

Annual Report

2015-2016



From the Chair

Fellow Mayors and Friends of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative,

This year has passed quickly but with a great deal of activity on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and beyond. As mayors and local leaders of communities along the lakes and river we have a deep appreciation for the significance of this freshwater source. That is why an incident like the lead in drinking water crisis in Flint, MI hits home to us all. This tragedy emphasizes the need to continue our work to protect and restore the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence and ensure the forty million people that get their drinking water from this resource have access to clean and safe water. We will continue our efforts started in response to the crisis to help communities understand if they might have a lead in drinking water problem and support finding solutions.

More broadly, over the last year, we continued our work to forge partnerships with the agricultural sector to address nutrients in Western Lake Erie that cause harmful algal blooms. We've gone on record against the Waukesha water diversion application. We continued our work on the threat of Asian carp, seeking to build consensus in the region on a long term solution. And, in a show of solidarity with local leaders around the world, we are encouraging our member cities to join the Compact of Mayors to help cities reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the municipal contribution to climate change. While the threats to the lakes and river continue, and while we experienced an inexcusable tragedy in Flint, MI this year, I remain confident and encouraged that our efforts to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River system will ultimately prevail. As citizens of this region, we are the stewards of this magnificent source of freshwater and we must continue to work together to ensure its health and vitality, and that of the people who rely upon it.

Sincerely,

Mayor Mitch Twolan
Mayor of Huron-Kinloss, Ontario
Chair and Director, 2015-2016



Voice of Mayors

Waukesha Water Diversion Application

The Waukesha water diversion application (Application) came to a decision point this year as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR) sent the Application to the Regional Body and Compact Council for region-wide review. According to the process outlined in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement and Compact, and ratified by the eight Great Lakes governors and the two Canadian premiers, all eight of the governors must approve the Application for it to go forward.



Cities Initiative Staff Meet with Ontario Minister of Agriculture Bill Mauro in Chicago

The Cities Initiative testified at hearings in Waukesha on August 17, 2015 and February 18, 2016, passed a Board resolution on February 11, 2016, and issued numerous press releases throughout the year reiterating our concerns with the Application. The Cities Initiative was disappointed that the WI DNR moved the Application forward and has encouraged the governors to reject the application, for several key reasons. First, the water service area in the application goes beyond the Waukesha city limits. Second, there are reasonable alternatives for Waukesha to provide safe drinking water to its residents – accessing Lake Michigan water should be the last resort. Third, there are significant questions about the impact of the return flow to the Root River. And finally, we have concerns over the Regional Body and Compact Council's Application review process, namely creating conditions in an anticipated approval to correct deficiencies in the application, without any opportunity for public comment. The Regional Body recommended approval on May 18 and the Compact Council is scheduled to decide on June 21, 2016. To read more, please visit <http://glslicities.org/initiatives/basin-management/compact-and-agreement/>.

Asian Carp

The Cities Initiative continued its efforts to help foster consensus within the region on a permanent solution to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River system through its work on the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) project. Unfortunately, the CAWS Advisory Committee did not reach consensus on a solution by its self-imposed deadline of December 2015. David Ullrich continues to advocate on behalf of the organization and as a member of the CAWS Advisory Committee for the full physical separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. Widely accepted as the most effective solution, it has been strongly opposed by the transportation sector and some business interests. A second solution that involves an aquatic invasive species (AIS) lock, a system of control points in the CAWS to



Asian Carp | Credit: NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory

prevent the transfer of Asian carp and other invasive species between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes basins, was also proposed and considered by the group. Recognizing there was an impasse, and to keep things moving on this critical issue, the Advisory Committee issued a letter to President Barack Obama requesting further study on the effectiveness of an AIS lock. The Cities Initiative supported this letter with much trepidation. This request adds additional time to reaching a solution – at least 3 more years – and time is of the essence. In the end, the Cities Initiative felt that an AIS lock is far better than current controls, even if not as effective as physical separation, and better than nothing. Additionally, pursuing this study keeps all the parties at the table discussing and considering options.

Consensus was reached to do necessary engineering on a short term action at Brandon Road Lock and Dam which would provide protection for the Great Lakes from species coming upstream but not protection going downstream to the Mississippi River. Planning is proceeding on this necessary short term action. For more on Asian carp, visit <http://glslicities.org/initiatives/invasive-species/asian-carp/>.

