

## **PRESERVING THE U.S.-CANADA RELATIONSHIP TO PROTECT OUR PROSPEROUS REGIONAL ECONOMY AND OUR PRECIOUS FRESHWATER RESOURCES**

*May 2025*

We, the undersigned members of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, declare that maintaining a strong U.S.-Canada relationship is a prerequisite to the continuation of our shared economic prosperity and the effective management of our shared freshwater resources.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to working tirelessly to improve ties between the United States and Canada and mitigate the worst consequences – economic and environmental – for our communities during this current period of turbulence in the relationship.

With these goals in mind, we affirm the following:

- The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region is the third largest economy in the world, generating \$6 trillion USD / \$8 trillion CAD in annual economic output and representing 50 percent of U.S.-Canada bilateral trade.
- Our region is home to about 84 percent of North America's surface fresh water, a vital resource that provides water to businesses and communities, underpins our economic and environmental well-being, and makes our region one of the best in the world to live, work, invest, and play.
- The threat of blanket U.S. tariffs on all Canadian imports has undermined decades of goodwill and mutually beneficial economic cooperation between the United States and Canada. These measures have forced the Canadian government to respond, triggering a trade war that will have sizable impacts on our region.
- The U.S.-Canada trade war will continue to harm our region's highly-integrated supply chains, creating significant and unnecessary economic pain in communities on both sides of the border and especially in our region. We anticipate massive business closures and hundreds of thousands of job losses, lower economic growth, and higher inflation.
- Binational governance institutions and frameworks that safeguard our precious freshwater resources – including the Boundary Waters Treaty and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement – are among the most successful models of international water management globally and must not fall victim to the broader deterioration in bilateral relations.
- First Nations and Tribes make essential contributions to our regional economy and freshwater protection across our region. It is incumbent on the United States and Canada to continue to pursue genuine reconciliation efforts that respect the treaty



rights of First Nations and Tribes and integrate their perspectives in bilateral decisionmaking fora.

- Recognizing that water knows no boundaries, the dramatic reduction in U.S. federal capacity – including funding freezes and cuts, mass layoffs at the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies, and program elimination, all without U.S. Congressional approval – will have enormous environmental impacts in the United States and Canada.

Given these circumstances, we municipal and Indigenous government executives must do everything in our power to reverse this deterioration in bilateral relations in order to promote healthy lakes and rivers, climate and coastal resilience, safe and affordable water, and economic transformation on behalf of current and future generations.

We look forward to working with each other, as well as partners and stakeholders across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region, on activities that will highlight the value of continued cooperation and collaboration across national borders as we seek to safeguard our economic vitality and our fresh water.

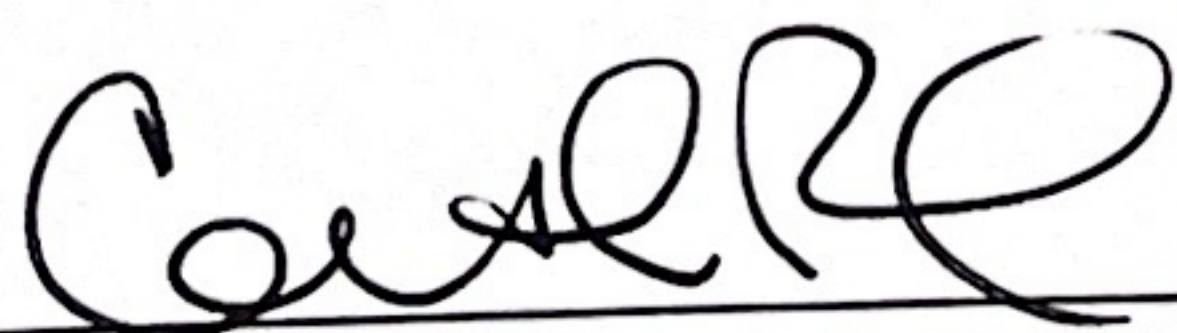
On Behalf of the Cities Initiative Membership:



Mayor Cavalier Johnson  
City of Milwaukee, WI



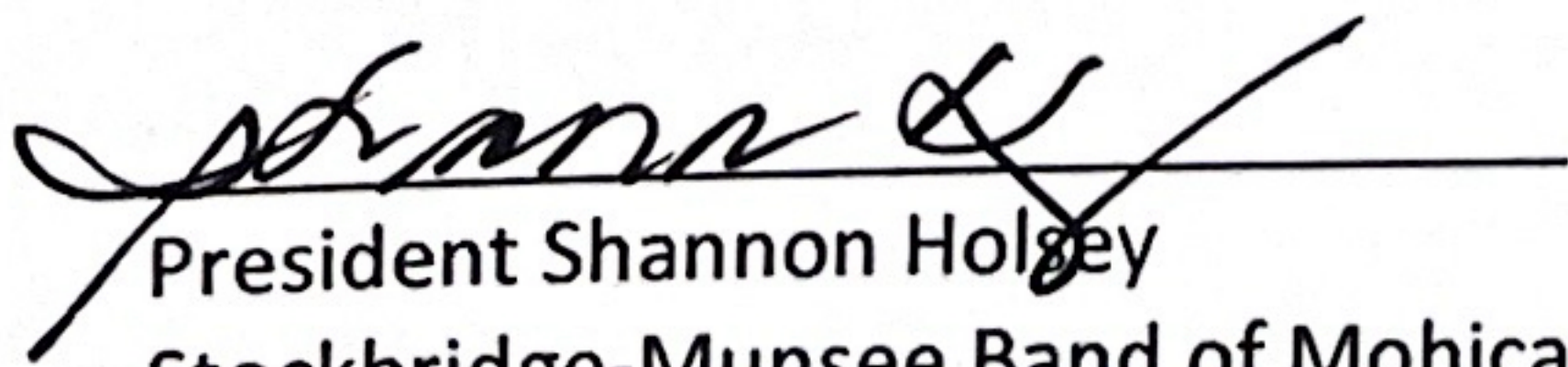
Mayor Rob Burton  
Town of Oakville, ON



Deputy Mayor Catherine Vallières-Roland  
Ville de Québec, QC



Mayor Eddie Melton  
City of Gary, IN



President Shannon Holgey  
Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican  
Indians