



## GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE

### 2010 Annual Meeting and Conference

#### Milwaukee, Wisconsin



The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative 2010 Annual Member Meeting and Conference, “Greening Our Blue Border”, brought mayors, stakeholders, local business and water experts to Milwaukee, Wisconsin from June 16-18<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Mayor Tom Barrett welcomed an enthusiastic crowd to Milwaukee, an appropriate host city for this year’s meeting given their recent recognition as a United Nations Global Compact City focused on freshwater technology.

The conference began with an opportunity for attendees to take a boat tour along the Milwaukee River and inner harbor of Lake Michigan. Folks were offered a special Milwaukee treat by stopping at three local Brewpubs along the way. An evening cocktail hour at the *Ironhorse Hotel* offered conference attendees a chance to enjoy a beautiful evening along Lake Michigan.

Thursday’s sessions kicked off with Milwaukee’s Whitefish Bay Middle School singing the Canadian and U.S. national anthems. Mayor Barrett gave welcoming remarks that focused on the need to work collaboratively to ensure the blue border between Canada and the U.S. is prosperous, clean and revitalized. Ambassador Gary Doer, Canadian Ambassador to the United States, also gave comments which celebrated the need for a binational approach to protecting, restoring and managing the largest source of surface freshwater on the planet.

Mayor George Heartwell of Grand Rapids opened the Cities Initiative members meeting. He expressed great thanks to the members for a wonderful and productive year and shared his passion for our work. The membership then elected the 2010-2011 officers for the organization. Mayor Denis Lapointe of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield was selected to be the Chair, Mayor Brian McMullan of St. Catharines as Vice-Chair and Mayor Dave Ross of Superior as Secretary/Treasurer. The membership approved 17 resolutions including the support for watershed plans, a need for a “vision” for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region and a push to keep invasive species out of our waterways. Additionally, the membership voted to launch a new Cities Initiative program that will highlight and expand upon what Great Lakes and St. Lawrence cities are doing to create sustainable communities. The Green CiTTS/Villes VERDD (Cities Transforming Towards Sustainability) program, will offer cities the opportunity to share best practices and create networks for training and funding opportunities.



The first panel of the conference, entitled “Vision for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River: A Green Economy,” scoped a vision for the region. By creating an economic/environmental synergy of green jobs, renewable energy and freshwater technology, the region can become a leader. Mayor George Heartwell moderated this panel with a brief overview of some of the “green”



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initiatives that Grand Rapids is conducting. Philip Enquist, a partner at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill architectural firm, presented the components required to develop a 100 year sustainable vision for the region. Richard Meeusen, co-chair of the Milwaukee Water Council, grabbed the attention of the conference with his powerful presentation on the precious resource of water.

Secretary Matt Frank of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources gave the lunchtime keynote address on the link between preserving the region's natural resources and providing tourism and recreational opportunities to citizens.

The afternoon press conference provided the opportunity for the mayors to share the new Green CiTTS program. Mayor Daley highlighted the sustainable work of many cities, noting that this region is a center for green development. Mayor Denis Lapointe voiced his enthusiasm for the coming years as chair of the organization while Mayor Barrett spoke of the great water technologies that Milwaukee has to offer. The mayors took a stance on oil spills, requesting meetings with Federal authorities to make sure proper resources are in place for such a disaster, were it to occur on the Great Lakes or St. Lawrence.



Focusing on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region as a tourism center, Mayor Ellen Anderson of the Town of The Blue Mountains moderated

the next panel, entitled "Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Tourism: Expanding the Territory," highlighting all that cities have to offer in terms of tourism from fishing and boating to eco-tourism. David Belgue, Secretary General of the Québec Ministry of Tourism discussed recreational trails along the St. Lawrence that offer tourists the opportunity to bike, hike or canoe along the river. Kelli Trumble, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism provided tourism tips for municipalities. Marlaine Koehler, the Executive Director of the Ontario Waterfront Trust, talked about the rising interest in Ontario for recreation along the north shore of Lake Erie.



