



**GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE**  
**ALLIANCE DES VILLES DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT**

**RESOLUTION 06 – 2015M**

**ACTION ON PHRAGMITES IN THE GREAT LAKES**

**Submitted by the Town of Collingwood, Ontario**

**WHEREAS**, *Phragmites australis* is an invasive perennial grass that continues to cause severe damage to coastal wetlands and beaches in areas around the Great Lakes, particularly in the Georgian Bay area; and

**WHEREAS**, *Phragmites australis* grows and spreads rapidly, allowing the plant to invade new areas and grow into large monoculture stands in a short amount of time, and is an allelopathic plant that secretes toxins from its roots into the soil which impede the growth of neighboring plant species; and

**WHEREAS**, *Phragmites australis* results in loss of biodiversity and species richness; loss of habitat, changes in hydrology due to its high metabolic rate, changes in nutrient cycling as it is slow to decompose, an increased fire hazard due to the combustibility of its dead stalks, and can have an adverse impact on agriculture; and

**WHEREAS**, invasive *Phragmites australis* should be distinguished from the native species, *Phragmites americanus*, which does not require control as it rarely develops into monoculture stands, does not alter habitat, has limited impact on biodiversity and does not deter wildlife; and

**WHEREAS**, invasive Phragmites have been identified as Canada's worst invasive plant species by Agriculture and Agrifood Canada; and

**WHEREAS**, Phragmites occupy over 4,800 hectares of land around Lake St. Clair alone, while 212 hectares of Phragmites occupy land along the St. Lawrence River. The Georgian Bay Area is particularly affected by *Phragmites australis*, with hundreds of stands along the shorelines that threaten valuable wetland areas; and

**WHEREAS**, controlling invasive Phragmites before it becomes well established reduces environmental impacts, time, and costs; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has fulfilled their obligation and action items from the Cities Initiative's 2010 Resolution on Invasive Phragmites by:



- Developing Best Management Practices that assist land management agencies and landowners in controlling invasive Phragmites;
- Establishing the Ontario Phragmites Working Group and developing the Ontario Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDsMapS) to share information about invasive Phragmites and its distribution while providing direction and guidance on its control;
- Leading Phragmites control measures in provincial parks; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States lacks coordinated Phragmites control standards among states and municipalities similar to those provided by Ontario's Best Management Practices and Phragmites Working Group; and

**WHEREAS**, primary action on Phragmites in Quebec includes:

- Research on climate change and Phragmites conducted by the Phragmites Working Group at the University of Laval and the University of Montreal;
- Ordinances issued by the Ministry of Transportation that dictate Phragmites management practices in order to prevent seed dispersal via roadways; and

**WHEREAS**, municipalities in Ontario can control invasive Phragmites on their own land, and on private property with the landowner's permission, provided they meet the requirements under the *Ontario Pesticides Act*; and

**WHEREAS**, conservation inspectors in Ontario currently lack authority to enter private land to take control measures against invasive Phragmites; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, best management practices include early detection, herbicide application, mowing, compressing or rolling, prescribed burning, and controlled flooding; and

**WHEREAS**, these best management practices are most effective when used in tandem as opposed to when used as stand-alone control measures; and

**WHEREAS**, best management practices can incur high costs because they require extensive time, labor, and specialized equipment to ensure safety and efficacy; and

**WHEREAS**, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Act has provided funding for fifty-four invasive Phragmites management projects on over 900,000 acres of land in the United States and is a vital resource for Phragmites management in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, municipalities, particularly in Canada, may not have access to specially allocated funds similar to those distributed in the United States under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative; and



**WHEREAS**, municipalities need access to funds in order to enact Best Management Practices.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative calls on its members to recognize the need to implement best management practices; to continue public education to promote early detection of invasive Phragmites; and to continue to research best management practices for Phragmites, with the greatest emphasis on implementing best management practices; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that because of differences in governance structures and in the impact of Phragmites in each region, the governments of the United States, Ontario, and Quebec will utilize differing country or province-specific recommendations; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the United States Congress to continue to support full funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act and its associated invasive Phragmites projects; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the Ontario Provincial Parliament to pass the Ontario Invasive Species Act (Bill 37), which would be the first stand-alone invasive species legislation in any Canadian province; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and its members call on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and other relevant authorities to increase the amount of funding available through the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' Land Stewardship and Restoration Program and through other avenues in order to support invasive Phragmites programs, including but not limited to: implementation of best management practices, further research, and public education, with the greatest emphasis on funding for implementation of best management practices; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the Government of Quebec to act in the following ways:

- Utilize a preventative approach to Phragmites management considering that Phragmites have not yet dispersed as dramatically in Quebec as they have in the United States and Ontario;
- Continue to pursue academic research in University settings on Phragmites dispersal and to make these findings available to Ontario and the United States;
- Facilitate the implementation of Best Management Practices through funding or other avenues, and use existing resources from Ontario and the United States when implementing Best Practices; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the Ontario Ministry of Environment and the relevant agencies of Quebec, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York to clarify and further outline



their best management practices into protocols that establish ‘due process’ in controlling invasive Phragmites, which would include but not be limited to:

- Increasing the promotion of existing public education materials, such as EDDsMapS, the Ontario Phragmites Best Management Practices Guide, the work of the Phragmites working groups in Ontario and at the University of Laval, and the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative to promote early detection and identification of invasive Phragmites;
- Establishing clear criteria that would guide decisions on whether action is required to control Phragmites, for example, based on the ecological or health implications of not taking action;
- If a situation meets this criteria, requesting that the private landowner take action to control Phragmites on his or her land;
- If a private landowner is unwilling to take action, allowing the authority to take action as appropriate under a bylaw or ordinance that respects the above ‘due process’;
- Assisting municipal and other local authorities with the implementation of best practices to control Phragmites.

Signed this 17<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2015

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John Dickert, Chair  
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative  
Mayor of Racine