

Ottawa River Watershed Study: **Engagement Guide for Municipalities**

Scope of the Study

On May 3, 2017, the House of Commons passed Motion M-104:

“That, in the opinion of the House, the government should undertake a detailed study with regard to the creation of an Ottawa River Watershed Council, which would bring a comprehensive, inclusive, co-management approach to the Ottawa River Watershed, in order to foster ecological integrity, sustainable economic opportunities, and quality of life; in its study, the government should examine (i) the council membership, which would include, but would not be limited to, federal, provincial, regional, and municipal governments, First Nations, industry groups, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, (ii) important indicators such as water quality, biodiversity, and shoreline integrity, in order to assist with the creation of a co-management plan and conservation strategy, (iii) the economic, cultural, heritage, and natural values within the Ottawa River Watershed.”

In response to Motion M-104, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) is leading a study examining the Ottawa River watershed. The Ottawa River watershed includes the Ottawa River, from its headwaters in Québec’s Laurentian Mountains, to its junction with the St. Lawrence River at the Lake of Two Mountains, as well as streams, rivers and lakes that flow into the river. [A map of the watershed is attached as Annex A.](#)

ECCC is engaging federal departments and agencies, the governments of Québec and Ontario, municipalities within and near the Ottawa River watershed, local watershed agencies, industry representatives, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the general public. A separate consultation process is underway with Indigenous groups.

In keeping with the Motion, ECCC’s Ottawa River Watershed Study will include:

- a collection of information on the natural, cultural, heritage, and economic values associated with the Ottawa River watershed, including the numerous waterways connected to it;
- a summary of existing indicators used to assess the health of the Ottawa River watershed;
- an analysis on whether and how to improve management of the Ottawa River watershed; and
- the potential mandate, membership, structure and activities of an Ottawa River Watershed Council.

Engagement Guide for Municipalities

This engagement guide has been produced in order to meet the following goals, and obtain the following results.

Goals:

- Describe your municipality's role within the Ottawa River watershed.
- Identify values associated with the Ottawa River watershed, including any natural, cultural, heritage and economic values associated with your geographic area of jurisdiction.
- Identify knowledge, data and current monitoring related to indicators of watershed health in your geographic area of jurisdiction. We are also seeking your feedback on any other relevant indicators to consider.
- Ascertain your municipality's views regarding the potential formation of an Ottawa River Watershed Council, or other possible forms of collaboration for addressing shared concerns within the watershed.

Expected results:

- ✓ Obtain information regarding your mandated roles within the Ottawa River watershed.
- ✓ Obtain information on the past, present, and potential future of the natural (e.g., water monitoring), social (e.g., jobs), and/or economic (e.g., economic growth) well-being of the region.
- ✓ Acquire input on potential indicators for assessing watershed health, and gain insight on the breadth of knowledge and data currently available at the local watershed scale.
- ✓ Gain insight into how an Ottawa River Watershed Council might intersect with your municipality's interests and priorities, and identify other potential solutions to addressing challenges affecting the Ottawa River watershed.

We ask that you please respond to all of the following questions, as applicable.

A. Your municipality's roles and activities that contribute to the natural, cultural, heritage and economic values within the watershed.

1. In what way are your roles and activities connected to the Ottawa River watershed?

2. Is your organization aware of any significant natural, cultural, heritage and economic values that are central to overall ecosystem health and the wellbeing of communities in the region? For example, these may include facts and trends population and economic growth, historically important features, recreational activities, and local tourism.

3. Can you describe some of the past, present and potential future threats to those values?

4. Does your municipality collect any information that would be relevant to the values or threats listed above? If so, please describe.

B. Identify knowledge, data and information that could assist in indicating watershed health.

1. The Motion identifies the following indicators to track regarding the health of the Ottawa River watershed: water quality, biodiversity and shoreline integrity. Do you agree with including these indicators? Are there other indicators that should be added?
2. Does your municipality collect any data that might inform an assessment of the health of the Ottawa River watershed? If so, is it publically available? If not, are you willing to share it?
3. Are you aware of any knowledge or data gaps related to watershed health regarding both your municipality and the broader Ottawa River watershed? If gaps do exist, are there any practices or models for data gathering and sharing that you have found to be most effective?
4. What, if any, would be the ideal role for a Council in analyzing and protecting watershed health? How would this interact with your current roles and responsibilities?

