

Québec, March 22, 2017

Honorable Representative Ken Calvert
California Representative
Chairman of the Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
2205 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Representative Betty McCollum
Minnesota Representative
Ranking Member of the Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
2256 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative* funding

Representative and Chairman Calvert:
Representative and Ranking Member McCollum:

For many years, the governments of Québec and Ontario have worked with the eight Great Lakes States on the sustainable management of the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River Basin. We are signatories to the *Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement* and members of regional forums such as the *Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers* and the *Great Lakes Commission*.

This binational partnership is rooted in the highly strategic nature of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River for both the United States and Canada. Taken together, they constitute 18% of the world's fresh water reserves and form a vital economic artery, in addition to providing drinking water to millions of our fellow citizens.

The significance of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River in our common history and their invaluable contribution to our present and future mean that we are directly affected by the policies and programs of all governments with jurisdiction over this water system. In fact, the Detroit and St. Clair rivers, the Lakes Superior, Huron, Erie and Ontario, as well as the St. Lawrence River are considered to be "binational" waterways.

For those reasons, we wish to express our strong interest and support for the *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative* (GLRI). In our view, it is essential that the GLRI remain an investment priority, especially in the context of the current debate on the United States Federal Budget. Since its inception in 2010, the GLRI has proved to be an indispensable engine for environmental and economic revitalization throughout the region. Here are three reasons why:

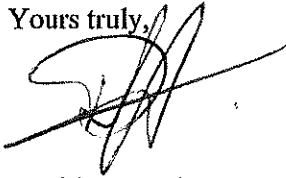
- **Problem-solving based on local action.** While some 15 Federal agencies help fund the GLRI, local community involvement in decision-making and setting priorities has been critical to its success and has proven to be the most efficient environmental and budgetary path forward. The existence of the GLRI has led to some 3,500 projects being completed in all of the Great Lakes States, and generated tangible gains in community quality of life and competitiveness.
- **A strong regional, binational and bipartisan consensus.** The GLRI is supported by a remarkable consensus among the 10 state and provincial governments of the region, but also among municipalities, state and federal legislators from both major parties, NGOs, the shipping industry and the area's principal economic players, all of whom see the GLRI as a key instrument of sustainable development.
- **Imposing and diversified economic benefits:** The economic value of the GLRI should not be underestimated. The vitality of key economic sectors like maritime transportation, tourism, fisheries and others depends on healthy waterways. For example, the annual economic impact of marine transport on our region is 34 billion dollars, and it supports some 225,000 direct and indirect jobs on both sides of the border. This logistic capital explains why the 10 Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River jurisdictions represent the third-largest economy in the world in terms of GDP and constitute a manufacturing and innovation hub of key importance to North America. In particular, we subscribe to the regional consensus on the GLRI because the projects it supports contribute to the sustainable competitiveness of our economies. GLRI's achievements have helped drive private investment and revitalization in communities like Buffalo, NY; Erie, PA; Muskegon, MI; and Milwaukee, WI.


These factors remind us just how vital water is as a strategic resource. The elimination of the *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative* credits would both compromise the tangible gains that have been achieved since 2010 and stifle the development of

communities in the eight states it serves. In the end, our region's competitiveness itself would be impaired.

We hope that you will consider our perspective on the importance of the *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative* for the entire Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River region, and hope to be able to discuss this further with you in the near future.

Yours truly,



David Heurtel
Minister of Sustainable Development,
Environment and the Fight against Climate Change
Québec 
Gouvernement du Québec



Christine St-Pierre
Minister of International Relations
and La Francophonie
Québec 
Gouvernement du Québec



Glen R. Murray
Minister of the Environment and Climate change



Government of Ontario

cc. Mick Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Co-Chair of the Senate Great Lakes Task
Force
Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), Co-Chair of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force