Voice of Mayors

Nutrients

The Cities Initiative is working to bring cities and agricultural interests together to identify and implement solutions to reduce nutrients entering Western Lake Erie that feed harmful algal blooms. We have made positive headway in Ontario. Thanks to the leadership of our chairman Mayor Mitch Twolan of Huron-Kinloss and Nicola Crawhall, we have established a partnership with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Together we are developing a water management and drainage strategy to reduce the transportation of phosphorus off agricultural lands and into water courses in the Thames River basin which leads into Lake Erie.

In the United States, we continue efforts to forge partnerships with agriculture and other sectors on the nutrient issue. We helped inform the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency nutrient strategy which was released recently. We are encouraged that our work on the strategy will help foster partnerships to inspire on the ground implementation of nutrient reducing best management practices. In Michigan, we are also seeking partners to join us in these efforts. We anticipate more action on this issue over the next six months. To stay up to date, please visit <http://glslcities.org/initiatives/nutrients/>.



Farmer and Mayor Jim Ginn, Central Huron, ON

Drinking Water

Ensuring citizens have access to clean and safe drinking water is a priority for local government. Mayors of the Cities Initiative were saddened and disheartened by the lead contamination of drinking water crisis in Flint, MI this past year. To help ensure no other community has to go through such a crisis, the Cities Initiative is undertaking efforts to help its members identify whether they have a lead problem in their drinking water and determine steps they can take to rectify the issue. Additionally, on our agenda for the next year is work to encourage strengthening the US federal lead-in-drinking water rule and enforcement of that rule. The Cities Initiative and its members have also reached out to Mayor Karen Weaver of Flint, MI to pledge our support and aid should the community require it as they come to terms with the situation and work to manage the long term repercussions.



Hydrocarbon Transportation

Hydrocarbon transportation has been high on our list of priorities again this year. Cities Initiative staff has been monitoring a number of pipeline issues, including reversal of flow in the Enbridge line 9B, the TransCanada Energy East project. In addition, we have been following the most recent safety regulations updates in oil and other hazardous substances transportation by rail, both in the U.S. and in Canada. Safety measures on the St. Lawrence have also been on our agenda, as we participated in a maritime safety conference organized by the Haut Saint-Laurent and Greater Montreal Round Table.

Regarding the Energy East pipeline project, the Cities Initiative has filed an application to participate as an intervener in the National Energy Board (NEB) public hearings. A list of approved participants will be released after the NEB has reviewed the applications, which is expected in the near future. The Cities Initiative has been participating in two different pipeline discussion forums in Calgary, Alberta, along with other stakeholders and regulatory agencies, to ensure the concerns of local governments are taken in account. The Pipeline Systems Dialogue has initiated a discussion on upgrading the pipeline approval process, while the Pipeline Safety Indicator & Transparency Forum has served as a starting point to move such indicators and associated transparency of information forward in Canada. The Forum participants have agreed to reconvene next Fall to receive a report of progress from the Canadian Energy Board and other stakeholders on pipeline safety information. The Cities Initiative recently intervened in a proceeding that would have allowed two 98 year old pipelines to reopen for transporting crude oil, and the proponents subsequently withdrew their request. For more information, visit <http://glslcities.org/initiatives/oil-transport/>.



Credit: Sunlight Foundation

Initiatives

Compact of Mayors and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Cities Initiative embarked on an exciting collaboration this year with the Compact of Mayors. The UN agreement among over 500 municipalities around the world and led by former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, the Compact of Mayors commits municipalities to taking action to reduce their greenhouse (GHG) emissions through monitoring, planning, taking inventory, setting targets, and implementing GHG reducing measures. Off the bat, 20 Cities Initiative members signed on to the agreement: Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Chatham Kent, Durham Region, St. Catharines, Bruce County, Chicago, Valleyfield, Sorel-Tracy, Ashland, Milwaukee, Racine, Evanston, Grand Rapids, South Haven, Muskegon, and Rochester. To learn more and join the Compact of Mayors, please visit <http://glsicities.org/initiatives/climate-change-mitigation/>.

