



GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE
ALLIANCE DES VILLES DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT
RESOLUTION – 2019M

TAKING ACTION TO REDUCE PLASTIC WASTE IN THE GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

WHEREAS, plastics are low cost, durable materials used on a daily basis. Their production and use are growing faster than any other material due to their many uses; and

WHEREAS, the characteristics that make plastics so valuable also create major issues for their end-of-life management, resulting in increased amounts of plastic waste being released into the environment; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that over half of plastic products and packaging are designed to be used once and thrown away. Today, an estimated 95% of the material value of plastic packaging, or between \$100 and \$150 billion dollars annually, is lost to the global economy after only a single use; and

WHEREAS, some plastics are collected and recycled, however the recycling rates are generally low, globally estimated at 14%, 11% in Canada and 9% in the USA; and

WHEREAS, microplastics are small plastics, less than 5mm in diameter, that are often broken-down or broken-off pieces of larger plastic items. Microplastics can also include synthetic fibers like nylon and polyester; and

WHEREAS microplastics are found in stormwater, urban and rural runoff and can pass through wastewater treatment plants, whose processes are not designed for their removal. Microplastics can be found along shorelines, surface water, and sediments in large numbers in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Microplastics may not decompose, may absorb chemical contaminants, contaminate surface waters, and be eaten by fish and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, plastic waste may pose a threat to the short and long-term health of the Great Lakes- St. Lawrence region and the residents and species within it; and

WHEREAS, the vision is to encourage a circular economy where all plastics are kept in the economy and out of the environment, including the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence; and

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes- St. Lawrence region are the largest source of surface freshwater in the world and the primary water source for 40 million people; and a major connection to the Atlantic Ocean; and

WHEREAS, The International Joint Commission has recommended the development of a binational microplastics strategy, the international community has taken action on plastics and microplastics, through the G7 Charter on Plastics and the global commitment on the New Plastics Economy signed by 150 companies; and

WHEREAS, municipalities have implemented comprehensive processes to ensure safe, high quality drinking water, and work to increase recycling rates; and

WHEREAS, many municipalities have passed motions limiting plastic water bottles at municipally- owned and operated facilities and endorsed the principles of reducing plastic bottled water to reduce waste and promote municipal drinking water as a safe, convenient and affordable alternative; and

WHEREAS, there are natural substitutes for plastic straws available at this time, and many businesses are already using them; and

WHEREAS, the list of cities across North America, colleges, universities, schools, and public institutions that have moved to eliminate plastic waste by banning plastic bottled water and plastic straws continues to grow; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Great Lakes Lakes-St. Lawrence Cities Initiative urges communities around the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence, to work together with governments, industry and stakeholders, to encourage a circular economy where all plastics are kept in the economy and out of the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence River and all waterways, and to develop a binational microplastics strategy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Cities Initiative calls for government and industry investments in science, monitoring, infrastructure and policies to help improve product design, plastic collection and recycling systems, to reduce plastics and microplastics in our waterways and nature; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative work with its members, governments and other groups to launch a program that offers a variety of tools for municipalities to help reduce plastic waste and microplastics from entering the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities supports participation of community-led cleanups, including through the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, US Adopt- a- Beach and other groups, to help reduce plastic waste and microplastics from entering the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and recording amount of individual litter items removed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that members of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative are encouraged to move towards reducing plastic waste, such as plastic straws and plastic bottled water for example, where-ever possible, in their municipal facilities, parks, municipal events and public spaces, and encourage alternatives that are non-plastic and/or compostable; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that municipalities be encouraged to work with festivals and events held in their jurisdiction to encourage organizers to adopt environmentally-friendly alternatives to plastics waste where possible; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative supports the addition by municipalities, states and provinces of recycling and waste containers at public beaches.