

# Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

## 2016 Annual Meeting and Conference

Niagara Falls, New York | June 15-17, 2016

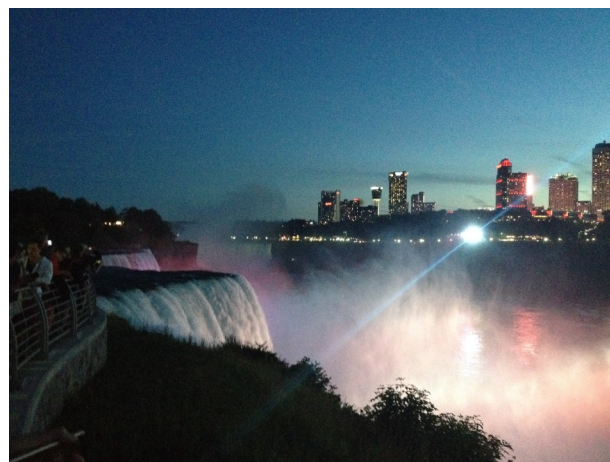
“A Greener World, City by City ”



### Introduction

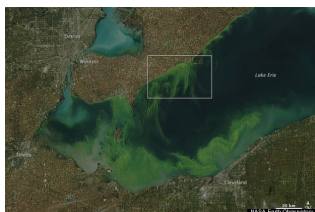
Only a few steps away from one of America's most breathtaking landmarks, mayors and delegates from the Cities Initiatives' 123 member municipalities, as well as other participants, came together for the 13<sup>th</sup> Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Meeting and Conference. This year's event, entitled *A Greener World, City by City*, was hosted by Mayor Paul Dyster in the City of Niagara Falls, New York - an ideal location to be surrounded by the power of water and the importance of binational cooperation.

This yearly event allows the Cities Initiative to establish the next year's priorities. It also provides mayors and municipal delegates with the opportunity to discuss best practices and challenges they meet every day with fellow local leaders in an effort to foster basin-wide knowledge and collaboration. Key messages from the event were: the need for paradigm shifts in regional development and how resources are valued, as well as the need to increase collaboration and scale up initiatives to tackle modern environmental issues.



### June 15: Annual Meeting

During the first day of the event, members attended a number of meetings to discuss future and pending issues to be addressed by the Cities Initiative and to review last year's accomplishments. Board members met and discussed priorities for the coming year. Topics discussed included the Waukesha water diversion application, pipeline safety indicators, and possible working relations with tribes and first nations. Members also had the chance to talk about region-specific issues during regional meetings for the United States, Ontario and Quebec. During the Annual Meeting, members adopted 13 new resolutions addressing a variety of topics, from phosphorus inputs in Lake Erie to climate change, the Waukesha water diversion application, and safety indicators for pipelines.



**Nutrient Pollution**



**Climate Change**



**Water Diversion**



**Oil Transportation**

## Members' Day

At the Annual Meeting, the Board of Director appointed new officers as Mayor Mitch Twolan passed the torch to Mayor Denis Coderre (Montreal) as new chair of the Cities Initiative for 2016-2017. Mayor Twolan thanked all the members for their commitments and efforts during his term. Highlights included the COP 21 held in Paris last November and the first Great Lakes Day at Queen's Park. Mayor Paul Dyster (Niagara Falls) and Mayor Sandra Cooper (Town of Collingwood) were appointed as Vice-Chair and Secretary-Treasurer of GLSLCI respectively.

At the Annual Meeting, the organization highlighted achievements from members including the Town of the Blue Mountains, recipient of this year's Wege Award. The Town of the Blue Mountains received the award for its solar-powered light installations to increase safety in their municipal parking lot.

During the evening, members were invited to a reception at the Top of the Falls restaurant where they were welcomed to the region by Bryan Printup of the Tuscarora Nation. Members were also treated with a musical performance honoring the spiritual and inspirational value of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.



