GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE
2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Milwaukee, WI | May 14-16, 2025
Saint Kate – The Arts Hotel | 139 E. Kilbourn Ave.

OFFICIAL PROGRAM

All sessions and activities will take place at the Saint Kate, unless otherwise noted

Masters of Ceremonies
Mayor Ryan Sorenson, City of Sheboygan, WI
Mayor Mat Siscoe, City of St. Catharines, ON

TUESDAY, MAY 13

4:00 pm	Registration opens – **until 7:00 pm**
8:00 pm	Welcome Reception ***Potawatomi Hotel & Casino*** (1721 W. Canal St.) *Presented by:* • ***Forest County Potawatomi*** • ***Government of Québec*** • ***Port Milwaukee*** *Please note that bus transportation will be provided to and from the Saint Kate to the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

8:00 am	Registration opens Breakfast service – **served until 9:00 am** *Presented by **Jacobs***
9:00 am	Concurrent pre-conference sessions: Session #1 – **Mayors Commission meetings** (***restricted to Cities Initiative members***) Session #2 – **The PitcH2O** (***open to all guests***) *Simone Ballroom 2* The Cities Initiative will be hosting its first ever water innovation competition. Presented with our partners, AquaAction and The Water Council, PitcH2O will provide an interactive forum for startups and cities to showcase their innovations on how they manage water challenges in a "pitch-style" format. Pitches will address our conference themes of water consumption, water protection, and water resilience. **Emcee:** • **Marissa Jablonski**, Executive Director, Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin **Judges:** • **Soula Chronopoulos**, President, AquaAction • **Karen Frost**, VP of Economic Development and Innovation, The Water Council **PitcH2O Presenters** **Start-up Category:** • **Chris Foley**, Co-Founder, P4 Industries • **Harrison Richarz**, Chief Innovation Officer, Pipesonic • **Kimia Shafighi**, CEO and Co-Founder, Biocence • **Matys Tessier**, Director of Finance, Ozero **Municipal Category:** • **Laura Gerencser**, Advisor, Water and Wastewater, Regional Municipality of Peel, ON

	• **Wayne Redekop**, Mayor, Town of Fort Erie, ON
10:30 am	Networking Break in the Aqua Innovation Exhibitor Space *Simone Ballroom 1* *Presented by **M.E. Simpson Co.***
10:45 am	2025 Annual Member Meeting (***restricted to Cities Initiative members***) *Simone Ballroom 2*
12:00 pm	Member Meeting concludes / Free time
1:00 pm	2025 Annual Conference Opening and Welcome Session *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by **AquaAction*** **Speakers:** • **Cavalier Johnson**, Mayor, City of Milwaukee, WI • **Soula Chronopoulos**, President, AquaAction
2:00 pm	Declaration – "**Preserving the U.S.-Canada Relationship to Protect Our Prosperous Regional Economy and Precious Freshwater Resources"** *Simone Ballroom 2* **Speakers:** • **Cavalier Johnson**, Mayor, City of Milwaukee, WI • **Rob Burton**, Mayor, Town of Oakville, ON • **Shannon Holsey**, President, Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians • **Catherine Vallières-Roland**, Deputy Mayor, Québec City, QC
2:40 pm	Special Address *Simone Ballroom 2* **Speaker:** • **Madeleine Féquière**, Consul General of Canada in Chicago
2:45 pm	Plenary #1 – **Balancing Supply and Demand: Preserving Our Region's Abundant Freshwater Resources** *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by **Veolia North America***

