

**State of the City Address 2016**  
**Dr. Karen Weaver, Mayor of Flint**  
**Flint, Michigan / August 4, 2016**

Good evening. It is an honor to address the people of Flint at my first-ever State of the City address. I appreciate the many citizens and leaders from government, business, churches, and the community who have chosen to attend today, especially Congressman Dan Kildee and Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero, and I am grateful for the steadfast support you have shown the City of Flint as it deals with a shocking and unprecedented drinking water crisis.

Despite that crisis, the resolve to make our city of Flint greater than ever has never been stronger. We are determined to continue the upward trend Flint was on before this crisis hit, when new restaurants and businesses were opening, revitalization was underway, and entrepreneurship was taking hold, along with a growing faith in the future.

Those positive changes mean that, once again, we're enjoying Atwood Stadium as an anchor in downtown Flint, a place we can watch our great sports teams play now it has been renovated by Kettering University. And who isn't looking forward to next year's reopening of the Capitol Theatre, which will be restored to its historical glory thanks to the state, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Hagerman Foundation? Isn't it positive that new companies are moving into Flint and creating expanded job opportunities, such as iSource Worldwide's \$2.7 million investment and 100 new jobs for the Dryden Building? Aren't we excited to see the long-vacant Chevy in the Hole property being transformed into a wonderful community park and into Kettering University's new automotive training ground? Flint is a wonderful place to live, and we plan to create an even better city in the days ahead.

We are determined to put us back on the road to recovery because Flint is our home. Like many of you, I grew up in Flint, went to school in Flint, and returned to Flint after getting my college degrees. I raised my family here, continue to work here, and believe in the city's people and promise. I'm blessed to have my husband, Wrex, in the audience tonight, along with two of my three children, Adrienne and Doug.

I appreciate the many other elected officials in the audience tonight who have fought so hard to make Flint a priority at the state and national levels. I want to give an especially big thank you to Congressman Kildee, state Senate Democratic Leader Jim Ananich and state Representatives Sheldon Neeley and Phil Phelps for being such strong advocates for Flint and its people. I would like to ask all the public officials who have helped Flint to stand so we can give them a hand for all their hard work.

While I'm well aware of the many hurdles Flint still must overcome, I want to start off by saying that we ARE making progress.

The people of Flint once again have control of their government after a long series of emergency managers. I would like to thank the City Council members who are in the audience tonight.

In another area of good news, crime rates are down. We know our police department was cut nearly in half in the past decade, mostly under emergency managers. But Police Chief Tim

Johnson and the dedicated police officers who serve Flint are working hard to make sure our streets are safe and everyone is treated with respect. Thank you, Chief Johnson, and thank you to our law enforcement partners, the Michigan State Police and Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell and his officers.

With the help of a \$3 million SAFER Grant we hope to get from the federal government, the City of Flint may soon be able to hire 33 additional firefighters and reopen Station 8 on Atherton Road on the city's south side. Fire Chief Ray Barton, who's here with us tonight, will start hiring firefighters as soon as we hear that the grant has been approved. I'd like to ask all police officers and firefighters in the audience to please stand so you can be recognized for your important work.

Despite an extremely tight city budget, we've been able to fill several top management positions and get an experienced and more diverse team in place at City Hall. We named Mark Adas as the City Engineer three weeks ago. David Subuda came on board as Chief Financial Officer at the beginning of July. Pamela Pugh will be joining us as the city's new Public Health Officer, and a new head of Planning and Development will be named soon. They will help me do even more to help Flint recover from the drinking water crisis, and to serve our citizens in the best way possible.

I want to thank Natalie Pruett for working with us on our plan to Rebuild Flint the Right Way. We want to ensure that, as Flint replaces its drinking water system, it also brings cutting-edge sewer, broadband and lighting systems to the city. Copies of the plan are available at the back of the room.

The state's Medicaid system has been expanded in Flint so that every pregnant woman and every youth up to the age of 21 who's qualified has health care coverage and can see a doctor and gain access to behavioral health services, transportation, and other health programs. That's so very important as we try to make sure that our children get the resources they need after ingesting lead in our water supply for over two years.

We have seen incredible compassion from people and organizations all across the country who have sent money, bottled water and other resources to Flint. In just one of many examples, our own C.S. Mott Foundation put together a coalition of 10 philanthropies who have pledged to put \$125 million in new grants into the Flint community in six areas: ensuring that all Flint residents have safe drinking water, meeting Flint families' health needs, supporting early education, building a more robust non-profit sector, promoting community engagement, and revitalizing Flint's economy. We are so pleased that folks such as Phil and Jocelyn Hagerman of the Hagerman Foundation and Ridgeway White, president of the C.S. Mott Foundation, are so dedicated to this community.

