

GREAT LAKES & ST LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Letter from the Chair

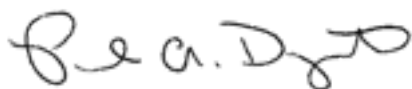
Dear Colleagues:

The 15th year of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative was one of great change and I am pleased to have chaired the organization during this period of growth. The transition in leadership went smoothly and I congratulate John on his first year at the helm. The Cities Initiative also embarked on a strategic planning process to chart a course for the organization and ensure we are impactful and meeting the needs of our member mayors.

The mayors' voice was loud this year on behalf of the lakes, river and region. From our work to create a funding and investment vision for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence in Canada, to upholding the intent and spirit of the Great Lakes Compact in the US, and continued efforts to reduce nutrient pollution, mayors came together in a number of ways to further advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

As we all know, a mayor's work is never done. And such is the case when it comes to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. I look forward to our continued efforts together to ensure the health and vitality of this significant freshwater system and our communities for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Mayor Paul Dyster, City of Niagara Falls, NY
2017-2018 Chair, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative



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Letter from the President & CEO

Mayors, elected officials and friends,

As we began our journey together we faced strong winds, often times in two directions. At times, we faced the winds head on, and we stood strong and forged ahead. Other times the winds pushed us toward a brighter future for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Either way, mayors are facing a future full of uncertainty; unpredictable weather, fluctuating budgets and uncertainty in leadership from top to bottom.

With all that we face together, I know that mayors and those who care about the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence will never waver. We know the importance of the water because it is part of our DNA. So together we focus our efforts on strategic planning, building a sustainable financing model for our organization and restructuring staff to allow mayors to be more productive than ever before.

The future of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence is bright, but it is not one that will come easy. I am confident that we have the best team of individuals assembled to take on that fight, along with our Great Lakes and St. Lawrence partners and our dedicated mayors!

Respectfully,



John Dickert, President & CEO
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative



REPRESENTING MAYORS

Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Collaborative Strategy

The Cities Initiative has embarked on an exciting effort with the [Great Lakes Fishery Commission](#), the [Council of the Great Lakes Region](#), [Freshwater Future](#), and [Stratégies Saint-Laurent](#), to create a vision for long-term federal investment in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence in Canada called the [Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative Strategy](#). Inspired by the U.S. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the Collaborative Strategy will be developed through an inclusive, stakeholder-led process to arrive at common recommendations in four areas: 1). Climate change impacts; 2). Nutrients and other non-point sources of pollution; 3). Toxics and other harmful pollutants; and 4). Bacteriological contaminants on beaches. Collaborative partners have received approval in principle to proceed from the Federal Minister of Environment, the Honorable Catherine McKenna, and are awaiting final word with respect to federal funding to develop the strategy.

Cities Initiative Mayors and staff with Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Collaborative Strategy partners



Diversion Application Review Process

A major development from the Cities Initiative challenge to the [Waukesha Water Diversion Application](#) in 2017 was the opportunity to improve and strengthen the diversion application review process. The organization is working with the Compact Council, the Regional Body, First Nations, and other stakeholders to recommend improvements to the process so that there is more public engagement from all over the basin, more clarity and certainty in the application process, and to ensure the spirit of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Compact and Agreement ("Compact and Agreement") is upheld. The Cities Initiative is appreciative of the input and contributions from First Nations representatives, a critical intervener in the process. We look forward to the next steps and appreciate the good working relationship developed with the staff of the Compact Council and civil servants from the States and Provinces.



REPRESENTING MAYORS

Aquatic Invasive Species

The Cities Initiative continues efforts to halt the movement of Asian carp from the Mississippi River basin into the Great Lakes basin. The construction of interim measures at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam to prevent the upstream transfer of aquatic invasive species (AIS) was this past year's focus. The Cities Initiative submitted [public comments](#) on the US Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study – Brandon Road Draft Integrated Feasibility Study, encouraging the immediate implementation of the Tentatively Selected Plan, and maintaining that ultimately full physical separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins is needed. The Cities Initiative is working to build national support for full physical separation, starting with a collaboration between the Cities Initiative and the mayors of the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative.

Foxconn Manufacturing Plant Development

The Cities Initiative advocates upholding the integrity of the Compact and Agreement as the region pursues economic development opportunities. The organization declared [publically](#) that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) should hold the Racine Water Diversion Application related to the Foxconn manufacturing plant in Mount Pleasant, WI until critical questions around the application, Foxconn's water use, and environmental compliance were further considered. The diversion of 7 million gallons per day from Lake Michigan was ultimately approved by the WDNR in April 2017. The Cities Initiative is on record with letters to Governor Scott Walker indicating that the organization and region will monitor the Foxconn plant to ensure compliance with all environmental regulations related to water, waste and air.



