

Letter from the Outgoing Chair

Fellow Mayors:

First let me inform you that since I am no longer serving as Mayor of Sheboygan, I have stepped down as Chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative effective immediately. I will remain on the board as the City of Sheboygan's proxy for incoming Mayor Sorenson until the next AGM.

It has been a tremendous honor to serve as Chair of this organization. While COVID-19 has impacted all of us, we were still able to achieve incredible things during my tenure. Here is a recap of our organization's accomplishments over the last 11 months.

- Increased our membership ranks by 10% and added new cities like Detroit, MI as active members.
- Successfully gained passage of U.S. Government American Rescue Plan that will distribute more than $360 billion in emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and tribal governments with specific funds set aside for rehabilitation of water infrastructure.
- Successfully advanced the creation of a Canada Water Agency and a number of other priorities outlined in the Action Plan to Protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence 2020-2030.
- Successfully advanced the inclusion of $111 billion in water infrastructure funding as part of the Biden Administration's American Jobs Act being considered by Congress. This proposal also includes significant funding for water equity solutions.
- Created a Mayors Commission on Water Equity that will fight for policy initiatives to battle the issue of water inequity in the United States.
- Created the Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience, a council of 16 mayors working to develop a policy blueprint that will work to enact concrete solutions to fight erosion along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River.
- Built new partnerships with foundations and added like-minded company sponsors.

I am happy to report that I am leaving this organization in the very capable hands of Mayor Walter Sendzik. Mayor Sendzik and I have worked closely over the last year to assure the vitality of this organization. I know he will continue these efforts during his term. He will be joined by Mayor Barrett of Milwaukee as Vice Chair and Mayor Cornell of the Township of Tiny as our Treasurer.

I would like to thank every one of you for your commitment to our efforts during my term as Chair. Without your commitment to the economic and environmental issues of our watersheds, we would never have accomplished all of the aforementioned achievements for our communities.

Best regards,

Mike Vandersteen