



An Agenda for Water Quality Revitalization

Following extensive consultation over the past two years with member groups, Great Lakes United has developed a preliminary position on the review and revision of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). This document, which was signed onto by sixty-five groups from across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region, was our formal submission in July to the governments in response to their consultation.

- 1 We support opening up the Agreement to revitalize it, provided the governments make a commitment not to weaken any current provisions.
- 2 The governments should commit to full public involvement in any significant decisions regarding changes to the Agreement, including:
 - An opportunity to comment on advice from Environment Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) and the U.S. Department of State;
 - An opportunity to comment on preliminary positions of DFAIT and State Department;
 - Formal public hearings on a complete draft of proposed revisions to the Agreement, if it is revised;
 - Formal status as observers at the negotiating table during negotiations.
- 3 As part of the review, the governments should ensure that a neutral, professional, and detailed assessment of progress and performance under the Agreement is carried out before decisions are made on how to proceed with revitalization of the Agreement.
- 4 Regarding the scope of the Agreement, we recommend that the governments adopt the recommendation of the IJC, that “the Agreement’s focus should remain on water quality, but take account of a broader array of stressors that impact on it.” These should include items such as invasive species, pollutants of recent concern (endocrine disruptors, carcinogens, neuro-developmental toxicants, flame retardants, pharmaceuticals, phthalates, perfluorinated compounds, perfluorooctane sulfonate, bisphenol A, nanoparticles), air pollution from sources beyond the Great Lakes basin, radionuclides, groundwater pollution, fish farms, intensive agricultural operations, urban development, water levels, and climate change.
- 5 The GLWQA should be revised to include the entire St. Lawrence River.

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To find out more about the progress of the Agreement revitalization, sign up for our listserv:

www.glu.org/english/lists.htm

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6 New principles and approaches should be added to or expanded in the Agreement. These should include prevention, the precautionary approach, reverse onus, and the watershed approach.

Learn More

The complete list of recommendations and background information can be found on the web at www.glu.org.

7 New science provisions should be added to the GL-WQA, including:

- Identifying indicators for the various goals in the Agreement;
- Commitment by the governments to gather enough data to be able to report on status of these indicators;
- Supporting research that will give warnings on emerging stressors;
- Ensuring that the monitoring and research results are widely available and easily accessible in a timely manner.

8 A strong public role should be embedded in the Agreement, including:

- Public initiative options, such as a citizen petition mechanism;
- Public representation on all IJC boards and the creation of a citizens' advisory board to the IJC;
- Commitment to create public advisory committees for government initiatives or programs related to the Great Lakes, and/or inclusion of the public on program steering committees.

9 The Agreement should recognize and define the role of the Tribes, First Nations and Métis in Agreement activities.

10 The Agreement should define the role of the provinces, states, and local governments in Agreement activities.

11 Commitments in the Agreement should be written in a way that leads to implementation by fostering enforceability and accountability. This means that commitments should:

- Have specific targets and timetables for achieving those targets;
- Replace words such as “seek” and “strive” with “achieve”;
- Include a commitment to put the targets and timelines of the Agreement into each country's legislation;
- Include provisions for regular reporting to the public on progress towards the targets and timetables.

12 Provisions for periodic independent audits of progress generated by the Agreement should be strengthened, and government responses to those audits should be made more specific.

13 The governments should demonstrate their commitment to a revitalized Agreement by having it approved and signed by the appropriate government officials (the prime minister and president at a minimum) and the appropriate aboriginal representatives and by making financial commitments adequate to achieve the goals of the Agreement.