

# Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

Annual Report 2011-2012



Dear Great Lakes and St. Lawrence friends –

It has been my pleasure to chair the Cities Initiative over the past year. Actions have been taken to improve the quality of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

The federal governments of Canada and the U.S. are ready to sign the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the Province of Ontario has recently introduced a Great Lakes Protection Act. Both of these are positive steps that help with our mutual goals to preserve and protect the Great Lakes. The Canadian and Québec governments have also made a significant financial commitment to the St. Lawrence River.

The Cities Initiative has been instrumental in making municipal voices heard throughout the basin on issues as diverse as ballast water regulation, Asian carp control, and shale gas exploration. My time spent working on these issues with my regional colleagues has proved to be extremely successful.

I am also proud of the Cities Initiative's work to promote best practices and continue to show leadership in water management through our Green CiTTS program. I look forward to the coming years to identify other initiatives our organization can move forward.

Sincerely,



Brian McMullan  
Mayor of St. Catharines, Ontario  
Chair, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative 2011-2012



## RESTORING THE NATURAL DIVIDE

Asian carp present one of the most significant threats to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence, and the Cities Initiative is playing a major role in finding a solution to the problem. The place where the invasive carp are most likely to enter Lake Michigan is through the Chicago Area Waterway System, a 130 mile series of canals, rivers, and channels created over the years to convey wastewater and barges. Many argue that the only way to be sure the invasive carp do not get into the lakes is to build physical barriers in the waterway and essentially restore the natural divide that existed before 1900 between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. A group of six private foundations provided \$2 million in funding to the Cities Initiative and the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) to manage a study to demonstrate the feasibility of physical separation to stop the invasive species, while at the same time maintain or improving water quality, flood control, and transportation. The Cities Initiative and GLC released the final report on January 31, 2012 showing three viable options for separation, costing between \$4.25 and \$9.5 billion, in line with the cost of major infrastructure projects of this nature. A large majority of those costs are to deal with the water quality, flood control, and transportation elements of the project. The report received extensive media coverage and positive reactions across the basin and in Washington.

The key next steps are to inform opinion leaders and the broader public about the importance of moving ahead with physical separation, further develop the technical and economic elements of the project, and continue the dialogue with the stakeholders. Mayor Emanuel and Mayor Heartwell serve on the executive committee of the project, along with Governor Quinn of Illinois and Governor Kasich of Ohio. Dave Ullrich manages the project with Tim Eder of the GLC. The Cities Initiative and GLC have secured an additional \$325,000 in funding for future work.



## BALLAST WATER

The issue of ballast water management has been at the heart of environmental news throughout this past year, more particularly in the Great Lakes region. For several years now, the Cities Initiative has taken part in the discussions on this important matter and has advocated for standards that are achievable, uniform, and protective throughout the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes.

The Cities Initiative has intervened on several occasions, by providing comments on a report to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and through meetings and exchanges with the Canadian federal government, the Québec government, the State of New York, environmental groups and representatives of the marine industry.

Over the last few months, the EPA and the U.S. Coast Guard announced the forthcoming entry into force of new standards that embrace the international standards developed by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Although discussions continue to take place between some of the States, the EPA and the U.S. Coast Guard, particularly regarding the timeline for the implementation of the new standards and the approval of treatment systems for ballast water, everything seems to indicate that the end result will meet the initial concerns of the Cities Initiative to the effect that the new standards will provide an adequate level of protection, will be uniform and achievable in terms of technology.



## GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY AGREEMENT

The Governments of Canada and the United States have been engaged in renegotiating the terms of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement over the last few years. A final draft was agreed to in early 2012, and following legal review, translation, and signing by both parties, it is anticipated that the agreement will come into effect later in 2012. The Cities Initiative was invited to participate on the Environment Canada Water Quality Agreement Advisory Committee, which allowed for a confidential exchange of views and advice throughout the renegotiation process.

## SHALE GAS

The Cities Initiative continues to monitor developments with regard to shale gas extraction in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin. The Cities Initiative submitted comments to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC) on its revised draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (dSGEIS) and proposed regulations on shale gas operations. The comments call on the NYDEC to revisit federal exemptions for oil and gas wells and wastes, assure increased protection of aquifers, consider pending EPA results and remove exemptions for shale gas waste and consider them legally hazardous waste. The Cities Initiative will continue to monitor new developments of the shale gas industry in other jurisdictions, including the ongoing strategic environmental study in the Province of Québec.