I also want to thank the Water Warriors, and ask them to stand.

And The Concerned Pastors did so much to draw attention to our bad water situation in Flint. Please stand so we can recognize you as well.

To everyone who has stepped up to help, whether you live in Flint or somewhere else, thank you. You are a blessing.

### **Get the Lead Out of Flint**

But even with the good news, so much more needs to be done to get the lead out of Flint and get the financial and other resources our citizens and businesses need to recover from this disaster.

That's especially true when it comes to the United States Congress, which left for its annual summer recess without committing one thin dime to help overcome one of the nation's most horrendous water disasters. The 100,000 residents of Flint obviously aren't a priority for those who control the U.S. House and Senate, even as we continue to pay a price for the water crisis through lower home values, lead-tainted water, Legionella outbreaks, ongoing health concerns and a lack of jobs. The families and children of Flint didn't deserve what happened to them, but they do deserve to get the help they need going forward.

Congressman Kildee has called on the U.S. House to pass \$765 million worth of funding for infrastructure repairs, expanded health care and education access, economic development and health monitoring in Flint, along with a call for the State of Michigan to match that funding. He's indignant that this disaster hasn't been addressed, and so are the people of Flint.

The U.S. Senate has failed to pass legislation that includes \$220 million in federal funds to help repair Flint's badly damaged water system, even though the state and federal governments declared a state of emergency in Flint in January. Senator Debbie Stabenow and Senator Gary Peters put together this funding plan with BIPARTISAN support from key Republican senators. The people of Flint cannot wait much longer for help. The leadership of the U.S. Senate must bring this aid for Flint to the floor and pass it!

Flint also will move forward with the FAST Start pipe replacement initiative to remove and replace every lead-tainted pipe in every neighborhood throughout the entire city. With the \$25 million that state lawmakers and Governor Rick Snyder have given Flint for the FAST Start initiative, we will launch the next round of pipe replacements at homes later this month. We also are about to start seeking bids from companies and pipefitters to replace the lead-tainted pipes in 5,000 more residences. In early July, our water team submitted an application to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for an additional \$80 million for our water system overall.

I can pledge to you that I will not rest until we secure all of the funding needed, whether from the State or the U.S. Congress, to replace every last lead-tainted pipe in Flint. It is my intent to stand here with you, next year at my second State of the City Address, with the FAST Start pipe replacement program fully funded, with multiple contracts awarded to the workers to get the lead out, and with pipes being replaced every day, until the job is done.

I would like to recognize a wonderful person who knows how important this is, and who is with us here tonight. General Mike McDaniel, an expert in crisis management, has provided incredible service to our Flint community, dedicating his time and energy and expertise to establishing and leading the FAST Start program – thank you General McDaniel! The first pipe replacement under FAST Start took place in March at the home of Barry Richardson and his fiancé, Ashley Haddock, who at the time was awaiting the birth of their baby. I visited them earlier this week, and their water now tests lead-free, giving them the confidence to drink, cook, and bathe in the water in their home. We will be dedicated to making that story happen again, and again, and again, for every Flint resident, until the job is done.

The State is continuing to send Flint money so residents can get credits for the lead-tainted water they should never have been charged for while the city was using the Flint River. Flint residents will see those credits continue until the crisis is over, and former residents now can apply for refunds. I want to thank Rich Baird, special adviser to Governor Snyder and a Flint

native, for making sure Flint residents are getting the help they need to get the lead-tainted pipes replaced and to help make the water safe to drink again.

It's reassuring to know we won't be changing the city's water source to the Karegnondi Water Authority until the city goes through 90 days of testing of treated KWA water to make sure it's safe. We appreciate the financial help we're getting from Genesee County and the state to pay for the extra \$7 million pipe needed for the new water source. I want to thank Chairman Jamie Curtis and the rest of the Genesee County Board of Commissioners for their assistance.

We need to go even further, and do more than just fix only the most pressing problems in our water infrastructure. We need to build a 21<sup>st</sup>-century infrastructure that can make Flint healthy, strong and sustainable for the coming generation. That's one reason that we are partnering with the D-E-Q and E-P-A to host the first National Drinking Water Critical Infrastructure Summit here in Flint next spring to share with other cities the lessons we've learned. And it's why we are calling on local, state, and federal authorities to support a total transformation of the Flint water system for the future.

