

**Mayor David Miller**  
**Keynote Address at SOLEC dinner**  
**October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004**



Good evening.

I am delighted to be your keynote speaker here, at the 6<sup>th</sup> biennial SOLEC conference.

I recognize some friendly and familiar faces in the audience – it's wonderful to see you all here in the same room.

Let me say what a wonderful opportunity I think it is to attend a conference of engineers and scientists, policy makers and decision makers, all three orders of government – municipal, state, provincial and federal and non-governmental agencies – and know that everyone here is concerned with the health and future of the largest freshwater system in the world.

As I read your agenda, I was truly impressed by the depth of science and expertise attending over the next two days.

As the people in this room know better than anyone else, cleaning up the Great Lakes is not a small job. Decades of neglect and environmental abuse have taken a toll on the Great Lakes. The environmental strain can't be reversed quickly. Or easily. Or cheaply.

Our task - to restore and improve the Great Lakes - is a collective challenge. But those successes we have had over the past 30 years have resulted, and will continue to result, in cleaner Great Lakes for future generations.

It is clear that it is only by working together and combining resources and expertise that we will continue to make progress.

I understand that this is the first year that municipalities have played a key role in the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference. That is a most important breakthrough, and one that I take a very personal interest in.

Since becoming Mayor of Toronto, I have been working with other municipalities on a New Deal for cities with the governments of Ontario and Canada. A cornerstone of the New Deal is “a seat at the table” on issues important to Toronto.

By that I mean that the City government must be at the same table with the governments of Ontario and Canada to provide the City’s perspective, experience, and to articulate our needs. It is only through a seat at the table for municipalities that we can ensure that the policies and programs developed by the other orders of government can attain the desired results at the municipal level.

I see the “seat at the table” campaign as completely linked to the Great Lakes Cities Initiative.

This innovative initiative was started by Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago to provide a forum for municipal leaders in the Great Lakes basin to learn from each other and to speak with a collective voice to the US and Canadian Federal, State and Provincial governments.

The Initiative has been in existence for less than two years but it has achieved a tremendous amount. It has focused the municipal interests and role in the Great Lakes and ensured that the municipal voice is heard in the right forums. It has also successfully lobbied the US government for significant new funding for dedicated to Great Lakes clean-up.

The Great Lakes Cities Initiative has captured the attention of the other orders of government and clearly sent the message that municipalities need to be at the table, identifying problems, collecting the evidence and data, and determining solutions.

It is also a means for mayors to talk to each other, learn from each other and share best practices.

I value this opportunity to develop relationships with the other Great Lakes mayors in Canada and in the US.

As result of this collaboration the mayors in the Great Lakes Cities Initiative have identified six key priorities for municipalities:

- Storm Water Run-off and sewer overflows
- Invasive species
- Waterfront revitalization
- Beaches
- Contaminated Sediment and
- Water management

I have only recently had the honour of becoming the Canadian Co-chair of the Great Lakes Cities Initiative and look forward to continuing the work that Mayor Daley and a dedicated group of mayors started on these key issues.

And let me take this opportunity to thank the many mayors who have been involved in the Great Lakes Cities Initiative from its inception.

In particular, Mayor Tim Rigby of St. Catherine's has been instrumental in providing leadership for the Canadian cities and I look forward to continue working with Tim on the Steering Committee. Mayor Terry Geddes of Collingwood has been a very active participant bringing his energy and enthusiasm to the Initiative. Thank you to you, and to all the other mayors that have been involved.

When I speak of partnerships in the Great Lakes, the Government of Canada is key. The Canadian Federal Great Lakes Program is itself a partnership of eight federal departments and agencies led by Environment Canada.

I was pleased, as I am sure you were, to hear in the Throne Speech yesterday that the Government of Canada is committing to bring forward the next generation of programs to protect and preserve the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. This is the opportunity for the Canadian government to involve municipalities in the design of these programs from their inception. And I will be working with other mayors to ensure the federal government knows we want to be involved.

Through the Canada-US Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Government of Canada leads restoration efforts through the provision of technical expertise, policy and operational guidelines.

Funding provided through the Great Lakes Sustainability fund for projects in the Toronto area such as fish barrier mitigation, stream naturalization, installation of habitat structures, involvement in municipal stormwater management and wastewater treatment projects and the Remedial Action Plans are demonstrations of municipal federal collaboration and are just a few of the initiatives of the Canadian government.

Now I would like to demonstrate why it is so important that municipalities are involved in the Great Lakes.

Municipalities are on the front lines of the Great Lakes. It is critical that provincial and state governments not only recognize that cities are key to the implementation and success of restoration efforts but that the public's major interaction with the Great Lakes is through municipal services such as drinking

water, wastewater collection and treatment, beaches for swimming, and waterfront amenities.

When there are problems with the Great Lakes, those problems are identified first at the municipal level. It is city leaders who are called when the algae blooms appear, when the beaches are closed and when the drinking water smells off.

Restoration, improvement of water quality and shoreline conditions are essential for the vitality of municipalities. Waterfront activity can drive local economies by supporting recreational, commercial, tourism, and cultural activities for residents and visitors and enhance the natural environment by supporting animal and fish habitat.

And most importantly the Great lakes provide drinking water. In Ontario 75% of Ontario residents get their drinking water from the Great Lakes.

It is also the municipal involvement and commitment that can ensure a positive result for all involved.

To illustrate a few examples:

St. Catharines' Henley Rowing Course and Martindale Pond is a tremendous waterfront development resulting from municipal initiative and partnerships with the federal and provincial governments and recreation and sporting interests. St. Catharines continues to improve its waterfront and the Great Lakes through its stormwater management program and Pollution Control Plan.

