

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Campaign 2011 Questionnaire Response from Canada's New Democrats

Investment

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence constitute the largest source of fresh water in the world. The US Federal Government committed \$475 million to Great Lakes restoration and protection initiatives in 2010 alone, exclusive of infrastructure investments, and likely will appropriate between \$200 and \$300 million in 2011. Only \$8 million was committed to non-infrastructure Great Lakes protection programs in last year's federal budget and only \$16 million was committed by the Federal Government to the St. Lawrence Plan last year. Canada's declining investment in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence is not keeping pace with American investments and is insufficient to maintain and enhance the quality of this global resource.

- i) If your party forms the next Government of Canada (or if your party is in opposition), would you increase the federal financial commitment to the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes (exclusive of infrastructure) next year, and if so, by how much?

The NDP believes that Canada's investment in maintaining the health of the Great Lakes should be at least proportional to that of its southern neighbor.

- ii) In its pre-budget submission, the Cities Initiative proposed the creation of a \$50 million/year Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Sustainability Fund for locally-directed nearshore protection measures in any communities within the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin. If your party formed the next Government of Canada (or if your party is in opposition), would you create such a Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Sustainability Fund?

The NDP has allocated \$200 million per year over four years for clean water projects, and would certainly consider endowing a fund for local initiatives.

Infrastructure

New federal wastewater treatment standards are expected to come into effect later this year. The regulations will require communities to rebuild or replace more than 25 per cent of Canada's 3,500 wastewater treatment systems. The necessary infrastructure upgrades are estimated to cost \$13 billion over the next 3 decades, and an additional \$30 billion if upgrades to bring systems into compliance with current standards are factored in.

iii) What is your government's plan to help cities meet federal wastewater standards?

The NDP believes that working with the provinces and territories to develop a pan-Canadian infrastructure strategy, with reliable long-term funding for local priorities, is an important objective that will provide certainty to municipal leaders and allow for effective planning and replacement of aging infrastructure. Addressing the municipal infrastructure deficit must become a national goal.

New Democrats take seriously our responsibility to protect and use our water resources wisely. We have consistently advocated for a ban of bulk fresh water exports, and to specifically exclude water from NAFTA. A New Democrat government would work with provincial and territorial partners to enhance Canada's water management practices. We have committed an initial \$200 million per year to help municipalities comply with the new federal standards.

Leadership

Over a number of years, action on Great Lakes and St. Lawrence protection has been delayed on several fronts. Negotiations on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Ecosystem and the St. Lawrence Plan have all been delayed. Investment in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence has not been made a priority. And very little political attention has been given to the greatest source of fresh water in the world. Political leadership on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence is sorely needed.

iv) If your party formed the next Government of Canada (or if your party is in opposition), would you commit to demonstrating political leadership in the protection of precious water resources in Canada, including the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence, and if so, how would you do this?

New Democrats take seriously our responsibility to protect and use our water resources wisely. We have consistently advocated for a ban of bulk fresh water exports, and to specifically exclude water from NAFTA. A New Democrat government would work with provincial and territorial partners to enhance Canada's water management practices.

Spills Prevention

Last year, Canada's Environmental Commissioner, Scott Vaughan, released a report in which he concluded that that Canada's spills prevention and preparedness regime is outdated and lacks a formal framework with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for responding to chemical spills.

v) If your party forms the next Government of Canada (or if your party is in opposition), would you update Canada's spills prevention and preparedness regime? Including

- a special focus on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region;
- a formal framework for responding to chemical spills;
- a prevention and response plan to address new and changing products in maritime cargo on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence, including light petroleum products, new chemicals, and other new cargo materials

New Democrats take seriously our responsibility to protect and use our water resources wisely. These measures will include protection of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region, introducing a formal framework for responding to chemical spills. We will implement a plan to address new and changing products in maritime cargo on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence, including light petroleum products, new chemicals, radioactive waste and other new cargo materials

A New Democrat government would work with provincial and territorial partners to enhance Canada's water management practices.

St. Lawrence River

The St. Lawrence River is already feeling the effects of climate change with severe storms and tides causing acute erosion in the St. Lawrence estuary and gulf areas as well as lower water levels in the Montreal region.

vi) If your party forms the next Government of Canada (or if your party is in opposition), would you create an assistance program for cities along the St. Lawrence to address or adapt to the effects of climate change?

New Democrats recognize the importance of the St. Lawrence to countless communities along its shores and inland. We are prepared to enter into discussions with the relevant provinces, states and municipalities over priorities for conservation and water protection and cost sharing of necessary corrective action.

Thank you for your responses.

Please return to Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Deputy Director, Nicola Crawhall at nicola.crawhall@rogers.com