	This plenary session will assess how communities can better manage water consumption to help keep water in the basin for generations to come by implementing innovative and resilient water-efficiency projects, encouraging more sustainable industrial practices, and defending the Great Lakes Agreement and Compact. **Introduction by:** • **Dave Ross**, Executive VP of Government Affairs and Sustainability, Veolia North America **Moderated by:** • **Alaina Harkness**, CEO, Current **Speakers:** • **David Naftzger**, Executive Director, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers • **Dave Ross**, Executive VP of Government Affairs and Sustainability, Veolia North America • **Catherine Vallières-Roland**, Deputy Mayor, Québec City, QC
3:45 pm	Networking Break in the Aqua Innovation Exhibitor Space *Simone Ballroom 1* *Presented by **MMSD – Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District***
4:15 pm	Concurrent breakout sessions: Breakout #1 – **Pioneering New Approaches to Water Management** *ARC Theatre* *Presented by **AquaAction*** This session will highlight case studies of cities across the Great Lakes region that are leading the way in approaching challenges with creative solutions. The session will be delivered as a series of lightning talks followed by individual Q&A and a facilitated large group discussion. **Introduction by:** • **Soula Chronopoulos**, President, AquaAction **Moderated by:** • **Brittany VanderBeek**, Director of Business Development, AquaAction **Speakers:** • **Étienne Lemieux**, President, CEO, and Founder, BioAlert • **Bert Liverance**, Reeve, Township of The Archipelago, ON

	• **Patrick Pauly**, Superintendent, Milwaukee Water Works • **Regan Smith**, Director, Technologies Ecofixe, Inc. Breakout #2 – **Coming Together: Scaling Up Waterfront Planning** *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by **SmithGroup*** This workshop will engage participants in planning at scale, presenting successful approaches from the Great Lakes. The session will include a facilitated exercise for participants to begin brainstorming the elements of a local or regional issue that could be mitigated by planning at scale. **Speakers:** • **Kirsten Holzheimer Gail**, Mayor, City of Euclid, OH • **Jason Stangland**, Director of Waterfront, SmithGroup • **Zoë Kuntze**, Senior Coastal Programs Manager, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative • **Jim Sonnhalter**, Planning Manager, Design & Implementation, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
5:30 pm	Day 1 Sessions End
6:30 pm	Biinaagami Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin giant floor map exploration ***Père Marquette Park*** (900 N. Plankinton Ave., Milwaukee)
7:00 pm	Cities Initiative Mayors Opening Reception ***Milwaukee County Historical Society*** (910 N. Doctor M.L.K. Jr. Dr.) *Presented by **Veolia North America*** **Speakers:** • **Cavalier Johnson**, Mayor, City of Milwaukee, WI • **Joseph Tackett**, CEO – Municipal Water Contract Operations, Veolia North America

THURSDAY, MAY 15

7:00 am	Breakfast **– served until 9:00 am** *Presented by **Black & Veatch***

7:30 am	Concurrent breakfast sessions: Breakfast Session #1 **– Advancing Coastal Resilience in a New Era** *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by **Stantec*** Coastal resilience is a clear and consistent priority for our communities, and the Cities Initiative is leading the way! The Cities Initiative's coastal programs have engaged over 100 municipalities across the region. This breakfast will bring together participants of the Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative; the Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts; and Advancing Coastal Adaptation in the Great Lakes. The breakfast will feature three five-minute talks from partners followed by networking, with the opportunity for participants to partake in an interactive activity. **Introduction by:** • **David Goldwater,** Senior VP of Public Policy, Stantec **Speakers:** • **Amy Lentz**, Director of Projects, Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership • **Bonnie Fox**, Policy and Planning Director, Conservation Ontario • **Zoë Kuntze**, Senior Coastal Programs Manager, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Breakfast Session #2 – **Biinaagami x Cities Initiative Shared Circle Meeting** (***by invitation only***)
9:00 am	Day 2 Welcome and Opening Session *Simone Ballroom 2* **Speakers:** • **Anne Vogel**, Region 5 Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • **Deb Andraca**, Wisconsin State Representative, Assembly District 23; Executive Committee Member, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus • **Martine Biron**, Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie, Government of Québec
9:30 am	Special Session **– Applying Tribal and First Nation Nature-Based Solutions for Water Management and Climate Resilience** *Simone Ballroom 2*

