



POLICY BRIEF

Supporting the need for provincial action on salt pollution in Ontario

Developed by the
Ontario Salt Pollution Coalition



ISSUE OVERVIEW

Ontario freshwater ecosystems and drinking water sources are facing growing, dangerous, and chronic salt pollution. Ontario is Canada's #1 user of winter salt, dumping approximately 2-3 million tonnes of salt each winter. Road salt is a known toxic substance designated under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act because of tangible threats including serious, irreversible environmental and public health damages. Other impacts to critical public infrastructure (roads, bridges, buildings) and private property are also a concern.

Currently, there are no provincial policies or regulations for road salts, including no salt use standards, required training, enforcement mechanisms, or protections against salt pollution. This policy void has created liability issues for snow and ice management contractors and has left municipalities out in the cold to deal with salt pollution issues locally. People across Ontario are coming together to work together toward provincial action on salt pollution.

POLICY SOLUTION

'Limited Liability' is a policy approach to winter salt management used in similar jurisdictions to increase safety outcomes and reduce environmental harms.

Limited Liability Legislation includes:

-  Required Contractor Training
-  A Single Set of Provincially-Endorsed Best Management Practices & Standards
-  Legislation Limiting Snow & Ice Management Contractor Liability
-  Establishing a Provincial Regulatory Authority

KEY ACTION

Municipalities and other governing bodies concerned with salt pollution pass a resolution:

- 1) affirming the need for provincial action on salt pollution
- 2) urging the province to form and fund an expert stakeholder committee to inform salt pollution action
- 3) recommitting to reduce their use of road salts locally

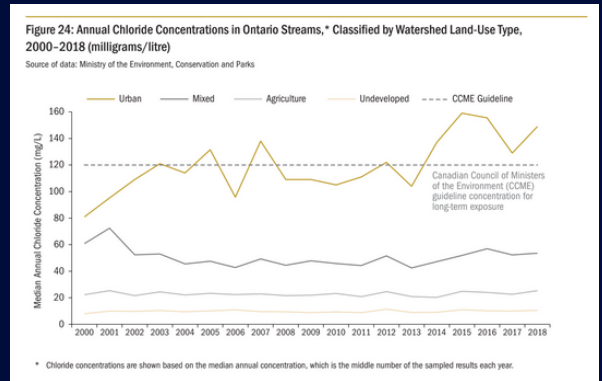
DRAFT MUNICIPAL RESOLUTION

Salt pollution needs a provincial-level solution to make meaningful, long-term strides to reduce water, land, and human health impacts.

Municipalities and other governing bodies concerned with salt pollution play a critical role in securing provincial action on salt pollution.

Municipalities are doing the best they can to deal with over-salting and salt pollution in their jurisdictions, but lack the policy and regulatory framework they need to meaningfully protect their local water bodies and drinking water sources. The Ontario Salt Pollution Coalition is working with municipalities to pass resolutions to affirm the need for provincial action on salt pollution.

[View the draft municipal resolution here.](#)



Source: Auditor General's 'The State of the Environment in Ontario' Report (2023).



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

to learn more about salt pollution in the province of Ontario

Take Action

- **OSPC Website:** <https://saltcoalition.ca/>
- **Draft Municipal Resolution:** [see GoogleDoc here](#)
- **OSPC Municipal Resolution Background:** [see GoogleDoc here](#)

Learn More

- **Smart About Salt Council:** <https://smartaboutsalt.wildapricot.org/>
- **Brief - "Snow & Ice Removal in Ontario: A Call for Change"** (Landscape Ontario, 2023).
- **Report - Good Practices for Winter Maintenance in Salt Vulnerable Areas** (2018).
- **Study - "Chloride trends in Ontario's surface and groundwaters"** (Sorichetti et al. 2022).
- **Watersheds Canada Salt Pollution Blogs:** <https://watersheds.ca/?s=salt>
- **Report - Limited Liability in Ontario** (Landscape Ontario, 2024).
- **Report - The State of the Environment in Ontario** (Ontario's Auditor General, May 2023).
- **Brief - Alternatives to Salt** (Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program, 2023).