

---

# **BACKGROUND**

---

## **CLEANING UP THE NIAGARA RIVER- PART OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S ACTION PLAN ON CLEAN WATER**

With an investment of up to \$2.9 million, our Government is taking real action to clean up a severely contaminated site within the Great Lakes – Niagara River. Through this commitment, the Government of Canada is addressing the principal sediment challenge facing the Niagara River Area of Concern, the remediation of contaminated sediment in a tributary of the Niagara River, Lyons Creek.

The Niagara River is the major waterway interconnecting Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Flowing north from Lake Erie, the Niagara River flows for a distance of 58 kilometres to Lake Ontario. Extending along the entire length of the Canadian side of the Niagara River, including Niagara Falls and the Welland River Watershed, the Niagara River accounts for 83% of the water flowing into Lake Ontario, and therefore significantly influences Lake Ontario's water quality and fish productivity.

Assessments of Lyons Creek identify elevated concentrations of PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls), arsenic and zinc in sediment and stream banks of Lyons Creek West, and PCBs in Lyons Creek East. Human Health Risk Assessments concluded negligible risks due to skin exposure to PCBs and to fish consumption for Lyons Creek East. Risk to human health from arsenic-contaminated sediment along Lyons Creek West was eliminated when the local industry remediated the site in 2007. Ecological Risk Assessment studies for Lyons Creek East and West confirmed the need for sediment management.

The Government of Canada is consulting the local public on the management options. We expect that local stakeholders will lead the next phase of the project which is to select and implement the preferred management option(s) of these areas. Potential options for Lyons Creek West and Lyons Creek East could include excavation and/or infilling, possible restoration of wetlands or monitored natural recovery. We expect to begin clean-up project in 2009 and complete it by 2012.

Areas of Concern are severely degraded geographic areas within the Great Lakes Basin. Restoring environmental quality is a priority due to their impact on local and basin-wide ecosystem health. In August 2007, the governments of Canada and Ontario announced the 2007 Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. The Agreement focuses on cleaning up the remaining 15 Canadian Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes. The Niagara River Area of Concern clean up is part of the Government of Canada's Action Plan for Clean Water and its goal of ensuring that all Canadians have access to clean, safe and healthy water.