

**Prepared Remarks of Governor Jim Doyle
Annual Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Mayors
Thursday, July 15, 2004**

Remarks:

I'm pleased to be here today at your annual conference. I'd like to thank Mayor Daley for hosting this meeting and for his leadership on Great Lakes issues. I commend all of you for being here today to better organize and coordinate our collective efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes are an international treasure. As part of our identity, they are also a tremendous asset that will help secure our region's future.

State and local governments in the region have invested and continue to invest significant resources in programs to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Despite these investments, and the many federal programs currently in place to protect and restore our Lakes, the Great Lakes remain at risk of damage from continuing pollution, environmental degradation, aquatic invasive species, and unsustainable water use.

The good news is that as a region, we are working together to protect against these and other risks. The Governors, Premiers, and Mayors, together with the federal governments and the private sector, have jointly made protection and restoration a regional priority. We must retain our abilities to manage our Great Lakes water use. While we must be ready to protect our lakes from diversions to Arizona or New Mexico, we must equally protect our local management roles from the possible federalization of water use decisions.

In December, my colleague Governor Bob Taft of Ohio met with you as Chair of the Council of Great Lakes Governors. At that meeting, he outlined the nine priorities for Great Lakes restoration and protection that the Governors collectively articulated in our October 1, 2003 letter to Congress. Many of these priorities are very similar to your own, adopted through the Great Lakes Cities Initiative, and we see them as complementary to one another.

The Governors and Premiers continue working to achieve our first priority – sustainable use of water resources – through the Annex 2001 to the Great Lakes Charter.

In the Annex, the Governors and Premiers have outlined a vision to update the management of the waters of the Great Lakes Basin. More specifically, the Annex will provide a framework for a new decision making standard to evaluate new or increased water use proposals. Annex 2001 was borne out of the recognition that demand for Great Lakes water will only grow in the future and that action was needed immediately.

Once implemented, these agreements will ensure that when other regions, particularly western states, look toward the Great Lakes to solve their problems, we'll have the legal authority we need to protect ourselves. In part, this means improving our own stewardship over the use of Great Lakes water.

We've been pleased to include the Mayors in an Advisory Committee, which has helped inform the development of the draft Annex implementing agreements. I want to thank

Dave Ullrich, Executive Director of the Great Lakes Cities Initiative; Marcia Jimenez, Environment Commissioner for the City of Chicago; and other staff from the Cities for their work to represent the views of the Mayors.

The work on the Annex has not been completed and there are still unanswered questions and issues. I am pleased that we will be able to share the draft Annex implementing documents with all of you and the public on Monday, July 19, when Governor Taft and I kick off a 90-day public comment period. This review period will include regional public meetings in Chicago and Toronto, as well as other public meetings in the Great Lake States and Provinces.

As leaders who live and work in the Great Lakes Basin, we are most effectively positioned to carry out restoration and protection activities. We are now in a position to provide collective, regional leadership on an issue of critical importance – our Great Lakes.

Additionally, we must ensure that we have a regional approach to protecting our lakes from invasive aquatic species as well as guarding against beach closings due to high pollution levels. I am encouraged that members of Congress have recognized the need for a long-term commitment. For too long, federal funding has been diluted into many different agencies and spent without clear objectives or established goals.

The President's Executive Order creating a Great Lakes Interagency Task Force establishes a process to improve federal interagency coordination. The Governors have stepped forward with the Cities to identify joint priorities for action, we understand how important the Great Lakes are to our environment as well as our economy and we know what must be done to ensure the sustainability of the Great Lakes. I've spoken with Administrator Leavitt and I am encouraged by his willingness to support our efforts and work with us to provide the necessary resources.

I applaud you for your work to ensure a responsible water use policy, and as co-chair of the Council of Great Lakes Governors, I look forward to working together in meeting our stewardship responsibilities in protecting and restoring the greatest freshwater resources in the world.

Thank you.