

## City Council

### Notice of Motion

MM41.18	ACTION			Ward:All
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### **Toronto Supports the Great Lakes Protection Act - by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon**

*\* Notice of this Motion has been given.*

*\* This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

#### **Recommendations**

Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment to enact, expeditiously, the long-awaited and promised "Great Lakes Protection Act" (Bill 6) to protect and restore the health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

#### **Summary**

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River represent the largest body of surface fresh water in the world and are a vibrant, diverse ecosystem that is critically important to the economic well-being and quality of life of Ontarians. The health of the lakes contributes to a \$4.4 trillion economy in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin in Canada and the United States.

There is an urgent and pressing need for a new, strong and effective law to protect and restore the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River watershed as the Great Lakes provide more than 80 percent of Ontario's drinking water and over 95 percent of Ontario's agricultural land is in the Great Lakes basin. The health of the lakes contribute to a \$4.4 trillion economy in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin in Canada and the United States.

Scientists tell us that 3 of our 4 Great Lakes are in decline (Lakes Ontario, Erie and Huron). Even the largest of the lakes, Superior, is feeling the impacts of major stressors like habitat loss and shoreline development. Lake-wide threats such as algae blooms (growing in both size and frequency), degradation and loss of wetlands, and chemical contamination are becoming increasingly problematic. If left unchecked, these challenges will result in water that cannot support the species that live there and is unsafe to fish, drink or swim in.

We need to restore the Great Lakes now so current and future generations can continue to enjoy their benefits. The Great Lakes Ecosystem not only provides drinking water to millions of Toronto residents, but it provides a place to learn, play, swim fish and boat.

In 2011 and 2012, the Ministry of the Environment consulted with municipalities, First Nations and Metis communities, environmental experts and stakeholders including industry, agriculture and tourism. Following this consultation, in June 2012, the Province introduced a Great Lakes Protection Act, which did not proceed due to prorogation of the Legislature. Earlier in February 2013, the Provincial Government reintroduced the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2013 (Bill 6) and this Bill is now making its way through the Legislature. In October 2013, the Great Lakes Protection Act was referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

A strong and effective Great Lakes Protection Act has the potential to:

- Create the planning and regulatory tools necessary to better address the complex and intractable issues facing the Great Lakes now and in the future;
- Address current legislative gaps in Great Lakes policy;
- Provide mechanisms to track and measure progress on improving Great Lakes health and holding responsible authorities accountable;
- Create opportunities for stronger community involvement on Lake issues;
- Affirm provincial commitment to meeting targets outlined in agreements with neighbouring Great Lakes-St Lawrence River states and provinces;
- Spark renewed interest in Great Lakes by focusing public attention and government resources on the urgency of the issues at hand; and
- Align priorities and decision-making across provincial ministries by legislating principles that guide decision-making related to Lake health.

The purpose of the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act is to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin, and to encourage individual and community engagement in support of that goal. Its focus is empowering people to restore the Great Lakes watershed, its water, wetlands, beaches and coastlines.

Restoration and protection of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River ecosystem needs to be approached with the greatest sense of urgency by all those responsible for dealing with this matter. The proposed Great Lakes Protection Act will bring urgent attention and focus to current and emerging threats to the Great Lakes watershed, provide additional regulatory tools to local communities, and create new legislative and governance structures to help ensure the Lakes remain drinkable, swimmable, and fishable now and into the future.

(Submitted to City Council on November 13 and 14, 2013 as MM41.18)

### **Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM41.18