Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
Alliance des villes des Grands Lacs et du Saint-Laurent

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

RESOLUTION 3 – 2009M

TRIPARTITE TABLE ON GREAT LAKES COLLABORATION AND THE RENEWAL OF THE CANADA-ONTARIO AGREEMENT RESPECTING THE GREAT LAKES BASIN ECOSYSTEM

WHEREAS, Great Lakes municipalities have direct responsibilities to protect and promote the Great Lakes, in terms of their role in providing drinking water, promoting economic development and tourism, managing sewage and stormwater outflows, protecting wetlands and natural areas, overseeing waterfront development, and operating beaches and marinas, among other responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, municipalities are collectively the largest financial contributors to the protection of Great Lakes, with local governments in Canada and the United States investing over $15 billion every year to protect and restore the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River system, of which $4.3 billion is spent in Ontario and Quebec alone; and

WHEREAS, the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem (COA) is the primary agreement between Canada and Ontario to protect Great Lakes water quality on the Canadian side of the lakes, defining common goals, responsibilities and actions at the federal and provincial levels; and

WHEREAS, the COA is also the mechanism used by Canada to meet its obligations under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA), which defines common goals and results to be achieved on a bi-national level; and

WHEREAS, the COA is currently up for renewal in 2010, and there is potential for the GLWQA to be reopened for renegotiation as well; and

WHEREAS, meeting existing COA targets could have significant implications for municipalities; and

WHEREAS, Great Lakes Mayors are calling for new targets to be introduced under COA that address issues that affect local communities and people who live and play at the Lakes' shorelines, such as better beaches management, algae control, support to adopt innovative techniques to reduce stormwater run-off and sewage entering the lakes; and

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WHEREAS, there has been no senior forum where federal, provincial and municipal governments come together to coordinate their Great Lakes protection activities and plan for the future; and

WHEREAS, a COA Memorandum of Cooperation (COA MOC) was signed in July 2008 to establish a new collaborative process between Ontario municipalities and the provincial Government, and has since facilitated municipal-provincial dialogue on Great Lakes issues of mutual interest, and created a forum for Ontario Great Lakes Mayors and Chairs to provide strategic advice to the Province for the upcoming negotiations of the COA; and

WHEREAS, during a COA MOC Summit meeting in May of 2009, the Great Lakes Mayors shared and discussed a collaborative action plan to improve Great Lakes protection with Ontario Ministers of the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, which included five action areas and a series of key recommendations; and

WHEREAS, Great Lakes Mayors wish to explore with the Federal Government their interest in joining the dialogue with the municipal and provincial governments and in engaging in collaborative approaches to protect the Great Lakes; and

WHEREAS, the time has come for federal, provincial and municipal governments to work together to reinvigorate and reorient Great Lakes protection for the benefit of the people who live and play at the shoreline, particularly as the COA, and possibly the GLWQA, are opened for negotiation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that GLSLCI members call on the federal and Ontario governments to join the GLSLCI in creating a senior municipal-provincial-federal Great Lakes Table, with Mayors and Ministers meeting at least once a year, to drive tripartite collaboration on Great Lakes protection, report on progress, and share information and ideas on COA negotiation and implementation.

Signed this 18th day of June, 2009

George Heartwell, Chair
Mayor of Grand Rapids
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative