



**GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE
CITIES INITIATIVE
ANNUAL REPORT
2005 / 2006**



INTRODUCTION

The voice of local government is coming through loud and clear to help shape a better future for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin and all the United States and Canadian citizens who live here. The newly created Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative began a very exciting year after a successful Annual Conference in Québec City in May 2005. Formed out of the Canadian-based International Association of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Mayors and the United States-based Great Lakes Cities Initiative, the new organization builds on the strengths of both groups to be a positive presence for local governments at the international, federal, state, and provincial decision-making tables for a broad range of issues affecting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. These resources are central to the economic well being of our cities and the quality of life for our citizens all across the basin. We must protect and restore them so that future generations may also benefit from them.

The Cities Initiative advances water quality, water conservation, and waterfront vitality through a wide range of activities, including education, best practices, cooperation, leadership, and action. On all fronts, this was a very successful year. Although much work remains to be done, the accomplishments of this year provide a solid basis for even more progress in the future.



OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

No single group can do everything needed to protect and restore a resource as vast and complex as the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. That is why it is so important to reach out to partners willing to work together to advance the agenda for the resource. Even before the new organization was formed, work was underway with governors, premiers, federal officials, tribes, and first nations, as well as environmental groups, business, industry, and agriculture. These relationships have served the organization very well.



Mayor Geddes, Mayor Miller and Mayor Rigby attend the Toronto Boat Show

Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, our Chairman, with strong and enthusiastic support from **Mayor David Miller** of Toronto, our Vice Chairman, determined that a key group to work with is the fishing and boating community on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Partnering with the National Marine Manufacturing Association and the Canadian Marine Manufacturing Association, Mayor Daley arranged for a symposium at the Chicago Boat Show and Mayor Miller, who was joined by **Mayor Tim Rigby** of St. Catharines and **Mayor Terry Geddes** of Collingwood, did the same at the Toronto Boat Show. Both events were in early January 2006, and were very successful. About 100 people from the boating and fishing communities attended each gathering, and with their strong interest in the well being of the resource, they will be important allies in the future. Already, that community is working to educate lawmakers about the importance of effective protection against invasive species, and the economic and ecological damage they can do.

The December 2005 midwinter meeting of the Board of Directors included a discussion about reaching out to universities to strengthen ties with the educational community. **Mayor Gary Becker** of Racine had already forged a working relationship with the University of Wisconsin Extension Service, and was a featured speaker at a conference on Water Quality sponsored by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges held in Milwaukee on January 17, 2006. Many valuable contacts were established at this gathering. The Cities Initiative also has reached out to several institutions for interns, and has already benefited from the work of students from the University of California at Berkeley, Dartmouth College, and the University of Chicago. These internships will continue in the future. Additional outreach includes work with the University of Illinois at Chicago (Institute for Environmental Science and Policy, External Advisory Board) and the Illinois Institute of Technology (Stuart School

of Management, Environmental Management Program Advisory Board) where our Executive Director serves as a member.

One of the other proposals that came out of the annual meeting was the use of a video production that would educate people about the value of the resource, the threats, and what mayors are doing to solve the problems. **Mayor David Ross** of Superior, with cooperation from **Mayor Herb Bergson** of Duluth, developed an outstanding 15 minute DVD suitable for use on public access television or in other formats. This DVD can serve as a model for other cities.



Mayor Daley and Mayor Ross

The Council of Great Lakes Governors continues to be a strong partner with the Cities Initiative. The mayors and governors worked closely with one another throughout the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Process, and **Mayor Richard Daley** has signed several important letters to the President and a number of key Senators and Congressmen with **Governor Bob Taft** of Ohio and **Governor Jim Doyle** of Wisconsin.

The International Joint Commission (IJC) has been an important institution on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence for almost 100 years. Under IJC jurisdiction and specific to the Great Lakes is the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, which sets out many important actions the United States and Canada are working on together to protect the lakes. As part of the regular review process for the Agreement, the IJC requested assistance from the Cities Initiative for holding a series of public meetings. In the report on the meetings, the IJC said, “The Commission established partnerships with mayors across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin, who cooperated enthusiastically by making meeting spaces and equipment available for the regional public meetings.”



Also on the international level, **Mayor Gerald Tremblay** led the effort to prepare a presentation for the World Water Forum in Mexico City in mid March of 2006. The focus of the presentation was on Montréal’s water management strategy and information about the work of mayors on the Cities Initiative was also included. **District Mayor Helen Fotopulos** of the Plateau Mont-Royal made the presentation for Montréal and the Cities Initiative.

These and many other partnerships will be essential to our long term success as an organization, and the important foundations for these working relationships have been firmly established.

WATER QUALITY

Ensuring high quality water in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence so that people can eat the fish, drink the water, and swim at the beaches is a fundamental principal for the Cities Initiative. We have worked on many fronts to advance the cause.

Cities all across the basin make substantial investments in infrastructure and operating costs to protect and enhance the resource. Frequently, these financial commitments by municipalities are overlooked when there are discussions about spending for the Great Lakes.