Collingwood Harbour and Severn Sound are great successes with beautiful waterfronts that tell the story. The de-listing of these municipalities as areas of concern is not only encouraging for other municipalities that have waterfronts listed as areas of concern, including Toronto, but are also testament to the results that can be achieved with concerted action through the federal remedial action plans, focussed resources, and a commitment to action by all levels of government.

On the other side of the border Erie, Pennsylvania has been a huge success story. Erie has evolved from a hard working industrial port to clean, green and beautiful waterfront attracting recreation amenities and increasing season population.

These are a few examples of the restoration of the Great Lakes from the municipal perspective. When you look into any one of these they are the result of strong relationships.

I would now like to share with you the Toronto perspective. Our City Council and I have made the environment one of our top priorities. I want Toronto to be a champion of the environment, and I am going to illustrate how Toronto is setting and achieving environmental goals.

Last year, through a series of budget consultations we held, called “Listening to Toronto”, residents clearly indicated that the environment is a top priority.

To respond, Toronto Council has established the Environmental Roundtable with 18 members of the public to advise the Mayor and City Council on current and emerging environmental sustainability issues affecting the City of Toronto and its goals of a clean, green and healthy City. The chair of the Environmental Roundtable, Deputy Mayor Joe Pantalone, has a deep commitment to the environment and the City.

Toronto’s is pursuing several environmental initiatives that have a direct and indirect influence on improving Great Lakes water quality.

### Natural Heritage System

Starting at the policy level - In Ontario, cities are required to pass an Official Plan, a policy document guiding the physical development of the City. It is a powerful policy instrument, not only because of its legislative basis, and the fact that it is binding on Council, but also because of the extensive public process involved to help formulate it.

The City also adopts other policies and plans such as the Environmental Plan and the Wet Weather Flow Management Master Plan to achieve the Official plan’s vision. A foundation of the Official Plan is the Natural Heritage System developed through an ecosystem approach.

### The Waterfront

A related priority is the revitalization of the Toronto waterfront. Through a partnership of Toronto, Ontario and Canada we are working with the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation to create waterfront parks, public spaces, cultural institutions and diverse and sustainable commercial and residential communities.

If Toronto’s waterfront is to achieve the vision it will take renewed energy and commitment from all the partners involved.

### Making Connections

The Wet Weather Flow Management Master Plan addresses the problems of stormwater picking up contaminants and polluting watercourses and shorelines

and it addresses overflows from the City's combined sewer system during severe weather.

The watershed based plan uses a hierarchical approach to manage wet weather flows: beginning with "at source controls" where the rainwater falls – followed by "conveyance system measures" as the flow moves through the sewer network – and finally "end of pipe facilities" before the flow enters our rivers or lake .

The plan takes a system approach to managing wet weather flow. The goal is to achieve, in a timely and sustainable manner, measurable improvement in ecosystem health of the watersheds, and to reduce and ultimately eliminate the adverse effects of wet weather flow on the built and natural environments.

The approach taken by our Plan is a significant cultural shift in engineering philosophy and practice. We haven't abandoned "engineering", but we have learned the value of harnessing nature's own engineering systems.

Toronto has also adopted a number of new by-laws that are important steps to making our environmental goals a reality.

#### Posters for the Sewer use Bylaw and pesticide Bylaw

The new **Sewer Use By-law** passed in 2000 makes Toronto the first Canadian municipality to have passed a by-law with pollution prevention requirements. It has stringent concentration limits for pollutants and requires any industry discharging such pollutants in any amount to prepare pollution prevention plans which have to be updated every two years. It also prohibits the discharge of swimming pool water into our ravines. This by-law has won a number of awards including the 2000 MOE Toronto and Region Remedial Action Plan Award of Excellence.

#### Trees

We all know how important trees are to the urban environment, and how trees mitigate airborne pollution of the great Lakes. Last week Toronto Council approved the **Private Tree By-law** to protect trees over 30 centimeters to complement the **City Street Tree By-law**. These are important steps to reversing the decline of the City's tree canopy.

The new **Pesticide By-law** restricts the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes to reduce contamination of storm water.

#### Water efficiency plan

We are also looking at doing things differently. Our **Water Efficiency Plan** is aimed a deferring the cost of infrastructure expansion to support growth by

targeting reductions in wastewater and water treatment flows. The plan implementation is \$74 million about 1/3 of the equivalent infrastructure cost.

### Salt truck and stream

Our **Road Salt Management Plan** to reduce salt in storm and snow-melt run-off will change salt storage and minimize use of road salt through innovative spreading and controlled applications.

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While municipalities are doing what they can, we do look to the Federal and Provincial governments to also take a leadership role in the Great Lakes basin on source water protection, nutrient enrichment and ecosystem imbalance and mitigating the impact of urbanization.

In order to make progress we need to make sure that implementation by municipalities is provided the necessary funding to meet the commitments and as implementers municipalities must be engaged in negotiation of agreements – again a seat at the table.

In addition I would ask that at this SOLEC you ask yourself and your colleagues the question - is the science meeting the policy? Is the monitoring data being used to the fullest advantage and value to inform the public, policy and decision making, to assess the effectiveness of existing policies and to determine if new policies and legislation is necessary so the public understands they are our ally?

We know how many demands there are on scarce dollars in every government. That is why it is imperative that we work together and work wisely to ensure that those dollars are well spent on implementable solutions directed at achieving the greatest benefit to the Great Lakes.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I look forward to my work on the Great lakes and I wish you a good conference.