Co-Chair’s Letter

I am honored to help lead the Council of Great Lakes Governors. And, it is a privilege to work with my fellow co-chair, Governor Quinn of Illinois, on our shared agenda.

I am also eager to work with Governor Pence from Indiana and Premier Wynne from Ontario. We welcome them to the Council of Great Lakes Governors and we look forward to our work together.

We will be welcoming our fellow Governors and the Premiers of Ontario and Québec to a leadership summit on Mackinac Island, Michigan, this summer. This meeting will be the first opportunity since 2005 for the Governors and Premiers to join together to discuss and act on issues of importance to the Great Lakes region.

The meeting will help reinvigorate our work and shape our plans to strengthen our economy and protect our Great Lakes. Through our work together, we expect to enhance our region’s competitiveness in the global economy while taking strategic actions on transportation, ports and U.S.-Canadian trade. We also plan to more effectively protect and restore our Great Lakes including stopping the spread and introduction of aquatic invasive species. We will also continue our implementation of the Great Lakes Compact and Agreement, and ensure that we keep our lakes great.

We thank our predecessors and, in particular, former Governor Daniels for his recent leadership of the Council. We appreciate the ongoing commitment by all of you to our work.

—Rick Snyder
Co-Chair, Council of Great Lakes Governors
Governor, State of Michigan

Council Welcomes Governor Pence of Indiana and Premier Wynne of Ontario

On January 14, 2013, former Congressman Mike Pence became the 50th Governor of the State of Indiana and the newest member of the Council of Great Lakes Governors’ Board of Directors. Prior to becoming Governor, Mr. Pence served the citizens of eastern Indiana from 2000-2010 as a Member of Congress. Prior to that, Pence served as President of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation and host of “The Mike Pence Show,” a Statewide radio program.

In addition, on February 11, 2013, the Council welcomed Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne as the newest Associate member of its Board. Premier Wynne was elected to become leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario and Premier-designate on January 26. She represents the riding of Don Valley West which is located in the city of Toronto. Prior to becoming leader of the Liberal Party, she was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Minister of Transportation, and Minister of Education for the Provincial government of Ontario.
The Co-Chairs of the Council of Great Lakes Governors, Governor Rick Snyder of Michigan and Governor Pat Quinn of Illinois, will host the Governors of the eight Great Lakes States along with the Premiers of Québec and Ontario at an invitation-only meeting Friday, May 31, to Sunday, June 2, 2013, on Mackinac Island, Michigan. The Governors and Premiers will gather to discuss policy issues relating to trade and economic development, transportation and water. This will be the first such meeting since 2005. More information will be available soon at www.cglg.org

As the region confronts record low lake levels, the Great Lakes Governors continue their efforts to sustainably manage regional water supplies. In the 2005 “Great Lakes Agreement,” the Governors and Premiers committed to develop a collaborative strategy with other partners to strengthen the scientific basis for water management.

Since this time, the Council of Great Lakes Governors has held scientific sessions annually in conjunction with the International Association for Great Lakes Research (IAGLR) conference. The Council plans another session for the IAGLR conference to be held at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, in June 2013. The focus of this year’s session will be water conservation and efficiency, and the first-ever cumulative impact assessment for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin that is being conducted by the Council.

The cumulative impact assessment is the first of its kind performed on a scale of this magnitude anywhere in the world, and is employing new and innovative approaches. A unique partnership is being used for the assessment including how data and information challenges are being tackled. Future assessments will build on this groundbreaking work and help to inform adaptive management.

The cumulative impact assessment builds on the years-long initiative to collect and integrate water use data and information at the regional level. This work draws on the efforts and expertise of the States and Provinces, various Federal agencies, and the regional water use database maintained by the Great Lakes Commission. Major database improvements are underway and improved reports will be released in years to come.

Further information on this work is available at www.cglg.org and on the websites of the Regional Body at www.glslregionalbody.org and the Compact Council at www.glslcompactcouncil.org
Last year marked a fresh start for the Council of Great Lakes Governors China trade office. Established in 2003 to promote the businesses and products of the Great Lakes States as well as attract Chinese investment into the region, the trade office is now managed by the Center of American States (CAS) in Shanghai.

China is quickly transitioning from the world’s factory to a global hub for financial services, advanced manufacturing and green technology. Faced with a shrinking labor force and aging population, as well as increasing competition from other developing nations such as India, Vietnam and Indonesia, China is turning to high quality and high end manufacturing processes to sustain economic growth. This grants the Great Lakes States an opportunity to help provide Chinese businesses with high quality and advanced machinery, state-of-the-art transportation equipment, computers and electronics, and chemicals. In addition, China’s rapid industrialization creates a host of environmental problems, which create opportunities for the many Great Lakes companies that specialize in environmental sciences, pollution control, water management and treatment, and green technology.

The Council’s trade office, led by CEO Ning Shao, helps businesses seize these opportunities. “China is a lucrative, but also difficult market to penetrate without local knowledge of how to navigate the various barriers and bottlenecks inherent in it,” said Ning. “We are not your typical state trade office in that we are involved not only in assessing market opportunities and finding partners, but we also become very involved in the process to finalize and deliver contracts. I believe the new Council of Great Lakes Governors China office will be the gateway for Great Lakes businesses in China.”

The CAS brings over 16 years of expertise in economic development, export promotion and attracting FDI to members, and has supported more than $950 million in confirmed export sales from the US to China. CAS is also moving quickly to promote the Great Lakes region and has already hosted trade missions to China led by Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton and Michigan Governor Rick Snyder. In April, the office will host Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker during his trade mission to China.
On January 25, the Great Lakes Governors applauded legislation introduced in Congress that would permanently fix the nation’s dysfunctional funding program to maintain ports and harbors. Specifically, the Governors pledged their support for the RAMP Act, H.R. 335, and commended the sponsors for their leadership. This legislation will immediately help to create jobs improving ports and harbors, while representing a long-term investment to enhance both the nation’s and the region’s global economic competitiveness.

The RAMP Act will ensure that funding collected by the federal government for harbor maintenance is spent for this purpose. Inadequate dredging and maintenance of harbors and ports forces ships to carry lighter cargo loads and increases the cost per ton to move cargo. Drought and low water levels on the Great Lakes have exacerbated this problem and hindered job creation and economic growth. The ports of Waukegan, Illinois, and St. Joseph, Michigan recently faced closure because of inadequate dredging.

A broad, national coalition supports this long-term solution to more closely tie trust fund expenditures to revenues, maintain the nation’s ports and harbors, and bolster the American economy. A copy of the press release can be found at www.cglg.org

Great Lakes USA teamed with Pure Michigan to sponsor the TravelMole Great Lakes Regatta on Lake Michigan. Last July, teams of UK tourism trade businesses competed to win a trip to the Great Lakes region and the opportunity to sail on Lake Michigan. Regatta teams included Virgin Airlines, Thomas Cook, and the winning team sponsored by Realex, the software company that operates the Virgin Atlantic worldwide booking system.

Event hosts included the Illinois Bureau of Tourism, Chicago's Essex Inn, Pure Michigan, and the cities of Holland, South Haven, Muskegon and Grand Rapids, Michigan.