



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

## Ontario communities to spend \$276 million over next five years combating coastal damages from climate change

- *Survey respondents reported spending \$82 million USD over past two years to respond to coastal challenges;*
- *Mayors urgently call on Congress to include needed funds in the upcoming infrastructure package.*

CHICAGO, July 16, 2021 – A survey of 45 Ontario cities, villages and other jurisdictions along the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River shows that coastal damage from climate change will cost at least \$275 million over the next five years, with shoreline communities having already spent \$82 million over the past two years. These figures only represent a fraction of the true need as not all shoreline jurisdictions are reflected in this figure.

“While water levels in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin are naturally variable with cyclical highs and lows, climate change is exacerbating these fluctuations, with water levels reaching record highs in recent years,” said Mayor Walter Sendzik, Chair of the Cities Initiative. “High water levels, paired with severe storm events and wave action, are leading to greater erosion and flooding that threaten public and private properties, critical infrastructure, and recreation and tourism amenities in shoreline communities.”

This new information illustrates the scope and magnitude of climate impacts on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and the need for increased federal assistance for coastal communities struggling to respond to threats to critical infrastructure and assets along their shorelines. The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, along with other regional organizations, are calling for funding in an upcoming infrastructure package to enable Great Lakes states and local governments to prepare for, respond to, and build resilience to current and future impacts from high lake levels and severe weather events.

The eight Great Lakes states have over 4,500 miles of shoreline, nearly as much as all the states bordering on the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and west coasts combined. A substantial, targeted

investment in coastal resilience in the Great Lakes is warranted and will generate substantial benefits for the environmental and economic health of shoreline communities in the region.

### **Key Ontario survey findings**

- Shore erosion and flooding are clear leaders in coastal issue concerns.
- Communities are mostly concerned about coastal erosion impacting natural coastal features, water infrastructure, and parks.
- Current resiliency planning has mostly been focused on a climate action plan as well as planning/ zoning code and ordinance updates.

*The Coastal Resilience Needs Assessment Survey was completed in partnership with the University of Illinois Applied Research Institute and collected information from March through May 2021. The survey received nearly 300 responses from 241 jurisdictions across all eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces that border the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.*

### **About The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative**

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a binational coalition of over 120 U.S. and Canadian mayors and local officials 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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