

Ministry of Environment: Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy Public Consultation Meeting

MacDonald Block, 900 Bay Street, Toronto: August 29th, 2012:

- Wide based representation included municipal, local, conservation, provincial boards, commissions and agencies & First Nation representatives, source protection authorities & environmental organizations, industrial, agricultural, recreational, conservation authorities and community groups included local communities
- Proposed legislation to provide strategic direction, protect natural heritage and focus on priority issues and stressed areas while building efficiencies utilizing and augmenting existing tools and empowering and enabling communities
- to take meaningful actions, building partnerships and setting phased in policies and plans for ecosystem direction
- Included in proposed Act is the establishment of a Great Lakes Guardians' Council that would improve collaboration, identify priorities and partnerships
- The purpose of the Act is to protect and balance social, economic, innovative and communities' wellbeing recognizing the vital importance of the Great Lakes in providing drinking water, biodiversity habitat, and spiritual and cultural importance to First Nations communities and protecting human health
- Vision of proposed Act: Great Lakes that are drinkable, swimmable and fishable by protecting and restoring the ecological health of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin by:
 1. Empowering communities with opportunities to become involved in protection and restoration of ecological health
 2. Protecting human health and well-being by protecting and restoring quality and quantity of water
 3. Improving shorelines, beaches and coastal areas
 4. Biodiversity protection and detecting and responding quickly to invasive species
 5. Enhancing understanding and adaptation to stressors such as climate change
 6. Environmentally sustainable economic opportunities & innovation

Challenges identified by participants were:

- The shoreline and local geographical areas are complex & there are gaps in shoreline development
- Needed are legally enforceable policies
- Climate change is bringing accumulative effects

- Don't want to reinvent wheel
- Want to maintain pristine areas while helping areas that need help
- Concern about wastewater treatment for growing GTA population
- What will Great Lakes look like in 2050 as U.S. & Quebec is taking Great Lakes water?
- Must pay attention to water levels
- Legislation currently has no targets
- Many tools available but not the political will
- Currently Credit River is one of largest contributors to phosphorous in Great Lakes
- Need to champion Great Lakes & publicly engage people
- Ask First Nations and Metis communities how they want to be included
- Develop Terms of Reference and Mandate
- Have core membership in Council and create a budget
- Accountability?
- Meetings: teleconferences? Focus groups? Collaboration with educational curriculum?

Next steps:

Bill will go to 2nd reading in the fall and then to the Standing Committee

- Will ask for further presentations