



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



**Economic Transformation**  
Tapping into Water for Sustainable Prosperity

**GREAT LAKES and ST. LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE  
2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

*Economic Transformation – Tapping into Water for Sustainable Prosperity*

**Montréal, QC | May 15-17, 2024**

**Marriott Chateau Champlain – 1050 Rue De la Gauchetière O**

*Presented by*



**Corporation de Gestion  
de la Voie Maritime  
du Saint-Laurent**

**The St. Lawrence  
Seaway Management  
Corporation**

*Preliminary Agenda*

*as of April 17, 2024*

*Note: This is a draft agenda. Content and timing of sessions is subject to change.*

*All sessions and activities will be taking place at the Marriott Chateau Champlain, unless otherwise noted.*

**TUESDAY, MAY 14**

**4:00 pm** Registration opens – **until 7:00 pm**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 15**

**7:30 am** Registration opens

**7:30 am** Continental breakfast buffet – **until 9:00 am**

**8:30 am** Cities Initiative Member Meeting – *restricted to Cities Initiative members*

**8:30 am** Shared Circle Meeting

**11:30 am** Member Meeting concludes / Free time

**1:00 pm** 2024 Annual Conference Opening and Welcome

**1:45 pm** Economic Transformation Pledge Signing Ceremony



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**Economic  
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**2:00 pm** Plenary #1 – Transforming our Economy

**Leading by Example: Showcasing Basin Cities' Progress on Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Economic Transformation**

**Speakers**

- **Ambassador David Cohen**, U.S. Ambassador to Canada
- **Cavalier Johnson**, Mayor, Milwaukee, WI
- **Valérie Plante**, Mayor, Montréal, QC
- **Bruno Marchand**, Mayor, Québec, QC

**2:50 pm** Break

**3:00 pm** Plenary # 2 – Transforming Energy

**Local Power: Catalyzing the Transition to Clean and Renewable Energy at the Community Level**

From hydropower and nuclear energy to community solar and geothermal, communities and utilities across the basin are pivoting away from fossil fuels to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality and seek a cleaner, more resilient energy future. Local governments are leaders in this historic transition, working with regional energy providers, industry partners and community groups to innovate and implement clean and renewable energy. Municipal authorities will also have to balance the energy transition, including grid electrification, with population growth and industry development goals. This session will discuss opportunities for local governments to become energy innovators and help lead the way on local power generation through strategic partnerships, community-led initiatives and innovative financing and procurement tools.

**Speakers**

- **Sarah O’Keefe**, Director of Sustainability and Climate Justice, Cleveland, OH
- **Maja Vodanovic**, Borough Mayor (Lachine) and Executive Committee Member Responsible for Water, Montréal, QC

**3:50 pm** Special Address

- **Pierre Fitzgibbon**, Minister of Economy, Innovation and Energy, Government of Québec



**4:10 pm** Break

**4:30 pm** Concurrent Breakout Sessions – Transforming Energy

I. **Transforming Energy: Policy Considerations, Opportunities, and Challenges**

*Presented by Hydro-Québec*

**Speakers**

- **Ursula Eicker**, Canada Excellence Research Chair in Smart, Sustainable and Resilient Communities and Cities, Concordia University
- **Alexis Laverdiere**, Environmental Sustainability Program Manager, Environmental Collaboration Office (ECO), Milwaukee, WI
- **Scott MacDougall**, Program Director, Electricity, Pembina Institute

II. **Transforming Energy: Project Implementation Considerations, Opportunities and Challenges**

**5:30 pm** Day 1 Closing / Free Time

**6:15 pm** Biinaagami Great Lakes-St. Lawrence watershed map exploration and photo-opportunity

*Port of Montreal Tower – 200 de la Commune St W*

**7:00 pm** Cities Initiative **Welcome Reception**

*Port of Montreal Tower – 200 de la Commune St W*

*Presented by CSL Group*

*In collaboration with the Montreal Port Authority*

**THURSDAY, MAY 16**

**8:00 am** Breakfast – until 8:55 am



**9:00 am** Day 2 Welcome and Opening Session

**Speakers**

- **Céline Haytayan**, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie, Government of Québec
- **Vanessa Cherenfant**, Chief Strategy Officer, VIA Rail

