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**Chairman of the Board
Great Lakes Commission**

Integrated Transboundary Water Management Conference
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Good morning! On behalf of the entire state and provincial membership of the Great Lakes Commission, it is my pleasure to address this impressive gathering of colleagues interested in issues of transboundary water resources management. I am particularly honored to share keynote presentation duties with the co-chairs of the International Joint Commission: my colleagues Herb Gray of Canada and Dennis Schornack of the United States. And, my compliments to the many agencies and organizations who are sponsoring this important event.

My message this morning is a simple one. As individuals, we have a fundamental obligation to contribute to the environmental and economic prosperity of the regions in which we live. This obligation is not the exclusive domain of government, whether it be at the local, state, provincial, regional, national or international levels. To the contrary, the everyday decisions that are made outside of government – whether they be business decisions or personal decisions – have a profound effect on the health of our environment, the sustainability of our economy, and the quality of our lives. And here, in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region, our future – our destiny – is firmly in our own hands.

Our stewardship obligation should not be taken lightly; it is one of awesome proportion! Just think of it! Just outside this hotel lies the world's greatest system of fresh surface water. These Great Lakes contain:

- ✓ **one of every five gallons of fresh surface water on the face of the earth;**
- ✓ **90% of all U.S. fresh surface water;**
- ✓ **five of the largest fresh water lakes in the world;**
- ✓ **over 50% of U.S. heavy industry and 70% of all domestic steel production;**
- ✓ **a multi-billion dollar sport fishery;**
- ✓ **a world class maritime transportation system;**
- ✓ **home to one of every three registered recreational boats in the United States; and**
- ✓ **the source of drinking water for some 28 million residents.**

The list goes on and on, but my point is clear. When we talk about the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system, we're talking about a resource that touches our lives daily, and the lives of many who are far removed from this region. It is, indeed, a world class resource with world class dimensions and significance. And, collectively, the decisions we make and the opinions we express – as individual stakeholders – help shape management and other public policy decisions at the regional, national and international levels.

This is where the Great Lakes Commission comes in.

Who are We?: A membership organization of the Great Lakes states and provinces, the Commission has its foundation in state and U.S. federal law. And, since its establishment in 1955, the Commission has promoted sound public policy on issues ranging from environmental protection and resource management to transportation and sustainable economic development. We accomplish this mandate through information sharing, policy research and development, and as a relentless and tireless advocate for the region.

The Great Lakes Commission is comprised of senior state and provincial officials, legislators and appointees of governors and premiers. I represent the governor of Wisconsin and have had the pleasure of chairing Wisconsin's Delegation to the Great Lakes Commission for the last decade. My colleagues on the Commission have honored me twice in the last two years first by electing me Chairman in October 2000 and again, last year, when I was elected to a second term.

The Great Lakes Commission has no regulatory authority. Rather, we use our "power of persuasion" to effect change within our region, nationally and internationally. We are, in the truest sense, an advocate and "cheerleader" for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and our member states and provinces. And, we're an information and policy broker that keeps our membership "in the same boat and rowing in the same direction."

Our Core Beliefs and Guiding Principles: We believe in the "ecosystem approach"; we need to manage the region as a single unified watershed rather than as a collection of political jurisdictions. We believe in sustainability; the notion that environmental and economic goals can and should be pursued in concert. And, we believe in partnership; that shaping a future for this region is not a government-driven, top-down approach, but a consensus-based, bottom-up proposition.

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The essence of the Commission's efforts is best summarized in our adopted theme: *Ensuring environmental and economic prosperity for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region*. As a Commission, we have built our regional advocacy around that theme, and have used it as a basis for identifying and promoting our federal legislative and appropriations priorities.

I'd like to share with you the seven key elements of our plan to "Restore the Greatness" to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system. Even though they were developed for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region, I suspect you'll find them highly relevant to many freshwater systems around the world.

We at the Great Lakes Commission recognize the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River system as the centerpiece of the largest freshwater system on the face of the earth. We realize that this system has come a long way since the lakes were declared "dead or dying" some three decades ago. But we're also

concerned that progress is stalling, given the steady erosion of federal support. We fear that we're in danger of compromising past progress and foregoing future opportunities. In brief, we believe the time is **now** to "Restore the Greatness." Toward that end, we've adopted "The Great Lakes Program to Ensure Environmental and Economic Prosperity." This is a statement of Commission priorities that emphasizes federal/state and U.S./Canadian partnership; the interdependence of environmental health and sustainable economic development; and our shared obligation as stewards of the world's largest freshwater system.