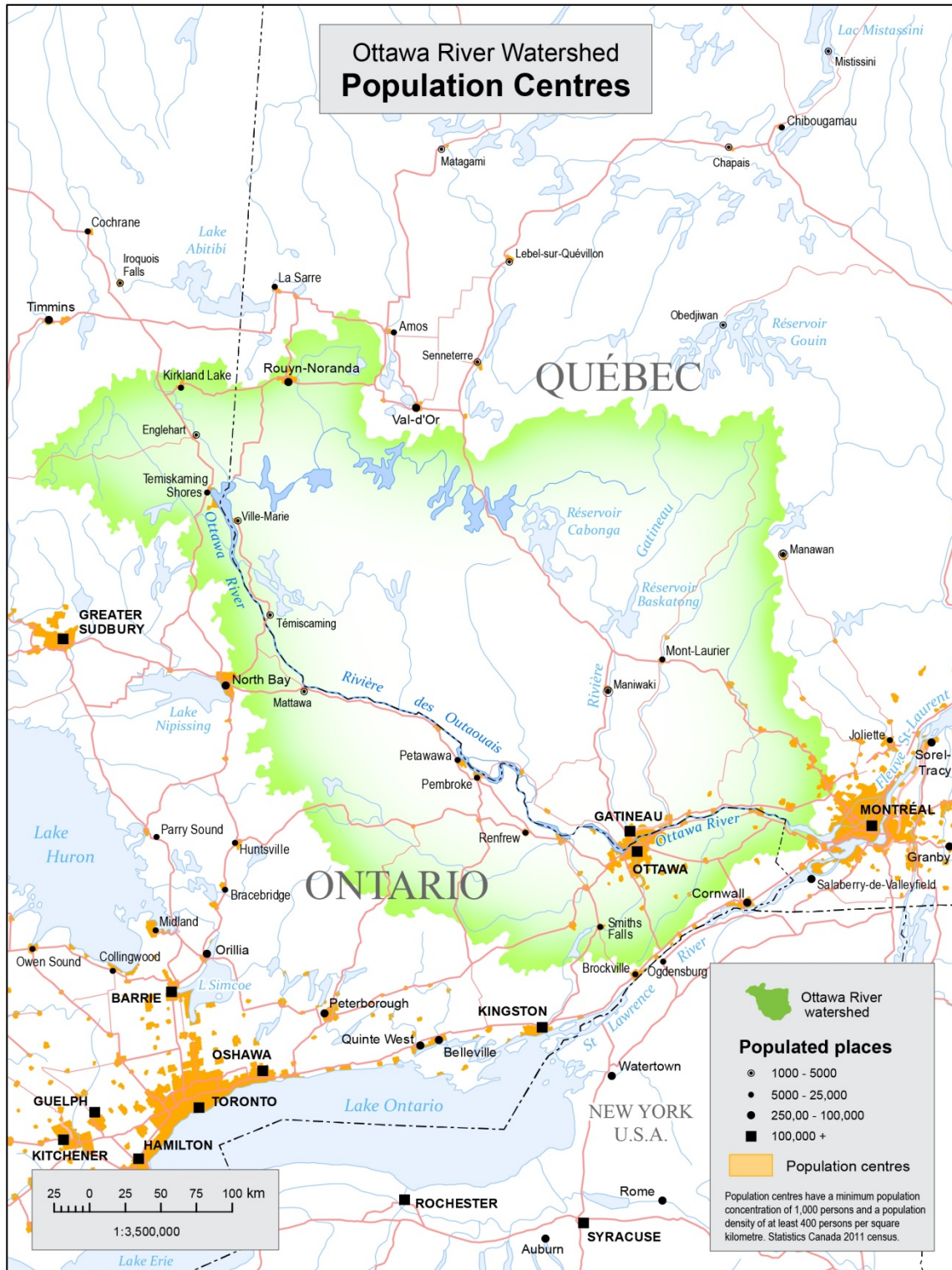
C. Your opinion on the potential creation of an Ottawa River watershed governance body, and the possible mandate, structure, activities, guiding principles and membership of an effective watershed governing body

Motion M-104 mentions that an Ottawa River Watershed Council would bring a comprehensive, inclusive, co-management approach to the Ottawa River watershed.

1. Is there a need for a more comprehensive, “big picture” approach to managing the Ottawa River watershed? If so, is a Council or other new entity the best way to ensure success? Are there other ways to achieve this?
2. Should a Council or other entity be recommended, what should its mandate and responsibilities include – or not include – taking into consideration the mission and responsibilities of municipalities?
3. Should a Council or other entity be recommended, how should membership be allocated be and how should it be structured? Further, how should municipalities be represented and what should their role be?
4. Attached in Annex B are eleven Integrated Watershed Management principles designated by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. How could management of the Ottawa River watershed better reflect the principles listed in Annex B?
5. From the perspective of your municipality, are you aware of any gaps in current governance? What would be the ideal role of municipal governments?

ANNEX A

OTTAWA RIVER WATERSHED STUDY MAP OF POPULATION CENTRES IN THE OTTAWA RIVER WATERSHED



ANNEX B

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT IWM PRINCIPLES

1	<u>Geographic Scale</u> - The watershed should be the planning boundary for integrated watershed management, and should be at an appropriate scale to address the issues under consideration in a way that recognizes its connectedness to upstream and downstream watersheds.
2	<u>Ecosystem Approach</u> - An interconnected process should be considered that uses best available knowledge, considers cumulative impacts, and promotes watershed and sub watershed approaches.
3	<u>Adaptive Management</u> - Flexible and continuous improvement and adaptation of approaches, policies and management should be undertaken by incorporating new knowledge and innovative design, practices and technology.
4	<u>Integrated Approach</u> - Land, water and infrastructure planning, investment and management should consider the direct, indirect or potential impacts and their interdependencies.
5	<u>Cumulative Impacts</u> - IWM planning should consider cumulative effects on the environment and the interdependency of air, land, water and living organisms.
6	<u>Precautionary Principles and No Regrets Actions</u> - Caution should be exercised to protect the environment when there is uncertainty about environmental risks.
7	<u>Proactive Approach</u> - Environmental degradation should be prevented. It is better for the environment and more cost-effective to prevent degradation of the environment than to clean it up after the fact.
8	<u>Shared Responsibility</u> - The responsibility for policy and program development and implementation should be shared within the mandate of all actors at the appropriate scale.
9	<u>Engaging Communities and Indigenous</u> - IWM processes should recognize and duly support the identity, culture and interests of local communities and Aboriginal peoples. IWM processes should enable meaningful participation by local communities and Aboriginal peoples who have a vital role in IWM because of their knowledge and traditional practices.
10	<u>Sustainable Development</u> - The right to development should be fulfilled to equitably meet economic and societal needs while not compromising the environment for present and future generations
11	<u>Natural Capital</u> - Natural capital should be protected and managed to reduce short- and long-term negative financial impacts. Natural systems provide goods and services of environmental, economic, social, cultural and spiritual value.