



September 23, 2011

Ms. Nicola Crawhall
Deputy Director
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
nicola.crawhall@rogers.com

Dear Ms. Crawhall:

I am pleased to provide you with the attached response to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's 2011 provincial election questionnaire, which outlines the Ontario Liberal Party's position on these issues of key importance.

Ontario Liberals are the only party with a positive plan to move Ontario forward. Together, we got through the recession the Ontario way: we protected education and health care, stood by workers in the hardest hit industries, and worked together to find new opportunities for our province and our families. Our strong leadership, experienced team and thoughtful long-term plan are getting results for Ontario families.

Eight years ago, during the dark days of Conservative cuts and conflict, Ontario was moving backwards. Today, our schools are rated among the world's best, our health care ranks first in Canada, and old jobs are coming back while new jobs are being created in emerging industries like advanced manufacturing and clean energy.

Our plan is getting results and Ontario is solidly on track. The Hudak PCs would take us off track and put our fragile recovery at risk with their reckless schemes. We need to keep moving forward, together.

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Ms. Crawhall, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's questionnaire — and please accept my best wishes.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dalton McGuinty
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
Premier

Enclosure

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Campaign 2011 Questionnaire

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 have been delayed and the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Ecosystem has been extended several times rather than reviewed and renegotiated to reflect current conditions. A renewed political commitment to the Great Lakes is sorely needed.

1) If your party forms the next Government of Ontario, how would you demonstrate political leadership in the protection of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence?

Ontario Liberals would continue our leadership on Great Lakes issues. We led the charge in ensuring that the 2005 Great Lakes — St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement protected against bulk diversions of water, and enshrined this protection in provincial law. Our Cosmetic Pesticides Ban reduced pesticide levels in the Great Lakes Basin and other waterways by 80 per cent.

Our *Forward. Together.* plan will continue this leadership through a new Great Lakes Protection Act and Fund. This new initiative will help:

- Clean up the pollution hot spots identified by scientists, targeting Nipigon Bay and Peninsula Harbour on Lake Superior, the Detroit River, the Niagara River, and the Bay of Quinte on Lake Ontario as the next priorities
- Better prevent pollution and runoff such as phosphorous from getting into the Great Lakes by working more closely with our regional partners
- Reconnect Ontarians with the Great Lakes in their communities by promoting recreational opportunities, improving beaches and supporting community programs.

We will also continue to work with our federal counterparts to push for a renegotiated Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and Canada-Ontario Agreement as soon as possible, but ensure that they meet the expectations of Ontarians to protect the precious lakes.

Under the last PC government, water inspectors were fired and Ontario earned a reputation as one of the worst places in North America for environmental protection. The Hudak PCs would take us backwards: the \$14-billion hole in their platform would mean deep cuts to environmental protection. Meanwhile, the Horwath NDP has turned its back on the environment — their priority would be to subsidize gas-guzzlers. They

have consistently failed to support the Ontario Liberals' progressive environmental initiatives like the *Endangered Species Act*, the *Far North Act* and the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban. Neither the Hudak PCs nor the Horwath NDP have addressed Great Lakes issues in their platforms.

Investment

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence system constitutes the largest source of fresh water in the world. It is plagued by a number of environmental challenges that require dedicated funding to be effectively addressed, including escalating nutrient levels resulting in algae build-up, chemical loadings from products and direct discharges; invasive species, the impacts of climate change, stressed habitat and species, the impact of agricultural and urban run-off on nearshore waters, contaminated sediment, to name a few.

2) If your party forms the next Government of Ontario, after a review of government finances, would your government commit to increasing the provincial financial commitment to the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence (exclusive of infrastructure) next year?

In the recent extension of the Canada-Ontario Agreement, Ontario Liberals made sure that specific attention would be paid to addressing: harmful pollutants, the development of a nearshore framework, stewardship activities to reduce nutrient levels, and invasive species prevention.

Our new Great Lakes Protection Act and Fund would build upon our existing commitments — and specifically focus on better prevention of pollution and runoff such as phosphorous from getting into the Great Lakes waterways. It will also encourage more Ontario families to take advantage of this beautiful natural resource by improving our beaches and supporting community programs.

Nearshore Water Quality and Stormwater

As a result of climate change and urban intensification, the negative impact of stormwater runoff on nearshore water quality is worsening, becoming one of the primary sources of pollutants to the Lakes. At the same time, many communities are experiencing increasing stormy conditions, basement flooding and flash floods.

3) If your Party forms the next Government of Ontario, what is your plan to help Great Lakes and St. Lawrence municipalities improve and expand their stormwater activities and floodwater conveyance to reducing flooding and reduce the impact of runoff on Great Lakes water quality?

Earlier this year, Ontario Liberals released Climate Ready: Ontario's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan. The plan highlights the steps we will take over the next four years to ensure that Ontario is prepared for the challenges that changing weather patterns will bring — including severe storms like those that have caused flooding and damage in municipalities. The plan creates a vision and framework for collaboration across ministries and with external partners.

Since 2003, we have committed roughly \$1.8 billion in grants to help almost 300 municipalities with more than 750 water and wastewater infrastructure projects. We have also committed almost \$1.7 billion in infrastructure loans. Our long-term infrastructure plan, Building Together: Jobs & Prosperity for Ontarians, articulates our commitment to work to ensure the financial and environmental sustainability of municipal water, wastewater and storm water systems. We will work with municipalities to explore innovative approaches to reclaiming water, recovering nutrients and generating energy from wastewater to mitigate urbanization impacts.

If elected, the Hudak PCs will be looking to rapidly cut programs to compensate for the \$14-billion hole in their platform. Historically, environmental programs have borne the brunt of Conservative cuts, with particularly tragic consequences for water quality.

Beach and Coastal Improvements

Many parts of Ontario are seeing increasing pressure on waterfront lands from increasing population, development pressures, increased erosion and changing water levels. Ontario is also fortunate to have some of the most beautiful beaches in the Great Lakes area, and yet these receive little government support to provide a safe, enjoyable family day at the beach.

4) If your party forms the next Government of Ontario, how would you work with Great Lakes and St. Lawrence municipalities to improve lakefront and coastal planning and improved support for beaches?

Ontario Liberals fully recognize the need for an increased focus on Ontario's beaches and coasts. With increased population, changing demographics and climate change, a comprehensive approach to beach and coastal management is crucial. Working with our municipal partners has been key to our approach and we will continue on this track. We also recognize the importance of beaches and coasts not just for the local communities, but also as economic drivers for the economy.

Our new Great Lakes Protection Act would build on our existing commitments and specifically focus on better preventing pollution and runoff such as phosphorous from getting into the Great Lakes waterways. The Great Lakes Protection Fund would go toward community initiatives to support beaches — and improve recreational and environmental assets in the Great Lakes and along their shores.

Climate Change Prevention and Adaptation

Many parts of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River are already feeling the effects of climate change with lowered water levels in the upper lakes, severe storms causing erosion, less ice cover over the winter months, and increased water temperatures causing increased growth of algae along the shorelines.

5) If your party forms the next Government of Ontario (or if your party is in opposition), how would you assist Great Lakes and St. Lawrence municipalities to address or adapt to the effects of climate change?

Please see answer to Question 3 above, which addresses our Adaptation Plan.