

Conservation Ontario Submission on Negotiations to Amend the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement – Sept 20, 2011



Conservation Ontario is the non-governmental organization representing the network of 36 Conservation Authorities in Ontario; watershed-based organizations committed to excellence in managing watersheds for Great Lakes benefits.

Conservation Ontario has provided written comments at each stage of public consultation provided throughout this renegotiation process for the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. As well, Conservation Ontario has supported the participation of Bonnie Fox on the Canadian Stakeholder Advisory Panel to provide advice from a watershed management agency perspective. Overall, Conservation Ontario and Conservation Authorities have been involved in numerous binational initiatives such as Lake Ontario and Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies, the binational Remedial Action Plans and the Lakewide Area Management Plans.

Conservation Ontario continues to advocate for the strengthening and reinforcement of the relevance and role of watershed management agencies in an ecosystem approach to protecting the Great Lakes through specific reference to 'watershed management agencies' in the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Overall, Conservation Authorities, and watershed management agencies in general, could be an asset and key implementing partner in meeting the commitments of many of the Annexes (e.g. RAPs, LaMPs, Nutrients, Habitat and Species, Climate Change, Science) of the renegotiated Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Conservation Authorities have active projects and programs which are directly related to the proposed Annexes and have a history of being active participants at binational tables. Conservation Ontario submits that those governments and agencies to be represented on the proposed Annex Sub-Committees should have a seat at the Executive Committee table to which they ultimately report. To ensure effective integration of efforts and an emphasis on 'action and implementation', the Parties are encouraged to engage watershed management agency representatives on the new Executive Committee.

Conservation Ontario appreciates the efforts of the Chief Negotiators and we look forward to a finalized Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement under which we can assist in meeting binational commitments. If you would like to discuss these comments further, please contact Bonnie Fox, Manager, Policy & Planning, Conservation Ontario at 905-895-0716 ext. 223.