Mayors Mitch Twolan and Sandra Cooper



Warden Bev MacDougall



Mayor John McKean



Bryan Printup



Reception at Top of the Falls

## June 16: Conference Day 1

### Opening of the conference A Greener World, City by City

Mayor Paul Dyster and Borough Mayor Chantal Rouleau opened the first day of the conference by welcoming all participants to Niagara Falls and wishing them a fruitful conference. Miranda Tubins from Niagara Falls High School then performed the U.S and Canadian national anthems before the first presentations.

### Keynote speaker: Cameron Davis, Senior Advisor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Cameron Davis offered a dynamic and motivational speech as first speaker of the Conference. During his speech, Mr. Davis praised the numerous achievements of mayors and the Cities Initiative over the last 13 years in advancing the role of local governments to protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. Amongst these achievements, Mr. Davis highlighted the recognition of the role played by local government in the protection of the Great Lakes in the 2012 Water Quality Agreement, the success of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and the delisting of Areas of Concern on both sides of the border. Mr. Davis then presented his views on the challenges cities will have to address in the next few years. These included the control of Asian Carp, algal blooms and drinking water issues, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

## Panel 1: Safe Drinking Water in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin

**Chantal Morissette** - Director of Water Services, City of Montreal

**Paul Froese** - Senior Advisor, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, ON

**Tom Neltner** - Chemical Policy Director, Environmental Defense Fund

The 2015 drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan put lead-contaminated water issues on the forefront of local governments' agendas, reminding us all how access to safe drinking water cannot be taken for granted. This session presented different initiatives being taken by governments to provide safe drinking water to their citizens and the potential impact of lead contamination on human health.

Chantal Morissette presented the efforts undertaken by the City of Montreal to address this issue and remove all lead service pipes in its service area. These included an assessment of houses that may have lead service pipes, a program to replace them, an outreach campaign to raise citizen's awareness, as well as research projects on health effects of lead exposure. The session was followed by a presentation from Paul Froese on the province of Ontario's approach to developing a drinking water protection framework. This framework was created through a combination of legislation, regulations, and norms that would establish a legal standard of care in the province for drinking water management and distribution. Tom Neltner then presented about the health impacts of lead-contaminated water on young children. He highlighted the importance of having strong drinking water policy and the crucial role that municipalities play in reducing lead contamination risks. According to Mr. Neltner, municipalities should prioritize creating programs to remove all lead service pipes in their jurisdictions. During the session, all speakers agreed that it is necessary to address lead contamination issues as soon as possible and that solving the issue is a long-term endeavor.



*Paul Froese, Chantal Morissette, Tom Neltner, Mayor  
Walter Sendzik*

## Special Presentation: Climate Change and Coral Reefs

**Doon McColl**, Churchill Fellow, Australia

How can we reduce the impacts of climate change? Or, how can we tackle environmental issues that fall under multiple jurisdictions in a more efficient manner? As demonstrated by Doon McColl, these challenging questions are shared by communities around the world, hence the importance of increasing dialogue among municipal actors at the international level.



*Doon McColl*

During her presentation, Ms. McColl explained how the Great Barrier Reef Authority (GBRA) has been addressing issues such as ocean acidification, extreme weather events and water quality degradation. Ms. McColl highlighted the key role played by municipalities through territorial development and regional collaboration and called for a change in territorial development practices. She also underlined the importance of having the support of local communities when tackling these issues. For example, the GBRA created a Reef Guardian program for commercial fishermen and for farmers where industry champions were recruited to mobilize other industry peers. They also created the Reef Guardian Council Program, which regrouped 16 local councils that represented 70% of the reef's catchment, where each council prepared their own action plan to identify the activities they will undertake regarding water management, climate change, public education, etc. This framework was developed by councils for councils, in collaboration with the Great Barrier of Reef Authority, which is the key to its success.