Mayor Richard Daley requested a survey of selected cities to get a sense of what they were spending on Great Lakes and St. Lawrence related matters.

Looking at a group of eight medium-sized and larger cities, the annual capital expenditures averaged just under \$100 million and the operating expenses were well over \$100 million. The types of things included were wastewater, drinking water, storm water, constructed wetlands, lakefront parks, and several other categories. Taking investments of this magnitude across the communities in Canada and the United States from Duluth in the west to Québec City in the east, the total municipal investment is in the billions of dollars and certainly is well beyond what federal governments are spending.



Mayor Daley speaks at the Boating and Fishing Symposium at the Chicago Boat Show

There was a unique opportunity in 2005 to advance water quality on the Great Lakes in a way that had never occurred in the past. Working from the Presidential Executive Order of May 2004 on the Great Lakes, **Mayor Richard Daley** joined with **Governor Bob Taft**, **U.S. EPA Administrator Steve Johnson**, and representatives from Congress and Native American Tribes on the Executive Committee of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration in leading an effort to develop a strategy and action plan for the future. After 12 months of intensive work by over 1500 people and a series of 6 public meetings with almost 750 participants, the Strategy was released at a large gathering on December 12, 2005 at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. The Strategy represents the broadest based agreement on priorities and actions ever reached on the Lakes, and it will serve as a guide for many years to come. Working from this platform, the Cities Initiative will take its own actions, and work with others to advance the protection and restoration of the resource. Although additional federal funding has not been committed as yet, the cities, states, and tribes will continue working with Congress to secure the level of investment both needed and warranted for a resource so priceless, and so threatened, as the Great Lakes.

To further the cause of Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, **Senator George Voinovich** of Ohio sponsored a hearing of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in Washington on March 16, 2006. The Committee requested testimony from

the Cities Initiative, and **Mayor Richard Daley's** remarks were delivered by the Executive Director. The cities presented a united front with **Governor Taft** and **Tribal Chairman Frank Ettawageshik** of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. Shortly after this Washington hearing, **Congressman Vern Ehlers** chaired a hearing in Grand Rapids, at which **Mayor George Heartwell** presented the comments for the Cities Initiative. Considering both of these hearings, and other factors, Congress and the Administration are clearly looking to the cities and their mayors for leadership on the Great Lakes, and they are finding many strong examples of it.

Following the Senate hearing, Great Lakes legislation was introduced in Congress to implement many of the highest priority recommendations developed through the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, including many of the priorities identified by the Cities Initiative. Several members of Congress played key roles in authoring these bills, including **Congressmen Vern Ehlers, Rahm Emanuel, Tom Reynolds** and **Mark Kirk**, and **Senators Mike DeWine** and **Carl Levin**. Many other members of the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation have also been strong supporters of these bills.



Mayor Miller and Mayor Peterson at the Toronto Regional Meeting

In Canada, legislation on source water protection which will have a major effect on our cities is moving forward in the Ontario Parliament. The Ontario Clean Water Act is part of the response to the Walkerton incident, in which several people died because of contamination of drinking water. At a meeting in Toronto on April 21, 2006, called by **Mayor Tim Rigby** and **Mayor Terry Geddes**, and hosted by **Mayor David Miller, Ontario Environment Minister Laurel Broten** encouraged the 25 mayors and other city representatives present to be actively engaged in the formulation of the final law and in the implementation plans. The cities want to make sure that the law will provide protection for the Great Lakes as a drinking water source, as well as ground water.

One of the greatest threats to the quality of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence resource is invasive species. With over 180 in the system already, and new ones arriving almost every 8 months, they have severely disrupted the biological balance of the ecosystem. A potential threat that could cause more harm than any of those in the past are the black, bighead, and silver Asian carp, which are currently less than 50 miles from Lake Michigan in the Illinois River. **Mayor Richard Daley** has worked closely with many elected officials to make sure the existing temporary barrier is made permanent, and that a new, more reliable barrier is installed. **Congresswoman Judy Biggert, Senator Barack Obama, Senator Voinovich, and Senator Dick Durbin** have been especially supportive of these efforts. It has been a slow and tedious process, but progress is being made. The Cities Initiative also continues to provide information on the importance of comprehensive national invasive species legislation in both the United States and Canada.

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement has guided the efforts of the United States and Canada since 1972 to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Although the Agreement was revised in 1978 and 1987, it has not been changed since. Cities were not included in the earlier versions of the agreement, and the Cities Initiative wants to make sure that does not happen again. **Mayor David Miller** and **Mayor Richard Daley** each wrote senior government officials in Canada and the United States to make sure the cities have representation in the review process. As a result, both the Executive Director and a senior policy advisor from Toronto are included on the Agreement Review Committee, as well as other city representatives on work groups. The Cities Initiative went on record earlier with the International Joint Commission about the importance of the role of cities in the Agreement, and that it should be broadened to include the St. Lawrence River and the full ecosystem, rather than just water quality.