## A WORD OF THANKS...

*The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative thanks all of its member communities and funders for their commitment to restoring and protecting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. Particular gratitude goes to **The Joyce Foundation** for its support of the Cities Initiative and our projects.*

## CANADA - QUEBEC ST. LAWRENCE ACTION PLAN

The Canadian and Québec governments announced the *St. Lawrence Action Plan 2011–2026*, a 15-year commitment to protect the River with a joint investment of \$70 million over five years. As a recognized stakeholder, the Cities Initiative is seeking to assure a strong municipal voice in the implementation of the St. Lawrence Action Plan, including potential participation in Regional Round Tables (RRTs) and associated committees; to increase member awareness and participation, and to help shape the orientation of the St. Lawrence Action Plan towards local and municipal actions and initiatives, notably community mobilizations funds.

In partnership with the responsible Federal and Québec government departments, the Cities Initiative organized a member webinar, to explain both the plan itself and the integrated management. In addition, Québec Cities Initiative representatives attended the first St. Lawrence Action Plan forum in Québec City, an occasion to meet and interact with both government officials and other stakeholders.



## ONTARIO REGIONAL MEETING

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, the Ontario Minister of the Environment, the Honorable Jim Bradley, met with member mayors at a Cities Initiative Ontario Regional Meeting, to hear directly from them about their priorities for the Great Lakes. The Minister's attendance was part of a series of municipal consultations on the anticipated *Great Lakes Protection Act*. Also at the regional meeting, members discussed some of the most pressing issues on the Great Lakes from a municipal point of view, including rural stormwater management.



## GREEN CITTS PROGRAM

The Cities Initiative successfully released its binational report on stormwater practices, 'Stormwater Management in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin: Cities Charting the Way Forward', at its 2011 annual meeting in Niagara Falls. The report was based on a comprehensive survey of members in Canada and the United States, comparing and contrasting approaches to stormwater management. The report was featured in a number of publications, including *Stormwater Solutions Magazine*, *URBA*, the newsletter of the UMQ (Québec's Union of Municipalities), and in November 2011, was the cover story of *Municipal World*, the leading Canadian municipal magazine. A number of webinars were held for members to promote best practices in stormwater management.

At its December 2011 meeting, the Cities Initiative board directed staff to develop principles and prepare a report on Sustainable Municipal Water Management (SMWM). An advisory committee of municipal staff worked through the winter and spring to develop the SMWM principles. A report featuring the SMWM principles and a public reporting format on progress towards sustainable municipal water management will be released at the Cities Initiative conference in Québec City in June 2012.



## ANNUAL MEETING—REGION OF NIAGARA

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting of the Cities Initiative took place in Niagara Falls, ON, hosted by Chair Gary Burroughs and the Region of Niagara. The meeting of the membership included resolutions on stormwater management, promoting safe shipping along the lakes and river and a continued backing of efforts to stop the threat of invasive species including Asian carp. The Green CiTTS program unveiled the report on stormwater management in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basins. The Cities of Milwaukee, WI, Trois-Rivières, QC and Montréal, QC were all honored for their efforts in stormwater management. The City of Sheboygan, WI was awarded the *Wege Small Cities Sustainability* grant for their energy efficient wastewater treatment plant. The Cities of Toronto and Town of The Blue Mountains, ON were recognized for their efforts on water conservation.

## MEMBERSHIP

During the past year the Cities Initiative gained new members from Ontario, Québec and the United States. The Cities Initiative would like to welcome new members including:

Mayor Neil Ellis, Belleville, Ontario  
Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, Gary, Indiana  
Mayor Thomas McDermott, Hammond, Indiana  
Warden Bernie MacLellan, Huron County, Ontario  
Warden Steve Arnold, Lambton County, Ontario  
Mayor Gary Starr, Middleburg Heights, Ohio  
Mayor John Henry, Oshawa, Ontario  
Mayor Alexandre Bélisle, Verchères, Québec  
Mayor April Jeffs, Wainfleet, Ontario

20 North Wacker Drive  
Suite 2700  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

[www.glsicities.org](http://www.glsicities.org)

312.201.4516