In advance of signing the final agreement negotiated at COP21 in Paris, the major international conference on climate change, the Board passed a resolution at its midyear Board meeting on December 11, 2015. The resolution called on the COP21 negotiators and Great Lakes and St. Lawrence mayors to work to help limit global temperature increases. Specifically the resolution called for: COP21 negotiators to set goals to limit warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius, striving for a goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius; COP21 negotiators to support cities through a Climate Change Fund; and called on Cities Initiative mayors to set a goal to collectively reduce 30 million tons of equivalent CO2 by 2020 from Great Lakes-St. Lawrence jurisdictions (the equivalent of taking 6 million cars off the road for a year). [Read the Resolution here.](#)

All of this activity came on the heels of the Cities Initiative's participation by Mayors Mitch Twolan, George Heartwell, Denis Coderre (Montreal), John Tory (Toronto), Regional Chair Roger Anderson (Durham Region) and David Ullrich at the Climate Summit for Local Leaders. The Summit, held in Paris a week before COP21, was a day-long conference where over 440 mayors from around the globe convened to discuss climate action at the local level. Read David Ullrich's full recap of the event here: ["What it's like to be in a room with 446 Mayors."](#)



*Mayor Denis Coderre (Montreal, QC)
speaks at COP21 Mayors' Summit*



**“If you want to get things
done, ask a mayor.”**

**Mayor Denis Coderre, Climate
Summit 2016**

Phragmites

The Cities Initiative continues its work with partners and its members to raise awareness and disseminate best practices on the management and control of the invasive phragmites species. This past year, the Cities Initiative joined the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative Advisory Committee (GLPC) and the Ontario Phragmites Working Group (OPWG). Participation on these groups ensures we are representing the municipal voice on this issue and allows our members access to information and research on phragmites and best practices in the US and Canada. Over the year, the Cities Initiative helped promote a number of webinars and new research conducted by the GLPC and the OPWG to its members. To learn more, visit <http://glsicities.org/initiatives/invasive-species/phragmites/>.



*Mayor Sandra Cooper (Collingwood, ON) working with
Georgian Bay Forever to eradicate Phragmites*

Initiatives

Climate Ready Infrastructure and Strategic Sites Protocol (CRISSP)

In partnership with the City of Gary, IN and the engineering consulting firm AECOM, the Cities Initiative completed a Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA) Great Lakes Climate Change program funded project on climate change resiliency. The CRISSP project aimed to assist municipalities in evaluating and addressing vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather of critical infrastructure and strategic sites, using existing internal and external resources. The CRISSP addresses two challenges faced by municipalities: the lack of reliable data on anticipated weather changes due to climate change; and the limited municipal financial and staff resources to devote to identifying and assessing vulnerability. As a result of the CRISSP project, we now have a methodology and matrix that provides small and medium sized municipalities with an affordable, simplified approach to evaluating vulnerability and resiliency to extreme weather events associated with climate change. To learn more, please visit <http://glslicities.org/initiatives/municipal-climate-adaptation/>.



CRISSP Team—Representatives from Gary, AECOM, Evanston, GLISA, Traverse City, Milwaukee, and Niagara Falls, NY

Microbeads

After an intensive campaign to encourage US EPA, the US Federal government and industry to ban and phase out the use of microbeads in personal care products, the Cities Initiative was pleased the US Congress passed and the President signed the Microbead-Free Waters Act in December 2015. The bill phases out the sale, manufacture and distribution of microbeads in rinse-off products by 2018. The Cities Initiative has also sent letters to Environment Canada and the Ontario Legislative Committee explaining the threat of microbeads to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River ecosystem and encouraging legislative action in Canada. Environment Canada is in the process of developing proposed regulations under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) of 1999 to prohibit the manufacture, import, sale or offer for sale of microbead-containing personal care products used to exfoliate or cleanse. Additionally, review is underway to add microbeads to the CEPA List of Toxics.

The Cities Initiative successfully reached out directly to all major personal care product companies using microplastics in their products, asking for a full disclosure of all products that contain microplastics, a commitment to completely phase out all microplastics products, and development and disclosure of plans to clean up existing microplastics pollution. The Cities Initiative has a resolution under consideration by the membership at the 2016 annual meeting that encourages expedited legislative action in Canada to phase out microplastics and for both countries to consider the need to phase out the use of microplastics in all personal care products, not just rinse-off products. For more information, visit <http://glslicities.org/initiatives/microplastics/>



