



**GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE**  
**ALLIANCE DES VILLES DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT**

**RESOLUTION 8 – 2016M**

**ACTION ON PHRAGMITES IN THE GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE**

**Submitted by: Town of Collingwood, Ontario**

**WHEREAS**, *Phragmites australis* (Phragmites) is an invasive perennial grass that continues to cause severe damage to coastal wetlands and beaches in areas around the Great Lakes ; and

**WHEREAS**, *Phragmites australis* grows and spreads rapidly, allowing the plant to invade new areas and grow into large monoculture stands in a short amount of time, and is an allelopathic plant that secretes toxins from its roots into the soil which impede the growth of neighboring plant species; and

**WHEREAS**, *Phragmites australis* results in loss of biodiversity and species richness, loss of habitat, changes in hydrology due to its high metabolic rate, changes in nutrient cycling as it is slow to decompose, an increased fire hazard due to the combustibility of its dead stalks, and can have an adverse impact on agriculture, particularly in drainage ditches; and

**WHEREAS**, invasive Phragmites has been identified as Canada’s worst invasive plant species by Agriculture and Agrifood Canada; and

**WHEREAS**, Phragmites occupy over 4,800 hectares of land around Lake St. Clair alone, while 212 hectares of Phragmites occupy land along the St. Lawrence River. The Georgian Bay Area is particularly affected by Phragmites australis, with hundreds of stands along the shorelines that threaten valuable wetland areas; and

**WHEREAS**, controlling invasive Phragmites before it becomes well established reduces environmental impacts, time, and costs; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States lacks coordinated Phragmites control standards among states and municipalities similar to those provided by Ontario’s Best Management Practices and Phragmites Working Group; and

**WHEREAS**, primary action on Phragmites in Quebec includes:

- Research on climate change and Phragmites conducted by the Phragmites Working Group at the University of Laval and the University of Montreal;



- Ordinances issued by the Ministry of Transportation that dictate Phragmites management practices in order to prevent seed dispersal via roadways; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, best management practices for *Phragmites australis* include early detection, herbicide application, mowing, compressing or rolling, prescribed burning, and controlled flooding; and

**WHEREAS**, these best management practices are most effective when used in tandem as opposed to when used as stand-alone control measures; and

**WHEREAS**, herbicides containing surfactants are prohibited for use in aquatic environments in Canada, meaning that Canadians are not able to fully implement best management practices; and

**WHEREAS**, Phragmites spreads easily because of its large seedhead and is often found in drainage ditches or along highways as well as in wetland environments; and

**WHEREAS**, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has provided funding for fifty-four invasive Phragmites management projects on over 900,000 acres of land in the United States and is a vital resource for Phragmites management in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, the Cities Initiative commends the Ontario government for passing Bill 37: The Ontario Invasive Species Act.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) recognizes the need to implement best management practices; to continue public education to promote early detection of invasive Phragmites; and to continue to research best management practices for Phragmites, with the greatest emphasis on implementing best management practices; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the United States Congress to continue to support full funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act and its associated invasive Phragmites projects; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the Ontario Provincial Parliament to list invasive Phragmites as part of the Ontario Invasive Species Act and designate it as a noxious weed; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Canadian federal government take the appropriate regulatory measures to expedite and approve the use of herbicides in aquatic environments by the 2016 growing season as well as the use of aerial control measures; and



**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Ministries of Transportation work in coordination with local governments to ensure that roadside Phragmites management practices are consistent within communities; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and other relevant ministries to continue to support the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative as well as provide funding to support: implementation of best management practices, further research, public education, and a harmonized provincial management strategy, with the greatest emphasis on funding for implementation of best management practices; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the Government of Quebec to act in the following ways:

- Utilize a preventative approach to Phragmites management
- Continue to pursue academic research in University settings on Phragmites dispersal and to make these findings available to Ontario and the United States;
- Facilitate the implementation of Best Management Practices through funding or other avenues, and use existing resources from Ontario and the United States when implementing Best Practices; and



**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Cities Initiative and its members call on the Ontario Ministry of Environment and the relevant agencies of Quebec, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York to clarify and further outline their best management practices into protocols that establish ‘due process’ in controlling invasive Phragmites, which would include but not be limited to:

- Increasing the promotion of existing public education materials, such as EDDsMapS, the Ontario Phragmites Best Management Practices Guide, the work of the Phragmites working groups in Ontario and at the University of Laval, and the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative to promote early detection and identification of invasive Phragmites;
- Establishing clear criteria that would guide decisions on whether action is required to control Phragmites, for example, based on the ecological or health implications of not taking action;
- Assisting municipal and other local authorities with the implementation of best practices to control Phragmites.

Signed this 15<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2016

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Mitch Twolan, Chair  
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative  
Mayor of Huron-Kinloss