

Montréal, Chicago and Milwaukee Mayors Sign Historic Pledge to Transform the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin into a Thriving Blue-Green Economic Corridor at Cities Initiative Annual Conference

The agreement is part of a larger collaborative effort by which Cities Initiative members will work together to develop and implement a ten-year plan to foster sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic development while protecting the basin's freshwater resources.

Montréal, QC – May 15, 2024 – Today, at the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's Annual Conference in Montréal, Mayor Valérie Plante of Montréal, QC; Mayor Brandon Johnson of Chicago, IL and Mayor Cavalier Johnson of Milwaukee, WI, led the signing of a historic [pledge](#) to transform the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin into a thriving blue-green economic corridor of the 21st century. The pledge was also signed by Mayor Olivia Chow of Toronto, ON; Mayor Justin M. Bibb of Cleveland, OH; Mayor Bruno Marchand of Québec City, QC and Mayor Mike Duggan of Detroit, MI. It also has the support of all 260 Canadian, U.S., First Nation and Tribal members of the Cities Initiative.

Our local economies must adapt to safeguard economic opportunities for current and future generations. The basin, which contains nearly 84 percent of North America's surface freshwater and already comprises the world's third-largest economy, is uniquely positioned to emerge stronger from this period of transition as our climate changes.

The pledge is part of a larger collaborative effort by which big city mayors and local elected leaders from both sides of the border will work together to develop and implement a ten-year plan to foster sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic development while protecting the basin's freshwater resources. This includes attracting blue and green industries to our communities; building clean, accessible waterfronts; implementing clean and renewable energy sources and expanding sustainable, integrated, water-borne commerce, mobility and tourism.

"The ecological transition is at the heart of the priorities of the City of Montréal, and I am pleased to see that the Cities Initiative shares our commitment to building a greener and more resilient world for future generations," said Mayor Plante of Montréal, Canadian Co-Chair of the Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation. "Now, economy and environment must constantly go hand in hand. We must commit to this path of responsible economic development that contributes to the resilience of our territories and the protection of our freshwater. It is about the quality of life of our communities."

"I am proud to join other mayors in pledging to transform our basin into a thriving blue-green economic corridor," remarked Mayor Johnson of Chicago. "Combating the decades of disinvestment and neglect in Chicago requires a bold new vision that prioritizes sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic development, safeguards our environment and puts residents first with good-paying jobs and safe, clean and affordable water."

“Signing this historic pledge is an important step for the economic transformation of our basin,” said Mayor Johnson of Milwaukee. “Milwaukee is already a leader in economic transformation and collaborating with other basin communities will be an additional asset as we seek to remain a global leader in freshwater innovation and green infrastructure.”

“This commitment is a good example of the leadership role cities can play in shaping a path towards sustainable economic development and freshwater stewardship,” said Mayor Marchand of Québec City. “We look forward to learning from our peers and promoting our best practices to better take advantage of the economic opportunities offered by our freshwater resources, but also to better protect them.”

Video statements from many of the Cities Initiative’s members discussing their support for economic transformation are available for viewing and downloading. Please [click here](#) to see if your local elected leader has recorded a message.

Earlier today, the entire 260-community membership of the Cities Initiative approved a resolution offered by Montréal to launch a Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation. The commission will collaborate with partners in government, industry and the non-profit community to develop the ten-year plan on economic transformation, which will be released at the Cities Initiative’s next Annual Conference in Milwaukee in May 2025. In addition to Mayor Plante of Montréal, Commission Co-Chairs include Mayor Lucas Cleveland of Cobourg, ON, Mayor Roger Reinert of Duluth, MN and Mayor Cory Mason of Racine, WI.

The Cities Initiative also recognizes several of its members for passing local resolutions supporting the launch of the Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation and committing to advance economic transformation in their communities, including: Beaconsfield, QC; the City of Dearborn Heights, MI; the Town of Lincoln, ON; Montréal, QC; the City of Muskegon, MI; the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON; the City of North Chicago, IL; the City of Owen Sound, ON; the City of Pontre-Claire, QC; Québec City, QC; the City of Racine, WI; Ville de Repentigny, QC; the City of St. Catharines, ON; Ville de Sorel-Tracy, QC; the Town of Tecumseh; ON the City of Toronto, ON and the City of Welland, ON.

The Cities Initiative’s 2024 Annual Conference, [*Economic Transformation: Tapping into Water for Sustainable Prosperity*](#), is centered on the building blocks of a sustainable freshwater economy and offers an opportunity for all stakeholders to share ideas for successful local development strategies that attract innovative blue and green businesses and elevate local sustainability champions. The conference runs to Friday, the 17th of May at the Montreal Marriott Chateau Champlain.

About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Cities Initiative is a multinational coalition of local governments, led by 260 mayors and chief elected officers, working collaboratively to safeguard the economic, environmental and social health of communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. The organization is committed to stewarding the basin’s freshwater and ensuring that all residents have access to clean, safe and affordable water as the foundation for sustainable, vibrant, inclusive and resilient communities.

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