

---

## How Lake Ontario's Pollution Has Continued Since Industrialization

Ever since the industrial revolution, humans have increasingly sacrificed the environment for progress. The burning of fossil fuels and in-proper treatment of wastes and chemicals puts a lot of stress on our environment, as specially Lake Ontario, the most downstream of the five lakes, but also the most polluted. Lake Ontario is the water source 4 million people depend on. One can simply not ignore the fact that Lake Ontario is in trouble.

More than 185 invasive species have established themselves in the great lakes. These species reproduce quickly, extremely adaptable, have few natural predator and out-compete native species. Species like the round goby, zebra mussels and sea lamprey are just a small list of many that have been released into Lake Ontario and they are very aggressive, un-balancing the natural ecosystem. Humans activity is one of the biggest reasons why invasive species are released. Activities ranging from fishing to international trade all have a chance to accidentally release invasive species.

The release of invasive species is not even the biggest killer. Regular sewage, which should be natural and be easily broken down by the environment, contains bacteria, virus, plastic, and other harmful chemicals that make the water contaminated long after it leaves treatment plants. Nutrients from sewage, are actually needed by the ecosystems, but sewage often dumps nutrients in large amounts, causing eutrophication and harmful algae blooms.

Waste water filled with toxic chemicals ranging from detergents to polychlorinated biphenyl to heavy metals. Once dumped into the lake, usually by factories, the water becomes contaminated, along with most aquatic life. The effects of these toxic chemicals are very dangerous toward biotic life. Fish in Lake Ontario is usually restricted for consumption due to containment.

The situation may seem grim; however, all hope is not lost. Although the situation is much better than two decades ago, it could most certainly be better. People needs to become more aware of the situation, and what they can do to help. By organizing clean-ups, spreading awareness, and making your life greener by switching to environmental alternatives. The government also needs to impose more regulations and harsher laws. However just this alone is not enough. International cooperation, with our close neighbor, the United States, is required.

Things are certainly better than before, but that doesn't mean the Lake Ontario cannot be better. The government could have done more; everyone could have done more. Four million people aren't the only users of Lake Ontario. Thousands of species of animals use Lake Ontario as their habitat. We can live with poisoned fish, murky waters and dead beaches or we can restore Lake Ontario to its former glory.