Chair’s Letter

The Conference’s first shared trade office recently celebrated its 25th year of promoting exports from the Great Lakes States to Canada. The office was based on a simple idea—by working together, multiple States could more effectively serve their small and medium sized exporters.

From this start, the Conference’s trade program evolved to include several foreign offices. Particularly over the past ten years, our trade program has thrived. The Conference now manages a network of ten shared trade offices spanning the globe. Participation and service levels are at an all-time high. The Conference’s offices completed more than 1,300 projects and assistance requests last year.

At the same time, the Conference created the first-of-its-kind program for multi-State/Provincial trade missions. These missions take groups of companies from different States and Provinces to selected countries. Through customized matchmaking, the missions connect potential exporters with customers and business partners. Altogether, these missions have assisted more than 300 regional companies to enter 20 foreign markets.

Our success is being recognized. In April, NASBITE—a leading organization of international trade educators and professionals—will honor the Conference with a prestigious trade program award.

While we appreciate this recognition, true success lies in increasing our exports, growing our economy and creating jobs. We look forward to building on our successes in the months and years to come.

—Rick Snyder
Chair, Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers Governor, State of Michigan

Regional Body and Compact Council Review
Waukesha Application

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Regional Body (Regional Body) and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Council (Compact Council) continue to review the Waukesha, Wisconsin diversion application. The application was forwarded to the Regional Body and Compact Council on January 7, 2016. A 60-day public comment period recently concluded.

On February 18, the Regional Body and Compact Council held a public hearing in Waukesha, where the public had an opportunity to provide comments.

The next meeting of the Regional Body will take place on April 21 at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Information including the application, public comments received, and a calendar of events can be found at www.waukeshadiversion.org. The Regional Body and Compact Council jointly host this website.
Conference Recruiting for Maritime Trade Mission to Québec

From September 25-28, the Conference will lead a multi-State trade mission to Montréal, Québec with a sector focus on the maritime industry. This mission builds on the work of the Governors’ and Premiers’ Maritime Initiative including the ongoing development of the first regional maritime transportation strategy, and Québec’s Maritime Strategy which launched in 2015.

Target participants from the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region include ports, companies and service providers in the fields of infrastructure, security and sustainable development. Each participant will receive a customized appointment schedule from the Conference’s Canada Trade Office and meet with prospective business clients and maritime industry leaders. Additional activities include a briefing, networking event and a tour of the Port of Montréal. The mission recruitment deadline is August 5, 2016.

The Conference will host a free webinar about Québec’s maritime industry and the trade mission on April 19 at 9:00 a.m. CDT. To register please click HERE.

Québec’s Maritime Industry
- The Port of Montréal is the second largest container port in Canada. $41 billion in goods move through the port every year. Port activity translates into $2.1 billion in added value to the Canadian economy.
- 98% of Québec shippers and 93% of Ontario shippers use the Port of Montréal.
- The St. Lawrence River connects the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, and is the link between North America’s industrial heartland and global markets.
- Québec’s Maritime Strategy seeks to promote the creation of more than 30,000 direct jobs and to encourage public and private investments of roughly $9 billion by 2030.

Conference Leads Successful Trade Mission to Europe

In March, the Conference led a successful multi-state trade mission to Germany and the United Kingdom. Twelve companies from Michigan, Minnesota, New York and Ohio, representing sectors including aerospace, environmental services, tooling and manufacturing met with potential distributors and other business partners.

Peterson Spring, an automotive parts manufacturer based in Southfield, Michigan, met with a number of prospective business partners. “This was our second trade mission to the UK and just as we experienced in the first mission, the quality of meetings, preparation of our hosts and climate created to establish long term business relationships was very successful. Very impressive support from Michigan Economic Development Corporation and from the Conference!”
Support Grows for New Soo Lock

Momentum is growing for the construction of a new lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. The Soo Locks are a linchpin of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence maritime system. The locks are vital to shipping and regional manufacturing, and to the economies of the United States and Canada.

The Governors’ and Premiers’ Regional Maritime Entity is developing the first-ever regional maritime strategy. Among the draft recommendations is the construction of a second “Poe Class” lock to provide protection against a failure of the existing, nearly 50-year-old lock and to enable continued transit for 1000-foot vessels. In recent months, the Ohio House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate have passed resolutions urging the U.S. federal government to upgrade the locks.

The Soo Locks are essential to the movement of vessels between Lake Superior and the rest of the regional maritime system. The locks are the only conduit for shipping raw materials such as iron ore to steel mills in Indiana and Ohio, which in turn provide steel for factories in Michigan and other parts of the region. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security recently analyzed the potential effects of an extended, unplanned closure of the Soo Locks. The Department found that such a closure would halt regional manufacturing of automobiles, appliances, construction equipment and other heavy equipment, resulting in crippling unemployment and economic recession.

The Regional Maritime Entity plans to finalize the strategy in coming months. For more information on the Governors’ and Premiers’ Maritime Initiative, click HERE.

Great Lakes USA Celebrates “Motown” Premiere in London

In March, Great Lakes USA and Pure Michigan partnered to celebrate the premiere of “Motown the Musical” in London. The production tells the story of the birth of Motown in Detroit, Michigan and features hits from legends like Smokey Robinson, The Supremes, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross and The Jackson Five.

Separately, Great Rivers Country recently joined Great Lakes USA as a preferred partner. Great Rivers Country is a destination marketing organization that promotes tourism in Illinois along the Mississippi River from Galena to Cairo. For more information, click HERE.