What do we need to do to "Restore the Greatness?" We at the Great Lakes Commission offer the following seven goals for your consideration:

- 1) We need to clean up our toxic hot-spots. Beneficial uses in each of the 31 U.S. and binational Areas of Concern must be restored and maintained, with a special emphasis on remediating contaminated sediment.
- 2) We need to "shut the door" on invasive species. The ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system must be restored and protected by preventing the introduction of new invasive species and limiting the spread of existing ones.
- 3) We need to control nonpoint source pollution. Air deposition, and urban and agricultural runoff, are diffuse sources of pollution that now contribute more contaminants to the lakes than point sources like industrial outfalls and other "end of the pipe" pathways.
- 4) We need to restore and conserve wetlands and critical coastal habitat. Our coastal areas are the most biologically productive components of our ecosystem, yet the locus for intensive development and other ill-advised land use practices.
- 5) We need to ensure the sustainable use of our water resources. The environmental and economic prosperity of the Great Lakes region is fundamentally dependent on access to abundant quantities of high quality water. In fact, almost one trillion gallons are withdrawn every day for a variety of purposes and more than two billion gallons are consumed daily or, in other words, lost to the system. If we are to make scientifically sound and legally defensible decisions on water withdrawal proposals, we need to be able to assess the status of our resource, track and measure usage, and develop regional programs to manage water withdrawals and use.
- 6) We need to strengthen our decision support capability. Sound policy is fundamentally dependant upon sound science. Yet, the continuing erosion of U.S. federal funding for our laboratories and their research, monitoring, data gathering and analysis programs has seriously compromised our management capability. Restoring our regional capability will ensure that state and federal laws, policies and programs – as well as international commitments – are carried out efficiently and effectively.
- 7) And, finally, we need to enhance the commercial and recreational value of our waterways. Great Lakes waterborne transportation is the foundation on which U.S. and Canadian regional and national economies were built. Approximately 200 million tons of cargo are moved annually on this system

and, from a recreational standpoint, approximately one million boats ply the waters of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence system every year. Much of our navigation infrastructure, however, was constructed between 50 and 100 years ago, and has not had major rehabilitation or modernization.

These seven elements of our "Great Lakes Program to Ensure Environmental and Economic Prosperity" provide the basis for a series of Commission recommendations for laws, programs and funds that can "Restore the Greatness." In fact, we have dedicated ourselves to promoting some 39 recommendations during the 107th Congress through testimony, correspondence, briefings and other communications. My colleagues and I on the Great Lakes Commission are also calling for the development of a large scale, consensus-based "Great Lakes Restoration Plan" that will build on our priorities. This plan will be a "blueprint for action," and present a commonly held vision, principles, goals and objectives that all Great Lakes-St. Lawrence interests – within and outside of government – can embrace.

Never before has the informed use, management and protection of this great resource been more important. From the local to international arena, we're all faced with some fundamental public policy questions. For example:

- 1) How can we safeguard our water resources from water diversion and export schemes, and consumptive use practices, that will compromise our environmental and economic sustainability?
- 2) How can we prevent the introduction of new invasive species - and limit the spread of existing ones - in a way that respects both our ecological and economic characteristics?
- 3) How can we turn a legacy of past abuse - our Areas of Concern - into a showcase for ecosystem restoration and all the attendant benefits?
- 4) And, from a broader perspective, how can we ensure that the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system – and its attendant needs – receives the attention, the programs, the laws and the funds deserving of a world class resource?

These are the types of questions that are high on the region's public policy agenda at this time. And, I'm pleased to note that they have been addressed in some detail over the course of this conference.

Ensuring environmental and economic prosperity for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region is everybody's business! It is our duty and obligation. Each one of us has an individual responsibility to do whatever we can, whatever it takes to Restore the Greatness to our **HOMES**, our Great Lakes – Lakes **H**uron, **O**ntario, **M**ichigan, **E**rie and **S**uperior!

So what better way to demonstrate our individual and collective responsibility than to promote the environmental and economic prosperity of this great region? What objective could be more noble than a cleaner environment; a stronger, sustainable economy; and a higher quality of life? And, what better time than now to join together, across this great region, to make it happen?

Thank you!