Microbeads: | Credit: Yahoo

Representing Mayors

Queen's Park Day

On October 6, 2015, the Cities Initiative held its first Great Lakes Day at Queen's Park in Toronto, Ontario, organized by Nicola Crawhall. Over 20 mayors and local officials from the Cities Initiative membership convened at the Legislative Assembly for meetings with several ministers as well as Members of Provincial Parliament. The day was championed by Minister of Finance Charles Sousa, who met with Cities Initiative members to discuss phosphorus and nutrients, climate change, Asian carp, and the invasive phragmites. Cities Initiative mayors and officials also met with Minister of Agriculture Jeff Leal, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry Bill Mauro, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Glen Murray, and with Members of Provincial Parliament from both the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Party caucuses. Climate change, nutrients, Asian carp, phragmites, wetlands, and the Great Lakes Protection Act topped the list of topics covered.



Ontario Mayors convene at Queen's Park



Cities Initiative Mayors and Local Leaders meet with Lieutenant Governor Elisabeth Dowdeswell

Great Lakes Days in Washington

Mayor Twolan and David Ullrich spent a very productive three days in Washington, DC, from February 23-25, 2016, for the Annual Great Lakes Days events. Great Lakes Days is hosted by the Great Lakes Commission, the Healing our Waters Coalition and the Northeast-Midwest Institute and brings together regional organizations with federal policy-makers to discuss progress on and needs for Great Lakes restoration and protection. This year Cities Initiative representatives attended meetings with staff of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the Deputy Head of Mission Dennis Stevens of the Canadian Embassy, and with Senator Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, and Representatives Dan Kildee, Mike Quigley, and Marcy Kaptur. Topics covered in these meetings included on the ground restoration progress of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, investment needs for municipal drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, the lead-in-drinking water crisis, climate change impacts and challenges for municipalities, and the nutrients threat. If any mayor has interest in participating in Great Lakes Days in Washington next year, please notify David Ullrich.

Presidential Platform

In light of the upcoming presidential election in the United States in 2016, the Cities Initiative along with Great Lakes business, industry, conservation leaders and a state organization have urged presidential candidates to commit to restoring and protecting the Great Lakes. The Healing Our Waters Coalition, the Council of Great Lakes Industries, the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition, the Great Lakes Commission, and the Cities Initiative sent a Great Lakes platform to all candidates that were still in the primary election cycle in March 2016, asking the White House aspirants to maintain at least \$300 million-per-year in federal investment to protect and restore the Great Lakes and to better the region's environment and economy. The platform reads: "Protecting and restoring the Great Lakes for the 40 million people who depend on them for drinking water in the United States and Canada, millions who enjoy outdoor recreation on the Lakes, and 1.5 million people whose jobs are directly connected to the Great Lakes will be a priority for my administration." Read the platform here: <http://www.healthylakes.org/2016-platform/>. The partners releasing the Great Lakes platform are neither endorsing, nor opposing, any presidential candidate and all responses will be posted on the Healing Our Waters website.

Quebec Meeting with Minister of Sustainable Development

On May 12, 2016, Mayor Coderre and Mayor Régis Labeaume (Quebec Metropolitan Community) met with the Quebec Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change, David Heurtel, in Quebec City. The mayors met with the minister to inform him of our work and positions related to the Waukesha water diversion application, the issue of microbeads, invasive species and our work on the Compact of Mayors.

Representing Mayors

Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Boards and Advisory Committees

The Cities Initiative continues its participation on a number of key decision and policy-making tables within the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region. Of note, we are particularly active on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA), Annex 4 subcommittee on nutrients in Lake Erie. Deputy Director Nicola Crawhall participates on behalf of the organization. The Annex 4 subcommittee recommended phosphorus reduction targets to the Parties to the GLWQA, which were adopted by the two countries in February 2016. The targets call for a 40% reduction in phosphorus loadings entering the central and western basin of Lake Erie, based on 2008 levels.

David Ullrich and Simon Belisle continue their participation on the Annex 6 and Annex 2 subcommittees, respectively. Additionally, David Ullrich continues to chair the Great Lakes Advisory Board, providing advice and input on funding priorities for the US Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to the US Federal Interagency Taskforce. David Ullrich, as a commissioner and Chair of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, continues to bring the municipal perspective to the fight against the invasive sea lamprey. This past year, David was also asked to join the Great Rivers Chicago Resource group to help in the visioning exercise for the Chicago River. This effort coincides and complements his work on the Chicago Area Waterways Study project on Asian carp.

