

GREAT LAKES & ST LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE

2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues:

As Chair of the Board of Directors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, I am pleased to present our 2019 Annual Report.

First and foremost, I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve this distinguished group of dedicated members that have given their time and passion to the protection of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Your efforts not only benefit your community, but they help to preserve our precious water for future generations.

Over the last year we have seen many transitions of leaders at the local, provincial and federal levels. While faces may change, our dedication to protecting our greatest of natural resources stays strong and united. We have fought back challenges in the US and educated newly elected leaders in Canada to ensure that they understand how their decisions can impact the economies, lifestyle and drinking water.

Together, we successfully fought to protect the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding in Washington, while building our relationships in Ottawa to support the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative Strategy and Thames River Phosphorus Collaborative. Mayors testified at the US Conference of Mayors meeting in Washington D.C. this January to explain how the decisions on trade would impact on our two nations.

We continued our efforts to create a stronger Great Lakes Compact to ensure our waters are safe and the laws are strong enough to withstand the many diversions being discussed. After a December 6, 2018 proposal passed that ignored most of our concerns, we see a change in the gubernatorial leadership in the Midwest which we hope leads to a strengthening of the rules.

I am proud to say that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is striving to build upon its member engagement as we move into 2019-2020 with even more challenges facing us. Our team has recently hired a firm from Québec to work on building our messaging and communication to allow us to be the voice of the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence.

I believe 2019 and 2020 will be exciting and challenging times for our communities. There is no better group of people I would rather work with to take on those challenges than you, the dedicated leaders of the region. Thank you for your commitment and continued support.



Michelle Morin-Doyle,

Deputy Mayor

Québec City

2018-2019 Chair, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative



GREAT LAKES & ST LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE

2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Letter from the President & CEO

Mayors, elected officials and friends,

We are better together! Thank you for your support and commitment to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence water that brings life and vitality to our residents and our communities.

Often people take this precious freshwater resource for granted, unaware of the challenges you as leaders face every day to provide them with clean, safe drinking water and a healthy environment to live work and play.

Thanks to our team of leaders and staff we have been able to accomplish much in 2018 and look forward to a strong 2019 of success and growth. The hard work of the Board of Directors, members and staff have allowed us to continue our efforts to build a new Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Collaborative in Canada to mirror, in part, the efforts of the US Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds with a focused priority on the protection of the Region.

The Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative was also funded by the Canadian federal government, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the GLSLCI, bringing together municipal and agricultural partners to install innovative technologies to reduce phosphorus at the edge of farmers' fields and municipal drains. Together, working with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and other organisations in the Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative, we are contributing to practical solutions to reduce nutrients and help keep Lake Erie healthy.

We are fortunate to have new members who know the power and importance of working together. I want to thank the Board of Directors and staff who have worked so hard to finalize our strategic plan, which provides our three critical areas of focus: water quality and quantity, Infrastructure and climate change.

We have been active in our outreach, introducing our Mayors and leaders to familiar faces at the US Conference on Mayors, and Ontario and Quebec forums. Our leaders have testified to panels in Washington DC and the Middle East at the Mayors Across Borders - Eco Peace Conference. We were honored in November, to solidify our partnership with Anishinabek Nation to call for more stringent rules for any future water withdrawals.

We continue to battle for Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding in Washington D.C. The \$300 million investment is critically important to so many local projects throughout US communities. It will be important going forward to have our Mayors and leaders tell their stories of the impacts of decisions made at all levels of government if we are to be successful in protecting our most valuable resource.

Again, thank you for your help as together we fight for the protection of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. The success of our local economies, quality of life and drinking water are relying on us!



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



Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Collaborative Strategy

Thanks to funding from the Canadian federal government, the [Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative](#) (GLSLCI) is creating a vision for long term investment in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence inspired by the US Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The GLSLCI and our partners, the [Great Lakes Fishery Commission](#), the [Council of Great Lakes Region](#), [Freshwater Future](#) and [Stratégies Saint-Laurent](#), have brought together over 200 thought leaders and volunteers into a series of discussions, webinars, meetings and recommendations on a final plan to be presented to the federal Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

The outcome of the 18 month process will be the [Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative Strategy](#), designing a new and innovative approach to protection efforts and better alignment of government science, programs and investments. The recommendations will be submitted to the Canadian federal government, and shared with the Governments of Ontario and Quebec, indigenous leaders, municipal leaders, and broader communities. The Collaborative Strategy is focusing on four key challenges: climate change; toxics and other harmful pollutants; nutrients; and beaches and bacteriological contamination.

