

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Conservation Authorities Support Strengthened Proposed Great Lakes Protection Act

Newmarket (February 19, 2015) – Ontario’s 36 Conservation Authorities strongly support a strengthened proposed *Great Lakes Protection Act* that will solidify collaborations to help to address growing issues around the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin.

The Great Lakes are severely threatened by climate change, a growing population, and increased run off from cities and farms. These issues affect water levels, stream flows, and the quality of water in the Great Lakes which 80% of Ontarians draw from for their drinking water. They also impact popular beaches, fish, birds and wildlife that live in or next to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin.

This week, the Ontario government re-introduced the proposed *Great Lakes Protection Act* which was first presented in 2012. The goals of the Government are to fight the impacts of climate change on the Great Lakes, reduce algal blooms, protect wetlands, as well as monitor and report on the health of the lakes.

The Government also proposes to establish a Great Lakes Guardians Council which will bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including conservation authorities.

“Conservation Authorities look forward to working more closely with the Provincial Government to expand and improve upon actions, such as watershed planning, stormwater management, and watershed stewardship programs, that are currently underway to improve conditions in the Great Lakes,” said Kim Gavine, General Manager of Conservation Ontario, the organization which represents Ontario’s 36 Conservation Authorities.

[35/36 Conservation Authority watersheds drain into the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.](#)

Upstream activities such as urbanization, increased water uses, pollution, and stormwater runoff from more frequent flooding affect water quantity and water quality downstream in the Great Lakes.

“As Ontario’s watershed managers, Conservation Authorities are able to bring all the different players to the table to develop programs and activities that assess and

manage the impacts upstream for improved conditions downstream.” Gavine said.

Climate change impacts such as warming waters, less winter ice, and changing weather create extreme weather events, such as prolonged lake effect snow and more intense and frequent flooding, costing municipalities, homeowners and businesses millions of dollars in damages.

We rely on the Great Lakes daily for multiple benefits:

- They provide water for many uses including: individual homes, municipalities, farms, and businesses
- Many Ontarians live along the shores of all the Great Lakes and use them for fishing, swimming, boating, hiking, and cottages
- They contribute to food production, manufacturing, tourism, and provide important shipping routes

Protecting and improving the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin and their watersheds supports a healthy economy for Ontario and helps us to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

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For More Information about Conservation Authorities and the Great Lakes:

<http://www.conservationontario.ca/what-we-do/great-lakes>

Learn About the Great Lakes: Conservation Ontario’s Interactive Map Showing the Benefits and Threats Around the Great Lakes:

<http://www.conservationontario.ca/what-we-do/great-lakes/learn-about-the-great-lakes>

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change News Release:

<http://news.ontario.ca/ene/en/2015/02/ontario-to-introduce-legislation-to-protect-the-great-lakes.html>

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