

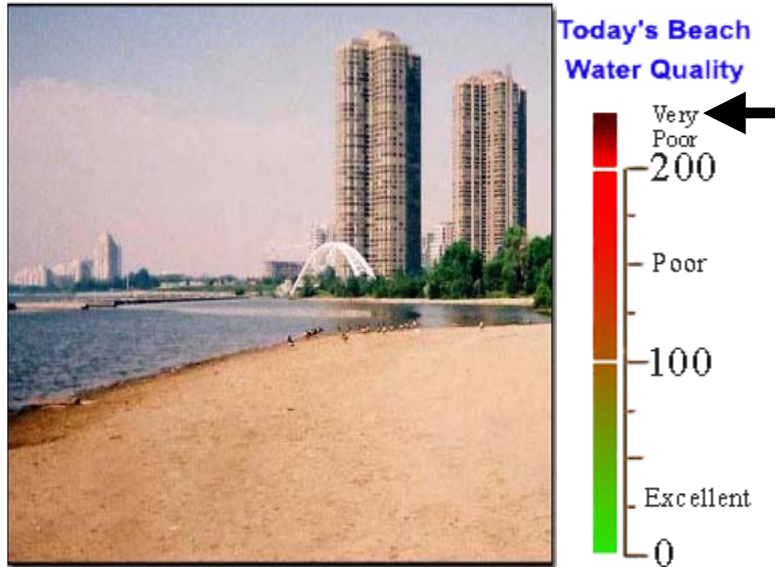
## Is the Canada – Ontario Agreement Working?

Fact Sheet

June 2004

For over 30 years, Canada and the United States have had a *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement*. This Agreement specifies goals for the condition of the Great Lakes and commits each federal government to carry out specified actions.

Only the federal government can negotiate and sign international agreements such as this, but the legislative authority to carry out the environmental actions required in the *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement* largely rests with the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Therefore, a high degree of federal-provincial co-operation is necessary if Canada is going to fulfill these obligations. The federal and Ontario governments have negotiated a series of Canada-Ontario Agreements (COA) since 1971. The most recent COA was signed in March 2002 and extends for five years.



Blue Flag program for assessment of Toronto beaches.  
The indicator shows very poor quality of water  
at the Sir Casimir Gzowski Park beach. [www.torontobeach.ca](http://www.torontobeach.ca)

The current COA had the following main goals:

- With respect to Ontario's 16 Areas of Concern, restore all uses in 2 areas of concern; complete required actions in 6 areas of concern; and make progress in the 8 remaining areas of concern.
- Have policies and programs in place to make progress towards virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances such as mercury, dioxins, furans, and PCBs; reduce other harmful pollutants; and have comprehensive knowledge on sources, movement, fate and impacts of harmful pollutants.
- Understand lakewide environmental problems and their causes; reach consensus on, and have broad-based support for direction and priority actions to address problems.
- Have in place coordinated and efficient federal/provincial scientific monitoring and an information management system for tracking environmental change and progress.

## Who is Responsible?

The Canadian and Ontario governments are jointly responsible for achieving these goals. In 2000, the Canadian government committed an additional \$40 million over five years towards the COA, with the money to be focused on cleaning up the areas of concern. In 2002, the Ontario government committed \$50 million over five years towards COA activities.

These resources are far from enough to achieve the goals stated in the COA. In 2003 the International Joint Commission estimated that the cost to restore the areas of concern in Ontario is about \$1.9 billion.

## What needs to be done?

The federal and Ontario governments must take the following actions to improve the inadequacies in the present COA:

- ✓ Develop detailed work plans that include specific and aggressive targets for achieving the goals in the COA.
- ✓ Provide sufficient resources in staffing and dollars and sufficient legislative authority to be able to achieve these goals.
- ✓ Improve the mechanisms for public involvement in the development and implementation of the work plans and in the assessment of progress under the COA.

## Great Lakes for the Future



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