## Conference Day 1

### Panel 2: Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Innovation

**Megan Meaney**, Executive Director, ICLEI Canada

**Paul J. Spicer**, Vice President, WEC Energy Group

**Fernando Carou**, Environment and Energy Division, City of Toronto

During this session, the panel discussed energy policies and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction measures that are being developed. All speakers emphasized the importance of policy alignment across all levels of government to support the efforts being developed and implemented on the ground. The panel also mentioned how difficult it was to define the right scale and scope of initiatives to reach set environmental targets in a more efficient manner.



*Megan Meaney, Fernando Carou, Paul J. Spicer, Mayor John Dickert*

Fernando Carou opened the session by presenting strategies being implemented by the City of Toronto and by highlighting how change provides new opportunities for cities. He also announced that the City of Toronto is working on a renewed Climate Action Plan, which will mainly focus on district energy-thermal networks, public transit, and building efficiency since these are the measures that have the most impact on GHG emission reduction for the city. Paul Spicer then presented the energy industry perspective and the role played by public policies to diversify states' energy portfolios. Mr. Spicer gave the example of the State of Wisconsin, which requires renewable energy to represent 10% of the energy distributed. He also explained how consumers could choose to be provided with 100% renewable energy if requested. To conclude the session, Megan Meaney presented programs offered by ICLEI to support municipalities in developing and implementing GHG emission reduction measures and climate change adaptation and mitigation plans. She explained how these programs are specially tailored to target and support small and medium sized cities that want to take action. She also gave an overview of the Compact of Mayors global initiative and of the differences between their programs and the Compact of Mayors.

### Special Presentation, Mark Thomas, NY State Office of Parks

During lunch, conference participants had the chance to learn more about the creation of the first State Park in the United States: Niagara Falls. Mark Thomas explained that the first State Park was created in 1883, at a time when industrial development and hydropower generation were well established in the region but were threatening the outstanding scenic qualities of the Niagara Falls. The Falls were finally designated as a State Park thanks to the perseverance and will of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who was also the leader of an environmental group, and Mr. Thomas Vincent Welch, a member of the Legislative Assembly of the State of New York.

Mr. Thomas also presented the modernization efforts undertaken by the State Park Authority to improve visitors' experiences. These measures include the addition and upgrade of recreation infrastructures as well as showcasing indigenous vegetation. He explained that they were trying to put the natural qualities of the site at the forefront of the visitors' experience.



*Mark Thomas*

## Conference Day 1

### Press Conference

Before the second half of Thursday's conference, mayors gathered for a Press Conference where they stated their opposition to Waukesha's water diversion application. The Cities Initiative also announced their partnership with the Compact of Mayors to lead climate change mitigation and GHG reduction efforts in the region. Finally, the Cities Initiative also announced a collaborative strategy to reduce phosphorus entering the Thames River through improvements to farmland water management and drainage.



*Mayors Mitch Twolan, John Dickert, Paul Dyster and Denis Lapointe*

### Panel 3: Lake Erie Algae Updates, Programs and Impacts on Municipalities

**Karl Gebhardt**, Deputy Director, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

**Don McCabe**, Executive Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

**Molly Flanagan**, Vice President of Policy, Alliance for the Great Lakes

On Thursday afternoon, this panel discussed how to address the issue of algal blooms in Lake Erie and how new federal, state, and provincial targets for nutrient reduction will impact municipalities and other stakeholders.

Karl Gebhardt presented the agreement between Ontario, Ohio, and Michigan, which aims to reduce phosphorus inputs by 40% in the western basin of Lake Erie. Mr. Gebhardt highlighted the need to increase cooperation and collaboration as well as to identify the roles and responsibilities of each actor for better accountability and to meet the phosphorus reduction goals. Don McCabe then presented the position of farmers and the new collaborative water management strategy for agricultural land being developed in collaboration with the Cities Initiative and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He emphasized the need to consult farmers and bring them on board in order to solve this issue. Molly Flanagan presented on algal blooms in Lake Erie, reminding the group that this is not a new issue and that it has been solved in the past. She then presented improvements needed to strengthen the current management system, including the use of voluntary and temporary measures, and she called for increased regulation of agricultural activities.



