



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



FRESH COAST
ECONOMIC CORRIDOR
ADVANCING OUR JOURNEY
TO PROSPERITY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026
Hamilton, ON | May 6-8, 2026

Hamilton Convention Centre – 1 Summers LN

Preliminary Program

Subject to change

All sessions and activities will take place at the Hamilton Convention Centre, unless otherwise noted ()*

TUESDAY, MAY 5

4:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Registration desk open
8:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Welcome Reception <i>Presented by Ramboll</i> <i>In collaboration with OPTERRA Energy Services</i>

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Registration desk open
8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Breakfast service <i>Presented by the Chamber of Marine Commerce</i>
9:00 AM – 12:15 PM	Nexus H2O – Innovating for Water <i>Presented by AquaAction</i> <i>In collaboration with Veolia North America</i> Advancing new approaches to water management is essential to keeping rates affordable for residents and businesses alike, while ensuring our water systems can support long-term economic transformation across the region. Nexus H2O will focus on cutting-edge water innovation, featuring the second edition of PitchH2O, a friendly competition for municipal innovators and water-tech start-ups. We will also highlight Cities Initiative programs in Ontario and



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	feature insights from municipal and private-sector leaders driving smarter, more efficient, and more effective water systems.
9:00 AM – 12:15 PM	Members' Annual General Meeting (<i>reserved for Cities Initiative members</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mayors Commission Meetings• Annual Member Meeting
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM	Welcome Ceremony
2:30 PM – 3:20 PM	Cities Initiative Annual Declaration and Plenary Session <i>Unlocking the Inland Advantage: The Critical Role of Port Cities in Accelerating Seaway Expansion and Strengthening Regional Economic Competitiveness</i> The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway and associated industries drive economic development across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region, fueling a CA\$12.72 (US\$9.3 trillion) regional economy. The Seaway's inland maritime trade routes provide enormous economic advantages to port cities. Seeking to capitalize on these benefits, the Cities Initiative is working to develop the <i>Fresh Coast Economic Corridor</i> from Lake Superior to the Gulf of the St. Lawrence, with the goal of expanding maritime commerce on the Seaway by 30% over the next decade. This plenary session will bring big-city mayors from across the region to highlight the critical role of cities in accelerating opportunities for Seaway expansion, delivering jobs and other benefits to residents, and strengthening regional economic competitiveness.
3:20 PM – 4:15 PM	Plenary Session <i>Presented by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization</i> <i>Building the Fresh Coast Economic Corridor: Strategies for Locally Driven Industry Attraction and Economic Growth</i> As water scarcity increases the costs of doing business globally, industries will be increasingly drawn to the Great Lakes and St.



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Lawrence River Region. With 21% of the world's surface fresh water, access to global markets through the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway, and an innovation-ready workforce, the region is poised for a new era of growth. Yet it would be a mistake to repeat the same playbook that generated economic growth at the expense of lakes and rivers. This plenary will explore how to attract the right industries to our region and how elected leaders can partner with the private sector to ensure new business investment delivers good jobs, protects water quality and supply, and advances long-term freshwater stewardship for communities for generations to come.

4:15 PM – 4:45 PM	Networking Break
4:45 PM – 6:00 PM	Breakout Sessions
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Mayors Opening Reception* <i>* Hamilton Art Gallery – 123 King St W</i> <i>In collaboration with Algoma Central Corporation</i>

THURSDAY, MAY 7

7:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Breakfast Service
7:30 AM – 5:00 PM	Registration Desk Open
7:30 AM – 8:45 AM	Networking Breakfasts I. <i>Climate Resilient Coastal Communities</i> <i>Presented by Stantec</i> II. <i>Efficient and Effective Water Utilities</i> <i>Presented by M.E. Simpson, Co.</i>



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	<p>III. Port Cities and Marine Champions <i>Presented by Algoma Central Corporation</i></p>
<p>9:00 AM – 10:15 AM</p>	<p>Day 2 Opening <i>Presented by Geosyntec Consultants</i></p>
<p>10:15 AM – 11:00 AM</p>	<p>Plenary Session</p> <p><i>Sustaining Turtle Island: First Nation and Tribal Approaches to Economic Transformation</i></p> <p>First Nations and Tribes have long traded freely across Turtle Island and engaged in a variety of economic activity to promote wealth, preserve traditional ways of life, and protect the environment. However, their economic contributions have often gone unrecognized while their voices have been persistently excluded from economic decision-making. As water-intensive industries relocate to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region, it is imperative that First Nations and Tribes have a seat at the table, recognizing their status as sovereign nations, deep commitment to environmental stewardship, and the impacts of economic development on their people, lands, and waters. This plenary session will share perspectives from First Nations and Tribal leaders on our region's future economic development and opportunities for enhanced regional collaboration to uphold treaty rights, promote broadly shared economic prosperity, and sustain Turtle Island for all residents.</p>
<p>11:00 AM – 11:30 AM</p>	<p>Networking Break</p>
<p>11:30 AM – 12:45 PM</p>	<p>Breakout Sessions</p>
<p>12:45 PM – 1:45 PM</p>	<p>Lunch Service</p>
<p>1:15 PM</p>	<p>Luncheon Address</p>
<p>1:30 PM –</p>	<p>Luncheon Keynote Plenary</p>



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2:15 PM

Presented by:

- *St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation*
- *Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation*

Expanding Maritime Commerce in Our Region: Opportunities and Challenges for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway is the unheralded engine of our region's economic prosperity. The Seaway and regional waterways move over 250 million tons of domestic and international cargo and generate CA\$66.1 billion (US\$50.8 billion) in economic activity each year while supporting more than 350,000 jobs in Canada and the United States. Yet the Seaway is falling short of its economic potential, operating at just 50% of its historic capacity. Both Ottawa and Washington share an interest in leveraging this key asset to support export-driven manufacturing, supply-chain resilience, and trade diversification. This plenary session will explore how targeted investments in port modernization, container terminals, customs clearance capacity, and multimodal infrastructure can help build the *Fresh Coast Economic Corridor* and realize a more robust vision our regional economy through a thriving Seaway.

2:15 PM –
3:10 PM

Plenary Session

Leveraging Brownfields for a Brighter Economic Future: Environmental Remediation, Business Attraction, and Community Revitalization

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region has the highest concentration of brownfield sites in North America – many of which exist along post-industrial waterfronts that have since been deemed "Areas of Concern" by U.S. and Canadian federal governments. Persistent contamination often leaves these valuable sites unusable for business and harms nearby water sources. But through targeted remediation and reinvestment, brownfields offer powerful opportunities for economic transformation and community revitalization. Across our region, communities are transforming brownfields into "brightfields" of renewable energy, attracting exciting new industries, and restoring public access to multi-use waterfronts. This session will examine how local elected leaders can



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creatively leverage contaminated properties to drive investment, return waterfront land to productive use, and prevent further environmental degradation.

3:10 PM – 3:40 PM	Networking Break
3:40 PM – 4:55 PM	Breakout Sessions
5:00 PM – 5:30 PM	Closing Ceremony <i>In collaboration with AquaAction</i>
6:15 PM – 7:30 PM	Exhibitors Reception <i>Presented by AquaAction</i>
7:30 PM – 9:30 PM	Awards Dinner

FRIDAY, MAY 8

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Educational Tours
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