INITIATIVES

Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative

Last year, the Cities Initiative and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) convened farming organizations, drainage professionals, First Nations, Conservation Authorities, cities and NGOs to develop a strategy to intercept and remove phosphorus from agricultural runoff entering the Thames River and its tributaries. The [Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative](#) (PRC) is chaired by Cities Initiative director and Chatham-Kent Mayor Randy Hope and OFA board member Mark Reusser. The strategy identifies a minimum of nine demonstration projects to implement affordable and practical drainage and water management solutions to reduce phosphorus entering the Thames River and ultimately Lake Erie. Following a year of strategy development and fundraising, the PRC anticipates installing projects and technologies on fields and in drainage channels in the Fall of 2018, and monitoring effectiveness over the next 3-4 years. The PRC has been cited in the Canada-Ontario Domestic Action Plan as a leading voluntary initiative to contribute to achieving the 40% phosphorus reduction target under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.



Lac St. Pierre Mayors Caucus on Nutrient Pollution

The Cities Initiative continues efforts to support the Lac St. Pierre Mayors Caucus on Nutrient Pollution. Last March, the Québec Ministry of Environment and Climate Change announced a \$14 million conservation initiative for Lac St. Pierre. The first component of the program, which represents investments of \$9.5 million, is dedicated to restoring wildlife habitats. The second component focuses on research and the creation of a multidisciplinary center of expertise to promote sustainable agriculture compatible with the Lac St. Pierre. Mayor Serge Peloquin of Sorel-Tracy was present at the announcement and expressed satisfaction that concrete action is being taken.

Lake Erie Collaborative

The Cities Initiative is working to build partnerships and collaboration in southeastern Michigan and northwestern Ohio to tackle the issue of nutrient pollution in the western basin of Lake Erie. Over the last nine months the Cities Initiative has coordinated nearly two dozen organizations, US EPA Region 5, farming interests from Canada and the US, and local elected officials to convene an initial meeting to identify local projects designed to immediately impact nutrient runoff.

AquaHacking Technology Challenge

The Cities Initiative has been an active partner with the De Gaspé Beaubien Foundation in the development, promotion, and organization of the AquaHacking Technology Challenge. The AquaHacking Challenge engages young innovators to develop innovative clean-tech solutions to help solve North America's freshwater issues. Issues to be tackled are proposed by key stakeholders and further vetted by an advisory committee to ensure they are realistic and viable. Teams are coached throughout the process by mentors from various fields, all with the goal of ensuring the solutions are practical and accessible to the agencies that will ultimately implement them. The Cities Initiative participates on the advisory team, helps coordinate mentors and experts, and contributes to the dissemination of the innovative technologies to its member cities.



2017 Annual Meeting and Conference

Members of the Cities Initiative were invited to experience Montreal's 375th anniversary during the [14th Annual Meeting and Conference](#), hosted by the City of Montreal and former mayor, Denis Coderre, June 14-16, 2017. The theme, *Cities and Strategic Partnerships*, brought together municipalities, indigenous people, various organizations and stakeholders to discuss the importance of partnerships to municipalities to advance protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

Parliament Hill Day

In November 2017, the Cities Initiative held the second annual Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Days in Ottawa along with partnering organizations the Council of the Great Lakes Region, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Freshwater Future, and Stratégies Saint-Laurent. Over twenty individuals representing municipalities, businesses, environmental NGOs, and fisheries attended and met with over a dozen officials from the Canadian Government, including Members of Parliament, Senators, Ministry officials, and Minister McKenna. Generating support for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Collaborative Strategy was a focal point of the delegation's message during the largest number of federal meetings ever held by the Cities Initiative in one day.



Cities Initiative Mayors and staff and partners meeting with Minister Catherine McKenna.

2017 Midyear Board of Directors Meeting

The Board of Directors convened in Toronto, Ontario on December 11 -12, 2017 for the midyear Board of Directors meeting. The two days included a strategic planning session led by consultant Bina Patel of Saathi Impact Consulting to garner board input on the strategic plan for the organization, and in-depth discussions on Asian carp, nutrient pollution, and climate change. We were joined briefly by the new Regional Director of the North Americas for the C40 Cities, David Miller (former mayor of Toronto and founding Cities Initiative director). Former mayor of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield and a founding director, Denis Lapointe, was recognized for his commitment to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence and the organization.