My administration has submitted a long-term project plan to the state D-E-Q that calls for a complete transformation of the whole water system – our supply lines, our distribution system, and our service lines. Our goal should be to create one of the best water systems in the United States – one that doesn't lose 40 percent of its water through water main leaks and faulty valves, that isn't still tainted by lead, that's flexible enough to serve future generations of residents and businesses in Flint. One that runs efficiently and doesn't charge the highest rates among urban areas in the country. One that will be a model for all the other cities in America with aging infrastructure they need to rebuild.

And so, I am setting the goal tonight that Flint will join with other levels of government, the private sector, and the smartest infrastructure thinkers in America to look at how to design, finance, and rebuild the Flint water system into a model for the nation. I am calling this the "Flint Fresh Start" initiative, and I will soon begin convening a series of meetings with key leaders at every level of government and industry to move this idea forward.

### **Making Sure Children Are Helped**

My next priority is helping the children of Flint. We must not – and WILL not – let any child in Flint slip through the cracks and fail to get the services needed to deal with health and education concerns caused by the water crisis. I'm happy to announce that all of our public schools now have lead-free water fixtures, making their water safe to drink again. I know how much Flint Community Schools Superintendent Bilal Tawwab appreciates that, and I want to thank him for coming tonight.

We will be seeing more subsidized childcare for working families and intervention for children with developmental delays thanks to \$25 million in state funding from the Michigan Department of Education.

The state also has appropriated money to provide healthy food to Flint children to reduce lead poisoning risks, and to cover psychotherapy sessions for children who need it. As a clinical psychologist, I know the toll that this water crisis has had on many of our children, the fear it has induced, and the stress it has caused families. So we are encouraged that we will be able to help our children deal with the physical and psychological effects of drinking lead-tainted water.

While we applaud the expansion of Medicaid to give health care coverage to all pregnant women and children and young adults up to age 21, we also need to have aggressive long-term screening and funding so we can continue tracking for decades how the effects of lead may be affecting today's children.

I want to thank Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, who's here with us this evening, for her many efforts to help Flint children recover, and for leading the Pediatric Public Health Initiative with Hurley Children's Hospital and Michigan State University. Equally dedicated are Clarence Pierce of Hamilton Health Clinic and Larry Reynolds of Mott Children's Health Center. Other folks, such as Kirk Smith of the Greater Flint Health Coalition and Amy Hovey of the C.S. Mott Foundation, have joined with more than 25 other community leaders to organize the Flint Water Response Team as a way to boost these efforts to serve children and families in our community.

Flint also is benefitting from the Flint Area Community Health Environment Partnership, led by professors from Wayne State University and Kettering University. Over the next four weeks, members of this group will visit Flint homes to conduct water testing and survey residents about the challenges they face now and expect to face in the future because of the lead-tainted water. These professors and researchers are working with us to determine any possible connection between the water and some of the health issues it may be causing, such as more cases of Legionnaires' disease. I hope the many Flint residents who will receive letters this week asking them to help the partnership with its work will fully participate.

Because we all have to work together to make Flint a place of opportunity for our children. Under my direction, the city plans to expand the Police Activities League beginning next year to give hundreds more children the chance to learn self-discipline, conflict resolution and team-building through sports.

I also plan to continue the city's efforts with My Brother's Keeper, responding to President Obama's challenge to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color. I will join Congressman Kildee to co-host a My Brother's Keeper launch event on August 20 at the University of Michigan-Flint called "Re-Ignition Flint" that will bring together leaders from across the state with national experts on black youth empowerment to move the program forward.

This week, Flint kids will travel to Hamilton, Ontario, to participate in the 59<sup>th</sup> annual CANUSA Games. This is a long-standing Flint tradition, and we look forward to restoring our water infrastructure so we can bring the games back to Flint next summer.

In addition, the City is working with Berston Field House as it serves kids through the Berston Bicycle Club, Berston Boxing Club, Creative Expressions Dance Studio and Chosen Few Arts Council to give children on the north side of Flint the chance to develop marketable skills. The Berston Boxing Club is where Flint native Clarissa Shields got her start, and we're all so proud of her as she gets ready to compete for a second Olympic gold medal. Good luck, Clarissa!

### **Adding Jobs and Economic Development**

My third main goal is to restore Flint's economy and create jobs. Today, I'm happy to announce that C3 Venture will invest \$9.7 million to bring nearly 400 good-paying manufacturing jobs to Flint to make interior plastic components for the auto industry. Company executive Bob Schaffer is in the audience, and we want to thank him for believing in Flint.

