

Moving toward a Sustainable Great Lakes Conference
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Toward Great Lakes Restoration Planning -- Panel

Remarks by
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I am pleased to be here today supporting a conference on sustainability. The mission of the Council of Great Lakes Industries is to promote the economic growth and vitality of the region in harmony with its human and natural resources or, sustainable development.

The members of CGLI belong because of their commitment to sustainable development as embodied in CGLI's mission.

I'm presuming I have been invited to provide a business perspective on restoration planning. The business perspective to any subject requires clear definitions. I have a few brief thoughts on how restoration gets defined in Great Lakes basin policy discourse:

First, when we speak about Areas of Concern, there is a clear definition of restoration — that the AOC be restored so that beneficial uses are no longer impaired. However, when we talk of restoration of the Great Lakes, the question "Restore to what?" is not defined. And, if we are trying to achieve sustainable development, it truly can not be defined in pre-settlement conditions.

Second, the term restoration implies our region is impaired! And, while that might have been true 3 decades ago — and may be true for some aspects of our ecosystem today - it does not reflect the great progress we have made, especially in the area of toxics. We're not there yet — and more people will create new stresses - but we need to celebrate our achievements, build on our successful partnerships, and together chart the course to sustainability.

And third, by focusing all our attention on restoration of the ecosystem we are excluding the economic and social aspects of sustainable development.

However, despite these reservations and my reluctance to embrace a narrow restoration agenda, we in industry are practical and understand the reality of attracting public and private investment.

All of us recognize that the Great Lakes region has had tremendous population growth in the past 200 years and that growth has impacted the ecosystem through many stressors. These stressors such as exotic species introduction, wetland destruction, water diversions and nutrient, sediment and chemical loads, to name a few, have had an evolutionary impact on our region. The reality is that there has been some significant recovery of the eco-system from this onslaught of man and the eco-system has evolved to a point where a return to its historic natural state neither desirable nor possible.

The simple focus of a sustainable development agenda is looking toward the future and making sure that we manage our economic, social and natural resources so they are available for future generations. CGLI supports the route to restoration through sustainable development.

CGLI is an affiliate member of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, based in Geneva, Switzerland. The WBCSD is comprised of 165 international companies whose leaders believe that the pursuit of sustainable development is good for business, the planet and its citizens.

There are actually two agendas for sustainable development. First, is the public policy agenda driven by forces other than business. Worldwide, this public policy agenda focuses on:

- Globalization
- Poverty eradication
- Sustainable production and consumption
- Health of the ecosystems
- Energy and climate change
- The role of innovation and technology
- Accountability and reporting
- Risk determination and reduction

Obviously, this public policy agenda has very specific implications for policy and governance in our region. Addressing these in-depth during my 10 minutes of intro wouldn't get us very far. If there's interest, perhaps our subsequent discussion will raise them as each is important to the Great Lakes region. My purpose in mentioning them is to remind us all of the breadth of issues we must address simultaneously, if we're to make the progress future generations deserve.

For business, the sustainable development agenda must make good business sense. Sustainable business practices include eco-efficiency, safety, and community interaction as developed by WBCSD. Businesses are finding these practices can increase efficiency and profitability while improving the environmental and social performance of a company.

Further, companies are beginning to promote their sustainability practices to consumers to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Industry believes a framework is necessary for a society - or in this case a region - to achieve sustainability. I would like to outline the key elements of that framework, developed by the WBCSD, that can lead to a sustainable future for the Great Lakes. And, while I am talking from an industrial perspective, many of these sustainable development framework elements require actions by government and citizens of the region.

- First, is the right approach to governance where policies are established and executed with a mix of command and control, voluntary initiatives and economic instruments. This framework element recognizes that economic stability and environmental stability are mutually dependent.
- Second is eco-efficiency. Industry, at least the industry CGLI represents, believes in pollution prevention, not only end of pipe solutions. Waste recycling is also an important component of eco-efficiency as is smart manufacturing that produces resource efficient products. Environmental management systems are one tool that helps industry maintain its focus on eco-efficiency. Broad application of eco-efficiency outside of industry can enhance our movement towards sustainability since many aspects of eco-efficiency can be applied to society as a whole.
- Third is corporate social responsibility. Companies led by people with vision and values serve people with vision and values. A majority of Canadian and U.S. corporations maintain these visions and values.
- Fourth is dealing with change especially through continuing education and training programs. Industry has been developing and implementing these programs for some time now and will continue to do so.
- Fifth are dialogues and partnerships between industry and the region's stakeholders. Many of these dialogues and partnerships have already demonstrated their ability to succeed. Industry associations have produced such programs as the Sustainable Forestry Initiative[®] by the American Forest and Paper Association and Responsible Care[®] through the American Chemistry Council. They promote and serve as important tools that will lead us to sustainability.
- Sixth is informing consumers about products and providing consumers a choice. This has been a little difficult for industry. Companies often need to do a better job informing their consumers about the environmental attributes of their products - both positive and negative - and their sustainable business practices.
- Seventh is innovation, which is not only important for industry but also all the region's stakeholders. It will lead us to those improved practices, processes, and products that will help us achieve sustainability.
- And, finally, eighth is striving to reflect the worth of our environment.

Hopefully this gives you a flavour of what a company committed to sustainable development is dealing with. Companies are doing this because they are finding that a focus on sustainable development helps them out perform their peers over the long term.

How about our region as a whole? How are we doing? The answer is we don't know yet. The pioneering State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference has taken on the important

task of developing indicators for the environmental health of the region. And there is an important attempt to go beyond environmental indicators. SOLEC is also developing social indicators and indicators of economic health. These are absolutely essential if we are to monitor attainment of each of the three legs of the sustainability stool — environment, social, & economic. Possible indicators in these categories include the use of environmental management systems, the use of alternative energy sources, the use of smart development by communities, the extent of recycling in communities. SOLEC has recognized, as many others have, that without a strong economy and social structure there are no resources to protect the environment.

But when setting targets to make progress to a sustainable state, we need to be realistic. We can never reach an ideal state of absolute zero pollutant release — even if it were measurable - and zero risk. Throughout our quest to attain sustainability or to achieve a restoration goal we must incorporate risk assessment and risk management principles. Regardless of how much funding comes to the region through restoration or other pursuits, we will have to assign priorities to insure that we are working on the right issues. The only substantively appropriate way to assign these priorities is through rigorous risk assessment/risk management processes.

This brief introduction illustrates how we view restoration or, as we would prefer, the pursuit of sustainable development. The elements of sustainability that I have outlined apply to all aspects of the region, not just industry. I believe we can attract public funding to the region by advocating the use these elements within all sectors. It will also help attract private capital investment. For example, if we focus on eco-efficiency improvements in our communities we see the need for improvements to aging sewer systems. Identifying this and other needs and securing funding for these programs will provide direct environmental improvement and move us down that road to sustainability.

CGLI believes that a focus on restoration should not be a focus on the past but a focus on the future through the quest for sustainable development. Through sustainable development we will meet our vision for the future and maintain a vibrant and sustainable economy in a region where we can eat the fish, swim in the lakes, and drink the water.

Thank you. I look forward to our discussions.