



Making Waves

October 16th, 2015

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Mayor's Profile: Mayor George Heartwell, Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Cities Initiative is kicking off its new "Mayor's Profile" series with Mayor George Heartwell of Grand Rapids, Michigan. GLSLCI will profile a different member mayor each quarter - look for upcoming editions in the following months!



Mayor George Heartwell

Although located more than 30 miles from the shores of Lake Michigan, Mayor George Heartwell has become one of the leading voices in the region for protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence.

Mayor Heartwell has been in office for 12 years as Mayor of Grand Rapids, Michigan and as City Commissioner for 8 years before that. His city made its reputation in wood furniture-manufacturing in the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries and today is home to the Big Three Office Furniture makers. Grand Rapids is also home to the United States' second-largest medical research institute, three major hospital systems, the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, and 22 other college and university campuses in its metropolitan area.

The city lies 32 miles inland of Lake Michigan on the Grand River, and its citizens draw their water from the Lake and also return their treated wastewater to the Lake. One of the Mayor's proudest accomplishments has been the complete separation of storm and wastewater sewers and almost total elimination of untreated discharges to the River. Mayor Heartwell has said that he chose to become part of the Cities Initiative because, "this amazing water body is critical to our economy, indispensable for our enjoyment, and essential to our spirits."

As some may not know, Mayor Heartwell is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. He is an avid and very accomplished fisherman and looks forward to fall Salmon, Steelhead, and Brown Trout fishing. He describes receiving the 2015 GLSLCI Water Conservation award as a high point for Grand Rapids; they have achieved an overall 25% conservation rate while experiencing modest growth in their water-customer base over the past 10 years.

Mayor Heartwell will retire on December 31st, 2015, after serving on the Cities Initiative Board of Directors since its inception and after 12 years as Mayor of Grand Rapids. When asked if he had any advice for the Cities Initiative and its mayors, Mayor Heartwell said, "Be bold, be persistent, and be a pain in the ass when you must be! The waters are worth everything we can give them."

Queen's Park Day

On October 6th, 2015, the Cities Initiative held its first Great Lakes Legislative Day at Queen's Park in Toronto, Ontario. Over 20 mayors and local officials from the Cities Initiative membership convened at the Legislative Assembly for meetings with several Ministers as well as Members of Provincial Parliament from both the PC and NDP caucuses.



Her Honour Elizabeth Dowdeswell and
Cities Initiative local officials

The day was championed by Minister of Finance Charles Sousa who met with the Cities Initiative members to discuss Asian carp, climate change, nutrient loadings, and the invasive reed Phragmites. The Cities Initiative mayors and officials also met with Minister of Agriculture Jeff Leal, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry Bill Mauro, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Glen Murray, as well as with Members of Provincial Parliament from both the Progressive Conservative and National Democratic Party caucuses, where climate change, nutrients, Asian carp, Phragmites, and wetlands topped the list of topics covered.

In addition, Her Honour Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, welcome the Cities Initiative group to her offices in the Legislative building, where she gave the mayors a tour of her art exhibit, 'Identity: Art Inspired by the Great Lakes.' Her Honour spoke eloquently of the importance of forging a common identity for Ontarians, and how the Great Lakes unite us all. Many thanks to the Lieutenant Governor, the Ministers, Members of Provincial Parliament, and staff who welcomed the Cities Initiative elected officials to Queen's Park and helped make the day a great success.

[Read more and view photos of Queen's Park Day here.](#)

NDP, Liberal, Green, and Bloc Parties Respond to Election Questionnaire

In anticipation of the upcoming Canadian federal election, the Cities Initiative wrote to five political parties requesting that they outline the positions they would take, if elected to form the next Government of Canada, on key issues relating to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, including Asian Carp, oil transport, and phosphorus loadings. The Cities Initiative has received responses from the New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Green Party, and the Bloc Québécois, and [their responses are available on our website by clicking here](#). All responses are available in both English and French

Lake Michigan National Marine Sanctuary

President Obama recently announced that the area of Lake Michigan near Sheboygan, Wisconsin is under consideration to be designated as a NOAA National Marine Sanctuary. This area of Lake Michigan includes several well-preserved shipwrecks just off the coast of Wisconsin. The Cities Initiative recently expressed its support for the establishment of such a sanctuary, and NOAA is currently accepting public comments on the Marine Sanctuary Status designation. [Read more here](#).

California bans microbeads

Governor Jerry Brown of California recently signed a bill into law that will officially ban the sale and distribution of products containing microbeads in the State of California. The ban takes effect on January 1st, 2020. California joins the growing list of states that have banned microbeads, which includes the Great Lakes states of Indiana and Illinois. Several other states have action in progress to "ban the bead." [Read more about microbeads here](#).

Washington DC Wastewater Treatment Plant harnesses electricity

D.C. Water, which treats wastewater from the nation's capital and the surrounding area, recently implemented a system that converts treated sewage sludge into electricity. The plant uses a thermal hydrolysis system to create electricity and power a third of the plant, leading to cost savings of

approximately \$10 million annually. [Read more about the plant here.](#)

Events and Webinars

Phragmites Webinar - Remote Sensing Series Part 1: Monitoring and Assessment of the Treatment and Control of non-native <i>Phragmites australis</i> in terms of Habitat Restoration	November 11th, 2-3pm Eastern Click here to register Organized by the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative
Blue Cities 2016: Organized by the Canadian Municipal Water Consortium, this event will bring together municipal water leaders, professionals from the industry, and experts to share knowledge surrounding stormwater, wastewater, and urban watershed management.	May 18-19, 2016 Toronto, ON Click here for more information

Membership

Please join the 117 Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative members in protecting and restoring the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River by clicking [here](#) for a membership application. If you are already a member, please encourage your neighboring communities to join, and be sure to renew your membership when you receive your notice.

If your municipality would like to share news with the Cities Initiative, please email information to Laura Bretheim at laura.bretheim@glslcities.org

