



Media Backgrounder

At its midyear meeting in Toronto, on December 11th, the Board of Directors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative adopted a resolution that:

- 1) called on negotiators at COP21 in Paris to adopt an ambitious target of holding greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to levels that will cause global average temperatures to rise no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, striving towards a more ambitious goal of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius; and
- 2) set a goal to collectively reduce 30 million tonnes of equivalent CO₂ by 2020 from their jurisdictions, the equivalent of taking 6 million cars off the road for a year; and
- 3) encouraged its 119 members to join the Compact of Mayors and seek further reductions in the future. Seventeen members have already joined; and
- 4) called on central governments to include cities in the planning and implementation processes of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, recognizing that 50% of the global population lives in cities, which are responsible for generating over 70% of the emissions and that cities are where impacts are felt most, and where the solutions will be found; and
- 5) called on countries bound by the COP21 agreement to support cities through a Climate Change Fund.

(see resolution, attached)

The COP 21 negotiations

- The 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris is expected to conclude its negotiations on December 11th, 2015.
- It is anticipated that negotiators will aim to hold greenhouse gases to levels that would cause global temperatures to rise 2 degrees Celsius. However, commitments by countries going into COP21 would not meet that target.
- Island nations that are already feeling the effects of climate change due to rising sea levels have called for emissions reductions to hold a rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius.



Cities Initiative Commitment to GHG reductions

- The Cities Initiative pledges to collectively reduce GHG emissions amongst its members by 30 million tonnes by 2020, which is equivalent to taking 6 million cars off the road for a year.
- This reduction represents an 11% reduction per capita in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region.
- 31 Cities Initiative member cities have already adopted GHG reduction targets. Among them, 19 cities have targets that apply to the entire municipality, while the remaining cities' targets apply only to their municipal operations.

Compact of Mayors

The Cities Initiative is partnering with the Compact of Mayors, led by the UN Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change Michael Bloomberg. It will encourage all of its members to join the Compact.

Launched in 2014, the Compact of Mayors is the world's largest coalition of city leaders addressing climate change by pledging to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, tracking their progress and preparing for the impacts of climate change. <http://www.compactofmayors.org/>

For the first time, the Compact will standardize the way city climate data is reported, establishing a universal approach to data collection. The data can be aggregated to highlight the collective impact of city actions, which will increase global and investor confidence.

Seventeen member municipalities have already committed to the Compact of Mayors, including: Ashland (WI), Chatham-Kent (ON), Chicago (IL), Durham Region (ON), Evanston (IL), Grand Rapids (MI), Hamilton (ON), Milwaukee (WI), Montreal (QC), Muskegon (MI), Racine (WI), Rochester (NY), South Haven (MI), St. Catharines (ON), Thunder Bay (ON), Toronto (ON), and Windsor (ON).

Media Contacts

David Ullrich
Executive Director
(312) 480-6501

david.ullrich@glslcities.org

Nicola Crawhall
Deputy Director
416-407-5880

Nicola.crawhall@rogers.com

Scott McKay
Program and Policy Manager
(Quebec)

(514) 618-0297

scott.mckay@glslcities.org