



2016 - 2017

# Annual Report

Great Lakes St. Lawrence  
Governors & Premiers

## Introduction

Over the past twelve months, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers propelled a forward-looking agenda to grow the region's \$6 trillion economy and protect the world's greatest freshwater system. Together they collaborated with key partners to expand international trade and tourism, and support industry clusters including maritime transportation. The Governors and Premiers also led the region's work to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin. These initiatives continue to successfully build consensus toward these shared goals with partners in government, industry and the nongovernmental sector.

## Economic Development

For the first time, the Governors and Premiers created a regional Economic Task Force to foster cross-border trade and grow industry clusters. Chaired by Ohio Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor, the Task Force is leading an effort to establish the region as a global center of excellence for cutting edge connected and autonomous transportation. This includes creating a regional Marine Autonomy Coalition and a partnership with the sector's global leaders in Norway to support the development and deployment of autonomous vessel technology. Continuing work on connected and autonomous vehicles will also help cement the region as the place for technology and service providers to create the future in transportation.

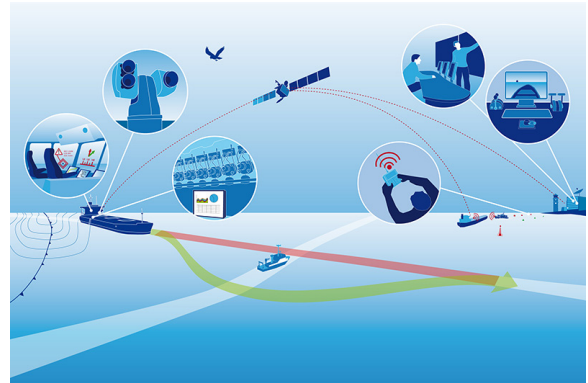


Image courtesy of MUNIN

## Maritime

The Governors and Premiers continued their drive to double maritime trade, shrink the environmental impact of the region's transportation network and support the region's industrial core. The States and Provinces, working individually and collectively, are leading an aggressive action agenda that includes support for critical system infrastructure and streamlining of regulations. This includes building consensus to construct a new Soo Lock, the linchpin of the regional maritime system.



Image courtesy of Ports of Indiana

In addition, an analysis of binational maritime governance will seek to streamline management and to eliminate barriers to new and existing markets. Separately, a partnership with the Great Lakes Commission is improving maritime data and technology. A new maritime careers portal will help connect employers with job seekers, while an updated maritime asset inventory will provide decision makers with information on system performance.

New cruise ships and operators are expected to enter the regional market in coming years, and the Governors and Premiers are collaborating with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the American Great Lakes Ports Association, the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, the Great Lakes Cruising Coalition, and other stakeholders to ensure the long-term viability and growth of this exciting industry.

## International Trade

The Conference's innovative trade program further expanded its global reach and impact. This network now includes thirteen foreign trade offices connecting regional companies with consumers



Trade Mission Participants with U.S. Ambassador to Romania Hans Klemm

and business partners in 91 countries on six continents. New offices are located in the Middle East, Singapore and South Korea. This year, the Conference led successful multi-sector trade missions to Québec, Poland, Romania, Indonesia, Vietnam and Mexico, and assisted 48 company delegates to grow their in-market sales. In addition, the Conference Trade Offices hosted 16 State-led trade missions.

## Tourism

The Conference's tourism partnership, Great Lakes USA, successfully showcased the region and its many attractions to a record number of international tourists. The partnership launched a marketing program in China, the world's fastest growing source of tourists, and continued successful programs in the United Kingdom/Ireland, and German-speaking countries. Great Lakes USA's "Preferred Partner" program continues to grow with new members joining the marketing consortium.



Cataract Falls Covered Bridge in Indiana.  
Photo courtesy of the Indiana Office of Tourism

## Aquatic Invasive Species

The Governors and Premiers continue to lead the charge in protecting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River from aquatic invasive species (AIS). Their least wanted AIS list has led to more than 40 separate actions to prohibit or restrict the highest-risk species, and the Governors and Premiers are putting in place new tools to jointly investigate violations of AIS laws. Next steps include expanding the list of least wanted species, and broadening the scope of a Michigan-Ohio-Ontario harmonization initiative to include law enforcement provisions.



## Protection and Restoration

The Conference created and led a multi-disciplinary team developing the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Blue Growth Fund. This groundbreaking, \$500 million impact investment fund will be an unprecedented vehicle to create environmental improvements while also generating financial returns. The Fund will focus on high-impact projects in forestry, agriculture, and smart water infrastructure. In coming months, the team will work to identify professional fund management in order to commercially launch the Fund.

Through the Conference, the leaders of Michigan, Ohio and Ontario have committed to a 40% reduction by 2025 in nutrient loading to western Lake Erie, which includes some of the region's most vulnerable waters. The jurisdictions have made significant progress on their domestic action plans and their aspirational goal of a 20% reduction by 2020.

## Water Management

The Conference coordinates the Governors' and Premiers' collaboration to protect the region's water supply, and serves as Secretariat to the Great Lakes "Compact Council" and Regional Body. After a thorough and transparent process, these entities determined that all legal standards had been met and approved a water diversion application by Waukesha, Wisconsin. The Compact Council also brought to successful completion a hearing on the single challenge to its Final Decision. Now that this is resolved, no challenges can be filed in court. Moving forward, the Regional Body and Compact Council will be reviewing and updating the procedures to be used when reviewing any future diversion proposals.