	Moderated by: • **Julia Watson**, Co-founder, Lo-TEK Institute **Speakers:** • **Grace Bulltail**, Assistant Professor – Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, UW-Madison • **Dr. Lyla June Johnston**, Activist, Navajo Nation
10:00 am	Plenary #2 **– Clean Water Communities: Addressing Legacy Pollution, Emerging Contaminants and Beyond** *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by **America Is All In*** This plenary session will explore effective community-led approaches and key programs and frameworks to protect and restore our freshwater ecosystem, with a strong emphasis on both environmental and socioeconomic benefits. **Introduction by:** • **Hollies Winston**, Mayor, City of Brooklyn Park, MN **Moderated by:** • **Melissa Scanlan**, Director of the Center for Water Policy, UW-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences **Speakers:** • **Linda Debassige**, Grand Council Chief, Anishinabek Nation • **Ken Johnson**, Mayor, City of Muskegon, MI • **Laura Rubin**, Director, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition
11:00 am	Networking Break in the Aqua Innovation Exhibitor Space *Simone Ballroom 1* *Presented by **LimnoTech***
11:30 am	Concurrent breakout sessions: Breakout #3 – **Strategic Communications and Marketing: Driving Policy & Public Action** *ARC Theatre* *Presented by **Xylem*** The session will include a hands-on messaging challenge, where participants will collaborate to craft impactful communication strategies tailored to different stakeholders.

	Introduction by: • **Mike Garaci**, Director of Business Development – Utility Services, Xylem **Speakers:** • **Jacque Edwards**, Marketing, Communications, and Development Director, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative • **Jim Cairo**, Creative Director, Cairo Design Breakout #4 – **Enhancing Water Stewardship Through Public-Private Partnerships** *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by* ***Veolia North America*** This session will examine the basic elements of a water use impact and risk assessment framework for municipalities and organizations. It will also focus on the ways in which cities can apply such a framework in partnership with water users (industrial, commercial and agricultural). **Introduction by:** • **Rory Munns**, President – Municipal Water Contract Operations, Central Region, Veolia North America **Moderated by:** • **Matt Howard**, VP of Water Stewardship, The Water Council **Speakers:** • **Pete Coffaro**, Director of Public Engagement, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District • **Paul Sambanis**, VP of Sustainability, Sloan • **Alvin Tedjo**, Councillor, City of Mississauga, ON
12:45 pm	Lunch – **served until 2:00 pm** *Presented by:* ***The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation &*** ***The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation***
1:15 pm	Luncheon Session – **The Future of Freshwater Shipping** *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by:* ***The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation &*** ***The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation***

	This session will showcase the importance of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence shipping corridor, which generates US$50 billion in economic activity and supports more than 350,000 jobs in the United States and Canada, and the vital role commerce in our region plays in the U.S.-Canada trade relationship. **Introduction by:** • **Jackie Q. Carter**, Director, Port Milwaukee **Speaker:** • **Jim Athanasiou**, President and CEO, St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation
1:45 pm	Plenary #3 – **Weathering the Storm: Promoting Water Resilience in an Era of Extreme Flooding and Erosion** *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by **Stantec*** This plenary session will discuss how basin communities can combat flooding risk and lessen the burden on municipal water infrastructure by advancing green infrastructure projects and integrating climate resilience as a central component of city planning. **Introduction by:** • **David Goldwater,** Senior VP of Public Policy, Stantec **Moderated by:** • **Bonnie Fox**, Policy and Planning Director, Conservation Ontario **Speakers:** • **Paul Ainslie**, Councillor, City of Toronto, ON; Chair, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority • **Eric Genrich**, Mayor, City of Green Bay, WI • **Kevin Shafer**, Executive Director, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
2:45 pm	Special Address *Simone Ballroom 2*
3:00 pm	Networking Break in the Aqua Innovation Exhibitor Space *Simone Ballroom 1* *Presented by **HDR***
3:30 pm	Concurrent breakout sessions:

Breakout #5 – **Harnessing Nature for Resilience: Overcoming Barriers to Green Infrastructure Implementation**
ARC Theatre
*Presented by **ENGIE North America***

This session will explore some key challenges with GSI implementation as well as strategies for overcoming barriers. The session will be delivered as a series of lightning talks followed by individual Q&A and a facilitated large group discussion.

