

# Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

## 2015 Annual Meeting and Conference

Sarnia-Lambton, Ontario | June 17-19, 2015

“Bridging Innovation and Change”



### Introduction

Over 100 mayors and municipal leaders gathered between the vast shores of Lake Huron and the blue waters of the St. Clair River for the Twelfth Annual Meeting and Conference of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, hosted by the City of Sarnia and the County of Lambton, Ontario. From action on nutrients, to a keynote address by Premier Kathleen Wynne, to presentations from Cities Initiative member municipalities, the 2015 Annual Meeting was a great success. This year’s theme, “Bridging Innovation and Change,” exemplified the many conversations about how Great Lakes and St. Lawrence municipalities can work together in new and creative ways to protect and restore the basin. Participants from municipalities, NGOs, and state and federal entities left the conference with renewed energy to continue to work collaboratively to protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence river for many years to come. Archives of presentations from the meeting are available on the Cities Initiative website.



*Mayors of the Cities Initiative at the Dow Chemical Great Lakes Monument in Sarnia*

### June 17: Annual Members' Meeting

The first day of the conference was filled with productive meetings with representatives from municipalities in the Cities Initiative membership. The Board of Directors met and discussed priorities for the coming year; prominent topics included Oil Transportation by Rail, Nutrient Pollution, and discussion surrounding ongoing concerns about invasive species, particularly Asian Carp and Phragmites (common reed). Mayor John Dickert (Racine, Wisconsin) concluded his term as Chair of the Board of Directors. During his time as Chair, Mayor Dickert provided strong leadership on the issues of clean drinking water and oil transportation. The membership met as a whole, where Mayor Mitch Twolan (Huron-Kinloss, Ontario) was elected to be the next Chair of the Board of Directors. Mayor Denis Coderre (Montreal, Quebec) will serve as Vice Chair, and Mayor Paul Dyster (Niagara Falls, New York) will serve as Secretary-Treasurer.



*Mayor Mitch Twolan and Mayor John Dickert turn over Board Chair responsibilities*

## Members' Day

The membership discussed and passed seven resolutions. These resolutions demonstrate the highest priority concerns of the Cities Initiative membership, and they will guide the Cities Initiative's work over the next year.

- **Asian Carp:** Calls for strong action to prevent Asian Carp from entering the Great Lakes Basin with particular attention in the Chicago Area Waterway System.
- **Action on Nutrient Pollution in the Great Lakes:** Calls for collaborative action to reduce nutrient pollution in the Great Lakes Region, particularly in the Western Basin of Lake Erie.
- **Oil Transport by Rail and Derailments:** In light of the 2013 Lac-Mégantic oil disaster, as well as a number of derailments that took place in early 2015, the Cities Initiative membership calls for strengthened regulations for rail cars carrying volatile oil through populated areas.
- **Oil Transportation in the Great Lakes Region:** This resolution, more general, calls for harmonized regulations and caution towards the transport of oil by pipeline, rail, and maritime shipping methods.
- **Harmonizing Regulatory Systems for Ballast Water:** This resolution, proposed by the City of St. Catharines, Ontario, calls for harmonized standards in the US and Canada for ballast water regulations. This aims to prevent invasive species from entering the Great Lakes region because of disparate standards in the US and Canada.
- **Action on Phragmites in the Great Lakes Region:** Calls for further funding, research, and legislative action towards fighting Phragmites, the invasive reed that particularly threatens wetlands.
- **Protection and Restoration of Wetlands in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin:** Presented by the City of Mississauga, Ontario, this resolution calls for an enhanced focus on wetland restoration and protection in the Basin.



**Asian Carp**



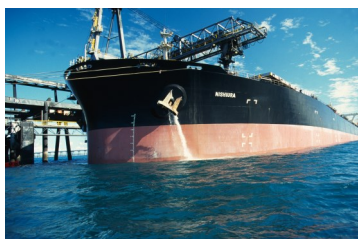
**Nutrient Pollution**



**Oil by Rail**



**Oil Transportation**



**Ballast Water**



**Phragmites**



**Wetlands**

Members also met on a Regional Basis—the United States Members, Quebec Members, and Ontario Members each held region-specific conversations with Cities Initiative staff to determine topics for future work that is specific to each region represented in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region.



*Scott McKay and Mayor Serge Péloquin*



## Members' Day

All member mayors gathered for a Press Conference, where incoming Chair Twolan stated , “Mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence stand together with the Premier and Governors in our commitment to do what it takes to achieve 40% phosphorus reductions by 2025 .” [Read the full press release here.](#)

In the evening, the membership toured a Canadian Coast Guard Police and Rescue vessel, where the Coast Guard officers described the collaboration between the police officers and the Coast Guard staff on the vessel as well as the collaboration required between U.S. and Canadian officers in order to effectively patrol the Great Lakes Region. The member Mayors and municipal representatives concluded a productive day of meeting and conversations by gathering at the Dow Chemical Great Lakes monument—a water-filled display of the Great Lakes that sits at the confluence of the St. Clair River and Lake Huron. The Cities Initiative would like to thank Tourism Sarnia-Lambton for organizing the evening’s outdoor reception, which featured local foods from the Sarnia-Lambton area.



## June 18: Conference Day 1

The Conference portion of the Cities Initiative Annual Meeting and Conference began with enthusiasm and excitement on Wednesday morning. Mayor Mike Bradley of Sarnia and Warden Bev McDougall of the County of Lambton welcomed the attendees, and the London Road School Children’s Choir performed the U.S. and Canadian National Anthems before Keynote speeches from Lynn Rosales of the Aamjiwnaang first nation and the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario commenced.



## Conference Day 1



Lynn Rosales



Premier Kathleen Wynne and Lynn Rosales



Premier Kathleen Wynne

## Panels: Day 1

### Nutrient Action Collaboratives: Solutions to Protect Drinking Water

Panelists Bill Creal, Elin Betanzo, Dr. Harvey Bootsma, and Mayor Jim Ginn provided expert insight into the complexity of nutrient pollution in the Great Lakes. All panelists emphasized the need for collaboration between farmers and scientists, and the panel provided a holistic view of the complexity of this issue. Dr. Bootsma presented on the science and mechanics of nutrients, while Mayor Ginn shared his unique perspectives as both the Mayor of Central Huron and as a farmer. Bill Creal informed the attendees of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's innovative strategies for nutrient reduction, and Elin Betanzo of the Northeast-Midwest Institute rounded out the presentations with a discussion of strategies for measuring nutrient loadings in various watersheds in the Western Lake Erie Basin.



(L to R) Mayor Randy Hope, Mayor Jim Ginn, Bill Creal, Elin Betanzo, and Dr. Harvey Bootsma

### Cities Initiative in the Community: Pilot Projects

Over the past year, the Cities Initiative worked with three member cities to develop Green Infrastructure pilot projects in their respective communities. Brad Doff, Acting Sustainability Coordinator of Thunder Bay, Ontario, described the surprises and challenges of two Low-Impact Design bioswales in high-traffic areas of the City of Thunder Bay. Brenda Scott-Henry of Gary, Indiana presented a new climate change mitigation strategy entitled the Sensitive Sites and Infrastructure Protocol, which helps cities identify infrastructure elements that are particularly sensitive or vulnerable to climate change. Nahed Ghbn of the City of Hamilton, Ontario, presented a vulnerability assessment of the Spencer Creek watershed, which involved an in-depth analysis of future climate predictions for the area.