**9:35 am** Plenary # 3 – Transforming Transportation

**Sustainable Commerce, Transit and Mobility: Reducing Emissions and Building New Economic Opportunities in Moving Goods and People through Freshwater Waterways and Communities**

Sustainable transportation of people and goods across our waterways is at the heart of transforming our regional economy. Governments and the marine industry are working together to decrease pollution and strengthen supply chains across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. Cruise operators are collaborating to reduce emissions, protect water quality and implement stewardship initiatives at their destinations. Basin communities are also contributing to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by improving transit and micromobility while enhancing the use of waterways, connections between people and places and quality of life. This session will highlight opportunities for local governments to move goods and people more sustainably through our waterways and communities while protecting our freshwater.

**Moderator**

- **Jean Aubry-Morin**, Vice-President, St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation

**Speakers**

- **Mathieu Saint-Pierre**, President and CEO, St. Lawrence Economic Development Council (SODES)

**10:25 am** Break



**10:45 am** Concurrent Breakout Sessions – Transforming Transportation

**I. Transforming Transportation: Policy Considerations, Opportunities and Challenges**

**Speakers**

- **Patrick Péloquin**, Mayor, Sorel-Tracy, QC
- **Philippe Dubé**, Chief Officer for Partners Relations, Montreal Metropolitan Transport Agency
- **Maguessa Morel-Laforce**, Director of Government Relations, Chamber of Marine Commerce
- **Jeffrey Scharf**, Associate Administrator, St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation

**II. Transforming Transportation: Project Implementation Considerations, Opportunities and Challenges**

*Presented by Algoma Central Corporation*

**Speakers**

- **William Steele**, Mayor, Port Colborne, ON
- **Véronique Trudeau**, Program Manager, Green Marine

**11:45 am** Lunch

**12:15 pm** Luncheon/Special Sessions

Special Session #1 – Fireside Chat

**Economic Reconciliation in an Era of Transformation**

First Nations and Tribal Nations are leading the way in generating innovative industries and initiatives that are helping to tackle the global climate crisis and better steward our waters. At the same time, those communities and industries continue to face barriers in accessing capital and opportunities for growth. As a region, we lose out when good business ideas originating here can't find the funding, training, and access to markets to flourish. In this keynote session, we will examine the hard truths regarding barriers to economic and business development in First Nations and Tribal communities. We will also explore the role municipal governments and industry can



play to foster Economic Reconciliation by opening up pathways to support Tribal and First Nations-led business growth and build stronger relations to tackle our shared challenges together.

**Speakers**

- **Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer**, Grand Chief, Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke
- **Linda Debassige**, Former Chief, M'Chigeeng First Nation
- **Patrick Madahbee**, Commissioner on Governance, Anishinabek Nation

**12:45 pm** Break

**1:00 pm** Special Session #2 – Remarks and Presentations

**Speakers**

- **David Miller**, Managing Director, C40 Cities
- **Katie Dailinger**, Project Director, Local Infrastructure Hub, National League of Cities
- **Gregg Ruhl**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Algoma Central Corporation

**1:35 pm** Break

**1:55 pm** Plenary # 4 – Transforming Industry

**A Thriving Blue-Green Economic Corridor: Promoting Freshwater Innovation, Green Businesses and Jobs and Sustainable Industry Practices**

Transforming the basin from an industrial heartland into a thriving green-blue economic corridor requires communities to foster freshwater innovation, attract green businesses and jobs and encourage sustainable industry practices. Freshwater innovation hubs are bringing together innovative firms, educational institutions and other stakeholders to create blue jobs and increase economic activity while improving water stewardship. Local governments, including economic development agencies, are playing pivotal roles in the green transition by coordinating with green businesses and crafting workforce development plans. Circular economy and other sustainable practices are increasingly being adopted by industries wanting to improve their bottom line and appeal to environmentally-



conscious investors and consumers. This session will explore how local governments and others are working together to nurture blue-green economic transformation at the local and regional levels.

