

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Great Lakes mayors united in support for ambitious Ontario Marine Strategy

*Securing the future of Ontario's blue economy with a dedicated vision for the maritime transport sector should be a priority for the provincial government in its new mandate.*

**St. Catharines, ON June 23, 2022** – Today, Mayor Walter Sendzik of St. Catharines and Chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) was joined by Mayor Bill Steele of Port Colborne, Mayor George Cornell of the Township of Tiny and marine industry representatives to announce that the organization, which represents more than 150 Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River mayors, wants to see the Ontario government develop a strategic, well-funded vision for the maritime industry in the province. The Cities Initiative joins a growing chorus of Ontario municipalities and maritime industry leaders working collaboratively towards strengthening this important sector.

“A provincial marine strategy, including modernization of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway network, will offer a tremendous amount of opportunities for Ontario's blue economy, including creating good jobs, attracting new employers and reducing congestion on our roads across our province,” said Mayor Sendzik. “Marine transportation is the most environmentally friendly way to transport vital goods and the province can demonstrate their commitment to reducing emissions by supporting the maritime industry. Developing an Ontario Marine Strategy will also help maximize future access to the Welland Canal, identify opportunities to grow the marine sector across Ontario and help make the industry more competitive against other provinces who already support this essential sector.”

In addition to its links to the binational Great Lakes shipping industry, which generates an estimated 227,000 jobs, the province's connection to these globally significant waterways offers several other economic, recreational and tourism opportunities, including the revitalization of the shipbuilding industry and a growing interest in cruise tourism in the region. A provincial marine strategy should also provide modern and competitive infrastructure, while ensuring ecosystem-friendly navigation and sustainable development opportunities for maritime communities.

“This is more than just a transportation initiative. A strategy focused on supporting our maritime industry is relevant for international trade and community economic development, but it also has important ties to tourism and recreation as well as natural resources and the environment,” said Mayor Bill Steele, City of Port Colborne.

“A well-rounded and well-funded Ontario Marine Strategy could be a gamechanger for Simcoe County and municipalities across the Great Lakes. Our history and economic prosperity have been long-tied to these key waterways and a clear vision for marine transportation has the potential to set our Great Lakes economy on the right course for decades to come,” said Mayor George Cornell of the Township of Tiny and Warden of Simcoe County.

The provincial government made a commitment to develop an Ontario Marine Strategy as part of its transportation plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe released in March 2022. The Cities Initiative is pleased that the Ministry of Transportation has started to consult with industry stakeholders, and looks forward to working with municipal and industry stakeholders, as well as the province to ensure that Ontario’s Marine strategy can be completed and funded this year.

“There has been great progress by industry partners, and we look forward to the province reaffirming its commitment to a marine strategy – driving a vision for how he’ll renew our marine infrastructure to better connect us to key markets and strengthen our Ontario-U.S. trade relations,” said Mayor Sendzik.

As a member of the Cities Initiative, the City of St. Catharines led a resolution supported by the organization’s membership at its annual conference. Similar to resolutions passed by the city councils of St. Catharines and Port Colborne, the Cities Initiative resolution calls on the provincial government to invest in modernizing port and navigation infrastructure to enhance the competitiveness of this key industry. In addition, the Cities Initiative wants to see funding for sustainable development projects for maritime communities, including new investments in water-based public transportation – like shuttles and ferries – similar to the comprehensive vision put forward by the Quebec government with its [Advantage St. Lawrence plan](#).

This year’s Cities Initiative conference, hosted in the area by the City of St. Catharines and Niagara Region, focused on “Powering the Blue Economy” with sessions dedicated to different industries that leverage our freshwater resources to support sustainable job growth and opportunities. The conference was supported by industry partners who have played a leadership role in pursuing an Ontario Marine Strategy and who joined Mayors Sendzik and Steele at today’s event, including the [St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation](#), [Algoma Central Corporation](#), the [Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority](#) and [Heddle Shipyards](#).

- “The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation welcomes the work of all government, community and industry partners on new maritime strategies to help develop the blue economy through modal optimisation, inter-operability and investments in new greening technologies and infrastructures. Marine shipping along the St. Lawrence Seaway is an energy-efficient, environmentally effective solution to supply chain challenges and a key asset in the fight against climate change,” said Jean Aubry-Morin, Vice President, External Relations at The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation.
- “Marine transportation is an essential contributor to economic prosperity in Ontario and is an integral part in the province’s efforts to lowering Ontario’s carbon footprint,” said Gregg Ruhl, President & CEO of Algoma Central Corporation. “The engagement of the Province of Ontario reinforces the need to develop a comprehensive action plan that supports the long-term sustainable growth of the sector and we are ready to work with government and

our industry partners in creating a plan made for the marine industry here in Canada and especially right here in Ontario.”

- “We’re excited to partner with the Province of Ontario to develop an Ontario Marine Strategy that drives economic growth and attracts investment. We see opportunity for quick wins to move more of the goods Ontario needs by water, while ensuring Ontario industry benefits from a sustainable and resilient supply chain, making use of this unparalleled natural asset on our doorstep,” said Ian Hamilton, President & CEO of HOPA Ports
- “We are extremely grateful for the Ontario government’s commitment to developing an Ontario Marine Strategy and we look forward to working with our industry and government colleagues on the details. Federal shipbuilding contracts represent a multi-billion-dollar opportunity for Ontario shipyards. An Ontario Marine Strategy will ensure Ontario is competitively positioned to capture this work and bring shipbuilding back to the province,” said Ted Kirkpatrick, Director of Business Development and Government Relations, Heddle Shipyards

The Cities Initiative will continue working with member cities and industry representatives to support their efforts to secure the funding necessary to build a competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century marine transport network in Ontario and across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence network.

In addition, the Cities Initiative hopes to see a Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway pillar as part of the upcoming national Blue Economy Strategy to ensure that provincial plans and commitments are further boosted by federal investments in developing this strategic low-carbon transport network.

### **Key Facts**

According to the Chamber of Marine Commerce:

- The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region is an economic powerhouse and the industrial heartland of both the United States and Canada with a combined GDP of over CDN\$6 trillion, making it the third largest economy in the world if it were a country.
- The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River waterway is the longest inland deep-draft navigation system in the world, connecting more than 110 commercial ports in Canada and the United States.
- Every year, ships deliver more than 230 million metric tons of cargo, worth over \$77.4 billion (CAD\$ 100 Billion) on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence waterway.

### **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 150 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.

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