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For immediate release

New report states Government cutbacks cause of failure of Great Lakes clean-up initiative

Today, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) released *Troubled Waters?* a comprehensive analysis of the failure of the 1994-2000 Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem (COA). COA established how Canada and Ontario would fulfil Canada obligations under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Dr. Mark Winfield, co-author of *Troubled Waters?* stated most goals and objectives of COA, specifically designed to clean up the Great Lakes will not have been achieved, when the Agreement expires in March 2000

Winfield concluded, COA was undermined by dramatic budget cuts at both levels of government, and indicated that some key Agencies reduced Great Lakes related spending by as much as 70% after 1995. COA became an orphan when agencies, such as the Ontario MNR both virtually and effectively abandoned their Agreement commitments.

Most local clean-up initiatives known as Remedial Action Plans (RAPs), developed to deal with specific Areas of Concern (AOC) where crippled by the cutbacks, observed Winfield. CIELAP research indicates only 4 of 16 RAPs are close to meeting the clean-up deadline of 2000, far short of the commitment to have cleaned up 9 sites by 2000, stated Winfield.

Winfield said the early success of COA (prior to 1995) which flowed from new Federal and Provincial regulations dealing with the pulp and paper industry, illustrated COA's potential. However, since then Ontario has taken many actions likely to lead to increases in pollution by priority contaminants. *Troubled Waters?* challenges the Federal and Provincial governments to start now to ensure a new Agreement exists before the existing agreement expires. Anne Mitchell CIELAP Executive Director concluded that there is a need to address weaknesses in the current agreement, assign precise responsibilities to specific agencies, and most importantly clean-up the Great Lakes - a goal supported by a majority of Ontarians.

Available through CIELAP are the names and phone numbers of contacts in some of the RAP locations that are willing to provide informed local commentary.

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The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy has for been commenting on and monitoring policy and regulatory changes related to the environment for 30 years.