

**EMBARGO UNTIL 9:45AM EASTERN, JUNE 15**

## Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Mayors Mobilize over Great Lakes Restoration and Climate Change

**Montreal, June 15, 2017** – Member mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative met at their annual meeting and conference, hosted by outgoing Chair Mayor Denis Coderre, in Montreal.

“This has been a very busy year. The Trump administration backed out of cutting the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for the remainder of 2017, but we must continue the battle for 2018 and beyond. 48 million people depend on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence for their drinking water. We are concerned for the future because such a decision would affect us all, from the port of Montreal to the waterfront restaurant in Windsor to the sport fisherman on Lake Superior, declared Mayor Coderre.”

Mayors of the Cities Initiative also ask the Canadian government to develop a more comprehensive strategy and framework for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence funding. “Given the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence are a shared responsibility, both federal governments must reflect the importance of the resource in their budgets. The mayors of the Cities Initiative will continue working with the Government of Canada to develop a funding strategy for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River to ensure their successful restoration and protection for years to come”, said Sandra Cooper, Mayor of Collingwood, ON and vice-chair of the Cities Initiative.

Following the United States departure from the Paris Climate Change Agreement, Mayors reemphasized the increased role of cities in the fight against climate change. “While the President of the United States has bowed out of the Paris Agreement, we are stepping up as cities to lead the charge against climate change,” added Paul Dyster, new Chair of the Cities Initiative and Mayor of Niagara Falls, New York.

The mayors also resolved to seek UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve status for the entire Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin, a measure intended to draw international attention to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River as a unique ecosystem of worldwide significance. The resolution encourages the US and Canadian federal governments to pursue creating one of the largest UNESCO Biosphere Reserves on the planet.

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a coalition of 130 cities from the United States and Canada representing over 17 million people who work together for the long term protection and restoration of the resource. The mayors work closely with state, provincial, federal, tribal, first nation, metis, industry, and non-government representatives from across the basin to protect, restore, and sustain one of the largest freshwater resources in the world.

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