In these, and many other ways, the Cities Initiative is moving forward to make sure that water quality in the Great Lakes improves in the future.

WATER CONSERVATION

One of the primary responsibilities of cities is to provide their citizens and businesses with clean, fresh, and abundant water for municipal uses. With increased concerns about sustaining both the quality and quantity of water from the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence in the long term, cities have moved forward with actions to make sure that water is used wisely within their jurisdictions. The Cities Initiative participated actively in the deliberations of the eight Great Lakes states and the provinces of Ontario and Québec, which extended over four years. The Cities Initiative was a member of the Advisory Committee and was very active in these discussions. The two primary points of emphasis from the Cities Initiative were the importance of a very restrictive approach on diversions outside the basin, and very strong measures for water conservation by all users of the resource. These measures were adopted and included in the final Agreement and Compact signed by the governors and premiers on December 13, 2006.



Several cities in the organization have moved forward with water conservation measures for their communities. The City of Chicago, led by **Mayor Richard M. Daley**, has seen water consumption drop by nearly 20% over the last 10 years, primarily as a result of infrastructure investments. **Mayor David Miller** launched a similar program in Toronto with the goal of a 15% reduction in water use by 2011 through programs such as providing incentives to switch to water efficient appliances, reducing the use of treated water for lawns and gardens, changes to building standards and water infrastructure upgrades to reduce leakage in the system.

In a survey of 414 cities across the country by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Urban Water Council, two-thirds indicated they had water conservation plans in place. We hope that the best practices of cities can be shared across the basin so that all cities will have access to the latest information on how to conserve water. These actions by mayors show a great deal of foresight on an issue that will grow in importance in the coming years. Demonstrating mayoral leadership, cities will be out front on an issue before it becomes a crisis.

The Cities Initiative plans to take water conservation to the next level in the coming year. Efforts such as reduction goals and recognition for innovative approaches to water conservation are under consideration.

WATERFRONT VITALITY

Cities all across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence are developing and implementing exciting plans for revitalizing their waterfronts. These plans include many exciting features that promise to make the waterfronts in our communities attractive to people as places to enjoy with their families for recreation at beaches, parks, and on walking and biking trails, pleasant places to live in homes, and exciting places to work and shop. Land use decisions were made over 100 years ago in many cases which resulted in a great deal of heavy industry locating on the shorelines, often with the backs of the cities turned to the water. Later, many highways were built that blocked the waterfront from the citizens. These may have been good decisions at the time, but things have changed, and waterfronts now are likely to have much greater value for recreational, residential, and commercial uses. With these types of uses, the proper design can ensure that the habitat value of the land and waterfront are preserved so that migrating birds, fish, and other wildlife can live compatibly with humans.



In an effort to assemble the best practices from all of the cities engaging in this work, the Cities Initiative has collected waterfront plans from 27 cities on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. These plans include many exciting innovations that promise to enhance the quality of life and stimulate the economies of our cities. In many instances, cities are already proceeding with implementation of their plans. The Cities Initiative has made many of these plans available on the website.

There are many exciting plans, and some that may be of special interest are highlighted here. Mayors from five cities along 21 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline have come together with **Congressman Pete Visclosky** and the State of Indiana to

develop the Marquette Plan, which is one of the most ambitious efforts on the Great Lakes. This area is home to the most intensive concentration of iron and steel manufacturing in the United States, and also some of the most sensitive habitat in the form of dunes in the Indian Dunes National Lakeshore and the Indiana Dunes State Park. Many residential sections are located in the area, as well, and it is a major transportation corridor on the land by highway and rail, over the water, and in the air. The plan looks to preserve land already protected, add land that is especially sensitive and important to the area, and provide more public access to Lake Michigan where it is not currently available. Many representatives of federal, state, and local governments, along with business, industry, and citizens, are working together to make this a reality.

In December 2004, the City of Cleveland released the Cleveland Waterfront District Plan for its shoreline along Lake Erie. The waterfront has been separated from the City for many years by a major highway. There have been many efforts to make the lakefront more attractive and more accessible over the years, including the construction of the new Cleveland Browns stadium, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Great Lakes Science Museum. The new plan would take the lakefront to an entirely new level, with plans for residential housing, boardwalks, building renovations, highway rebuilding, and many other projects totaling almost \$500 million. Several projects are already underway.



Toronto's ambitious plans to redevelop the Central Waterfront, estimated at \$17 billion over 30 years, has moved from planning to implementation this year with the development of the Dragon Boat competition watercourse, improvement to beaches and trails, the award of the design competition for continuous public access across the waterfront to a Rotterdam's West urban design and architecture firm and groundbreaking of the 80 acre West Don for a new community of 5,800 new residential units, employment space and 23 acres of parks and public space.

CONCLUSION

The first full year of operations for the merged Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative has been very busy and productive. Mayors and their cities have become significant players in policy formulation, decision making, and action across the basin. The groundwork is in place for even more effective actions and results in the coming years to protect and restore the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence for all future generations.