



April 25, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
Room S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Murkowski, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Udall:

On behalf of the 129 U.S. and Canadian mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, I am writing to express our organization's support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and to request the appropriation of \$300 million for the program in the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations.

These investments in the Great Lakes bring tremendous value to the region, including the drinking water for over 48 million people, 1.5 million jobs, a \$5.8 trillion binational economy, and a \$7 billion dollar fishery. Annual investment through GLRI aids in the recovery of the Great Lakes after decades of industrial pollution and safeguards these precious water resources from invasive species and harmful algal blooms. The magnitude of the proposed cuts would have serious implications for the economy and restoration efforts of the Great Lakes region. Without GLRI investments, the economy, environment, and way of life in both the United States and Canada is threatened.

GLRI has provided funds to dozens of municipalities and hundreds of organizations for over 3,400 total restoration projects and leveraged economic and environmental recovery in the Great Lakes Basin. For members of the Cities Initiative in particular, GLRI has been instrumental in redeveloping waterfront communities, restoring native habitat, and spurring economic opportunity. However, much work remains to be done and these efforts would be severely curtailed without GLRI.

While GLRI served as a catalyst for many Great Lakes projects, municipalities also have made significant investments of their own in restoration and protection of this valuable water resource. According to a 2008 study conducted by our organization and the Great Lakes Commission, local governments in U.S. and Canada invest over \$15 billion in Great Lakes and St. Lawrence protection and restoration annually. Rather than expecting state and local governments to fund these efforts exclusively, all orders of government must continue to share this responsibility, collaborate on restoration projects, and recognize the importance of the Great Lakes in their budgets.

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Denis Coderre, Mayor of Montréal, Chair

Paul Dyster, Mayor of Niagara Falls, New York, Vice-Chair

Sandra Cooper, Mayor of Collingwood, Secretary-Treasurer



While our region has made incredible gains in the past seven years since GLRI's inception, we have work remaining and new challenges emerging. Our coalition of mayors strongly encourages you to continue investing \$300 million annually in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to sustain the progress made towards a more prosperous and sustainable Great Lakes Basin. If you have any questions, please contact our Executive Director, David Ullrich, at david.ullrich@glscities.org or (312) 201-4516.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Paul Dyster
Vice-Chair, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
Mayor of Niagara Falls, New York

Cc: The Honorable Rob Portman, Co-Chair, Senate Great Lakes Task Force
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Co-Chair, Senate Great Lakes Task Force