(L to R) Nicola Crawhall, Brad Doff, Brenda Scott-Henry, and Nahed Ghbn

**Climate Change and adaptation: we're all dealing with this now; it's on our psyche.**

- Brad Doff, Acting Sustainability Coordinator, Thunder Bay



## Conference Day 1

### **Speaker: Dr. John Hartig, Refuge Manager, Detroit International Wildlife Refuge**

Dr. John Hartig took attendees through the journey of the City of Detroit from an industrial center, to a small but mighty center for environmental advocacy, to today, where urban conservation methods rapidly carry the city back to an ecologically healthy state. The Detroit International Wildlife Refuge along with other conservation programs have led to the return of peregrine falcons, Lake Sturgeon, whitefish, and even beavers; this ecological recovery is one of the greatest success stories in the world, particularly considering Detroit's history of industrial contamination and pollutants.

Dr. Hartig emphasized the importance of urban conservation in the future; over 50% of the world's population lives in cities, and urban conservation improves quality of life for everyone in the community. From the transformation of an industrial brownfield into an ecologically valuable wetland, to citizen science programs, to soft shoreline engineering, the urban conservation measures in Detroit are truly innovative examples of positive ecological transformation.



*Dr. John Hartig and David Ullrich*

### **Great Lakes Blue Economy Presentation: Tim Eder and Stephen Cole, Great Lakes Commission**

Tim Eder and Stephen Cole of the Great Lakes Commission presented a new program entitled "Great Lakes Blue Accounting." This program will examine the effectiveness of past investments in the Great Lakes to see if such investments have led to measurable improvements in Great Lakes water quality and quality of life. Much of the program consists of unpacking what it means for investments to be effective and takes a multi-perspective approach to evaluating investments in the Great Lakes. Visit [bit.ly/BlueAccounting](http://bit.ly/BlueAccounting) for more information or to participate in the program.



*Stephen Cole, Great Lakes Commission*

### **Risk Reduction in Oil Transportation in the Great Lakes Region**

Panels resumed with a discussion of oil transportation in Great Lakes Region. The Cities Initiative welcomed Patrick Smyth, Vice President for Safety at the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association; Normand Pellerin of Canadian National Railways; and Robert Lewis-Manning, President of the Canadian Shipowners Association. The panel provided perspectives and information on the transport of oil by pipeline, by rail, and by ship from industry professionals. Mr. Smyth discussed the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association's safety strategies for its vast network of North American pipelines and also explained the structure of pipelines management. Mr. Pellerin described the network, ownership structure, and management of North American rail systems and discussed the technology involved in monitoring the safety of rail cars and tracks. Mr. Lewis-Manning explained concerns about shipping petroleum across the Great Lakes and described the processes for preventing environmental damage.



*(L to R) Patrick Smyth, Normand Pellerin, and Robert Lewis-Manning*

## Conference Day 1

### Shoreline Restoration and Economic Activity: Challenges and Opportunities

Many shoreline areas along the Great Lakes were once industrial sites for shipping and transporting goods; City Engineer Andre Morin, Borough Mayor Chantal Rouleau, and Mayor Mike Vandersteen discussed how their respective cities are transforming their waterfronts into recreational and ecologically valuable areas. Andre Morin, City of Sarnia, described a challenge turned opportunity with the City's Centennial Park; the park was found to be contaminated with black tar and asbestos, but this setback turned into an opportunity for rehabilitation and ecological restoration through advocacy by municipal staff. A restored Centennial Park plans to be opened in 2016.

Borough Mayor Chantal Rouleau, City of Montreal, presented Montreal's Water Plan, which will open the St. Lawrence River shoreline to the community. From a Harbor Bath to improved beach access, the water plan seeks to give back to the community and support outdoor activities in ways that will greatly improve the value of the shoreline for the City of Montreal.

Mayor Mike Vandersteen, City of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, presented the city's work on restoring Areas of Concern; many of these once-contaminated sites have been restored to their natural ecological state and provide opportunities for citizens to access and experience more of the natural world. All three municipalities demonstrated the innovation and determination required to bring such restorative shoreline projects to fruition.



