ESTABLISHING AND FUNDING A MUNICIPAL STREAM UNDER THE FRESHWATER ACTION PLAN

May 2026

WHEREAS the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative represents municipal and Indigenous government leaders working to protect freshwater resources and advance economic prosperity across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region.

AND WHEREAS municipalities and First Nations are frontline implementers of freshwater protection, restoration, monitoring and climate adaptation initiatives.

AND WHEREAS municipalities play a critical role in improving water quality, strengthening shoreline and watershed resilience and advancing a growing water innovation economy across the region.

AND WHEREAS the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River system provides drinking water to more than 40 million people.

AND WHEREAS the 2022 State of the Great Lakes Report, prepared under the Canada–United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, assessed overall water quality in the basin as “Fair,” highlighting the need for continued and accelerated action to restore and protect freshwater ecosystems.

AND WHEREAS municipalities face significant and growing financial pressures to maintain and upgrade aging water infrastructure, with estimates indicating that over $50 billion is required to repair and replace drinking water and wastewater systems across Canada.

AND WHEREAS data from Statistics Canada shows that approximately 17 percent of treated drinking water is lost before reaching end users due to leaks and system inefficiencies, reflecting the urgent need for investment in modernization and system renewal.

AND WHEREAS according to Statistics Canada, Canada treats approximately 5,800 million cubic metres of wastewater annually, yet about 3.7 percent is discharged untreated into the environment, posing ongoing risks to water quality and ecosystem health

AND WHEREAS wastewater infrastructure across Canada and the United States is aging and placing growing pressure on local governments; Statistics Canada reported that sewage infrastructure had the highest average age of any major infrastructure asset category in 2021 at 17.5 years nationally, while sewage treatment plants specifically averaged 16.0 years in the latest national data series; and in the United States, most wastewater treatment plants are designed for an average lifespan of 40 to

50 years, with many systems constructed in the 1970s and 1980s now requiring significant reinvestment, repair, or replacement.

AND WHEREAS many smaller municipalities continue to rely on lagoon-based wastewater systems because they are comparatively simple and lower-cost to operate, but these systems can face significant compliance and performance challenges; federal reporting has found that lagoons are the most common wastewater system type in Canada, representing 56 percent of reported systems, including 154 systems in Ontario and 340 in Québec, and that lagoon systems accounted for a large share of suspended-solids exceedances and 68 percent of reported acute lethality test failures among systems that failed such tests in 2017.

AND WHEREAS lagoon systems are also widely used in small, rural, and Tribal communities in the United States, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has warned that the financial and technical barriers to upgrading those systems can contribute to human-health, recreational, and aquatic-life impacts, while wastewater contamination in rural areas may also threaten small drinking-water systems and private wells.

AND WHEREAS federal data in both Canada and the United States show that boil-water advisories are more common in smaller systems and communities, often reflecting limited technical, managerial, and financial capacity, aging infrastructure, and increased vulnerability to system failures and contamination events.

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada has committed significant investments through the Freshwater Action Plan and established the Canada Water Agency to strengthen freshwater protection nationwide.

AND WHEREAS effective freshwater protection requires predictable, long-term funding and program structures that enable municipalities of all sizes to participate.

AND WHEREAS investments in municipal freshwater initiatives can support the growth of a water innovation economy and strengthen the economic competitiveness of communities across the region.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- The Cities Initiative calls on the Government of Canada to fully implement and permanently fund a Municipal Stream under the Freshwater Action Plan, co-designed with municipalities and First Nations and prioritizing the needs of communities across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin
- This Municipal Stream should:

- Support science, monitoring, restoration, infrastructure planning, climate resilience and local implementation activities led by municipalities and Indigenous communities.
- Include predictable and regularly scheduled funding intakes aligned with municipal budget cycles, enabling municipalities to develop strong and collaborative project proposals.
- Include dedicated access streams for both large and small municipalities, as well as streamlined and proportional application and reporting requirements, ensuring equitable participation across communities of different capacities.
- Provide technical assistance, knowledge exchange and capacity-building support to accelerate the adoption of innovative freshwater protection and infrastructure solutions across municipalities.

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT copies of this resolution will be distributed to: this specific list of people or agencies.