*Mayor Mitch Twolan, Karl Gebhardt, Molly Flanagan and Don McCabe*

### Keynote Speaker: Commissioner Dereth Glance, International Joint Commission

Commissioner Dereth Glance gave a passionate speech calling for drastic change in the perception and valuation of water resources and the services they provide. She advocated for increased awareness of the values and opportunities related to water. The wealth of data used and created by citizens was given as an example of potential opportunity that should be further investigated for better water management. Commissioner Glance also presented the new triennial Water Quality Agreement assessment report, which recognizes the causal links between water quantity and quality in the Great Lakes and highlights the need for better monitoring of progress made. She concluded her speech by inviting all the participants to the Great Lakes Public Forum, which will take place in Toronto from October 4 to 6, 2016.



*Commissioner Dereth Glance*

## Conference Day 1

### Panel 4: Municipal Green Urbanism and Sustainability Initiatives

**Mayor Paul Dyster**, Niagara Falls, NY

**Jill Jedlicka**, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper

**Jim Tovey**, Councillor, City of Mississauga

**Michelle Morin-Doyle**, Deputy Mayor of Quebec City and member of the Quebec Metropolitan Community Council



*Councillor Jim Tovey, Deputy Mayor Michelle Morin-Doyle, Jill Jedlicka and Mayor Paul Dyster*

The last panel of the day showcased innovative water management and sustainable development initiatives from member cities. Mayor Paul Dyster

(Niagara Falls, NY) moderated the panel and opened the session by explaining the vision behind the renewal of the City of Niagara Falls, which aims to reconnect its citizens and visitors to the natural environment of the area by creating a city within a park. Jill Jedlicka then presented the Niagara Greenway Initiative and the efforts undertaken by the organization to restore the Buffalo River. The severely contaminated river was a legacy from the industrial past of the region, and its restoration represents a remarkable accomplishment. Ms. Jedlicka highlighted the importance of considering citizens as partners for the development of vibrant communities, and she emphasized the need for them to have a meaningful voice.

Deputy Mayor Michelle Morin-Doyle then explained the process that was followed to develop the new source water protection regulation adopted by the Quebec Metropolitan Community (QMC). This regulation was developed following water quality degradation in Lake St. Charles, which is an important drinking water source for the region. In order to address the issue, stricter rules regarding territorial development and buffer zones needed to be implemented. Deputy Mayor Morin-Doyle explained how the QMC reached out to citizens and municipalities before adopting the new regulation. Councillor Jim Tovey closed the session by presenting the remarkable story of citizens who wanted to develop the most sustainable community in the world on a former brownfield. Once completed, the citizens' masterplan was approved and taken on by the city as the Inspiration Lake View project. Benefits from this project include the creation of wetlands, green spaces and recreational amenities as well as habitat restoration. The project, currently in the implementation phase, is a great example of the member cities' leadership in building a greener world.



*Tom DeSantis*



*Conference's Exhibitor Booth*



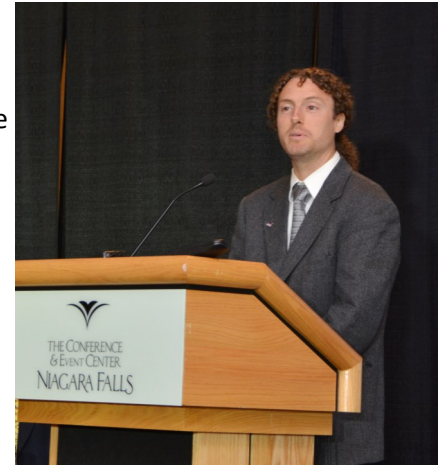
*Mayors Paul Dyster, Tom Barrett and Mike Vandersteen*



