



COA 2021

What did we ask for? What did we get?



Indigenous governance

We asked for:

- Include Indigenous peoples as rights-holders and titleholders under a tri-governance model
- Commit to providing adequate resources to Indigenous peoples for their participation in the Agreement's implementation

We got:

- Indigenous peoples of the Great Lakes will be included as contributors to the implementation of the Agreement **but are not recognized as rights-holders and titleholders**.
- New commitment to invite First Nations and Métis representatives to participate in COA Executive Committee meetings
- There were commitments to provide financial support and capacity to FNs and Métis, but no concrete sums for investment in supporting FNs and Métis to participate in implementation are provided.

Ambitious goals

What we asked for:

- Establish concrete, ambitious targets and timelines and clearly articulated responsibilities for participating governments and stakeholders

What we got:

- An interim timeline provided - “In 2023, assess and report on progress towards achieving phosphorus reduction targets and actions specified in the Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan”
- “In 2022, support the development and implementation for phosphorus management plans for priority Lake Erie watersheds.”

Ambitious goals

What we asked for:

- The Parties clarify how cross Ministerial coordination will be managed within a streamline administration
- The Parties clarify which body will oversee the implementation of the policies that relied on the COA Management Committee such as the Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan
- Annex Leads to follow five-year work plans to guide implementation of the COA be maintained

What we got:

- The oversight of the Agreement will be entrusted to the COA Executive Committee. The Committee will meet at least annually to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the Agreement.
- Build on existing governance structures to ensure partner participation in the implementation of the Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan. -- This is vague.
- Five-year work plans maintained.

Reporting

What we asked for:

- The Parties commit to jointly reporting on progress under COA (rather than separately), and do so through publicly available biannual reports that use a consistent set of measures and indicators of progress and success.

What we got:

- Joint reporting will continue.
- Few results and activities in the final COA are specific, measurable, and time-bound. Much of the work described in the final COA is consultative, outreach-focused, or research-oriented. Although such commitments are important, they are far less quantifiable, and it is unclear what the anticipated outcome is at the end of the COA term.

Funding

What we asked for:

- COA include specific funding obligations sufficient to implement the commitments under the Agreement and the Annexes
- COA include transparent reporting of funding commitments and actual expenditures. Specifically, Canada commit to a minimum \$100 million per year investment under COA and that Ontario similarly make a significant annual funding commitment.

What we got:

- No specific funding commitments.
- Without transparent reporting of funding it is very difficult for the public to ascertain what funding commitments and amounts are made towards the implementation of COA commitments.

Public Engagement

What we asked for:

- COA be amended to include an outline of the public engagement process for future COAs, clarifying when the review will begin and how the public will be consulted.
- A public advisory body be established to provide input to the COA Executive Committee and ensure that public engagement is formalized and ongoing.

What we got:

- None of these recommendations were included. The public engagement Annex echoed the same wording for objectives and plans as previous COAs.
- The ECO has highlighted the lack of public involvement in the negotiation and the implementation of commitments as a persistent shortcoming of COA.

Nutrients Annex

What we asked for:

- Specify the timelines and targets for priority Lake Erie watershed phosphorus management plans.

What we got:

- “Support the development by 2022 and implementation of phosphorus management plans for Lake Erie priority watersheds, including the Thames River and Leamington area tributaries and key sectors.”
- Timeline provided but no concrete targets. Reporting on Lake Erie phosphorus loads will occur binationally and domestically on an annual basis.

Harmful Pollutants - Plastics

What we asked for:

- Ontario establish high collection targets for plastic products and Canada and Ontario commit to implementing an ambitious extended producers' responsibility for products and packaging.
- Remove any mention of thermal treatment (incineration) and ensure options for waste management remain consistent with a Circular Economy.
- As we transition to a Circular Economy, Ontario establishes a deposit return program for plastic bottles.

What we got:

- Facilitate the standardization of Extended Producer Responsibility programs applicable to plastic.
- Transition from the current Blue Box Program to a Producer Responsibility model.
- Support capture and clean up projects aimed at preventing and removing plastic pollution from our waterways and land
- Thermal incineration still included as a solution!
- No deposit return program for plastics bottles established despite being best practice for recovering over 90% of containers sold

Harmful Pollutants - Chlorides

What we asked for:

- Ontario commits to establishing a Provincial Water Quality Objective for chloride, as the clearest way to meet their objective of developing “site-specific chloride guidelines”

What we got:

- Continue to monitor chloride concentrations in water
- Ontario will develop site-specific chloride guidelines for areas that are primary habitat for chloride-sensitive species
- Work with municipalities, conservation authorities, private sector and other partners to promote salt application best management practices, certification and alternatives

Stormwater and Wastewater Management

The addition of stormwater and wastewater management as an Annex is a welcome move to help address the urgency of investing in stormwater and wastewater infrastructure across Ontario.

The Government of Canada established the Green Infrastructure Fund under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program which supports stormwater and wastewater infrastructure.

However, this funding stream is predominantly grey-infrastructure based stormwater investments (e.g. more sewers) and minimal investments in natural infrastructure and green stormwater infrastructure (e.g. bioswales, permeable pavement, green roofs, rain gardens, native plantings, wetlands, vegetative strips alongside roads).

The federal and provincial government need to properly define green infrastructure as it is defined by academics and practitioners in this field to properly reflect investment in green infrastructure.

Climate Change

This Annex talks about improving our understanding of climate change in the Great Lakes, assessing existing and future vulnerabilities, integrating climate change into Great Lakes management strategies, sharing climate change information, and helping communities build climate change resilience and adapt to climate change.

However meaningful climate change action within the Great Lakes region will continue to be undermined as long as the government continues to invest more into fossil fuels than renewables and neglects to aggressively support efforts to lower GHG emissions from major emitting sources such as fossil fuels intensive industries and animal agriculture.

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