The first phase of the project, focusing on the Great Lakes, will report in June 2019. The St. Lawrence phase now underway, will report in early spring 2020, with the final integrated report in late Spring 2020.



Water Quantity Project: Compact Council

Consistent with our new strategic plan's focus on water quantity, the Cities Initiative continues to protect the integrity of our vital water resource and work to improve the management of water quantity in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin.

In 2005, the Great Lakes States and Canadian Provinces of Ontario and Quebec jointly entered into the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (the "Agreement") in which the governing bodies recognized their "shared duty to protect, conserve, restore, improve and manage the renewable but finite Waters of the Basin." The Great Lakes States reaffirmed their commitment to this Agreement by entering the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Compact (the "Compact"), ratified by Congress in 2008. In order to implement the objectives of the Agreement and the Compact, the member parties created the Regional Body and the Compact Council.

In August 2017, considering its challenging experience with the City of Waukesha water diversion, the Compact Council agreed to work with the Cities Initiative and others to update and improve the Council's procedures for future applications. Throughout 2018, the Cities Initiative—along with the Tribes and First Nations and other concerned stakeholders—sought to work collaboratively with the Council, and repeatedly

advised the Council of several critical issues which needed to be addressed to ensure the protection of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. Unfortunately, the Council elected to ignore many of the issues raised, and instead enacted revised procedures that are still deficient in many critical respects.

Anticipating this disappointing result, the Cities Initiative held a [press conference](#) November 29, 2018 for the first time joined by the Anishinabek Nation - to call for greater protections and changes to the procedures. We were successful in preventing the Compact Council from adopting a position that would have led to a worsening of the procedures. For example, before the Cities Initiative and Anishinabek Nation sounded the alarm, the Compact Council was proposing

that any citizen wishing to appeal a decision would be responsible for the cost of the appeal hearing. Our coordinated action appears to have been important to prevent such a step backwards.

In addition, we have received the assurance that the procedures update discussions were not capped and that we would pursue our work in a 2019 "Phase II". In cooperation with our legal advisors Jenner & Block, we have drafted a White Paper that presents the rationale supporting policy improvements. With the support of our members and funders, we will continue our work to ensure that the spirit of the two agreements are upheld.



November 2018 Joint news conference with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and Anishinabek Nation calling for increased protection for any proposed water withdrawals

Stopping Asian Carp from entering the Great Lakes-St Lawrence

Asian Carp are a group of invasive fish that threaten the health of the Great Lakes and its fisheries. Asian Carp are found in the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal, which links the Mississippi River Basin to the Great Lakes, as well as in other parts of the Chicago Area Waterway System. Although Asian Carp have not yet reached the Great Lakes, mayors and stakeholders around the Great Lakes Region are concerned that the carp will soon travel into the basin, where they may rapidly grow and harm the Great Lakes ecosystem, including the \$7 billion fishing industry.

To stop Asian Carp there are a system of existing controls in Chicago and experts have now determined the most likely entry points, including priority #1 the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, Illinois about 45 miles -75 kilometers from Lake Michigan and south west of Chicago. Adult Asian carp are about 6 miles- 10 kilometers downstream from the Brandon Lock and Dam. The Cities Initiative provided comments on the US Army Corps



VOICE OF MAYORS

of Engineers proposed plan, and calls for the immediate implementation of the proposed works, called the Tentatively Selected Plan at Brandon Road. Time is of the essence in order to coordinate construction with the planned closure of locks for regular maintenance.

The GLSLCI has brought additional partners to the table to convince Congress to move forward with funding the Brandon Road work in 2019. The Mayors continue to support separating the system entirely as a final measure to eliminate the threat of Asian Carp entering through the canal.

In February 2019, the Cities Initiative issued a [news release](#) on Asian Carp, to draw attention to the immediate need to allocate funding, start design work and construction of non-structural methods, which was picked up in Canadian and US media. The GLSLCI will continue its work with its partners on the Brandon Road project while aggressively looking for a long term solution to Asian Carp.

INITIATIVES

Lake Erie and Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative

Lake Erie water quality has declined in recent years, due to large algal blooms which impact drinking water, fishing, wildlife and recreation. In some years, the western part of Lake Erie algal bloom can stretch over 1000 square miles, and turn the Lake bright green. Scientists and governments working under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) have set a new target of 40% reduction in phosphorus to help reduce the algal blooms and lack of oxygen.

To help support these efforts, the Cities initiative has joined with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, conservation authorities, First Nations, municipalities, drainage and environmental groups on the [Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative](#). The goal is to test innovative technologies to reduce phosphorus at the edge of farmer fields and in municipal drains. Five technologies were chosen from a competitive process, and are being installed in the Thames River watershed, in Southwestern Ontario. The Thames River is a priority watershed under the GLWQA and this project is one of the actions under the Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action plan. The Cities Initiative thanks Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and other farming organisations for funding support for this 3-5 year project.

In 2019, the GLSLCI is preparing to build upon the success in Canada and to discuss expanding the collaborative in the US, with help from partner organizations around the Maumee River region and the US EPA.



Meeting of the Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative, in London to discuss project progress.



INITIATIVES

Webinar Series

The GLSLCI is committed to providing valuable information to our members. Therefore, we created a webinar series to provide a consistent stream of ideas and best practices to assist our municipal leaders and their staff.

We recognize that municipalities in the Great Lakes Region are experiencing the effects of our changing climate – from flooding, to extreme temperatures, to winter storms, to high winds. Great Lakes cities are at different stages of preparedness for extreme weather associated with climate change.

Cities Initiative hosted a series of webinars on resilient municipalities, including best practices sharing, expert guidance and solutions. Key topics addressed include preparedness and response to severe flooding, community engagement for resiliency planning, green infrastructure implementation in resource-strapped communities, and financing and funding for resilient infrastructure. If you missed these thought provoking webinars, you can catch them by viewing the recordings on our [website](#). Please join us for our next webinar series starting fall 2019.



AquaHacking Technology Challenge

The Cities Initiative continues to be an active partner with the De Gaspé Beaubien Foundation in 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 contributes to advancing innovation and solutions to its member cities by participating on the advisory team, acting as a Water Leader for microplastics and flooding, helping coordinate mentors, and sharing the innovative technologies.



Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessment-CRISSP Phase II Project

Through a collaboration with AECOM, the City of Gary and University of Michigan's Great Lakes Integrated Science and Assessment office (GLISA), the Cities Initiative has developed the Climate Ready Infrastructure and Strategic Sites Protocol (CRISSP), which relies on available data and municipal staff's own knowledge of their facilities and infrastructure to assess their assets' vulnerability to extreme weather in a way that is both relatively quick and low-cost.

INITIATIVES

While the tool has been received positively, opportunities for refinement and expansion have been identified. The Phase II is currently in discussion with member cities, including Duluth, MN and Repentigny, QC. Our plans are to refine and expand CRISSP to include an economic component to aid with decision-making, improve user-friendliness, and offer more training and promotion to our members. As soon as funding is secured, an Advisory Committee comprised of municipal representatives from coastal cities in each of the eight Great Lakes states and the provinces of Ontario and Québec will be engaged to help inform our efforts.

EVENTS

2018 Annual Meeting and Conference

Members of the Cities Initiative were invited to the [15th Annual Meeting and Conference](#), hosted by the Town of Ajax and former mayor, Steve Parish, June 13-15, 2018. The conference brought together municipalities, indigenous people, and organizations to discuss methods to advance resiliency to extreme weather and flooding.