*Borough Mayor Chantal Rouleau*



*David Ullrich, Mayor Rouleau, Andre Morin, Mayor Dickert, and Mayor Vandersten*

## Conference Day 2

### Keynote Speakers: Lynn Rosales and Consul General Douglas George

Lynn Rosales opened the second and final day of the conference by speaking about the connection between place and water. She spoke about her personal connection to the Sarnia-Lambton Area, how she and all of us are drawn to be connected to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region, and sang a traditional song about the water. She also emphasized that the environment, our Mother, is hurting, and we must do all we can to improve our world.

Consul General Douglas George, who originally hails from Sarnia, then spoke about the ongoing successful relationship between the United States and Canada. He highlighted cross-border strategies to improve water quality in the region, and also encouraged attendees to continue to uphold this positive relationship for years to come.



*Lynn Rosales*

**I don't know how many times I travel from home; there is still something in here that calls me back, and that is that spiritual connection that I have to this place.**

**- Lynn Rosales**



*Consul General Douglas George*

## Conference Day 2

### Award Presentations

Dr. Mark Nolan-Hill of Highland Park, Illinois, provided an update of the city's work done through the Wege Small Cities Sustainability Award, which the city received in 2014. The city was able to complete an extensive public education program as part of its Water Conservation and Efficiency Initiative; the program included water bottle distribution and the design of a display that demonstrates daily average water use for household consumers.

The City of Racine, Wisconsin received this year's Wege Small Cities Sustainability Award for its work to educate citizens about stormwater management and to improve the city's stormwater management systems.

The Cities Initiative also issued two Water Conservation Framework awards; this year marked the conclusion of the Water Conservation Framework program, and several cities were recognized for their progress in Water Conservation and for innovation in Water Conservation methods. The City of Toronto was recognized for Innovation in Water Conservation methods, and the municipalities of Ajax, Ontario; Town of the Blue Mountains, Ontario; and Grand Rapids, Michigan were recognized for their progress on water conservation. Over the course of the Water Conservation Framework program, which began in 2007, participating cities have collectively achieved a 19% reduction in water use, exceeding the program's goal of a 15% collective reduction by 2015.



*David Ullrich and Mayor George Heartwell, Grand Rapids*

### Student Project Presentations:

#### NASA/DEVELOP and University of Michigan Climate-Ready Cities Program

The Cities Initiative continued its tradition of hearing from graduate students about collaborative work done with the Cities Initiative in the past year.

Emily Adams, of the NASA/DEVELOP program, presented research on wetlands mapping in the Georgian Bay Area. The DEVELOP team created a mapping technique to chart areas of wetland growth and decline in the Georgian Bay area; this research may now be used by cities in the Georgian Bay region to view patterns in wetland change.

Alexandra Brewer and Samuel Molnar represented the University of Michigan Climate Ready Cities Team, who greatly assisted in the Cities Initiative's MARS (Municipal Adaptation and Resiliency Services) program this year. Their team developed the Cities Initiative's MARS webinar series as well as several other tools and infographics to illustrate climate adaptation and resiliency work at the municipal level. Ms. Brewer and Mr. Molnar presented just a sliver of the large amount of work done by the team, all of which will be available to Cities Initiative member municipalities.



*Emily Adams, Simon Belisle, Alexandra Brewer, and Sam Molnar*

**Because climate change is complex, adaptation is complex – we leverage existing human resources, programs, and frameworks to get climate adaptation done.**

**- Sam Molnar, U Michigan Climate-Ready Cities Program**



## Conference Day 2

The conference concluded with a presentation from Mayor Paul Dyster, of Niagara Falls, New York, on the 2016 Annual Meeting. Warden Bev MacDougall also presented Mayor Dyster with a Cities Initiative flag, passing along the host city responsibilities. We look forward to seeing many Mayors, member staff, and others in 2016!



## Many Thanks

The Cities Initiative would like to thank the County of Lambton and the City of Sarnia for graciously hosting the 2015 Annual Meeting and Conference. Many thanks to all of the presenters, panelists, and sponsors who made the conference a great success and a highlight of the year at the Cities Initiative. Lastly, thank you to all of the attendees for joining us this year and contributing the collaborative and innovative progress in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region.

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