The final session of the day gave the opportunity for all attendees to break out into small groups to discuss a sustainable future for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence cities. During the "Exchange with Mayors," topics like protecting water resources and coastal areas, promoting low-carbon energy generation and consumption, adopting green land-use and building design and encouraging green economic development, were discussed in groups comprised of mayors and other conference attendees. Mayors led the charge in sharing what their communities have done and what can be done in the future.

The evening closed with an exceptional dinner at the *Milwaukee Art Museum*. Overlooking Lake Michigan, Mayor Barrett proudly welcomed all to one of Milwaukee's true gems.



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Friday morning began with dynamic addresses from two speakers who are passionate about the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Senior Advisor to the U.S. EPA Administrator, Cameron Davis, spoke on the important role all orders of government can play in the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Mr. Davis stressed the need for collaboration to achieve the goals for the region. Richard M. Daley, Mayor of Chicago and the Founding U.S. Chair of the Cities Initiative, spoke about the vitality and sustainability of cities. Mayor Daley highlighted some of the work that Chicago has done to make it “green” and applauded the strides the Cities Initiative has made in its almost seven years of service.



Moving to one of the major subjects of the past year, the panel “Invaders of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River: Asian Carp, Algae and Ballast Water,” explored the issue of invasive species and their various vectors of entry into the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. From algal blooms to ballast water and the infamous Asian Carp, this panel gave conference attendees the opportunity to hear from experts in the field. Mayor Dave Ross of Superior, Wisconsin moderated the panel with information on Superior’s “Great Ships Initiative,” a comprehensive study of best ballast water management practices. John Rogner, Assistant Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, spoke about efforts in Illinois

to stop Asian Carp from entering Lake Michigan. Lindsay Chadderton from The Nature Conservancy provided an overview of on-the-ground efforts to control invasive species throughout the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Finally, Dr. John Carey from Environment Canada provided an overview of some of the toughest invasive species that threaten the Great Lakes and ways we have dealt with their invasion.



Closing out the panels for the conference, Cities Initiative mayors spoke about a variety of initiatives in their communities during the “Cities Taking Action: Advancing the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence and other waters” panel. Mayor Brian McMullan of St. Catharines moderated the panel and provided an update on the Canada Ontario Agreement-Memorandum of Cooperation (COA-MOC), an agreement between the Province of Ontario and the Cities Initiative to work together on Great Lakes issues. This past year’s focus of COA MOC efforts was the health of beaches and coasts. We were very pleased to have Mayor Jarkko Virtanen, Vice-President of the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), join us from Turku, Finland. The UBC is a sister organization to the Cities Initiative, that works on sustainability, shipping, trade and tourism along the Baltic Sea. Mayor Virtanen shared some of the UBC’s experiences with the Cities Initiative mayors on sustainable practices in Turku. Mayor John Dickert of Racine, Wisconsin spoke about best management practices that the





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city has implemented at their local beaches. Councillor Helen Fotopulos of Montréal, Québec spoke to the advancements that Montréal is making in their water treatment and the involvement of students in the city's environmental efforts.

The Annual Awards Luncheon brought the three day conference to a close. After Congresswoman Gwen Moore shared with attendees her passion for the Great Lakes, Chair Peter Partington from the Region of Niagara invited all to join him next year in Niagara Falls, Ontario for the 2011 Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Meeting and Conference.



In its fourth year, the Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Awards was presented to a city with a population under 100,000 residents that is doing exceptional work to promote economic, social and environmental elements through sustainability. This year's award winner was the City of Bayfield, Wisconsin for their "Clean it, Green It" campaign. Standing in for Mayor John Piskura, David Ullrich provided an update from last year's award winner, Sheffield Lake, Ohio. For the second year, recognition awards were given to two communities for their extraordinary work on water conservation. The City of Thunder Bay, Ontario was recognized for innovation in water conservation and the City of Cobourg, Ontario

was applauded for progress on water conservation efforts.



The 2010 Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Members Meeting and Conference was officially closed by Mayor Barrett. The Cities Initiative looks forward to 2010-2011 and carrying out the important mandates and initiatives the membership developed at the conference.

To see the resolutions passed by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative membership at the 2010 Annual meeting, please [click here](#).

To see the 2009-2010 annual report of the Cities Initiative, please [click here](#).