



Great Lakes-St. Lawrence
Legislative Caucus

Resolution on Reducing Nutrient Pollution in the Great Lakes Region

WHEREAS, clean water is essential to support a healthy population, a thriving economy, and a well-functioning ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, polluted runoff from agricultural lands and communities (nonpoint sources) and discharges from point sources such as wastewater treatment plants results in excess nutrients in the water bodies of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region, with significant consequences for public health, the environment, and the economy;

WHEREAS, excessive phosphorus and nitrogen, for example, contribute to the growth of harmful algal blooms of cyanobacteria, most notably in the western basin of Lake Erie; in 2014, the bloom was so severe that residents of the City of Toledo, Ohio, lost access to their drinking water for three days while the residents of Pelee Island, Ontario, lost access to their tap water for two weeks; and

WHEREAS, excessive phosphorus and nitrogen can lead to the formation of dead zones in water bodies such as central Lake Erie and Green Bay in Wisconsin; these dead zones result from the growth, death, and decay of bacteria, thereby depleting deeper, colder water of oxygen and causing harm to aquatic organisms; and

WHEREAS, remedying the problem of nutrient pollution requires a holistic approach that begins with a clear understanding of the scope of the problem, the relative contribution of different sources of pollution, past and ongoing programs and practices intended to reduce pollution, the effectiveness of these actions, and possible solutions based on the best available evidence; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Patricia Birkholz Institute for Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Policy gave members of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus (GLLC) the opportunity to study the issue of nutrient pollution for the purpose of devising



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regional policy-based solutions to this persistent problem, informed by the latest scientific research; and

WHEREAS, the different approaches that states and provinces in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region take to address the problem of nutrient pollution include innovative ideas that may serve as models for other jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the GLLC is to take coordinated, regional action to solve problems affecting water quality in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region, gathering the best science-based ideas from studies and putting them into practice so that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River continue to provide a plentiful source of clean, affordable water to the region's residents, businesses, and industries; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the members of the GLLC do hereby commit to collaborate regionally on policy measures in the states and provinces to reduce nutrient pollution that has the potential to affect all water bodies in the region; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the specific measures recommended for the states and provinces to implement will be delineated in a GLLC action plan developed by the Caucus's Task Force on Nutrients, which will include as members the 2019 class of Birkholz Fellows and will lead the GLLC's work on this important issue; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the GLLC's Task Force on Nutrients will assess progress toward this regional goal annually for a two-year period and will seek to identify opportunities for continued collaboration to further reduce the impact of nutrient pollution on the region's water resources.

Adopted by the GLLC Executive Committee on December 11, 2019.