



DEDICATED TO A STRONG GREATER MINNESOTA

August 6, 2025

Mayor Don Zeman  
City of Hinckley  
P.O. Box 366  
Hinckley, MN 55037

Dear Mayor Zeman:

I am honored to have been elected President of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) for 2025-2026 at the CGMC Membership Meeting in July. It was great to be together at the Summer Conference in Bemidji. I want to thank the outgoing CGMC President, Mayor Shelly Carlson from Moorhead, for her leadership and advocacy on behalf of Greater Minnesota over the past year.

Since last November, Minnesota politics has been filled with unprecedented drama and tragedy. The 67-67 tie in the Minnesota House, the closely divided Senate, and the darkening state budget situation proved tremendously challenging to navigate. The murders of Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman and her husband challenged our very faith in our shared civic life. Through it all, the CGMC has been a steady voice for Greater Minnesota cities.

During the last session, the CGMC was laser-focused on our shared legislative priorities: protecting local government aid (LGA), creating an ongoing sustainable funding program for EMS, passing a bonding bill that invested in water and wastewater treatment projects, and defeating one-size-fits-all zoning mandates from St. Paul. We were successful on all these fronts.

By far, our most important work this last session revolved around protecting the LGA program from cuts. Even as they were proposing new and increased taxes and funding new programs, the Senate DFL proposed cutting \$20 million in LGA. These cuts would have been terrible for Greater Minnesota, and the CGMC was front and center in opposition, calling them out as unnecessary and unfair. Ultimately, the legislature and governor passed a balanced budget that left LGA intact.

### **Path forward requires a focus on the basics**

If 2025 showed one thing, it's that we can't take anything for granted. With state budget uncertainty being the new normal, protecting LGA will again be at the center of our advocacy.

We are also certain that the conversation around housing policy and zoning preemption will continue next year. The CGMC will continue to resist these intrusions on local control and work to focus the legislature on solutions that are more impactful for Greater Minnesota's housing challenges.

Following up on our success last year, we will renew our work to pass another bonding bill that makes investments in water and wastewater infrastructure, the critical Greater Minnesota Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) grant program, child care, transportation, and important local projects statewide. We will also continue our fight to defeat efforts by metro legislators who seek to undermine key water and wastewater programs at the Public Facilities Authority (PFA).

While we were successful at establishing a program to help EMS providers with their operating deficits—especially in Greater Minnesota—we were disappointed that the program was only funded for one year. One of our key goals for the upcoming year will be to secure ongoing funding for the program so that residents and visitors can know that if they have a health issue or accident, help is on the way.

### **Working together for the future of Greater Minnesota**

As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, I have just come from the CGMC's annual Summer Conference in Bemidji. While there, I was inspired by the commitment of city officials from across the state to our shared work of building strong communities in Greater Minnesota. We have a great CGMC team, and you and your city have been a critical part of it.

As we look forward to next year, I want to explain the invoice included with this letter:

*Invoice for General Dues*—This invoice indicates the cost of your city's CGMC membership for 2025-2026. In recognition of the additional uncertainty and pressures being placed on city budgets, neither the base fee nor the per capita assessment rates have been increased for dues this year. At the CGMC Membership Meeting in July, the membership voted to maintain our current dues rate. If you are a recent member whose dues are still phasing up to their ongoing total, you will see that increase reflected on your invoice. If you are a long-time member, your dues will vary slightly from last year due to population changes. In some cases, your dues may go up slightly, and for some cities, they may be slightly lower than last year.

As stated on the invoices, payment is due by **February 1, 2026**. We encourage cities to pay early if they are able. For any questions about your invoice, please contact CGMC Membership Coordinator Emma Nelson at [ennelson@flaherty-hood.com](mailto:ennelson@flaherty-hood.com) or 651-259-1936.

### **Renew your CGMC membership today!**

These are pivotal times for Greater Minnesota. Renew your membership today to help us continue the important work of strengthening our communities. I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keri J".

Keri Johnson, St. Peter City Council Member  
President, Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities