



Great Lakes  
Commission  
des Grands Lacs

2008 Annual Report



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# The importance of stewardship: Now more than ever

For the states and provinces of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region, 2008 will be remembered as a year of both great accomplishments and significant challenges. Accomplishments came in the form of strengthened legislation to protect the water resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River and the promise of a new U.S. federal commitment to support Great Lakes restoration with significant funding. Challenge emerged in the form of economic crisis on a scale not experienced since the Great Depression.

Great Lakes states and provinces, historically reliant on a strong manufacturing base, found themselves particularly vulnerable to the tectonic changes affecting that sector, and looked with a renewed sense of urgency to the economic importance of protecting their most valuable natural asset: the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin.

Within this dichotomy of environmental hope and economic turbulence, the Great Lakes Commission is uniquely positioned for leadership. In 2008 the Commission rose to the occasion guided by a new work plan linking the Commission's core strengths to its strategic objectives. We extend our gratitude to all the Commissioners and staff who worked hard to develop this guidance, which will define our activities for the next two years.

One of the strong themes in Great Lakes policy discussions in 2008, and one that will resonate even more in years to come, is the connection in the Great Lakes region between environmental health and economic growth. Findings in the widely distributed Brookings Institution 2007 report "Healthy Waters, Strong Economy" confirmed what many of us have long believed: investment in Great Lakes restoration

will generate significant long term economic benefits. Given the economic challenges facing the region, this message rings loud and clear with all our member states and provinces.

As we move forward under this theme, the Great Lakes Commission will continue to focus on many of our historic priorities: cleaning up toxic hot spots, closing the door on aquatic invasive species, reducing nonpoint source pollution, including air deposition, and providing a well-maintained navigation infrastructure for both commercial and recreational users. We will also

step out more aggressively into emerging policy areas including heightened attention on habitat revitalization, water conservation efforts among the states and provinces, and sustainable development of energy resources.

Commission activity will reflect the states' and provinces' shared commitment to developing alternative energy sources, particularly from wind, which offers the advantages of environmental cleanliness and economic investment opportunities in the form of manufacturing and transporting turbine components. The overarching impact of

climate change to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin is also of key interest to our members and will continue to be addressed in many Commission programs.

To a great extent, this region faces some uncharted territory ahead in the form of major economic and social change. It can be difficult in such times to stay a steady course but the fact remains that we are guardians of the most precious freshwater resource on the planet. This is the time to renew and strengthen our commitment to its stewardship. We owe nothing less to the generations to come.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Quinn". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn  
*Chair*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Eder". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tim A. Eder  
*Executive Director*