



REPORT TO: Co-Chairs and Members of the
Planning and Public Works Committee

SUBJECT: Update of Bi-National Planning and Water Stewardship
Opportunities

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council:

1. That the Regional Municipality of Niagara endorse, in principle, the recommendations in the *The Vital Connection: Reclaiming Great Lakes Economic Leadership in the Bi-National US-Canada Region*. (per Appendix A)
2. Declare 2009 the Year of Water Stewardship in the Bi-national Niagara region.
3. That Council support, consistent with the previous Council endorsement of 'Niagara 10' recommendations, particularly Proposal #10, the holding of a conference in 2009 with the theme: "Our Shared Waters for the Next 100 Years: The Science, Governance and Sustainability", said conference in conjunction with the centennial celebration of the IJC (i.e. June 2009).
4. That immediately following Council's endorsement of these recommendations this report be shared with Niagara's area municipalities and the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLCI).
5. That the staff be encouraged to work with other stakeholders in the bi-national Niagara area to collectively nominate the International Joint Commission for the 2009 Stockholm Water Prize.
6. Circulate to other local governments along the border to secure support for the nomination.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of opportunities to increase the profile of water stewardship in the Niagara Region and to continue evolving the efforts to align objectives of communities on both sides of the Canada-US border.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, the importance of bi-national cooperation at a municipal level in the Great Lakes area has been introduced. A variety of initiatives, including the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, and the adoption of the 'Niagara 10' Recommendations have been put into place. Because of the intrinsic connection between the two countries at a community level, it is important to synch public policy efforts across the border. This report builds on previous efforts as well as makes recommendations to support some current initiatives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The actions contemplated by the recommendations do not commit Council to financial obligations at this time. The Region's potential participation in facilitating the Stockholm Water Prize nomination does involve nominal staff time. Any Regional role in the 2009 Conference, particularly, any financial contribution, will be the subject of a future report once such details are known.

BACKGROUND

At its regular meeting of October 18th 2007, Council approved DPD 121-2007, a report focused on bi-national planning and co-operation efforts. The report contained the fifteen 'Niagara 10' recommendations that centered on cross border sustainability planning in Niagara. The recommendations spanned in focus from development, the environment, governance, programs and access and transportation issues in a bi-national context. A full inventory of bi-national communication and efforts is available in DPD 121-2007, contained in Appendix B. Recent efforts include the formation of the 'Niagara 10', comprised of mayors and regional heads from either side of the border and the Region of Niagara's addition to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLCI).

In 2007, the Region of Niagara joined the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLCI), a bi-national organization of local officials designed to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. The GLSLCI supported the publication of *Healthy Waters, Strong Economy: The Benefits of Restoring the Great Lakes Ecosystem*, through the Brookings Metropolitan Institution. This document laid out how to manage the water systems and how proper management is intrinsically tied to economic growth.

DPD 121-2007 also contained a recommendation to secure support in order to create a Canadian counterpart version of *Healthy Waters, Strong Economy*. This culminated in a report done by the Brookings Metropolitan Institution addressing strategies for the Canadian side of the border, called *The Vital Connection*.

In 2006, the Ontario government released the *Places to Grow Act* that contained the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In the Plan, a strip of land following closely along the border was designated as a Gateway Economic Zone, in recognition of the vital role the border plays in trade and flow of goods, as well as the unique aspects of Great Lakes region. This will present another opportunity to evolve our bi-national agenda.

REPORT

Adopting the “The Vital Connection: Reclaiming Great Lakes Economic Leadership in the Bi-National US-Canada Region” Report

As explained previously, Niagara’s boundary area has recently been designated as a Gateway Economic Zone and Gateway Economic Center by the Ontario government in the *Places to Grow Plan*. The recognition of the bi-national Niagara area as a unique economic center is not new. For many years the Great Lakes region has played the role of a launching pad for new movements in economic development, such as the steel, oil, auto and aviation industries.

However, the Great Lakes area is under strain from many sources. The globalizing economy, fast rising economic competitors, environmental and climate change pressures, and the new challenge of securing a border from terrorism while maintaining a relatively open border can take its toll on economic development.

To deal with these transitory growth pains, the Great Lakes area has many underlying assets that can be leveraged. A huge international economy and market place, an unrivalled center of innovation, large and growing center point for global trade, commerce, and exchange of people and ideas, and a globally unique natural environment all combine to create a unique bi-national area.

The Vital Connection was developed by the Metropolitan Institute and supported by the GLSLCI and contains a Blueprint for Bi-National Great Lakes Economic Leadership that provides a limited set of ambitious goals, each with a deadline, which will allow both countries to utilize the Great Lakes region to its full potential. Analysis by staff members has determined that these are appropriate goals and therefore can be endorsed.

The Vital Connection report actually represents the follow-up report contemplated by Council’s endorsement of Recommendation 3 from report DPD 121-2007. More specifically, *The Vital Connection* report states:

“The report elevates what is at stake for the states and provinces of the Great Lakes region, and ultimately for both countries. In doing so, it seeks:

- To inform and help national political leaderships on both sides of the border to appreciate and animate the latent economic power in the Great Lakes region
- To forge understanding and move policies that would have significant, positive economic benefits for both countries and that would be uniquely helpful to the positive economic transformation of the bi-national Great Lakes region
- To arm private and public sector leaders within the Great Lakes with credible and reliable data and analysis that can inform federal and state/provincial policy.”

“The next U.S president must join with his or her Canadian counterpart to punch through real and perceived barriers to bi-lateral policy innovation, and put the major elements in place that can fuel bi-national prosperity and transform the Great Lakes regional economy. Working together, the countries can pioneer effective and efficient ways to enhance economic exchange while both ensuring mutual security and respecting the unique cultures of each partner.

The recommendations offered here are organized around a limited set of ambitious goals, goals that would serve to prioritize and unify efforts, push through bureaucratic inertia, and truly realize the promise of the region:

- By 2010: Develop a Bi-National Innovation Fund and Strategy
- By 2010: Redevelop North America’s Freshwater Coast
- By 2015: Define and Implement the “U.S.-Canada Border of the Future”
- By 2025: Realize Bi-National Great Lakes Carbon Goals and Renewable Energy Standards
- BY 2030: Create a Common Market for Commerce and Human Capital”

It is noted that one of the principal authors of the Vital Connection, Dr. Affolter Caine, will be presenting the report findings at the 2008 Smarter Niagara Summit (Dr. Affolter-Caine is on the agenda for May 9, 2008).

Nominating the IJC for the Stockholm Water Prize and Declaring 2009 the Year of Water Stewardship in Niagara

The Stockholm Water Prize is the most prestigious prize for outstanding achievement in water-related activities in the world. It is awarded by the Stockholm International Water Institute to any activity or actor which contributes broadly to the availability, conservation and protection of the world’s water resources, and to improved water conditions which contribute to the health of the planet’s inhabitants and ecosystems.

Past Laureates have represented regions from around the world and a wide range of water-related activities, professions and scientific disciplines. The prize Laureate is announced in connection with UN World Water Day and is awarded with a crystal sculpture and a USD \$150,000 award. More information on the award and nomination process is available in Appendix C.

More specifically, the Vital Connection reports states that the Vital Connection report actually represents the ‘follow-up’ report contemplated by Council’s endorsement. of Recommendation 3 from Report DPD 121-2007 (ref: Appendix II).

The 'Niagara 10' recommendations included Proposal #10 - a recommendation to develop a political strategy for building the profile of the cross-border Niagara region by maximizing opportunities related to events of bi-national significance, such as the 2009 Centennial of the Boundary Waters Treaty. As compliments to the IJC's decision to have centenary celebrations in Niagara in 2009, the declaration of 2009 as the Year of Water Stewardship and the nomination of the IJC for the Stockholm Water Prize will provide positive publicity for the bi-national Niagara area and the current efforts toward water stewardship and bi-national economic co-operation.

CONCLUSION

The Great Lakes area is responsible for sixty two percent of total bi-national trade dollars, as well as being home to business sectors with critical mass and global reach. In addition to this, twenty percent of the world's surface fresh water flows through the Great Lakes Basin. The economic and environmental situations are intrinsically connected. The bi-national Niagara area's future depends on these cooperative interdependencies and continued awareness of this connection is needed. The Bi-national Niagara area is in a unique situation because of close economic ties and reliance on local water systems. There is a long history of cross border communication in the Niagara area.

Submitted by:

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APPENDIX

Appendix I	Article excerpts, "The Vital Connection: Reclaiming Great Lakes Economic Leadership in the Bi-National US-Canadian Region," taken from the Metropolitan Policy Program, March 2008	Page 5
Appendix II	DPD 121-2007, "Update on Bi-national Planning and Cooperation Efforts," October 10, 2007	Page 13
Appendix III	2008 Stockholm Water Foundation Prize	Page 50