

Summary of Mid-Year

The Mid-Year Meeting provided an excellent opportunity for municipal leaders across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River to speak directly with federal representatives on several critical issues.

The first day focused heavily on U.S. federal officials discussing the region's environment, economy and social issues. The meeting included:

Former Congressman Cedric Richmond, Senior Advisor to the President and Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement, spoke about the infrastructure and environmental priorities of the Biden Administration.

Congress Brad Schneider (D-IL) spoke about environmental and infrastructure issues in Congress and the push by elected officials in Washington to provide funding to American municipalities.

Radhika Fox, the newly appointed Environmental Protection Agency Assistant Administrator for water, spoke about the Biden Administration's focus on water issues.

Updates and briefings by industry and government officials were also part of the meeting agenda:

- **Algae Blooms and Phosphorus**: The Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative vice-chair presented the successes they have seen over the first two years of the study. Outlining plans for the third and final year of the project provided a road map for future actions. To learn more about the Thames River study and related work being done across the region, see our That Green Stuff on the Great Lakes: Algae (Cladophora) Bloom webinar or the study.
- **Invasive Species and Asian Carp**: Officials from the State of Illinois and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided an update on current activities to stop the spread of Asian Carp into the Great Lakes watershed, including progress in designing control measures to deploy at the Brandon Road lock near Chicago.

Updates on initiatives were also provided by staff:

- A review of the successful Great Lakes Day in Washington included events and meetings with Canadian Members of Parliament and American Members of Congress.
- Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Coastal Resiliency Needs Assessment Survey, a Cities Initiative's effort to survey shoreline communities in the eight states and two provinces about their coastal management challenges and needs.

American speakers were also in attendance on Day two:

Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) spoke about the environmental and infrastructure initiatives currently being debated in the U.S. Senate and the need for more region wide coordination to ensure national and global economic competitiveness, while protecting the environment.

Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) who addressed the important legislative initiatives that will be considered in Congress that will protect the Great Lakes.

Day two focused on Canadian issues with several speakers, including:

Chris Bittle, Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, spoke about the Government of Canada's commitment to supporting municipalities with additional funding during COVID, coupled with stable, predictable long-term financing for municipal infrastructure. He also spoke about the transportation needs of the region as climate change affects lakes, bridges, and roads.

Terry Duguid, Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Climate Change, spoke about the new Canada Water Agency and the Government of Canada's focus on developing national resources to help local governments adjust to climate change.

There were also two panels of elected officials:

- **New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) Member of Parliament Brian Masse** (NDP-ON) and **Carole Hughes** spoke with mayors on various regional issues, with a focus on support for small, rural and remote communities dealing with the effects of climate change and the need for economic stimulus.
- **Great Lakes Legislative Caucus Delegation of Provincial and State Representative**s, including: **Jennifer French** (NDPO-ON), **Joelle Boutin** (CAQ-QC), **Toby Barrett** (PCO-ON) lead a conversation on how the municipal and state/provincial governments can work together on environmental and economic issues facing the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

Day two also included a briefing by **Chamber of Marine Commerce CEO Bruce Burrows** on issues facing shipping in the region. He outlined updates on the effects of COVID-19 on the industry and the infrastructure, labor, regulatory and navigation modernization needed to ensure continued economic growth.