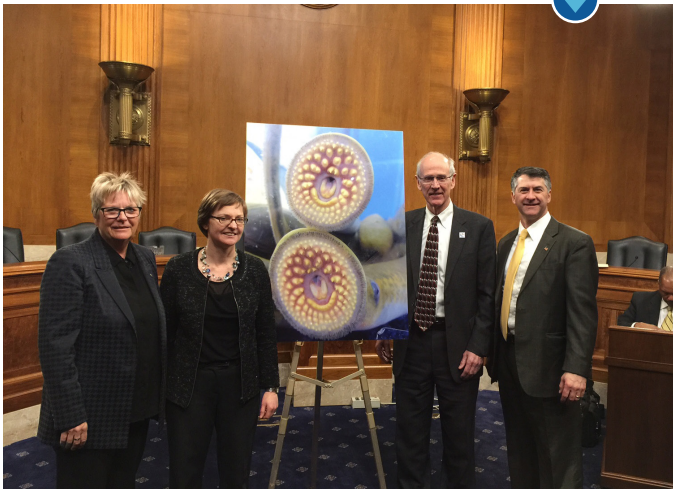
Board members attend the 2017 Midyear Board of Directors meeting in Montreal, Québec.

Regional Meetings

John Dickert has held three regional meetings of mayors to discuss their concerns and questions during his first year at the helm of the Cities Initiative. The first was in the Niagara Region, hosted by Mayor Walter Sendzik of St. Catharines, where a dozen mayors discussed issues ranging from the North American Free Trade Agreement to water levels. Next, in Wisconsin, John met with 14 mayors to discuss the issues of Asian Carp, water levels and funding. Finally, John traveled along the St. Lawrence River meeting with mayors and arrived in Québec City to meet with the Union of Québec Municipalities. The group discussed a variety of topics and met with new mayors from the region. Thanks to Mayor Régis Labeaume, President of the Québec Metropolitan Community, Deputy Mayor Michelle Morin-Doyle of Québec City, and Cities Initiative Program Manager Scott McKay, a very successful and educational conversation with nearly 50 mayors was held.

Great Lakes Days

The Cities Initiative participated in the annual Great Lakes Days on March 6-8, 2018 in Washington DC to advance mayors' Great Lakes priorities at the federal level. Cities Initiative staff visited a number of congressional offices, advocating for full funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, maintaining federal agency capacity to support the Great Lakes, strengthening Farm Bill conservation priorities, investing in water and maritime infrastructure and protecting the Great Lakes from Asian Carp.



Madame Chantal Rouleau, Nicola Crawhall, David Ullrich and John Dickert at a Senate Hearing during Great Lakes Days.



ORGANIZATION

Membership

The Cities Initiative is pleased to welcome new members to the organization this year, bringing our total membership to 133 member municipalities. Welcome to Mayor Marc Demers, Laval, Québec, Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson, Region of York, and Mayor Milt McIver, Northern Bruce Peninsula, Ontario!

Strategic Planning

With board direction, the Cities Initiative engaged in a strategic planning process for the organization in the Fall of 2017. Bina Patel of Saathi Impact Consulting was brought on to guide the organization through the process, which included staff and board strategy sessions, one-on-one outreach to directors and members, discussion and feedback opportunities on all-member webinars and membership polling. The plan aims to evaluate organizational impact, ensure member needs are being met, and improve and expand internal operations. The plan will be rolled out in the Fall of 2018.

In Memorium

The Cities Initiative is grateful to have had the opportunity to work with the late Roger Anderson, chair of the Regional Municipality of Durham and the late Jim Tovey, Mississauga city councillor on our efforts on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

Staffing Transitions

2017-2018 was a year of exciting change for the organization. David Ullrich, founding executive director, retired in June 2017, and John Dickert, former mayor of Racine and director on the Cities Initiative board, took the reins in July as President and CEO. Simon Belisle, program manager, and Andrea Paine, administrative and program assistant, departed the organization in December 2017 and April 2018 respectively. We wish them the best in their new endeavors and thank them for their hard work for the Cities Initiative. In May 2018 the organization welcomed Jane Eagleton as the new administrative assistant in the Chicago Office. Jane comes to us from Oklahoma and speaks French.

Fundraising

The Cities Initiative is building a more sustainable funding base for the organization with a new fundraising strategy. The goal is to expand the number of members and include more foundation support for general operations, while building partnerships and coalitions to provide mayors with dedicated grants specifically for mayoral projects. With board approval, the staff also developed corporate sponsorship opportunities to pursue with appropriate corporate partners. While it is the first of this kind for the organization, the Cities Initiative is eager to build partnerships like the one established with GEI Consultants in May 2018. Through our partnership, GEI and the Cities Initiative will work together to share with member municipalities information, best practices, and expertise around resiliency planning and green infrastructure.

The Cities Initiative would like to thank its 133 member municipalities, who's collective voice helps advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. Special thanks to the Joyce Foundation, the C.S. Mott Foundation, and the Wege Foundation for their continued support for the organization and our work. Thank you to our new partner, GEI Consultants, for their support as a Protector of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence.