



Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Mayors Deeply Concerned about U.S. Budget

Chicago, March 3, 2017 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative), a coalition of mayors from over 125 cities across the basin representing over 17 million people, expressed deep concern over draft White House budget cuts that would reduce funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative by 97% from \$300 million to \$10 million and for the EPA by 25%. The mayors work closely with state, provincial, federal, tribal, first nation, and non-government representatives from across the basin to protect, restore, and sustain one of the largest freshwater resources in the world.

Current Vice-Chair of the Cities Initiative Paul Dyster, Mayor of Niagara Falls, New York, said, “It would be a tragedy for the U.S. government to step back from its commitment to the Great Lakes, a resource that is critically important to the economic well-being and quality of life of the region. A tremendous amount of progress has been achieved over the past 5 years under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and that would be lost with these cuts, with so much more work left to be done.”

Mayor Sandra Cooper of the Town of Collingwood, Ontario, Secretary of the Cities Initiative said, “With the northern shore of all the lakes, Georgian Bay, and a stretch of the St. Lawrence River as part of Ontario, these resources are part of the fabric of who we are as a people, and to reduce the investments so dramatically just does not make sense from an economic, environmental, or quality of life standpoint. Investments in the Great Lakes have been shown to deliver a 2:1 return according to studies completed several years ago.”

David Ullrich, Executive Director of the Cities Initiative, said, “Cuts of this magnitude would be devastating to the efforts of our two countries over the past 5 decades to restore the resource. Great progress has been made on cleaning up toxic hot spots, reducing nutrient loadings that cause algal blooms, and preventing the introduction of invasive species.” He went on to say, “Local governments have been investing at over \$15 billion per year according to 2008 study by the Great Lakes Commission and the Cities Initiative, well beyond the federal governments’ investments, and this would be a major step back from the responsibility shared for this resource.”

In addition to these budget cuts, the administration announced earlier this week a halt to critical work to stop the Asian carp from reaching the Great Lakes. The mayors expressed grave concern over any additional delay in dealing with this looming threat to the \$7 billion fishery. The recent discovery of Asian carp in the St. Lawrence River makes the situation even more critical.

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