



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



June 22-24, 2022

**POWERING
THE BLUE
ECONOMY**

Leveraging the potential of our freshwater resources

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River mayors turn attention to growing the region's blue economy

Members of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative gathered in Niagara Region, Ontario to hear from government and industry speakers on the power of leveraging the basin's freshwater resources for economic renewal as part of its annual conference.

ST. CATHARINES, ON June 24, 2022 – More than 140 mayors and elected municipal officials, along with industry and other government representatives, gathered in person this week in Niagara Region, Ontario, as part of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) annual meeting. This was the first time the organization gathered in person in three years, a welcome reunion for the binational coalition of mayors.

The conference was focused on the theme of “Powering the Blue Economy,” a topic of great interest to mayors who are focused on ensuring they can deliver clean water to their residents and support local sustainable job growth.

“We were proud to host the Cities Initiative in St. Catharines and Niagara Region, welcoming members from across Ontario, Quebec and the U.S. Great Lakes States to discuss the immense potential the blue economy can bring to our communities,” said outgoing Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Chair Mayor Walter Sendzik of St. Catharines, Ont. “From our world-class food and wine, beer and beverage sectors, to the vibrant marine industry and freshwater tourism employers in our city and region, we were able to showcase firsthand how our freshwater resources can generate good jobs when properly stewarded.”

More than 20 speakers joined the conference to cover a variety of topics touching on the blue economy, such as maritime commerce, cruise tourism, waterfront redevelopment and water innovation. Members also heard from a variety of U.S. and Canadian government and legislative representatives, like Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan, Chair of the U.S. Council on Environmental Quality Brenda Mallory, NOAA Administrator Dr. Rick Spinrad, Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Jayme White, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, Canadian Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Terry

Duguid and Vance Badawey, Member of Parliament for Niagara Centre and Co-Chair of the parliamentary Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Task Force.

“We brought together a stellar group of speakers and funders for this year’s event, which demonstrates the value and importance of our organization’s work in protecting our essential freshwater resources that are the foundation of a sustainable regional economy worth \$6 trillion,” said incoming Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Chairman Mayor Billy McKinney of Zion, Ill. “The fact that we also had excellent representation from U.S. and Canadian administrations shows the importance of our region, the health of the Great Lakes and our binational relationship for both our countries.”

Collaborating on sustainable development around the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence

This year’s conference, co-hosted by the City of St. Catharines and Niagara Region (Ontario), also saw unprecedented support from industry and government partners. For the first time, the Cities Initiative was pleased to partner with The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, the presenting sponsor for the organization’s annual meeting, opening the possibility for ongoing collaboration around shared priorities.

“The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation is proud to work with local government, industry and community partners to protect our shared water resources and to take action on climate change while helping to solve supply chain challenges and spurring economic growth for cities on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system,” said Terence F. Bowles, President and CEO of The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation.

In addition, the Cities Initiative received generous support from the Governments of Ontario and Canada, Algoma Central Corporation, Niagara College, Stantec, the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority, Heddle Shipyards, the Shedd Aquarium, Brock University and the Niagara Parks Commission for this year’s event.

Members Awarded

As part of the conference, six members of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative were acknowledged for their outstanding achievements related to environmental protection in their communities and service to the organization:

- **Daley-Miller Impact Award: George Cornell, Mayor of the Township of Tiny, Ontario** -- Named after the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative co-founders David Miller and Richard Daley, the Daley-Miller Impact Award recognizes a mayor who embodies the mission of the Cities Initiative, to protect and restore the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, and has demonstrated noteworthy work related to strategic initiatives or advocacy efforts over the past year. Mayor Cornell has served on the executive committee for the last two years and has been an advocate for growth of the organization and its activities. He has supported the Cities Initiative recruitment efforts, single handedly calling potential members to join.

- **Barb Hodgins Award: Cameron Richardson, Supervisor of Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change, Town of Ajax, Ontario** -- Barb Hodgins, staff member at the Planning Department of the Town of Ajax, Ontario, was involved in many Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative projects over the years. In recognition of her impact on the organization, the Board created an award in her honor. The award is intended to recognize a staff at a member city - a person who has made contributions to the organization and who embodies the mission of the organization in their work. Cameron serves a vital role at the Town of Ajax where he leads multiple community-wide strategies and plans related to climate change, sustainable practices, and environmental protection.
- **Member of the Year, Quebec: Gino Moretti, Mayor of the Municipality of Saint-Anicet, Quebec (Prix du Membre de l'année: Gino Moretti, Maire de la Municipalité de Saint-Anicet, Québec)** – The award recognizes a Mayor or other city leader who has gone above and beyond in involvement with or service to the Cities Initiative in the past year - for example through participation in committees, councils, or webinars. Mayor Moretti participated in several Cities Initiatives over the past year, including moderating webinars and providing Quebec perspectives to the Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience.
- **Member of the Year: Ontario: Mary Clare Latimer, Councillor of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Ontario** – This award recognizes a Mayor or other city leader who has gone above and beyond in involvement with or service to the Cities Initiative in the past year - for example through participation in committees, councils, or webinars. Councillor Latimer actively participated in the Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience and has helped the Cities Initiative formulate several new partnerships in Ontario to move the coastal resilience programming forward.
- **Member of the Year, United States: Ryan Sorenson, Mayor of the City of Sheboygan, Wisconsin** – This award recognizes a Mayor or other city leader who has gone above and beyond in involvement with or service to the Cities Initiative in the past year - for example through participation in committees, councils, or webinars. Mayor Sorenson spoke at several Cities Initiative webinars and programs over the past year, has represented the organization at countless events, and will serve on the Executive Board in the coming year.
- **Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award: Town of the Blue Mountains, Ontario** – This recognition is for a community with a population under 100,000 that demonstrates an innovative sustainability initiative with clear social, environmental, and economic benefits. Small cities were invited in Spring 2022 to apply for this \$7500 award. Town of the Blue Mountains, in partnership with several neighboring cities, piloted a diversion program to keep a non-biodegradable Styrofoam out of landfills. In the first six months, the participating cities collectively diverted 560 kg of foam.

About The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a binational coalition of U.S. and Canadian mayors from more than 137 cities and municipalities working to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. The Cities Initiative and local officials integrate environmental, economic and social agendas to sustain a resource that represents approximately 80% of North America's surface freshwater supply, provides drinking water for 40 million people, and is the foundation upon which a strong regional economy is based.

#

U.S. Media Contact:

Jonathan Altenberg
President and CEO
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
jon.altenberg@glslcities.org
Mobile: 847-347-6947

Canada Media Contact:

Phil Murphy-Rhéaume
Canada Policy Director
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
phillipe.murphy-rheaume@glslcities.org
Mobile: 514-609-5436