
MEDIA RELEASE**For Immediate Release****November 29, 2006****US, Canadian cities fouling the Great Lakes with raw sewage**
Sewage Report Card reveals Great Lakes cities not making the grade

TORONTO, ONTARIO – Sierra Legal released its first **Great Lakes Sewage Report Card** today, an investigative report that analyzes twenty cities in the Great Lakes basin and grades them based on how well they manage their sewage. The results are appalling. Although many cities have made efforts to clean up their act, waters surrounding urban areas throughout the Great Lakes are still commonly unsafe for recreational use and many parts of the vast freshwater ecosystem are in peril.

“The Great Lakes basin is one of the most important freshwater ecosystems on the planet – holding one fifth of the world’s freshwater,” said report author Dr. Elaine MacDonald. “Yet, the twenty cities we evaluated are dumping the equivalent of more than 100 Olympic swimming pools full of raw sewage directly into the Great Lakes every single day.”

The **Great Lakes Sewage Report Card** represents the first-ever ecosystem-based survey and analysis of municipal sewage treatment and sewage discharges in the Great Lakes basin. The report grades cities on issues such as collection, treatment and disposal of sewage based on information provided by each municipality.

The report documents that many cities in the region have antiquated systems for collecting and treating sewage and regularly release untreated sewage into local waterways. It is estimated that the 20 cities evaluated, representing a third of the region’s 35 million people, dump more than 90 billion litres of untreated sewage into the Great Lakes each year.

The results are disappointing, with cities like Toronto, Syracuse and Hamilton getting below average grades. Detroit, Cleveland and Windsor performed abysmally and are at the bottom of the class. The cities that fared poorly typically have serious problems related to their combined sewers; antiquated systems that combine storm water and sanitary sewers into a single pipe and are prone to releasing raw sewage during wet weather.

Green Bay, Peel Region and Duluth are at the top of the class. All three generally have more sophisticated treatment processes and permit very little sewage to escape into the environment through combined sewer overflows, spills or bypasses.

In addition to grading the cities, the report provides an analysis of the region’s patchwork of sewage treatment laws and policies, and offers several recommendations to ensure the protection of water quality in the Great Lakes for future generations.

“Although it would be easy to point the finger at municipalities, the Great Lakes basin is a political quagmire that includes two countries, eight states, a province, dozens of tribes and First Nations and hundreds of local municipal and regional governments,” continued MacDonald. “The only way out of this mess is to have all levels of government make a renewed commitment to upgrade our aging sewage systems and conserve our precious freshwater resources.”

The full report card and background materials can be downloaded from www.sierralegal.org. For further information please contact:

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Rank	City	Grade	Comment
1	Green Bay, WI	B+	No overflows, bypasses or spills. Secondary Treatment. Removes phosphorus and dechlorinates final effluent.
2	Peel Region, ON	B	Secondary treatment. Minor sewer overflows. Phosphorus removal.
3	Duluth, MN	B	Tertiary treatment. Dechlorinates final effluent. No combined sewers. No sewer use by-law.
4	Thunder Bay, ON	B-	Secondary treatment. Invested in many upgrades. Planning to install UV disinfection.
5	Rochester, NY	B-	Secondary treatment. Phosphorus removal. Combined sewers in 75% of system, but attempting to control CSOs.
6	Erie, PA	B-	Secondary treatment. Phosphorus removal. New CSO control infrastructure. 20% combined sewers.
7	London, ON	C+	Secondary treatment at five plants, one with tertiary treatment. Frequent but small CSO events. UV disinfection.
8	Grand Rapids, MI	C+	Secondary Treatment. Uses UV disinfection. Several SSO and CSO events per year.
9	Milwaukee, WI	C+	Secondary treatment. Removes phosphorus and dechlorinates final effluent. Reported 4.1 billion litres per year.
10	Sault Ste Marie, ON	C+	Primary and Secondary treatment. Upgrading from primary to secondary at main sewage treatment plant. No combined sewers.
11	Niagara Region, ON	C+	Secondary Treatment. Reported more than 400 million litres of CSOs per year, not including overflows from 11 cities within the region.
12	Toronto, ON	C	Reported 9 billion litres of CSOs per year and 900 million litres bypasses in 2004. Plans for UV disinfection. Most comprehensive final effluent testing.
13	Hamilton, ON	C	Secondary treatment. Estimated 4.6 billion litres of CSOs per year. 17 unmeasured CSO points. Phosphorus removal.
13	Sarnia, ON	C	Secondary treatment. Combined sewers in 10% of system. Did not provide CSO volume. UV disinfection.
15	Kingston, ON	C	Primary and Secondary treatment. Commencing upgrade of primary plant to secondary. Reported 349 million litres of CSOs per year.
16	Sudbury, ON	C	Secondary treatment. Reports 3 overflows and 317 million litres of CSOs per year.
17	Syracuse, NY	C-	2.6 billion litres of CSOs per year. Combined sewers in 65% of system. Ammonia and phosphorus removal. UV disinfection.
18	Windsor, ON	D+	Primary and Secondary treatment. Currently upgrading primary plant to secondary. 1.8 billion litres of CSOs per year. 50% combined sewers.
19	Cleveland, OH	D+	20.8 billion litres CSOs per year. Secondary treatment. Phosphorus removal and dechlorination. No details given on effluent testing.
20	Detroit, MI	D	Secondary treatment. Reported over 200 overflows in 2005. 50 billion litres of CSOs in 2002. Largest treatment plant in North America.
	<i>Chicago</i>	<i>B-</i>	<i>Does not discharge into the Great Lakes Basin</i>



MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

The Great Lakes

- The Great Lakes hold one fifth of the world's freshwater, about 23,000 km³ (5,500 miles³)
- With a recharge rate of 1% per year, it takes the system 100 years to completely flush
- They cover 244,000 square kilometres (94,000 square miles)
- They include 12,800 kilometres (8,000 miles) of shoreline and 30,000 islands

Report Card Cities

- The 20 cities evaluated in this report include: Cleveland (Ohio), Detroit (Michigan), Duluth (Minnesota), Erie (Pennsylvania), Grand Rapids (Michigan), Green Bay (Wisconsin), Hamilton (Ontario), Kingston (Ontario), London (Ontario), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), Niagara Region (Ontario), Peel Region (Ontario), Rochester (New York), Sarnia (Ontario), Sault Ste. Marie (Ontario), Sudbury (Ontario), Syracuse (New York), Thunder Bay (Ontario), Toronto (Ontario), Windsor (Ontario)
- These cities account for approximately one third of the 35 million Canadians and Americans living in the Great Lakes basin
- The cities of Buffalo, Durham-York, Kitchener-Waterloo, Toledo and East Chicago did not respond to numerous requests for information and were not included in the report
- The City of Detroit did not respond to requests for information, but was included solely based on publicly provided information
- The City of Chicago provided information and was included for informational purposes, but is not included in the analysis because it discharges into the Mississippi River basin.

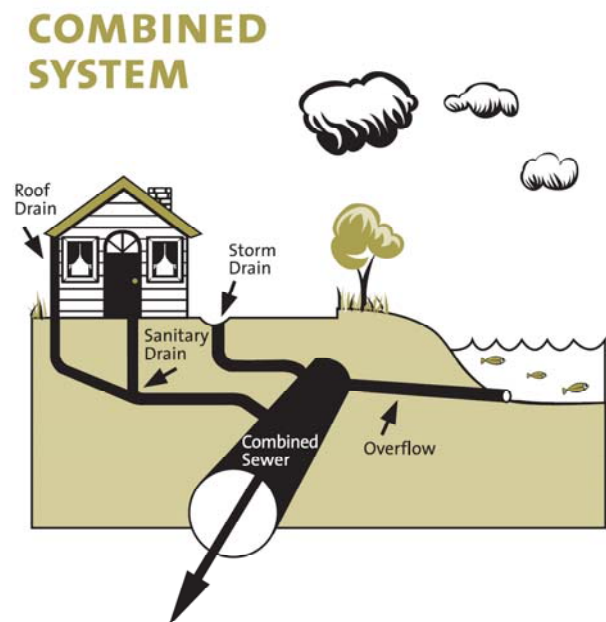


Great Lakes Sewage Treatment

- The 20 cities produce and treat more than 3 trillion litres of sewage per year
- All cities have at least secondary treatment, except for Kingston, Sault Ste. Marie and Windsor. Each of these cities plans to upgrade to secondary treatment
- Only London and Duluth report to have tertiary level sewage treatment
- Nine cities reported to have phosphorus removal technology: Peel, Toronto, Hamilton, Erie, Green Bay, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Rochester and Syracuse
- Cities that use dechlorination include: Green Bay, Milwaukee, Cleveland and Duluth
- Four cities use UV disinfection: Syracuse, Grand Rapids, London and Sarnia. Toronto and Thunder Bay currently have plans to upgrade to UV disinfection

Combined Sewer Overflows

- Combined sewers are an antiquated system that transports both sanitary sewage and storm water in the same pipes. During wet weather the flow often exceeds the treatment system capacity and overflows directly into local water bodies
- It is estimated that the 20 cities dump almost 93 billion litres of untreated sewage into the Great Lakes each year through combined sewer overflows
- Detroit had more than 260 CSOs in 2005 and released more than 50 billion litres of in 2001
- Cleveland releases more than 20 billion litres of CSOs per year
- The only cities reporting no combined sewers were Peel Region, Sault Ste. Marie, Duluth and Green Bay



Solutions

- **Water Conservation:** It is estimated that implementation of household-based water conservation programs can immediately reduce water use by more than 40%
- **Keep the rain out of the drain:** Disconnecting residential downspouts and footing drains can dramatically reduce the volume of storm water entering municipal systems. Encouraging rain barrels and use of porous landscaping materials also reduces the quantity of storm water
- **Separate CSOs:** Physically separating storm water and sanitary sewer systems greatly reduces overflows and total volumes flowing to treatment plants
- **Remove the toxics at the source:** Preventing toxic chemicals from entering the sewage system significantly reduces the environmental burden of sewage effluent and sludge
- **Funds for infrastructure and research:** All levels of government must make available funding to ensure proper treatment facilities and sewer infrastructure are provided throughout the Great Lakes basin. We must also encourage the development and implementation of alternative technologies for sewage treatment.