

**Environment Canada / Ontario Ministry of
Environment**

**Review of the 2007-2010 Canada-Ontario
Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin
Ecosystem**

Final Report

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Introduction

Background

The Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem (COA) provides the long-standing mechanism through which Ontario works with the Government of Canada to restore, protect, and conserve the environmental quality of the basin for present and future generations.

The first COA was signed in advance of the 1972 Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). Subsequent COAs were signed in 1976, 82, 86, 94, 2002 and 2007. COA implementation contributes to meeting Canada's obligations under the GLWQA. COA has evolved from a focus on nutrients, to a broader ecosystem approach, to a focus on the sustainability of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem.

The 2007-2010 COA was renewed in 2007 and will expire on March 31, 2010. The current Agreement is signed by eight federal departments and three provincial ministries. Federal signatories are: Minister of the Environment (and Minister Responsible for Parks Canada Agency); Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food; Minister of Fisheries and Oceans; Minister of Health; Minister of Natural Resources; Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Provincial signatories are: Minister of the Environment; Minister of Natural Resources; Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The purpose of this review is to provide information and recommendations to support the development of the 2010 COA. This review was undertaken on behalf of the COA MC Secretariat as per the commitment under the 2007-2010 COA which states that "Canada and Ontario will conduct a comprehensive review of this Agreement to be completed by November 27, 2009".

Methodology

Delta Partners Inc. was engaged in early February, 2009 to:

- Conduct up to 40 one-on-one interviews with COA Annex Implementation Committee members and COA Management Committee members and selected federal and provincial government staff members;
- Synthesize the interview responses to each question; and,
- On the basis of these responses, make recommendation(s) on each question.

The questionnaire was developed by members of the joint federal/provincial Review Project team, in consultation with the COA MC and AIC members and Annex Leads.

A total of 48 individuals participated in 40 interviews that were conducted in person or by telephone. One person responded by e-mail. Each interview lasted for 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded by the interviewer who, subsequently, made written notes and destroyed the recordings. The complete list of participants can be found at Appendix 'A'.

The synthesis of responses to each question was aided by the use of Atlas qualitative data analysis software, which was used to organize the written notes for easy access to all the data for each question. The recommendations are what emerged from the resulting synthesis.

This Report contains a summary of the interview responses to the questions asked and resulting recommendations. The recommendations are based solely on the comments and recommendations from the participants and not from the consultant's own in-depth knowledge of the agreement or the issues. Therefore, each recommendation needs to be further validated as to its potential contribution to supporting the development of the 2010 COA.

Contextual Note

The interviews revealed one common theme concerning the preferred structure of the COA which, we feel, has a direct bearing on the interpretation of the questionnaire responses.

Due to various concerns, a majority of those interviewed felt that there should be two documents, or sections, associated with the COA. One would be a high level document that was the overarching agreement for COA, and the other would be more operational in nature.

The high level document would have a long term view of the Great Lakes Project (ten to twenty years) and would represent the agreement between the federal and provincial governments. It would contain the high level principles already contained in COA (concerning the "how" rather than the "what"), and would lay out the (five to ten) ecological areas that were defined by the scientific community to be the scope of what is required to be done in the Great Lakes to achieve the desired state. The desired state, or overall objectives of the program, would be defined in this document. This agreement would be signed by the participating ministries and departments, as the COA is today.

The operational document would then be the five-year action plan, which would consist of the sub-projects selected to meet the goals of the overall project.

Beneath that there would be the usual one year project work plans.

It was felt by the participants that this arrangement would help in several areas, among them are:

- creating better continuity of projects;
- relieving the stop-start nature of projects;
- creating a better environment for funding;
- providing a mechanism to evaluate whether or not the approach is working;
- allowing flexibility of project management within the context of the high level agreement

- e.g. ability to terminate a project that was not contributing to the overall goals;
- creating a true federal/provincial agreement; and,
- allowing the MC to be truly strategic – achieving the high level goals would be their mandate.

We feel it is important to understand the presence of this idea – that the strategic and operational aspects of COA should be clearly separated – in order to interpret many of the responses to the questions posed. For example, to the question “Should performance measures be included?”, the majority response was “no”, assuming the current form of the agreement which lacks a clear strategic/operational separation. However, if an improved agreement were to clearly separate the strategic and operational aspects, the answer would be “yes” regarding the operational part, and “no” regarding the strategic part.

Because our mandate was to provide one or more distinct recommendations corresponding to each question as posed, it was difficult to incorporate this overall contextual perspective — involving hypothetically separate strategic and operational agreements – in the analysis.

