The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and the Canada-Ontario Agreement

Mayor Brian McMullan, City of St. Catharines

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Introduction

- Municipalities have direct responsibilities related to the protection of the Great Lakes
- Collectively they invest over $15 billion annually
- Initiative creates a forum for Mayors to offer strategic advice to government
- Need to set priorities and share scientific and technical expertise
What is the Canada Ontario Agreement (COA)?

- Main agreement on Great Lakes between Canadian federal government and Ontario provincial government.
- Defines federal-provincial Great Lakes priorities, projects, funding and timing.
- No formal municipal involvement in the past.
- Recently extended for one year until March 2011.
What is the COA Memorandum of Cooperation?

- Framework for Ontario municipalities to discuss Great Lakes priorities with the Ontario provincial government
- First signed July 2008, recently renewed until 2012
- Process facilitated by Cities Initiative, and ALL Ontario Great Lakes municipalities are welcome
The COA-MOC process

- GLSLCI established a working group of Ontario municipal staff
- Developed Mayors’ Collaborative Action Plan
- Municipal working group and Ontario Government staff meet and jointly identify areas and projects of mutual interest
- Hosted two Mayors and Ministers Great Lakes Summits
At the Shoreline: A Mayors’ Collaborative Action Plan to Protect the Great Lakes

On May 5th, 2009, the Great Lakes Mayors and Chairs Committee presented their report, *At the Shoreline: A Mayors’ Collaborative Action Plan to Protect the Great Lakes*, to the Ontario Ministers of Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at the first Provincial-Municipal Great Lakes Summit in Toronto. The report consists of a five-point action plan and key recommendations to forge a stronger relationship and strategic coordination among the three orders of government to protect and promote the Great Lakes.
What is the Mayors five point action plan?

- Five areas for further collaboration:
  1) Create a municipal-provincial-federal Great Lakes table
  2) Improve and promote beaches and natural shorelines
  3) Attack nuisance and toxic algae
  4) Reduce untreated sewage and stormwater
  5) Build a better business case
Better beaches and shorelines

- Goal: Increase beach coordination and funding
- Status: held Beach and Coastal workshop, agreement to create municipal-provincial network, host webinars, work on promotion, share success stories
- New Cities web page Great Lakes, Great Beaches and Coasts
Reduce Sewage and Stormwater

- Need a significant reduction in untreated sewage and stormwater to Lakes
- Moving up the pipe approaches
- Status: two new joint project with province-sewage overflow monitoring and reporting, stormwater innovations

Photo credit: Urban Strategies Inc.
Better Business Case

- Lakes are an undervalued resource
- As a stand alone region, Great Lakes would be second largest economic power in world
- Need to improve estimates of value of Lakes to aid decision making and investment
- Status: Joint economic valuation project underway - project report fall 2010
Next Steps

- 3rd phase of COA MOC process
  - Continue work on 4 joint projects:
    - beach and coasts/ sewage/stormwater/business case
  - Likely quarterly meetings, and working groups on each issue over next 8 months
  - Plan for third Summit May 2011
  - Ideas and participation welcome
History

- Settled in 1800
- Canal system in 1829
- Waterworks in 1875
- Sewers to waterways 1912
- Wastewater treatment 1951
Pollution Control Plan

- Original PCP in 1990 – updated in 2008
- Older municipality with combined sanitary sewers
- 85 Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)
- Two tier – Region and City
- Two wastewater treatment plants – operated by Region
CSO Tanks

- Currently six Combined Sewage Facilities
- Approximately 15,000 m$^3$ of storage,
Beaches

- Three municipal beaches
- Permanently Closed from 1970s until 1994
- Last 10 years – increased recreational opportunities

- Sampling completed 7 days a week during season
- Beaches are indicators of overall water quality in City
Constructed Wetland

- Constructed in fall 2007
- Treatment for residential storm water
- Partnership between the City and Ontario Power Generation
- Monitored and maintained by the City
Brownfields

- Have reached urban limits
- Development geared towards intensification

- Domtar property now restaurants and commercial
- Maintained historical elements
- Contaminated sites cleaned up to guidelines
For more information...

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