



# Sheboygan, Wisconsin Mayor Mike Vandersteen elected chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

**Chicago – June 9, 2020** -- Sheboygan, Wisconsin Mayor Mike Vandersteen will lead the bi-national Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative following a unanimous vote by the organization's board of directors. Vandersteen succeeds outgoing chair Michelle Morin-Doyle, Deputy Mayor of Quebec City, Quebec, and will serve a one-year term.

Additionally, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Board of Directors announced that Deputy Mayor Michelle Morin-Doyle is named Past Chairman; Walter Sendzik, Mayor of St. Catharines, will serve as Vice-Chair; and Councillor Suzie Miron will serve as Secretary Treasurer. New members joining the board are Waukegan Mayor Sam Cunningham and Gary Mayor Jerome Prince.

"I am proud to be leading this important organization that represents the voices of U.S. and Canadian mayors across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region," said Mayor Vandersteen. "Mayors are on the front lines confronting the challenges facing coastal communities and I look forward to advancing solutions that strengthen the economic and environmental health of our member cities and towns."

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Board of Directors affirmed several top priorities for the coming year, including:

- Implementing the recently released Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative Action Plan 2020-2030, which outlines actions for Canadian federal and provincial governments to address climate change, toxics exposure, harmful algae blooms and contaminated beaches;
- Advocating for federal investments that create jobs and stimulate economic activity while addressing critical Great Lakes priorities, such as modernizing water infrastructure, minimizing impacts from coastal erosion and flooding, and sustaining Great Lakes restoration efforts;

- Working with federal, state, and provincial agencies to respond to the impacts of historically high lakes levels and building capacity among local governments to strengthen resilience to climate change;
- Expanding and diversifying membership to include new cities and towns, particularly underserved communities and areas of the basin not currently represented on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative.

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative will continue its work on other longstanding priorities, such as preventing the introduction and spread of Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species; reducing impacts from nutrient pollution; strengthening the process for reviewing water diversion applications; reducing plastic waste in the Great Lakes; and expanding ecotourism opportunities.

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Meeting, originally scheduled for mid-May in Quebec City, was cancelled due to restrictions in place to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Instead, monthly webinars are being held for Cities Initiative members on specific topics of interest.

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is completing an organizational restructuring that includes new staff, strengthened policy expertise and modernized communications. In January, Jonathan Altenberg was hired as the new executive director. He brings experience in political affairs, communications and marketing, including work in Washington, DC and with several state legislatures. Matt Doss also joined the staff in May as U.S. Policy Advisor. Matt previously worked as a policy advisor for the Great Lakes Commission for the past 25 years.

### **About The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative**

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a bi-national coalition of close to 100 U.S. and Canadian mayors and local officials working to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. The Cities Initiative and local officials integrate environmental, economic, and social agendas and sustain a resource that represents approximately 20 percent of the world's surface freshwater supply, provides drinking water for 40 million people, and is the foundation upon which a strong regional economy is based.

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### **For More Information Contact:**

Jonathan Altenberg  
Executive Director  
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative  
Mobile: 847-347-6947  
Office: 312-201-4516