It is recommended that the next version of the COA should have two documents or parts:

- ***The first would be a high level document, an overarching agreement containing the principles (the “how”) and would lay out five to ten areas of focus for the next 10-20 years. This agreement would be signed by the participating ministries and departments.***
- ***The second part would be more operational in nature (the “what”), a five-year action plan or work plan, which would consist of the projects selected to meet the goals of the COA.***

Higher Level Strategic Recommendations

The subtext of the interviews revealed three underlying themes including:

- issues around the vision and strategic direction of the Great Lakes initiative;
- issues around the implementation and effectiveness of the Agreement itself, most of which are a consequence of the lack of clarity and/or agreement around vision and strategy; and,
- issues around the actual practice of multi-jurisdictional, multi-stakeholder co-operation.

These themes are concisely summed up in one quote from the interviews as follows:

“COA is a statement of federal and provincial achievement, but is it the overarching framework? No, it is up to the federal/province and Great Lakes governors - to produce the desired state (vision), the COA piece is to see that operational details are clearly defined. This demands a higher level of Ontario/Federal coordination.”

Vision

It is very difficult to develop, implement and sustain progress towards the accomplishment of a strategic vision in the absence of committed resources and a bounded organizational structure with an appropriately articulated mission. At some point, an issue such as the care of the Great Lakes Basin may become mature enough in the public consciousness to warrant a greater level of commitment than can normally be expected through the normal process of federal/provincial cooperation. At this time of review, it would be a good opportunity for the COA Management Committee to consider the feasibility and desirability of supporting the creation of an Agency with a mandate to further develop and implement the current initiative.

It is recommended that the next version of the COA include a commitment to study the feasibility and desirability of options for the governance of the Great Lakes Basin, including the creation of an Agency dedicated to that end.

Implementation

In the main body of the Report, we suggest a number of specific recommendations around the clarity of certain COA principles and defining the scope of the Agreement in order to clarify objectives. However, the main higher level issue with the implementation of the Agreement concerns the lack of separation between the strategic and operational levels.

It is recommended that the allocation of responsibilities be reviewed and allocated to the MC and AIC, respectively, on the basis of whether they are strategic or operational in scope.

As a corollary to the above recommendation:

It is recommended that the MC be redesigned so that it will attract the intended participants at the ADM level and the AIC be further empowered for them to be able to pursue their full operational role as defined in the Agreement.

The lack of resources devoted to communication and information technology is another major issue affecting both the ability to collaborate effectively and the ability to leverage public awareness in the cause of the Great Lakes Basin.

It is recommended that the MC recognize the strategic importance of communication and that they promote and support the allocation of resources and development of infrastructure for this function.

Practice

During the interviews, there was a significant amount of comment regarding, what we believe to be, some fairly normal behavioural tendencies in initiatives of this type. The following quote from the interviews is indicative:

“MC doesn't do strategic direction for COA. For a lot of attendees, COA is not their main task. The real strategic direction comes from AIC - brings it up at the MC and it always gets approval. So the meeting is - here's what we have agreed to, now how do we do it? Have never seen any resource re-allocation.”

There is also a certain amount of cynicism, as indicated by the following:

“Not much meat in the meetings - the process is crumbling. Information out, never any discussion, we are just there to nod, decisions are already made.”

These observations lead us to recommend that you actively manage the expectations of meeting participants and pay some attention to the morale of those involved. Of course, these issues are outside of the Agreement itself, but may have a profound affect on its performance.

It is recommended that the committee Chairpeople make an effort to engage their membership more actively and, if necessary, explicitly address issues that may be having a negative impact on meeting effectiveness and, by extension, COA performance.

Summary of Interview Responses and Recommendations

Principles

1. How are COA principles currently used?

Most (23 responses) felt that in general the principles are fine – they are very broad and not applied directly in day to day work. However, they inform the agreement and provide general direction for people's day-to-day activities.

There were several specific suggestions as to how the principles are, or should be used. These suggestions include:

- Provide guidance with respect to project management.
- Provide guidance with respect to managing conflicts in agency conduct - useful during negotiations.
- Referenced in meetings to 'hold people's feet to the fire', particularly around issues of transparency and inclusiveness.
- Some felt that COA - through the principles - should be written in such a way as to inspire people to take positive action, particularly through media pieces and fact sheets.
- Used for work planning and subsequent allocation of resources by the ministries and departments.
- Guide policy development and could contribute to performance measures for the MC.

Some noted that there seems to be a mixture of management principles - the "How" and operational (subject matter) principles – the "What". This may cause some confusion with respect to how the principles ought to be used. Most of the negative comments (approximately 6 responses) regarding the use of principles appear to be based on a misperception that the principles are objectives to be achieved rather than general guidelines for behaviour and decisions.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that, in any future formulation or reformulation of COA principles, care be taken to preserve their use as general guidelines for decision-making and behaviour, not to be confused with substantive objectives.

2. Are there principles that should be added or removed?

Most (22 responses) are satisfied with the principles. The only significant thread among this satisfied majority is a questioning of the 'Precautionary Principle' which, according to some, may be having unintended consequences as a cause for inaction. However, since the Precautionary Principle is perfectly clear as stated, such an unintended consequence should be regarded as a behavioural and/or communications problem, and not a problem with the principle itself.

Among the minority of respondents who wanted a change, specific suggestions as to what should be 'beefed up' in the Principles include:

- Pollution prevention
- Cumulative impacts
- Conservation areas
- Species management
- Economic development
- Sustainability
- Traditional ecological knowledge
- Emerging science - evolving threats
- Community responsibility - shared responsibility
- Integrated approach - across silos
- Climate change adaptation, especially in coastal work

Most of the suggestions that the minority of respondents made appear to be already encompassed by the existing Principles or operational (subject matter) objectives that should not be enshrined in the Agreement as general Principles.

It was noted that some of the Principles cannot be observed due to insufficient funding (e.g. Communication and Free Exchange of Information/ data collected once) - areas that are most in need of IT support to succeed. However, in our opinion, this would not be a valid reason to remove them.

It should be added that, although the intent of the Adaptive Management Principle is clear, there is a problem with the syntax that may be cause for some confusion.

Recommendations:

In order to reinforce the appropriate use of principles as general guidelines for decision-making and behaviour, not to be confused with substantive objectives, it is recommended that the following Principles be considered for elimination from the list:

- Principle (e) – Conservation
- Principle (i) – Pollution Prevention
- Principle (j) – Pollution Reduction
- Principle (l) – Rehabilitation

It is recommended that the Precautionary Principle be reviewed as to how effective it is in achieving the desired behavioural and decision-making results.

It is recommended that the Adaptive Management Principle be reviewed in order to correct an apparent syntax error.

Scope

1. Are there mechanisms in place to address key Great Lakes Basin issues not currently addressed by COA?

Almost everyone agreed that there is other work being done to address Great Lakes issues. Some examples of the responses include:

- Great Lakes Fisheries Commission;
- Air Quality US/Canada;
- Municipal Waste Water Strategy;
- Brownfields;
- Toxic Management Plan;
- Niagara River;
- Water Quantity;
- Sediment;
- Great Lakes Strategic Framework;
- Those covered by other Federal regulations, and they already have programs.

However, when asked more closely about the *mechanisms* in place no-one had any detailed information to offer.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the COA planning agenda include a systematic effort to create and maintain an inventory of related Great Lakes Basin initiatives and mechanisms in order to identify potential opportunities for collaboration and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

2. Would the management of key Great Lakes Basin issues be improved by expanding the scope of COA to address these issues?

As to whether the scope of the COA should be expanded to include these, opinion was divided with approximately 13 respondents saying 'no' and 18 saying 'yes'. Amongst those who thought it should be expanded there were many areas suggested including, for example:

- Water Quantity
- Endangered species
- Climate change
- Source water protection

- Role that forests play (good or bad) in water quality and water quantity
- St Lawrence River - Corridors
- Conservation - How to work collectively.
- Land use planning
- Ecosystems: rather than one specific dimension of the GL.
- Legacy substances

Several respondents suggested that the scope of the agreement should be expanded only for the purpose of integration, to fill policy gaps or to streamline management. It was also suggested by at least one respondent that the scope should be reduced to a manageable minimum (i.e. focus on water quality).

Some pointed out that it was hard to suggest any new areas of scope without an idea of the vision or some kind of over-arching agreement that described the long term objectives of the agreement. This emerged as a major theme throughout the interviews.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the scope of the Agreement be reviewed in the context of clear, long-term (20 years) strategic objectives.

3. Is the COA appropriately linked and cross referenced to other governance and implementation mechanisms, such as RAPs, LaMPs, BEC, the IJC Water Quality and Science Advisory Boards, Great Lakes Commission, etc. of relevance to the management of Great Lakes issues?

Responses to this question were almost evenly split between those who appeared to be satisfied with the COA linkages (17 responses) and those who were more critical (14 responses). It was generally agreed that while good links do exist, especially with RAPs, and LaMPs, these links are informal and not well defined - in other words the links relied on the people in place at any given time. Respondents were not so clear on the linkages with BEC, IJC and GLC.

Recommendations

It is recommended that steps be taken to formalise (define and document) the linkages and roles vis a vis RAPs, and LaMPs.

It is recommended that steps be taken to define the contribution required from BEC, the IJC and/or the GLC in the longer term strategic context of the agreement, and further define linkages and processes accordingly.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. In the COA itself or in the management documents created to support COA, are roles/responsibilities and accountabilities clear and appropriate for the following: COA MC, COA AIC, Annex Leads?

The general response to this question was positive, with approximately 19 respondents indicating that roles/responsibilities and accountabilities are clear and appropriate. Approximately 8 responses were negative.

Interpretations of this question were mixed, with some referring to the roles as documented and others referring to how they felt they worked in practice (as a preview of AIC Question 1). Most agreed that as written, they were clear- especially for AIC and Annex leads. The negative responses generally referred to roles/responsibilities and accountabilities as practiced.

A few felt that some of the more operational items should be removed from the MC and put with the Annex Leads or AIC. It was noted that at present, Annex Leads cannot comply with COA Article VII - 3(b) regarding 'Multi-year work plans' because they are currently constrained to one-year work plans.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Annex Leads be supported and held accountable for multi-year work plans as a means of bringing roles and responsibilities as practiced more into line with those as written. This would entail making the Annex Lead role into a full time position, tied to resources.

It is also recommended that the communication and reporting links with Lake Advisors be formalized.

2. What new approaches, if any, should be instituted to improve the operation and effectiveness of the various committees and teams?

Of the people that offered suggestions for change there was mixed bag of responses, including:

- MC membership needs to be broadened
- MC and AIC should be different people.
- Attendees should wear their "COA hat" rather than their ministry hats
- Stronger accountability accords are required for each agency
- Important to delineate responsibilities of various committees
- While Environment Canada and MOE have a main role, they should coordinate rather

than control, they should be more inclusive

- A mid-term conference would be good - information exchange
- AIC should have more decision-making ability
- Go back to first principles. Define why we are here, what we do, get everyone on the same page
- Need better communication up and down the line

Many felt the role of the Annex Leads could be expanded and more formalised, empowering them to make changes and create new linkages as they saw fit. Quote from an interview - "The AIC should have more decision-making ability, would send less up to MC. Then the MC could be more strategic and could put more emphasis on 'developing joint positions and joint action plans... '(as per COA Article VI 2(j))."

On the other hand, "evaluating against goals results and commitments... (as per COA Article VI 2(b)) - and ongoing evaluations of ... implementation (as per COA Article VI 2(c)), should be AIC roles."

It was also suggested that ADMs should not be approving work plans, and implementation.

The theme of unfunded commitments came up frequently. That is, it was commented that there are commitments that form part of the agreement but currently have no funding attributed to them. It is a source of frustration that documented commitments cannot be realised as they have not been funded.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the allocation of responsibilities be reviewed and allocated to the MC and AIC, respectively, on the basis of whether they are strategic or operational in scope.

It is recommended that the MC be refocused so that it will attract the intended participants at the ADM level and the AIC be further empowered for them to be able to pursue their full operational role as defined in the Agreement.

It is recommended that the role of Annex Lead be reviewed with a view to creating a greater degree of operational empowerment.

Questions Specific to MC

1. Is the role of COA MC appropriate?

Generally, those asked to comment thought that it did a good job for the current COA (6 responses). However, the responses were liberally sprinkled with comments like “should be more strategic”, and “need better metrics (quantitative data)” and “Co-chairs come with their ministry or department hat on”.

Regarding the need for better quantitative data, it was felt that the MC ought to have *additional* measurements to allow them to gauge the overall success of COA rather than just the results of the individual work projects. In fact, as reported elsewhere, it was felt that the AIC, not the MC, should be responsible for reviewing and evaluating the work projects.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the role of the MC should not be the reviewing of work plans but should include longer-term planning instead.

2. Should COA MC play an expanded role in the management of Great Lakes issues? If so, in what areas?

The responses to this question were split (3 ‘no’ and 3 ‘yes’). Those who thought the MC should have an expanded role suggested that the expanded role would be to “identify gaps, look forward”, “could be an instrument for Canada and Ontario to deliver on the GLWQA.” Bottom line: form follows function - if COA changes, the MC will probably have to change.

Recommendations:

The role of the MC is appropriate as written in the existing COA.

3. Are linkages to other governance bodies sufficient? If not, how should they be improved?

Most (4 responses) answered ‘yes’. This is best summed up by one respondent’s

comment. “Appropriate for the current (operational) task. A lot of links are available through the MC if they really did strategy.” The one ‘no’ response indicated that there were gaps in addressing strategic concerns.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the MC adopt a more strategic focus and relate to other governance bodies at this level.

4. Is the COA MC process/meetings effective and efficient? If not, how can these be improved?

On the positive side, comments range from “effective and efficient”, to “approach is focused on results and decisions”.

It was also suggested that MC meetings could have better balance on information sharing versus decision-making, with more emphasis on the latter - MC would be more effective if the meeting agendas were more strategically focused.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the MC be refocused so that it will attract the intended participants at the ADM level

5. Does the COA MC receive the necessary input and support, including Secretariat support, required to fulfill its role? If not, what needs to be improved and is there anything else do you need from the Secretariat?

Respondents are universally pleased with the support provided by the secretariat. However, there was one suggestion for improvement to the effect that there should be a single Federal/Provincial unit working in one location.

While this was only mentioned directly by one respondent, it was inferred by others that more IT support would greatly benefit the operation of the secretariat.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the MC investigate the establishment of a single Federal/Provincial unit working in a single location and provide more IT support.

Questions Specific to AIC and “Others”

1. Is the COA MC providing you with strategic management in appropriate areas as stated in COA? If not, provide examples how to improve COA MC’s role.

Almost unanimously (12 responses), those interviewed who chose to respond to this question did not think the MC was giving strategic direction. It was pointed out that the designated people generally did not attend, and sent a delegate. The broader effect of this is that every team seems to have the same people on it - this diminishes the effectiveness of the intended structure. Everyone wanted the MC to be strategic. Some specific suggestions included:

- MC should have more of a policy focus.
- MC should be concentrating on the next agreement.
- MC doesn’t do: COA Article VI 2(i) “pursuing opportunities for engagement and cooperation....”; COA Article VI 2 (j) “developing joint positions and joint action plans for representing Canadian interests.... Nothing outside the usual fed/prov arrangement”.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the MC be refocussed so that it will attract the intended participants at the ADM level and adopt a more strategic approach to fulfilling their role.

2. Is the AIC fulfilling its role as stated in COA? If not, in which areas is AIC’s role falling short?

Most people that have been involved with the AIC were happy with how well it was fulfilling its role (11 responses). Among those who felt that AIC was not fulfilling its role (6 responses), it was pointed out that the Annex leads were not empowered , for instance, to seek new alliances etc. It was pointed out that they were hampered by lack of a good IT system to support them, resulting in less communication and information flow than was needed. It was also suggested that they had difficulty separating their Agency hat from their COA hat.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the AIC be further empowered for them to be able to pursue their full operational role as defined in the Agreement.

It is recommended that adequate resources be devoted to IM/IT management and infrastructure in support of AIC's role.

3. Are there other roles the AIC or Annex Leads should take on?

Most people (12 responses) felt that the Annex Leads had a lot to do already and didn't need any more – but that doesn't mean that the role could not be expanded with more resources. Many felt that the role of the Annex Leads was under-recognised and thought it should at least be a full-time job with more authority. For instance, currently they have no ability to question or hold other agencies accountable for non-performance on commitments.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the AIC and/or Annex Leads be further empowered for them to be able to pursue their full operational role as defined in the Agreement.

4. Are the Annex Leads and Teams adequately meeting their role as stated in COA? If not, how can this function be improved? What are the challenges and obstacles?

Generally doing fine (11 responses), though they are challenged in terms of resourcing and lack of IT support. This leads directly to, among other things, a lack of communication with other agencies and teams.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that adequate resources be devoted to IM/IT management and infrastructure in support of AIC and/or Annex Lead's role. This might include:

- automated repository for Work Plans with review, access and update capabilities;
- a COA portal with access to all related COA (and non-COA) activities;
- storage and retrieval facility for scientific information accessible to all COA participants;
- links to facilitate internal and external communication;
- Ongoing IT support to set up and maintain this system.

5. Should consideration be given to defining different roles or structures to meet COA commitments? If so, please describe them.

The responses were split on this question (5 'no' responses and 4 'yes' responses). In the main, it was suggested that the existing structure should be properly staffed.

The following comments were offered by those who favoured defining different roles or structures to meet COA commitments:

- Re-define the secretariat in a way such that the role will flow from creating a Strategic Plan. Create regional collaboration within the resulting context.
- Create a more flexible structure within an expanded COA.
- Try to get more frequent contact between AIC and Annex leads - twice a year is not enough.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the next version of the COA include a commitment to study the feasibility and desirability of options for the governance of the Great Lakes Basin, including the creation of an Agency dedicated to that end with adequate resources.

Collaboration

1. Does COA facilitate effective collaboration between signatory agencies?

A large majority of respondents (24 responses) felt that COA does facilitate collaboration; some said it has enabled achievements that could not have been done otherwise. Some said it “gave them permission” to collaborate with others.

The negative responses (5 responses) suggested the following:

- Limited to what we can do with the province. There are legal restrictions. They collaborate, but not within COA.
- People collaborate through the working relationship between them - COA does not.
- It was only the money that enabled collaboration, not the COA.

Recommendations:

None specific – See Higher Level Strategic Recommendations

2. Is the COA work plan effective in supporting collaboration?

Again, a majority of respondents (20 responses) said ‘yes’. However, opinion on the effects of the work plan on collaboration was mixed, depending on the viewpoint of the speaker. Those who worked closely with the work plan were more likely to say that it did - those more on the outside were less likely to.

The negative responses (8 responses) suggested that the work plan itself is somewhat vague and divided by agency boundaries. To quote one respondent, “What COA work plan? All there is, is “Transport Canada will do...”, but no COA budget, just the department budget. That's where we need a strategic agreement.”

It was also suggested that you can't build a system that starts and stops every five years and maintain any sort of initiative.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the role of Annex Lead be reviewed with a view to creating a greater degree of operational empowerment, including the authority and resources to comply with COA Article VII - 3(b) regarding 'Multi-year work plans'.

3. Do you feel that there are other federal and provincial agencies that need to be engaged in COA to make it a success? If yes, which ones and why?

Only 6 respondents answered 'no'. The 'yes' answers (24 responses) appear to be suggestions for inclusion, but not an opinion that such engagement is necessary to make COA a success. Some felt that more inclusion might be needed only if the scope of COA were to be broadened. Suggestions for greater inclusion were:

- Add provincial Ministry of Transport, provincial Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure as signatories
- Conservation authorities - but not as signatories.
- Great Lakes Cities, CAs, Municipalities etc.
- Infrastructure, Municipal Affairs, Tourism, Economic Development
- Energy and Infrastructure, Health & Long Term Care,
- Statistics Canada - surveys, water budgets, municipal water use, industrial water use.
- Intergovernmental Affairs. There is no COA voice at cabinet level. Environment Canada has to start at the beginning with every new COA - justifying the agreement every time.

Most felt more ministries should be involved, top of the list were: Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care; Ontario Energy and Infrastructure; Economic Development, after that Tourism and Transport.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that more ministries should be involved, especially:

- Ontario Energy and Infrastructure;
- Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care;
- Economic Development:
- Tourism;
- Transport

It is recommended that a broader range of collaborative relationships be explored and developed, particularly with Statistics Canada and the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, without necessarily adding to the number of COA signatories.

4. Are municipalities, Aboriginal peoples specific industries, the public health community, outdoor recreationalists, etc. appropriately engaged in the delivery of COA commitments? If not, how can this be improved?

Most respondents (13 responses) felt that most of these groups were engaged "appropriately", which was at the project level – though it could always be improved. Municipalities were the main candidate for closer collaboration than currently exists, though none suggested that any of the groups be signatories to the agreement. It was suggested, for example, that one could have standing stakeholder groups as per the MNR

model to have COA get a higher profile.

Comment from those who felt that stakeholders were not appropriately engaged (8 responses) included the following:

- To involve these other communities it is often hard to get funding as provincial and Federal priorities are often not aligned.
- Probably some policy and funding changes would work re: municipalities - to get them to change the way they do business.
- Public consultation process - could communicate with these groups and raise awareness
- There may be opportunities to leverage more partnership funding if we marketed it more.
- These groups need to have greater involvement at local levels.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that COA continue to engage the above communities at the project level.

It is recommended that you review the MNR Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to evaluate its usefulness in this environment.

Reporting, Communication and Public Profile.

1. Are COA results effectively communicated? If not, what is your suggestion for improving the communication function within COA?

Respondents were unanimous that this was an area not well done, it also provoked the most questions about the purpose of the program and the difficulties of achieving a good result, even if it (communications) were staffed – which it isn't.

The communications specialists came up with the clearest answer – COA is not a whole. The work is done by separate agencies and they all have their own agendas – and rules concerning communication - that make it impossible to create a COA overview. Similarly with IT staffing restrictions - all the agencies have their own web sites, but there is no COA web site where one can look up all the work going on for, say, a lake.

Some typical comments include:

- So much time and energy put in - and not necessarily reaching the right audiences. The education piece needs to be funded especially at the local level. MNR, CAs, Parks Canada should be mandated to do education.
- Not doing a good job. Make it someone's job. Too many approvals required. A basin-wide report does not capture the attention of the general public - local is more meaningful.
- Need support for communication. Communications people don't understand technical language, rather have a technical person who is communications oriented.
- The problem with communication is that it takes a year to get something out through the federal government. It is not timely, not effective. Better to use on the ground communications - something local.
- There needs to be a bit of a sales job in Ottawa. It is a success story and needs to be presented as such. Could be reported to the policy community in Ottawa. Sometimes decisions are hurriedly made on what to include in briefing notes to ministers, so people need to be generally aware of COA.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the MC/AIC:

- Define and publish COA reporting protocols to meet, at a minimum, the requirements of the Canada Water Act and the Environment Commissioner;
- Secure adequate IT staffing to support the Communications function and assignment of technical staff to work as liaison with the Communications staff; and,
- Set up and manage a COA web portal that can organise already existing material to represent COA as a whole, using pointers to existing material.

2. How would you assess the public profile of COA? In your opinion, would you say that this needs to be improved? If so, how?

All agreed that the public profile of COA is low to non-existent. Once again, there was discussion as to whether or not “COA” needed a public profile. Many felt that the public did not care about such details, but it did care a) about the Great Lakes and b) about what was going on that affected their local area. It was noted by many that there has never (to their knowledge) been a target audience defined. What were the behaviours that we wanted to change by these communications? Although a communications protocol has been submitted by Communications, it has never been adopted or the work funded.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the MC/AIC:

- Define and publish the role to be played by external communication in the success of COA;
- Adapt and adopt the communications protocol already submitted;
- Adopt a strategy of local communications, newsletters, announcements etc;
- For the purpose of public communications, consider renaming the COA to something more descriptive of the substance like, for example, “The Canada/Ontario Project to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes”, or something similar.
- Negotiate a COA information sharing strategy with other ministries/departments to minimise the approval process – possibly using existing material approved by the individual areas; and,
- Secure adequate IT staffing to support the Communications function and assignment of technical staff to work as liaison with the Communications staff.