2018 Midyear Board of Directors Meeting

On November 29-30, 2018 the Board of Directors held their midyear meeting in Collingwood, Ontario. The two days included discussions on water quantity, microplastics, nutrient pollution, and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative. For the first time, we were delighted to be joined by the Anishinabek Nation, Grand Council Chief Glen Hare, Regional Deputy Grand Council Chief Ed Wawia and Regional Chiefs for a discussion and a joint [press conference](#) on water quantity and the need for strict procedures for any proposal for water diversions. Former Mayor of Collingwood, and outgoing Chair, Sandra Cooper was recognized for her commitment to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence and the organization.



REPRESENTING MAYORS

Mayors Across Borders

Mayors from Canada and the US were invited to the Jordan River Valley in the Middle East to continue conversations and knowledge sharing with the Jordan River Valley Mayors and discuss potential solutions to the water crisis. The trip, supported by the Sister Cities International and Eco Peace, took the Mayors on a 10 day tour of 20 cities, meeting 15 mayors and joining a 5 nation panel to discuss the water crisis in the Jordan River Valley.

Mayors Crombie and Twolan provided expert testimony that has led to new approaches to water to consider. The Mayors from the Jordan River Valley are considering continuing the discussions in Washington DC in 2019-2020.



US Conference of Mayors' Event

In an effort to build bridges between the US and Canada, the GLSLCI has begun a series of meetings between our Mayors and federal officials. In 2019, Cities Initiative Mayors attended the US Conference of Mayors' Annual Meeting in Washington D.C. Thanks to support from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Embassy, Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie spoke at the US Conference of Mayors' Trade Committee, discussing the impacts of the new trade agreement between Canada/US/Mexico. The Mayors presented a strong case for open borders and less tariffs between the US and Canada.

Mayors Sendzik and Crombie spoke at the Climate Change hearing and were warmly recognized by former Mayor Miller, the C-40 North American Director. US Mayors Vandersteen, Dyster, Weaver and others played a significant role in demonstrating the need for cross border collaboration. The GLSLCI will continue to bring our Mayors across borders to build relationships that are critical to our future.



REPRESENTING MAYORS

Great Lakes Days in Washington

The Cities Initiative participated in the annual Great Lakes Days in March 2019 in Washington DC to help advance Mayors' Great Lakes priorities at the federal level. Cities Initiative staff visited a number of offices, adding our voice to support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding, increasing efforts to stop Asian Carp, and reducing algal blooms in Lake Erie.



Sheboygan Mayor Mike Vandersteen attends a meeting hosted by the Canadian Consulate

Wege Award

[Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award](#) program awards \$5,000 to one small Cities Initiative member city in the U.S. or Canada working to protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. The Cities Initiative, in partnership with the Wege Foundation, is proud to continue the tradition of this annual award to encourage environmental stewardship and recognize effort and results.

This year's winner was the Severn Sound Invasive Species Strategy, developed collaboratively between the Townships of Tay, Tiny, and Severn, the Town of Midland and the Severn Sound Environmental Association. It manages invasive species at the regional level by incorporating mapping, monitoring, and controlling problematic invasive species while fostering community involvement and education. With the Award, the team will be able to acquire much needed equipment to map, monitor, and control invasive species, as well as produce educational posters and factsheets, and train staff.



ORGANIZATION

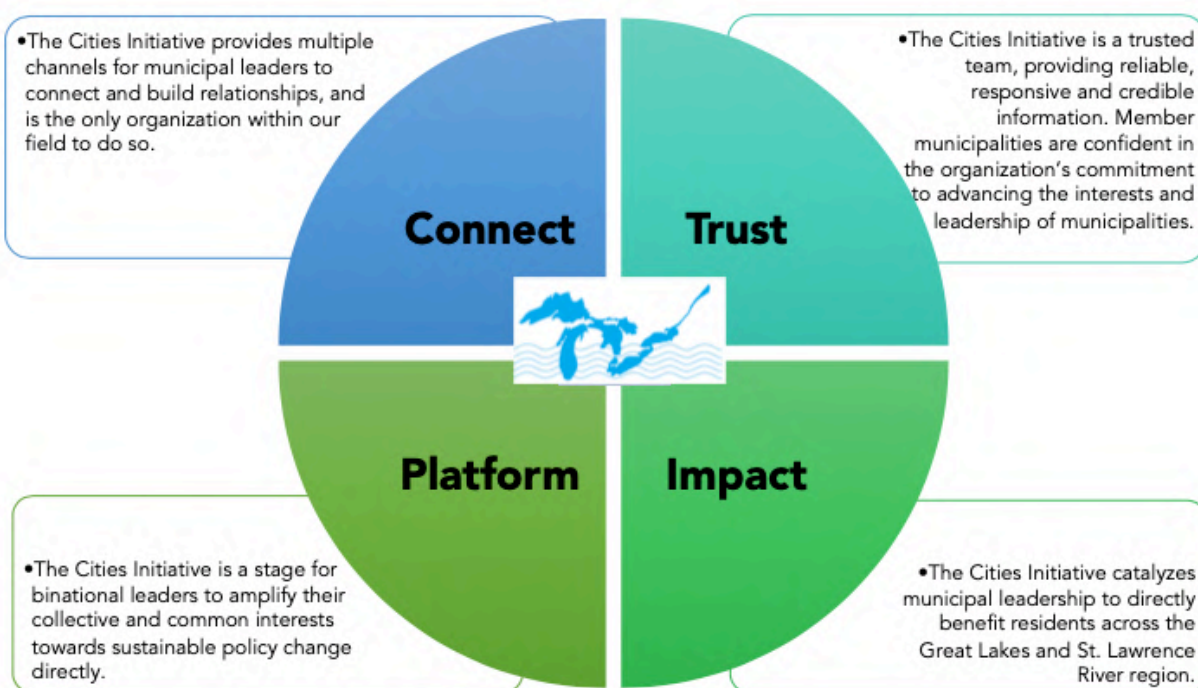
Membership & Board Members

The Cities Initiative is pleased to welcome several new members to the organization this year, bringing our total membership to 84 member municipalities. Welcome to new members from Waukegan IL, Wasaga Beach ON, Thessalon ON, Vaudreuil-Dorion QC and Kenosha WI. If you are a municipality interested in [membership](#) please join us!

Following the Ontario municipal election in October 2018, there have been some changes in our [Board of Directors](#). We thank our outgoing Chair Mayor Sandra Cooper, Collingwood, Chatham Kent Mayor Randy Hope, and Tay Township Scott Warnock for their service to the organization, the Board and the Great Lakes. Deputy Mayor, Michelle Morin Doyle, UMQ was voted in as Chair of the Board. Welcome to three new Directors joining the Board, Mayor Brian Saunderson from Collingwood, Mayor Darrin Canniff from Chatham Kent and Mayor Karen Weaver from Flint. Welcome aboard!

Strategic Planning

In August 2018, the Board approved the Cities Initiative strategic plan. 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 sets our three focus areas for the Cities Initiative: water quality and quantity, infrastructure and climate change.



ORGANIZATION

Staffing

Cities Initiative staff are here to help you with any questions and guide you to resources you may need. We are a [team](#) of four: John Dickert, former Mayor of Racine and director on the Cities Initiative board, continues as President and CEO. Sarah Rang joined the organization in September 2018 as Deputy Director. Scott McKay continues as Quebec Program Manager and Jane Eagleton continues as Administrative Assistant. Melissa Soline, program manager, departed the organization in April 2019 and we wish her the best in her new endeavor and thank her for her hard work for the Cities Initiative over the years. Nicola Crawhall, continues to assist the organization as a consultant on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Collaborative. Many thanks to our interns in the Chicago office, Nabil Mahmood from Western University (2018) and Jessica Vibert (2018-2019), supported by the Quebec government.

Financial Report

The Cities Initiative would like to thank our member municipalities whose collective voice and support helps us protect and restore the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence.

We are very fortunate to continue to have the support of Joyce Foundation, C.S. Mott Foundation and Wege Foundation who have generously supported our organization. Thank you to our legal firm, Jenner and Block who have generously provided pro-bono advice on water withdrawals.

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 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 guidelines to help identify corporate partners. While it is the first of this kind for the organization, the Cities Initiative is starting to build partnerships with GEI Consultants, TruGreen and Stantec.

The Cities Initiative would like to thank our member municipalities whose collective voice helps advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. Special thanks to 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 partners, GEI Consultants, TruGreen and Stantec for their support.