

**REMARKS BY MAYOR RICHARD M. DALEY
GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE ANNUAL MEETING
Friday, June 18, 2010**

Good morning.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. And I'd like to thank Mayor Tom Barrett for hosting this year's meeting in his beautiful city.

As you know, I am very proud of this organization and I want to thank you for all the work you have done, and will continue to do, for our common goals.

For many years, local leaders have recognized the same fundamental facts: the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River are our cities' great treasures, yet these precious natural resources are being threatened.

We have also recognized that cities on both sides of the border can be driving forces in speeding protection and restoration efforts that had been progressing far too slowly.

Over the past seven years, since this organization was founded, we have seen our share of successes.

We have earned seats at the table of numerous organizations, including the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Great Lakes Commission and the International Joint Commission's Water Quality Board.

When the Coast Guard proposed live fire training on the Great Lakes, we as mayors stood firm in opposition – stopping the plan.

We also organized the resources in our communities to oppose BP from increasing its pollution into the Lakes.

However, as proud as we are of our work, there is much that remains to be done.

As mayors, we don't look back, we look forward.

On many levels, these are complex problems that are fundamentally beyond the scope and resources of most cities to address.

These are national problems requiring national solutions and we have worked to remind our national governments of their responsibilities.

However, as mayors, we are on the front lines of dealing with these issues and we have an obligation to do all we can to mitigate them.

And I know that all throughout the region, we are doing just that.

As a part of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, our mission rightfully focuses on protecting and restoring the critical natural resource that is so central to all of our communities.

In addition to that important work, another crucial part of our mission, especially in these difficult economic times, is fighting to put people and businesses back to work to ensure the continued vitality of our cities.

It's no secret that, despite some recent signs of progress in the economy, too many residents of our region are still worried about losing their jobs or their homes and providing for their families.

I believe our economy is undergoing a fundamental restructuring. That kind of change creates uncertainty, but it also creates opportunity.

To create the economic stability that people need, local government must lead by example.

One of the keys to building a successful city, whether big or small, is never to lose sight of the future, no matter how challenging the present might be.

By planning for the future and actively looking for bigger opportunities, we will not only survive but also thrive.

It has never been more important for institutions to be creative, cooperative, and open to reinvention.

I believe the essential idea on which cities must base their strategies for moving forward is simple: they must improve the quality of life for all their residents.

To achieve that goal, cities must move forward on many fronts at the same time.

But there's one area in particular that is relevant to the reason we are gathered here for this conference: a commitment to the environment.

Yesterday, we announced a new Sustainability Initiative. For many cities, this will simply expand on work that has been going on for years.

While other levels of government are mired in red tape and bureaucracy, mayors are out there taking action. Where federal, state, and provincial leaders are unwilling or unable to move forward, mayors do.

In Chicago, we believe that the economic future of our city is directly linked with our efforts to protect and enhance the environment.

By doing things like planting trees and creating open space, investing resources to remove pollution from the air and encouraging the construction of buildings and infrastructure that are smart for the environment, you enhance the quality of life for all the residents of your city.

With this in mind, we have undertaken many initiatives aimed at making Chicago the most environmentally friendly city in the world.

Let me mention just a few ways Chicago has led by example over the years to improve the natural environment and make people's lives better:

- In 2008, we unveiled the Chicago Climate Action Plan, a comprehensive and detailed strategy to help lower greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change throughout the entire city – and that includes businesses, residents, institutions and city government itself.

Other cities have set similar goals, but Chicago's plan is the first to both identify emission sources and anticipated impacts of climate change and propose ideas that specifically respond to that research.

- We are also aggressively pursuing green infrastructure throughout the city to keep clean storm water out of our sewers and to reduce the urban heat island impact.
 - Since I became mayor, for example, we've planted more than 600,000 trees and landscaped more than 90 miles of medians on major streets.
 - We have added more than 200 acres of new parks and green space throughout the city, including more than 100 campus parks adjacent to our public schools. Parks and public open spaces are essential building blocks of strong neighborhoods.
 - We have established the Chicago Tree Initiative, which brings together the resources of 20 agencies and organizations to plant, care for and advocate for trees.

We're hoping to inspire a civic and social movement that will involve the city, the green industry, the business community, and private homeowners in improving our urban forest.
 - Chicago has more than 1900 miles of alleyways – the most of any city in the world.

Through our Green Alley program we have tested a range of techniques such as permeable pavers and permeable concrete and we are now making these techniques the standard operating procedure for rebuilding alleys and in many other construction projects.

- Green buildings are an important part of our environmental efforts in Chicago.

As we rehabilitate existing city buildings and construct new ones, we follow green building policies.

Our Center for Green Technology – a rehabilitation of a former industrial building -- was the first municipal building in the world to be awarded a platinum rating by the U.S. Green Building Council.

- We have established a Green Business Strategy program in which we work with Chicago companies to help them save money by becoming more sensitive to the environment.
- As part of a major expansion of our McCormick place convention center, we have built a 3,000-foot tunnel to carry clean rain water from the roof to Lake Michigan.

This will keep approximately 55 million gallons of rain water out of the sewer system.

- And our rain barrel program provides subsidized rain barrels to residents, encouraging them to both conserve water and disconnect their downspouts to keep storm water out of the sewers.

- And of course, Chicago is a leader among cities in the use of green roofs. We now have 600 green roofs completed or underway totaling more than 7 million square feet.

We planted our first rooftop garden on City Hall in the year 2000. It is 21,000 square feet with nearly 150 different species of plants and two bee hives which produce honey that is sold to benefit after school programs for teens.

We have promoted the construction of green roofs through a combination of requirements and incentives included in a number of policies administered by city departments.

And even now, in the middle of the greatest economic downturn most of us can remember, we're using every available tool to improve the environment, and so can you.

For example, we are using money from the federal economic stimulus program to create approximately 650 jobs to do such things as:

- Deconstructing City-owned buildings and preparing the deconstructed materials for re-use.
 - Planting trees and landscaping.
 - Offering green job training and work experience in the growing fields of locally grown organic agriculture, hand-made sustainable products and recycling services, and more.
- We received a \$15 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to deploy 554 alternative fuel and hybrid vehicles and to install 153 alternative fueling and electric vehicle charging stations throughout the region.

These projects will reduce harmful emissions, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create and retain jobs.

- World Business Chicago, our economic development organization, has implemented a green industry target study to retain, attract, and expand green industries and firms in Chicago.

We have already brought to Chicago the headquarters of Veolia Environment – one of the world's largest environmental companies.

- We have focused on green jobs through the WorkNet Chicago program that directs job seekers to training and education that will prepare them for green employment opportunities.
- Our Greencorps Chicago trains hard-to-employ populations in horticulture, carpentry and other specialized environmental areas.

- We have partnered with Cleanslate, a neighborhood beautification business, to clean up garbage in our neighborhoods, 38 percent of which was recycled.
- Our “City Farm” program uses City-owned land to farm, harvest and sell locally grown organic produce. As part of the process, local youth who live in public housing are trained in urban farming and small business management.

I look forward to working through the “Cities Transforming Towards Sustainability” Initiative to share best practices such as the ones I have mentioned and to learn from the outstanding work that you are doing in your own cities.

By working together, we will make the Great Lakes region the home of the green economy.

By our very nature, mayors take action and we will bring that same attitude and commitment to this program.

I am tremendously proud of this organization, not just for the work that we have completed, but for the things that we have yet to accomplish.

The fundamental vitality of cities will ensure our success.

Thank you.

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