

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative 2014 Annual Meeting and Conference

Thunder Bay, Ontario | June 18-20, 2014



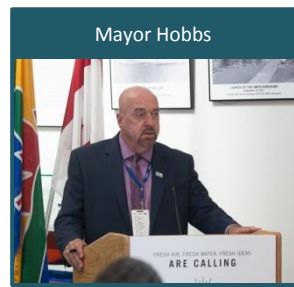
This year, from June 18th-20th, Thunder Bay hosted the 11th Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Meeting and Conference with the theme “Navigating Change, Fresh Air, Fresh Water, Fresh Ideas”. Taking place under the watchful eye of the Sleeping Giant on the shores of majestic Lake Superior, over 150 attendees, including municipal, provincial, state and federal officials, discussed current and pending issues regarding the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and region and new ideas were provided for them to bring back to their community.

Wednesday, June 18 Press Conference

The opening of the annual general meeting started with a press conference that unveiled the Cities Initiative legacy project – a new bottle-filling station and water fountain at Prince Arthur’s Landing.



Annual General Meeting



Mayor Hobbs

The outgoing chair, **Mayor Keith Hobbs**, expressed his appreciation to all the members for their dedication during his year as chair before passing the baton to his successor, **Mayor John Dickert**, for 2014-2015. **Mayor Mitch Twolan** and **Mayor Denis Coderre** were elected to serve as Vice-chair and Secretary-Treasurer respectively. Also, members elected **Mayor Randy Hope** as a new member of the Board of Directors.

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Seven resolutions were presented and carried by the members. The resolutions covered a broad range of issues dealing with climate adaptation, Asian carp, microbeads, nutrient loads, fossil energy transportation, urban planning and water infrastructure.

Four cities were recognized for their outstanding work. The Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award went to the City of Highland Park for their Water Conservation and Efficiency Initiative. The City of Kingston and the City of Grand Rapids were recognized for their efforts on water conservation, as part of the Cities Initiative Water Conservation Framework. Finally, the City of Montréal received the 2014 Green CITTSA Award for its sustainable municipal water management public report



Mayor Rouleau and Mayor Hobbs

Thursday, June 19 Conference Day

Opening ceremonies took place at Chippewa Park Beach. It was marked by a traditional Water Offering teaching given by first nations community members of Thunder Bay followed by the American and trilingual Canadian national anthem.



Josephine Mandamin

Dr. Joel Scheraga and Mayor Dickert



In his keynote address, **Dr. Joel Scheraga**, Senior Advisor for Climate Adaptation, USEPA, underlined the importance for municipalities to adapt to climate change. He identified numerous opportunities that are available for municipal stakeholders. Dr. Scheraga concluded by pointing out examples of leadership at the municipal and federal levels.

The first panel of the conference was **Municipal Adaptation and Resiliency: Cities at the Forefront**. Speakers shared innovative ideas and examples of partnerships that lead to better preparedness and resilience to extreme weather events. **Mr. Brad Doff**, Sustainability Coordinator at the City of Thunder Bay, informed the conference participants about encouraging developments in adaptation and mitigation of climate change by the city. Beset by substantial damage from intense storms, the city recently adopted a proactive approach through the EarthCare Sustainability Plan. Examples of successful collaboration efforts were presented during this panel. **Mr. Jamie Favors** summarized the main components of the DEVELOP National Program which collaborates with decision makers to conduct environmental research projects using NASA Earth observations that have been instrumental in advancement of the knowledge regarding extreme precipitation events and stormwater runoff impacts. **Ms. Heather Stirratt**, Great Lakes Regional Coordinator at NOAA's National Ocean Service, shared the wide range of tools, products and services offered by NOAA designed and built with community needs in mind. These resources are being used in an ongoing collaborative project between the Cities Initiative, NOAA, University of Michigan and communities of the Great Lakes Basin.

Mayor Hartwell, Jamie Favors, Heather Stirratt, Mayor Hobbs and Brad Doff



Mayor Tom Barrett of Milwaukee updated the members on the Cities Initiative Sustainable Municipal Water Management framework, which was launched in 2012.

Jim Donihee, Dr. Ali Asgary, Andy Buchsbaum and Mayor Arnold

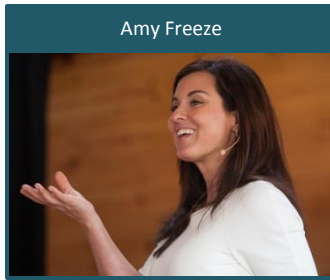


The second panel, **Energy Transportation in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region**, drew attention to the challenges municipalities face because of the increase in energy transportation. **Dr. Ali Asgary**, Associate Professor, Emergency Management of York University, underscored the risk associated with oil transportation and stressed the importance of implementation of regulations.

"Some of the incidents we had in the past few years, in Toronto and Lac Mégantic, they were not about lack of regulations. They were mostly about lack of implementation or proper implementation." **Dr. Ali Asgary**

Mr. Andy Buchsbaum, Great Lakes Regional Executive Director of the National Wildlife Federation focused his presentation on pipeline safety for the Great Lakes. He shared some underwater images from the Straits of Mackinac. Participants saw that the pipeline was suspended above the lake floor and could be under stress due to current, the weight of encrusted debris or the impact of dropping boat anchors. In light of these concerns, he noted a series of recommendations to reduce the risks of this pipeline. Finally, **Mr. Jim Donihee**, Chief Operating Officer, Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, concluded this panel by bringing the views and perspectives of the pipeline industry. He delivered a strong message about what the pipeline companies he represents were undertaking, including building a culture of safety and putting integrity first.

The lunch program keynote address by **Ms. Amy Freeze**, Meteorologist at WABC-TV in New York City, reviewed the data used for predicting weather. She explained how the uncertainty of predictions grows when timescale increases. She captivated the audience when she spoke of preparedness for events like “Superstorm Sandy”, that are the “new normal”.



Amy Freeze

Mr. Serge Villeneuve, Advisor for Scientific Integration at Environment Canada, completed this session with an update of the St. Lawrence Action Plan. Significant results have been achieved especially in regards to shoreline erosion along vulnerable stretches of the St. Lawrence, the establishment of the first marine protected area in Canada (Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park) and cooperation with different stakeholders.



Serge Villeneuve



Dave Ullrich and Gordon Walker

Mr. Gordon Walker, Commissioner and Acting Canadian Chair of the International Joint Commission (IJC), addressed the algae issue in Lake Erie and reviewed the

main elements of the new plan entitled *Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Plan 2014* recently published by the IJC, in his keynote speech.



Mike Goffin

The third panel, **Current and Emerging Issues for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities**, discussed nutrient loadings, plastic pollution and shoreline issues of interest to municipal stakeholders. **Mr. Mike Goffin**,

Regional Director General of the Ontario Region for Environment Canada, presented a clear picture of the situation of harmful and nuisance algal blooms in Lake Erie. He stated that, in the past, this complex problem had been addressed successfully and the key to success is the engagement of cities in decision-making and in taking action. **Dr. Sherri “Sam” Mason**, Associate Professor of Chemistry, and Environmental Sciences Program Coordinator at SUNY-Fredonia, presented her findings regarding microplastics in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River system. She urged participants to take action to eliminate microplastics products.



Dr. Sherri “Sam” Mason



Bill Ross, Dr. Scott Hamilton and Bill Skrepichuk

The final panel of the conference, **Cultural and Historical Heritage: an Influence over the Entire Region**, was a trip back in time. Panelists shared information on the cultural and historical heritage surrounding Lake Superior and explained how the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region reflects this history today. **Mr. Bill Ross**, Principal Investigator at Ross Archaeological Research Associates covered 14 000 years of history in his presentation and highlighted the extensive aboriginal influence. **Dr. Scott Hamilton** from the department of Anthropology at Lakehead University, talked about the integration of aboriginal cultures and European cultures and how lessons can be learned in addressing current issues. To conclude, the maritime story of Lake Superior which shaped the economic landscape of the Great Lakes region was portrayed by **Mr. Bill Skrepichuk**, Lake Superior Maritime Historian.

Gala Dinner at Fort William Historic Park

The conference day ended with a reception and delicious dinner at Fort William Historic Park. Greeters, artisans and fiddlers welcomed participants. Guests enjoyed great food, great jazz and great company.



Friday, June 20 Special presentation

For the final day of the 11th Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Meeting and Conference, **Mr. Robert Michaud** from the Marine Mammal Research and Education Group (GREMM) and **Ms. Aislinn Gauchay** from the John G. Shedd Aquarium made a special presentation on beluga whales, a new topic for the Cities Initiative.

These at risk marine mammals can be found in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and are good bioindicators of the water quality of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. The John G. Shedd Aquarium and the GREMM have been collaborating for several years on the Marine Mammal Emergency Response Network to implement measures to save animals in trouble in the waters of the St. Lawrence.



Closing Ceremonies and Presentation from 2015 Host

The 2014 Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Meeting and Conference was officially closed by **Mayor Keith Hobbs**. The Cities Initiative thanks the City of Thunder Bay and its staff for their tireless efforts to make this event so memorable and productive. A very special thanks goes to all the sponsors that contributed to the event's success. Preparations are already underway for the 2015 Annual Meeting and Conference in the City of Sarnia and the County of Lambton.

To view the resolutions passed by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative membership at the 2014 Annual Meeting or to view the presentations of the panelist and keynote speakers, please click [here](#).