#### Moderator

- **Mark Fisher**, CEO, Council of the Great Lakes Region

#### Speakers

- **Alaina Harkness**, Executive Director, Current
- **Martin Damphousse**, Mayor, Varennes (QC) and President, Québec Union of Municipalities

**2:45 pm** Plenary #5 – Transforming Industry

*Presented by AquaAction*

**3:45 pm** Break

**4:00 pm** Concurrent Breakout Sessions – Transforming **Industry**

#### I. **Transforming Industry: Policy Considerations, Opportunities and Challenges**

*Presented by The Coca-Cola Company and the Great Lakes Bottlers*

#### Speakers

- **Andrea Denshem**, Senior Strategic Advisor, Alliance for the Great Lakes
- **Dominique Dodier**, Director General, EnviroCompétences
- **Emily Simonson**, Director of Strategic Initiatives, U.S. Water Alliance

#### II. **Transforming Industry: Project Implementation Considerations, Opportunities and Challenges**

*Presented by Xylem*



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### Speakers

- **Gary McNamara**, Mayor of Tecumseh, ON
- **Hugues Paris**, Vice-President, Sustainable Development, Port of Québec City

- 5:00 pm** Day 2 Closing / Free time
- 6:30 pm** Cities Initiative Awards Dinner Cocktail Reception
- 7:15 pm** Cities Initiative Annual Awards Dinner

### Speaker

- **David Miller**, Centre for City Climate Policy and Economy, C40

## **FRIDAY, MAY 17**

- 8:00 am** Breakfast – until **8:25 am**
- 8:30 am** Day 3 Welcome
- 8:35 am** Plenary #6 – Transforming Waterfronts

### **Waterfronts for Everyone: Designing Accessible, Multi-Purpose and Resilient Centers of Environmental and Socioeconomic Revitalization**

Freshwater restoration and protection efforts across the basin are elevating waterfronts as centers of environmental, economic and social activity. Basin communities are increasingly designing accessible, multi-purpose waterfronts that effectively balance public access and recreational opportunities with housing and economic development. With increased risks from extreme weather events and the new climate reality, local governments must also create resilient waterfronts that can withstand variable water levels and remain vibrant over time. This session will showcase successful examples of waterfront revitalization from across the basin, with special emphasis on how local governments can develop waterfronts that prioritize the health of our economies and communities – and, of course, our freshwater.



### Moderator

- **Christopher Sweetman-Holmes**, Senior Director, Canadian Lands Company

### Speakers

- **Yvonne Hamlin**, Mayor, Collingwood, ON
- **Cory Mason**, Mayor, Racine, WI
- **Catherine Vallières-Roland**, Deputy Mayor, Québec City, QC

**9:25 am** Special Address

**9:45 am** Break

**10:00 am** Concurrent Breakout Sessions – Transforming Waterfronts

#### **I. Transforming Waterfronts: Policy Considerations, Opportunities and Challenges**

##### Speakers

- **Guy Caron**, Mayor, Rimouski, QC
- **Olivier Legault**, Director and Urban Planner, Rues Principales
- **Samantha Nellis**, Water Program Director, Huron Pines

#### **II. Transforming Waterfronts: Project Implementation Considerations, Opportunities and Challenges**

*Presented by SmithGroup*

##### Speakers

- **Angela Coleman**, General Manager, Conservation Ontario
- **Sophie Lemire**, Executive Director, Comité ZIP des Seigneuries

**11:00 am** Annual Conference Closing Ceremony



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**11:30 am** Annual Conference Adjourns

*\*\*Lunch boxes will be available for those departing on educational tours*

**12:00 pm** Educational Tours

**Option #1 – Visit of the Port of Montréal and the City of Montreal’s Jean-R.-Marcotte Wastewater Treatment Plant**

**Option #2 – Visit of Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Territory**

**5:00 pm** Return to Marriott Chateau Champlain Hotel