individuals. Federal guidelines for consumers were issued in 2009 by the Office of Drug Control Policy on how to dispose of prescription drugs.
- Legislation is being considered in various U.S. states on PPCP collection and disposal, with bills currently under consideration in Florida, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington, which uphold the concept of extended producer responsibility where the producer is responsible for administering and financing collection and disposal of the product.

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- In Canada, where this issue is often regulated at the provincial level, many provinces are making progress to encourage proper disposal using the concept of extended producer responsibility. Currently, the most progressive provincial program is in British Columbia where a regulation was passed in 1997 that calls on brand owners in BC to provide consumers with a disposal method for expired or unused medications (natural health supplements and nonprescription medications are included). Medications are returned to local pharmacies that participate in the return program. Over 90% of pharmacies in BC participate. The cost for collection and disposal is covered by brand owners.
- In other provinces, like Quebec, there are informal arrangements where consumers can take pharmaceuticals back to local pharmacies for proper disposal. Cost for collection and disposal is borne by the pharmacy and/or municipalities.
- In Ontario, a regulation is expected in summer 2009 requiring producers to administer and pay for the collection and disposal of pharmaceuticals and other hazardous household wastes. There is also an existing arrangement to take pharmaceuticals back to local pharmacies, with about 90% pharmacy participation.
- Pharmaceutical manufacturers already pay for medicine return programs in many places, including France, Italy, Spain and Australia. There are also many successful and cost-effective examples of manufacturer stewardship for other products, including electronics, rechargeable batteries, mercury thermostats, and paint.
- In the absence of mandatory producer-sponsored collection and disposal programs, many local governments have voluntarily chosen to take a leadership role to provide consumers with a safe collection option and to better protect their sources of drinking water.
- An informal survey of the sixty-four Cities Initiative member cities found that many held voluntary PPCP collection events, including discrete events, permanent drop-off locations, and take back to pharmacies. In fact, in 2008 alone, 11 member municipalities collected close to 700,000 pounds of PPCPs.

**Cities Initiative Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products Framework:**

Members of the Cities Initiative firmly believe in extended producer responsibility, that is, pharmaceutical manufacturers must take full responsibility to ensure the safe collection and disposal of their products. Where appropriate, when municipalities or other agents undertake to help with collection of pharmaceuticals, they must be compensated by the drug companies for the costs incurred.

The *Cities Initiative Pharmaceuticals and Products Framework* is a voluntary program through which cities can register their collection activities for pharmaceuticals and personal care products, such as

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holding a collection event, developing an ongoing collection program, or bolstering public education on the issue. The Framework will also focus on advancing national or provincial policies on PPCP collection and disposal that aim to increase producer responsibility for the collection of unused PPCP.

Through the Framework, cities will share best practices and knowledge on PPCP collection and disposal efforts to achieve these goals. Cities will also track the costs of participating in pharmaceutical collection programs to demonstrate the costs incurred at the municipal level.

*The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a bi-national coalition of 64 mayors and other local officials that works actively with federal, state, provincial, tribal, and first nation governments and other stakeholders to advance the protection, restoration and promotion of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. For more information, please visit our website at [www.glslcities.org](http://www.glslcities.org)*

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