

MOE

Water Conservation

In an effort to address current and future stresses to water quantity, such as population growth and climate change, the provincial government is proposing to modify some aspects of water management.

The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) have developed proposals for modifying three (3) key elements of water management in Ontario:

- Developing a water conservation and efficiency strategy for Ontario, as committed to under the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement;
- Strengthening the regulation of new and increased intra-basin transfers (transfers of water from the watershed of one Great Lake to another) according to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement; and,
- Implementing Phase 2 of the province's water charges program that would extend the existing charge to medium and low consumptive commercial and industrial users

Two (2) of these elements – developing a water conservation and efficiency strategy and implementing Phase 2 of the water charges program – are proposed to be applied throughout Ontario. The proposal for managing new and increased intra-basin transfers is proposed to apply only to surface water and groundwater resources within the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin.

Purpose

Specifically the proposal paper identifies:

- Options for what could be included within the provincial government's water conservation and efficiency strategy;
- Proposals for managing intra-basin transfers in the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin; and,
- Proposals for implementing Phase 2 water taking charges.

Subsequent to receiving comments, MOE and MNR intend to develop a draft water conservation and efficiency strategy for Ontario, and regulations pursuant to the *Ontario Water Resources Act* for managing intra-basin transfers and implementing Phase 2 water taking charges.

Background

In December 2005, Ontario Premier McGuinty, Quebec Premier Charest, and the governors of the eight U.S. Great Lakes states signed the [Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement](#). It is a good faith agreement committing the provinces and states that share the Great Lakes to pass laws to better protect and conserve the surface water and groundwater resources of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin. The Agreement was negotiated in response to shared concerns about proposals for large diversions and bulk exports of Basin water, increasing water demand in the Basin and the uncertain effects of climate change on the supply and demand for Great Lakes water into the future.

To implement the Agreement in Ontario, the provincial government passed the *Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act* in June 2007. It amended the *Ontario Water Resources Act* to enable the provincial government to meet key commitments of the Agreement, including regulating intra-basin transfers and developing a water conservation and efficiency strategy for the province. The *Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act* also granted the provincial government authority to charge commercial and industrial water takers for the water that they use. Phase 1 of the water charges program, affecting 'high consumptive' industrial and commercial water users (e.g., beverage manufacturers), was introduced in August 2007 through [Ontario Regulation 450/07 Charges for Industrial and Commercial Water Users](#).