



November 2, 2007

The Honourable John Gerretsen
Minister of Environment
135 St. Clair Avenue West
Toronto ON
M4V 1P5

Dear Minister Gerretsen,

On behalf of the mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, we would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Ontario's Minister of Environment. As you chart out plans for the next four years, we urge you to treat action on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence as a high priority.

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a bi-national association of mayors of 49 cities in 10 states and provinces, including Kingston, that are located in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin. The mayors share a commitment and passion for protecting the health of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence ecosystem, the source of drinking water, economic vitality, and recreational activity for over 40 million people.

The Cities Initiative applauds your government's commitment to the Great Lakes with its leadership on the Great Lakes Charter Annex, the 2007 Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem, and the *Clean Water Act*. We urge you to continue to build on these successes.

In particular, the Cities Initiative is asking the Ontario Government to involve local governments as full partners on Great Lakes and St. Lawrence matters, and secure municipalities a seat at the table for the renegotiation and implementation of COA 2010, and other provincial decisions related to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. It is imperative that cities are included in government to government discussions, rather than as one of a number of stakeholders. We bring significant investment and decision making authority to the table. It is time that we work in a coordinated fashion with the Provincial and Federal Governments to protect the Great Lakes.

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Likewise, it is important that the Ministries of Environment, Public Infrastructure Renewal, and Municipal Affairs work with Great Lakes municipalities to determine infrastructure funding priorities that would directly benefit the Great Lakes, such as sewage treatment upgrades, the separation of combined sewers and management of stormwater runoff, and the replacement of leaking water distribution systems.

We are also interested in working with you and your colleague Jim Bradley, Minister of Transportation, on the development of plans for an 'H2O highway'. There may be significant economic benefits for cities with ports in this proposal, and there may also be unintended environmental implications. We would like to offer our help in exploring these considerations jointly with the Province, the Federal Government, and the industries engaged in discussions to date.

Given the bi-national nature of the Great Lakes, we would also like to support you in working with your Federal colleagues, specifically with regard to:

- urging the Federal Government to accept and act on the recommendations of the Binational Executive Committee's Agreement Review Committee, and engage the United States to renegotiate the 20-year old Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA);
- urging the President of the United States to support passage of a ballast water law before the US Congress, and ensure that an equally strong level of protection and enforcement from invasive species exists on both the American and Canadian sides of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin;
- securing a Canada-Ontario commit to delist all Areas of Concern (AOCs) by 2015;
- urging the Federal Government, and the International Joint Commission to accelerate the assessment of the causes and impact of low lake levels in the Upper Lakes.

Given the ecological and economic importance of the Great Lakes region to the Province of Ontario, we know we share a common goal to protect this invaluable resource. The Cities Initiative would welcome a meeting at your convenience to discuss ways that we may support each other in reaching this common goal.

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Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this request of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative to continue the Government's strong support for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence in its second mandate.

Sincerely,

Brian McMullan, Mayor of St. Catharines
Ontario Regional Director, Great Lake and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

Lynn Peterson, Mayor of the City of Thunder Bay, and
Vice Chair, Great Lake and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

David Miller, Mayor of the City of Toronto, and
Founding Canadian Chair, Great Lake and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

cc. Gail Beggs, Deputy Minister

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