Events

2015 Annual Meeting

The Cities Initiative thanks the City of Sarnia, Lambton County, Mayor Mike Bradley and Warden Bev MacDougall for a wonderful annual meeting in June 2015. We were honored to welcome distinguished guest, Premier Kathleen Wynne of Ontario, who gave the Keynote Address. Attendees heard from panelists about the threat of nutrients in the Great Lakes, shoreline restoration projects, and oil transportation in the Great Lakes Region. Cities Initiative pilot projects and student collaborative projects were also featured. Access more on the meeting at <http://glslicities.org/events/annual-meeting/sarnia-lambton-2015/>.



Cities Initiative Member Cities Attend the Annual Meeting

2015 Midyear Board Meeting

Hosted this year in Toronto, the Board of Directors met December 11 – 12, 2015 for their midyear Board Meeting. Board members in attendance included Mayor Twolan, Mayor John Dickert (Racine), Mayor Randy Hope (Chatham-Kent), Mayor Heartwell, Mayor Denis Lapointe (Salaberry-de-Valleyfield), Borough Mayor Chantal Rouleau (Montreal), Mayor Sandra Cooper (Collingwood), Deputy Mayor Michelle Morin-Doyle (Quebec City/CMQ) and Mayor Paul Dyster (Niagara Falls, NY). In addition to passing the Climate Change resolution addressing the need to slow global warming and efforts to reduce GHG emissions in Great Lakes and St. Lawrence municipalities, the Board helped set direction for the organization on a number of issues including nutrients, water infrastructure, and the Waukesha water diversion application.



Cities Initiative Board in Toronto

Organization

Membership

Over the past year we have been pleased to welcome nine new members to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, growing the organization to 123 members: Mayor Ziggy Polkowski (Neebing, ON); Warden Denis Doyle (Frontenac County, ON); Mayor Don Mitchell (Whitby, ON); Mayor Wayne Redekop (Fort Erie, ON); Mayor Stephen Scaffidi (Oak Creek, WI); Mayor Tom Mlada (Port Washington, WI); Mayor Michael Seferian (Oregon, OH); Mayor Justin Nickels (Manitowoc, WI); and Warden Gerry Marshall (Simcoe County, ON).

It is with great admiration that we bid farewell and thank two mayors for their dedication and support during their tenures: Mayor George Heartwell (Grand Rapids, MI) and Mayor Larry MacDonald (Bayfield, WI). Both are very dedicated to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and were active on a number of efforts in our organization. Mayor Heartwell, a founding member of the organization, had been an active board member for 9 years and was chair in 2009. Mayor MacDonald had been an active member of the organization for 8 years and worked on the organization's Operations Committee for 4 years. We wish them the best of luck on their future endeavors!

Best Practices Library

In July 2015 the Cities Initiative launched its new and improved website, including a revamped best practices library. The Best Practices Library has been updated and reorganized to be a dynamic, searchable database of best practices, tools, and information documents that are specific to municipal issues in the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Region. If members have a best practice they would like to submit for inclusion, please visit <http://glslcities.org/resources/submit-a-best-practice>. Visit the new best practice library at <http://glslcities.org/resources/best-practices-library/>.

Funding Strategy

With support from the Mott Foundation, the Cities Initiative worked this past year to develop a more focused funding strategy for the organization. We employed the Institute for Conservation Leadership to help guide us in the process. The final strategy, which was approved by the Board of Directors in February 2016, uses a mix of membership growth, additional private foundation funding and strategic partnerships, and revenue from the annual meeting to help us secure long-term and sustainable financial health for the organization.

About Us

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a coalition of U.S. and Canadian mayors and other local officials working together to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. By integrating their environmental, economic and social agendas, local governments help sustain a resource that represents 20 percent of the world's surface freshwater, provides drinking water for 40 million people, and is the foundation upon which a strong regional economy and high quality of life is based.

Thanks

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is grateful for generous operations and program funding support from the Joyce Foundation, the Mott Foundation and the Wege Foundation. The Cities Initiative would also like to thank its 123 member mayors and their communities for participating in this important work and strengthening the municipal voice on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

Cover Page Images: Whitby, ON (Credit: Rick Harris); Collingwood, ON (Courtesy Mayor Sandra Cooper); Montreal, QC (Credit: Travel Noire); Duluth, MN (Credit: Scott Feldstein)

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