Bob and other C3 Venture leaders don't want to be just another Flint employer. They want to be a full-fledged partner and drive innovation in a city they can see is dealing with the water crisis

with grit, determination and resilience. They appreciate our city and our residents' incredible potential, and they want to be a part of helping Flint again become a thriving, vibrant city. That's why they are determined to fill as many of these new jobs as possible with Flint residents, and to offer incentives to new hires who come from outside the city to move into Flint. We so appreciate those efforts.

Flint also has gotten the great news, announced less than a week ago, that our city has secured a \$20 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to revitalize key segments of Saginaw Street, Dupont Street, and Atherton Road. Flint will use the highly competitive TIGER grant to rebuild these streets as we overhaul our drinking water system. When we put them back in place, we will make sure that they are beautiful, walkable, and ready to provide the best way to connect the many parts of our city.

This is the kind of positive progress that I want for Flint, and I'm prepared to work with anyone to make sure our city recovers. Whether it's local, state or federal economic development officials, the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce, local business owners, foundations and social service agencies such as United Way of Genesee County or the American Red Cross, labor and health care leaders, or our excellent partners at Mott Community College, U of M-Flint, Kettering University, Baker College and Davenport University, I am willing to do whatever it takes to make sure Flint has more good jobs and more pathways to success for our residents.

Because how wonderful would it be if all the graduates of our local colleges, universities and trade union apprenticeships could find great jobs right here in Flint? How great would it be if every Flint high school graduate had access to job training or higher education, and if every Flint resident who wants to work can find a job that supports them and their families? That's the Flint I want to see. That's the Flint I know we can get to if we all work together to help every Flint resident succeed.

We're taking steps to get there with the help of programs such as Flint WaterWorks, which is providing opportunities this summer for 100 young people ages 16-24 in Flint who are out of school and not working, to earn a paycheck and learn new skills while helping the city recover. Tonight I am so glad that some of the key leaders of Flint WaterWorks, such as President Kathi Horton of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint and our native son, Bishop David Maxwell, have stepped up to help our youth and young adults.

We're getting there through initiatives such as the summit recently held by the Flint and Genesee Chamber to bring Chamber leaders from Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing to suggest ways we can spark more economic development in Flint. Thanks to Chamber CEO Tim Herman, who's here tonight, for making that happen.

And while we'll be doing our best to bring in new businesses and jobs, we'll also be reaching out to business owners who have stood by Flint throughout the water crisis, such as Mark Kattola of Landmark Foods. Mark's two Flint grocery stores are helping lower-income families afford more fresh fruits and vegetables to help combat the effects of ingesting. Furthermore, he has kept his stores in the city even though he had an opportunity to move them elsewhere. Thank you, Mark.

As the City of Flint works to encourage more businesses in Flint, my goal for the coming year is to team interim Economic Development Director Suzanne Wilcox with the economic development innovators in this community to take our efforts to the next level. A next level of preparing our sites and infrastructure for more businesses, a next level in recruiting businesses and helping existing businesses expand, a next level in training our opportunity youth in the

skill sets to tackle these careers, and a next level of telling the rest of America that an investment in Flint will yield great returns.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I want to say that Flint residents and businesses already have paid a huge price for this man-made water disaster, and we will continue to pay a price until Flint truly recovers. We must renew and rebuild Flint!

Because Flint is the canary in the coal mine. When we turn our back on cities, when we neglect our infrastructure, when we allow injustice and inequity to hold back people of color and the economically distressed, when we abandon the key roles of public governance to save a handful of dollars, we can see the tragic results for our cities and families. If Flint is forgotten and left to suffer alone after a decade of neglect and a man-made disaster, it will be a sad reflection of the challenges facing our entire nation and its people.

But if we can build a stronger collaboration among our citizens, every level of government, private sector businesses, our educational and health institutions, non-profits and philanthropy . . . if we get the resources to fix and rebuild Flint . . . if we restore social justice and economic equity, we will show that places like Flint can rise again, and be healthy, livable, prosperous and sustainable communities. Flint can be the beginning of a “Lead Free America.” And that will be a wonderful reflection of what our nation, and our people, should be about in these great United States.

The time for action is NOW, whether we’re talking about rebuilding infrastructure, rebuilding economic opportunity or rebuilding trust. Progress is being made, but we still have a very long way to go to restore a city severely damaged by those who allowed its drinking water to be poisoned by lead.

No other city – no other PEOPLE – should have to go through what Flint and its residents have had to endure. As your mayor, I will do everything in my power to make sure Flint gets the help it needs to recover. With the right kind of assistance, I know that Flint will do more than survive – it will THRIVE.

I look forward to working with you as we make Flint a national example and success story of healing and renewal. Thank you, and God bless the citizens of Flint, and the United States of America.