Introduction by:

- **Katy Glynn**, Senior Business Development Manager, ENGIE North America

Moderated by:

- **Emily Simonson**, Senior Director of Water Leadership and Innovation, US Water Alliance

Speakers:

- **Pete Hill**, Senior Policy Advisor for Green Infrastructure, Environmental Policy Innovation Center
- **Thomas Monter**, Project Engineer, ENGIE North America
- **Sylvain Ouellet**, Councillor, City of Montréal, QC
- **John Paul Jewell**, Regional Sales Manager, East, ENGIE North America

Breakout #6 – **Discussion on Brownfields: Demystifying Remediation and Exploring Opportunities**
Simone Ballroom 2
*Presented by **Ramboll***

This session will discuss challenges and opportunities associated with remediating brownfields and addressing vacant lots, highlighting success stories from around the region.

Introduction by:

- **Jennifer Hagen**, Global Site Solutions Service Line Director, Ramboll

Speakers:

- **Sarah Bregant**, Planning and Community Development Manager, Northwest Side Community Development Corporation
- **Amy Dzialowski**, Senior Principal, Geosyntec
- **Evan Kanji**, Staff Professional, Geosyntec

	• **Tory Kress**, Senior Environmental Project Manager, Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee
4:45 pm	Annual Conference Closing Ceremony *Simone Ballroom 2* **Speakers:** • **Tom Barrett**, former U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg; former Mayor, City of Milwaukee, WI • **Linda Debassige**, Grand Council Chief, Anishinabek Nation • **Cavalier Johnson**, Mayor, City of Milwaukee, WI
5:30 pm	Day 2 Sessions End
6:00 pm	Exhibitors Reception – Aqua Innovation Exhibitor Space *Simone Ballroom 1* *Presented by **Veolia North America*** *In collaboration with **General Motors** & **Baird***
7:30 pm	Cities Initiative Annual Awards Dinner *Simone Ballroom 2* *Presented by the **Government of Ontario** &* ***Fund for Lake Michigan*** **Speakers:** • **Cavalier Johnson**, Mayor, City of Milwaukee, WI • **Earl Provost**, Ontario Agent-General in Chicago, Government of Ontario • **Vicki Elkin**, Executive Director, the Fund for Lake Michigan • **Andrea Matrosovs**, Warden, Grey County, ON • **Adam Tindall-Schlicht**, Senior Advisor, Ramboll

FRIDAY, MAY 16

9:00 am	Educational Tours *Departing from the lobby of the Saint Kate* *Presented by:* • ***Acti-Zyme*** • ***The Brico Fund*** • ***Ducks Unlimited***

- ***Greenprint Partners***
- ***International Joint Commission***
- ***Reyes Coca-Cola***
- ***Visit Milwaukee***

Tour #1 – **Green Infrastructure and Water Treatment Bus Tour**
Milwaukee has become a global leader in sustainable stormwater and wastewater management, pairing grey and green infrastructure to combat urban flooding and keep our water clean. This tour highlights spots around the city that showcase that leadership.

Facilitated by ***MMSD*** *&* ***Veolia North America****;* ***Milwaukee Public Schools, Reflo, Greenprint Partners***

Tour #2 – **Waterfront Restoration and Revitalization Boat Tour –** After decades of industrial pollution, this tour highlights how the **Milwaukee** community is coming together to restore water quality, revitalize waterfronts, and create access.

Facilitated by ***Milwaukee Riverkeeper*** *&* ***Milwaukee Harbor District****;* ***UW-Milwaukee faculty*** *&* ***staff***

1:00 pm	Return to Saint Kate – End of 2025 Annual Conference