Format/Structure/Results

1. How can we ensure future commitments are realistic and achievable?

Many felt that there should be an over arching agreement of the joint Federal and Provincial vision/objectives on the desired state of the Great Lakes. This agreement could include the management principles and a small number (5 to 10) of ecological factors that it is agreed should be addressed. Using a logic model approach, five-year projects could be chosen to address these factors, and under that, one year work plans could be drawn up.

Additional suggestions include:

- Have the implementers involved in the writing of COA.
- Link the person accountable to each commitment.
- Measure and track local targets.
- Plan only things that have resources available

Recommendations:

It is recommended that consideration be given to:

- Formatting the COA in such a way that it has two sections - one long term (corresponding to the current framework agreement) and an operational, short term section (corresponding to the current Annexes), possibly using the Ontario Bio-Diversity Strategy as a model;
- Formulating objectives in such a way as to avoid allowing them to be shaped by the restrictions/interests of individual Departments and Ministries; and,
- Adopting a disciplined Project Management Approach to formulating and meeting commitments under the COA, using a logic model approach to align projects with the overall objectives.

2. Would COA's format and structure benefit from inclusion of performance measures where possible for COA goals and/or results? If yes, in which specific areas?

Most people agreed that performance indicators are good (19 responses), but only in context of the overall plan (see above, Question 1), and only at the right level. People were anxious that despite having all this activity – 183 commitments – there was no mechanism to link back to the overall objectives and no way to know, even if all these projects were successful, it would achieve the objectives. Nevertheless, respondents were

precautionary about enshrining performance levels in the Agreement because, for example, a commitment that is quoted in COA cannot be changed, even if it is found to not be as useful as it had been intended.

Thus, only higher level measures should be enshrined in COA, and these could only be changed by the MC (or highest body). It was also suggested that we should use the “State of the Lake Ecosystem” report as basis for reporting.

There is a general ambiguity in the question as to whether it refers to performance measures included within the Agreement or performance measures at the operational level. Most of the negative responses (9 responses) appeared to refer to the former alternative, where it would be impractical for gaining agreement, inflexible for the longer term and dysfunctional in focusing too much attention on the parts at the expense of the whole. Other comments referred to past experiences, including the following:

- Great in theory, but has proven impractical in the past.
- Take note of the 2008 audit on “Growing Forward” - apparently the audit was not favourable, and some have seen in COA, examples of things that were criticised in “Growing Forward”.

Recommendations:

It is recommended, in the context of the two-level (strategic and operational) agreement recommended above, that:

- Performance measures be articulated at the right level within the Agreement;
- Specific performance targets not be enshrined in the Agreement; and,
- Consideration be given to the use of the “State Of The Lakes Ecosystem” report as a model.

3. Is the current structure of annexes, goals, results and commitments an effective management framework for organizing COA? If not, are there other structures that should be considered?

Most respondents (18 responses) answered ‘yes’, indicating that the current structure is an effective management framework.

Suggestions for improvement included the following:

- Each of the commitments needs to be linked back to an agency or, possibly, to a person.
- Annexes could be re-aligned, or clarified.
- Annex 4 should be incorporated in to the other annexes.
- Annex 3 is too big. Maybe need lake by lake actions, break it down to things that people can relate to.
- Use the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy as a model.

- Maybe consider an issues based structure. Now the structure is well planned to match with managers of federal departments (i.e. government structure).

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- On the understanding that Annexes may be developed and/or terminated fairly freely, this inherent flexibility of the Annex structure be used more liberally as a management tool; and,
- Each commitment should be linked to a specific agency or person.

4. Are goals, results and commitments articulated at the right level - too specific - not specific enough? Does this pose challenges to the effective management and delivery of COA?

Of the people who responded to this question many thought the level of detail was about right (13 responses). However a significant number (10 responses) suggested that goals, results and commitments were either too specific or not specific enough. It was also suggested that they contained inconsistencies that are a hindrance to reporting.

A lot of people felt that 183 commitments were too many. Many commented that there is no clarity of the vision above the operational framework. How does the MC see that the whole is working? Some felt that the MC (or one higher) should be constituted like the GLC, having political, scientific and stakeholder input.

Recommendations:

In order to rationalize the goals, results and commitments, It is recommended that consideration be given to:

- Formatting the COA in such a way that it has two sections - one long term (corresponding to the current framework agreement) and an operational, short term section (corresponding to the current Annexes), possibly using the Ontario Bio-Diversity Strategy as a model;
- Formulating objectives in such a way as to avoid allowing them to be shaped by the restrictions/interests of individual Departments and Ministries; and,
- Adopting a disciplined Project Management Approach to formulating and meeting commitments under the COA, using a logic model approach to align projects with the overall objectives.

Appendix A – List of Participants

Name		Position	Organization	COA Role
Allen	Paul	Assistant Director, Freshwater	Natural Resources Canada	AIC
Anderson	Dave	Lake Huron Basin COA Coordinator	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources	Lake Advisor
Bailey	Sharon	Director, Land and Water Policy Branch	Ontario Ministry of Environment	AIC
Barnes	Judi	Policy Analyst	Ontario Ministry of Environment	MC Secretariat
Boyd	Duncan	Supervisor, Great Lakes Unit, EMRB	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Annex 4 Lead
Boysen	Eric	Director, Great Lakes Branch, NRMD	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources	AIC
Briggs	Ted	Great Lakes Advisor, Southwestern Region	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Lake Advisors
Brindle	Ginette	Director, Ontario Service Centre	Parks Canada	MC
DeBarros	Conrad	COA Project Manager	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Annex 1 and 3 Lead
Duff	Scott	Manager, Program Coordination, Research & Partnerships	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs	AIC
Goffin	Michael	Director, Strategic Integration & Partnerships Division	Environment Canada	COA AIC Co-Chair
Hawthorne	Heather	Communications Advisor	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Communications
Humphrey	Susan	Director, Canadian Wildlife Service	Environment Canada	Federal Annex 1 Lead
Hyde	Rob	Great Lakes Program Officer	Environment Canada	AIC
Iannantuono	Adele	Regional Liaison Officer	Health Canada	AIC
Joosse	Pam	Program Analyst, Program Coordination, Research & Partnerships	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs	AIC
Joyce	Dan	Divisional Program Specialist	Ontario Ministry of Environment	AIC Secretariat
Kalinauskas	Rimi	A/Manager Great Lakes Areas of Concern Section	Environment Canada	AIC
Keller	Martin	GL Project/Planning Advisor, Source Protection, DWMD	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Source Water Protection Lead
Kennedy	Alison	Senior Policy Advisor	Environment Canada	AIC
Kingston	Maxine	Technical Director, Great Lakes Region	Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada	MC
Klawunn	Paul	Head, Regional Studies		Federal Annex 4

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Name		Position	Organization	COA Role
		Section		Lead
Lambe	Bob	Regional Director General, Central & Arctic Region	Fisheries & Oceans Canada	MC
Lawrence	Rosalyn	Assistant Deputy Minister, Natural Resources Management Division	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources	MC
Malhotra	Madhu	External & Stakeholder Relations Coordinator	Ontario Ministry of Environment	MC Secretariat
Marsden	John	Manager, Great Lakes Management & Reporting Section	Environment Canada	Federal Annex 3 Lead
McChristie	Michelle	Great Lakes Advisor, Northern Region	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Lake Advisor
Morley	Andrew	Great Lakes Advisor, Eastern Region	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Lake Advisor
O'Neill	Carolyn	Manager, Great Lakes Section	Ontario Ministry of Environment	MC Secretariat
Orsatti	Sandra	Manager, Aquatic Research & Development Section, Science & Information Resources Div.	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources	Annex 3 Lead (former)
Raeburn-Gibson	Richard	Assistant Director, Eastern Region	Ontario Ministry of Environment	AIC Co-Chair
Richardson	Jim	Director, Environmental Management Branch	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs	AIC
Ritchie	Bev	A/COA Great Lakes Project Manager	Government of Ontario	AIC
Ross	Charlie	Communications Coordinator	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Communications
Scanlon	Mary Ellen	Great Lakes Advisor, West Central Region	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Lake Advisor
Schroeder	Julie	Manager, Special Projects	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Annex 2 Lead
Smith	Judy Ann	Lead Communications Advisor	Environment Canada	AIC
Smith	Ian	Director, Source Protection Programs Branch, DWMD	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Source Water Protection Lead
Thorburn	Mary	Environmental Sci., Environmental Monitoring & Reporting	Ontario Ministry of Environment	Annex 4 Lead
Tseng	Tom	Manager, Public and Natural Resources	Environment Canada	AIC
Van Lunen	Ted	A/Director General, Great Lakes Forestry Centre	Natural Resources Canada	MC
Vollmershausen	Jim	Regional Director General, Ontario	Environment Canada	COA MC Co- Chair
Waffle	Alan	Great Lakes Co-ordinator	Environment Canada	Federal Annex 2 Lead

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Name		Position	Organization	COA Role
Walsh	Dawn	COA GL Project Coordinator, Policy & Program Section, GL Branch, NRMD	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources	Annex 3 Lead
Wiley	Chris	Aquatic Invasive Species Co- ordinator	Transport Canada	MC
Williams	Michael	Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division,	Ontario Ministry of Environment	MC Co-Chair
Wilson	Kevin	Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Program Development & Dispute Resolution Services, Ministry of Labour	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources	MC (former)
Zarull	Michael	Section Head, Sediment Remediation	Environment Canada	AIC

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