## June 17: Conference Day 2

### Special Presentation: Sean McCartney, Center Lead, NASA Develop National Program

The last day of the conference began with a presentation from Sean McCartney on the NASA –DEVELOP program and their project forecasting *Phragmites australis* habitats in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin. The NASA- DEVELOP program was created to link NASA's earth observation data to environmental policy and management for better decision-making. As part of this program, Mr. McCartney presented how the team mapped and forecasted the dispersal of Phragmites, an invasive species, as part of a project in collaboration with the Cities Initiative. In order to forecast the expansion of Phragmites, NASA identified five main parameters affecting Phragmites distribution and modeled their future expansion based on regional development trends from the last 30 years. The maps created as part of the project were a source of great interest to the audience, and Mr. McCartney announced that they intend to further improve their models and forecast in the future and will provide their results to the Cities Initiative.



Sean McCartney

### Panel: 5 Control Solutions for Phragmites

**Dr. Janice Gilbert**, Ontario Phragmites Working Group  
**Heather Braun**, Senior Project Manager, Great Lakes Commission  
**Nancy Vidler**, Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group

The last panel of the conference explored possible solutions to control and eradicate Phragmites, a non-native invasive reed taking over wetlands and threatening natural habitats across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin. Dr. Janice Gilbert started the session by explaining the characteristics of the invasive reed and the existing control methods. During her presentation, Dr. Gilbert emphasized the difficulty of controlling and eradicating Phragmites and the challenges added by provincial regulations in Ontario that prohibit the use of herbicides in wetlands or near streams.



Nancy Vidler, Mayor Scott Warnock, Heather Braun and Dr. Janice Gilbert

Heather Braun then spoke about the necessity of increasing collaboration and best practice sharing among all actors across the basin as well as increasing public awareness and outreach. The Great Lakes Commission developed a successful regional communication strategy that provides pamphlets and best practices information to stakeholders in order to address these gaps. Nancy Vidler then presented on the importance of local associations in fighting Phragmites. Ms. Vidler explained how a citizens' initiative drove Phragmites control response in the community of Lambton Shores, Ontario, and how they are replicating their model in neighboring communities. She emphasized the difficulties and high costs associated with the eradication of Phragmites, especially once it is established, and she urged municipalities to recognize the problem and adopt a community-wide approach for Phragmites control and eradication.



## Keynote Speaker: The Honourable Vance Badawey, Member of Parliament, Niagara-Centre

It was with great honor that the Cities Initiative welcomed Honourable Vance Badawey, Member of Parliament representing Niagara-Centre. MP Badawey started his speech by greeting his local government counterparts and commending their capacity to motivate and inspire their constituents. MP Badawey also expressed the federal government's desire to increase its cooperation with local governments and MPs from other parties. He reiterated that all elected officials have the responsibility to protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence ecosystem, the region's gateway for foreign markets that connects the Canadian economy to the rest of the world. He also underlined the importance of collaboration between Canada and the United States for a more sustainable future.



*The Honourable Vance Badawey*

## Closing Ceremony and Presentation from 2017 Host City

The conference concluded with a presentation from Borough Mayor Chantal Rouleau (Rivière-des-Prairies–Pointe-aux-Trembles) and a video from Mayor Denis Coderre (Montreal) inviting all delegates to the 2017 Annual Meeting and Conference that will take place in Montreal. We look forward to seeing many mayors and local government representatives in Montreal next June!

## Many Thanks

The Cities Initiative would like to thank the City of Niagara Falls and the Niagara Tourism & Convention Center for graciously hosting and helping to organize the 2016 Annual Meeting and Conference. Many thanks to all the presenters, panelists, and sponsors who made the conference a great success. Lastly, thank you to all of the attendees for joining us this year and contributing to collaborative and innovative progress in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region.



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