Mayors Urge Governors and Premiers to Reject Waukesha Application

Historic, precedent-setting Great Lakes water diversion application to be discussed this week

April 20, 2016

Today, Mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative call on the Governors and Premiers of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin to reject the Waukesha Water Diversion Application and uphold the Great Lakes Compact and Agreement. The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Water Resources Regional Body, which is responsible for implementing the Compact and Agreement, is holding a special meeting on the Application in Chicago on April 21, which is the last formal opportunity for Ontario and Quebec to be heard. To this day, 17 Canadian cities have passed resolutions opposing the water diversion (view resolutions at http://glslcities.org/initiatives/basin-management/compact-and-agreement/).

The Cities Initiative, a group of 122 local government leaders from the United States and Canada representing over 17 million people, is opposed to the water diversion because it does not comply with the Compact in several ways. First, the water service area goes well beyond the city limits of Waukesha. Second, there are reasonable alternatives for Waukesha to provide safe drinking water to its residents. Third, there are significant questions about what the return flow would do to the Root River on its way back to Lake Michigan. All of these add up to the bad precedent an approval would set when the Compact created a very strictly limited exception for cities and counties on the borders of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin.

“We urge the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec to use this last opportunity to oppose this application and uphold the Compact”, said Mayor Mitch Twolan of Huron-Kinloss, ON, chair of the Cities Initiative. “The US and Canada came together to protect our lakes and river by creating the Compact and Agreement, and it is time to affirm our commitment to our shared resources by rejecting the application.”

Mayor John Dickert, of Racine, WI, where the diverted water would be returned to Lake Michigan through the Root River, added: “The impacts on the Root River were not analyzed properly. We do not want Waukesha’s return flow to disrupt years of efforts and millions of dollars invested in making the river and our waterfront a key economic driver for our city.”

Mayor Randy Hope, of Chatham-Kent, ON expressed his concerns by saying: “My fellow Canadian mayors and I look to the eight governors with a watchful eye. We want to protect our vital water resources and stop this effort that is contrary to the Compact’s limited exception. We do not want this dangerous precedent set by Waukesha.”

"My city of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, along with many other members of the Cities Initiative, passed a resolution opposing the Waukesha Diversion Application", said Salaberry-de-Valleyfield Mayor Denis Lapointe. "Cities have shown their leadership by protecting and respecting the water that travels to us via the St. Lawrence River. We urge the Regional Body members to oppose the Application."

The Cities Initiative is a binational coalition of 122 mayors, representing over 17 million people, who work together to protect, restore and sustain the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin. To learn more, visit our website at www.glslcities.org.

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