



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The City of Sault Ste. Marie Recognized for the “Sault to the South” Trade Corridor by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

HAMILTON, Ontario — May 8, 2026 — The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) announced that the City of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, has received the 2026 Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award, which recognizes meaningful projects that balance economic, social and environmental aspects of protecting water quality that could be used as a best practice inspiration for other cities. The City was recognized for the “Sault to the South Trade Corridor” initiative. In addition to being recognized as a winner of the Wege Award, Sault Ste. Marie will also receive a \$2,700 contribution to support the project.

The City was honoured during the Cities Initiative’s awards gala at its 2026 Annual Conference, held May 6–8 in Hamilton, Ontario.

“We are proud to be recognized by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative through the Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award,” said Mayor Matthew Shoemaker of Sault Ste. Marie. “It reflects the City’s commitment to practical, locally driven sustainability efforts and building a more resilient community. We are grateful for the support and will reinvest it to further advance this work.”

The Sault to the South Trade Corridor is a transformative port-led economic diversification initiative underway to advance the development of a publicly accessible, climate-forward marine terminal designed to become Canada’s first green port “by design.” Launched in September 2024, this initiative will strengthen multimodal connectivity between marine, rail, and road networks while embedding low-emission operational standards and climate-resilient infrastructure design.

The Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award was created to support and recognize small cities, with populations of under 100,000 and with limited resources, who demonstrate leadership in tackling water quality issues while ensuring economic vitality and social equity. Submissions for the Wege Award are evaluated by Cities Initiative staff and reviewed by the organization’s board of directors. This year, three members of the Cities Initiative were selected for their exemplary projects to further improve the quality of freshwater resources for future generations: the City of Benton Harbor, MI, the City of Sault Ste. Marie, ON, and the City of Gaspé, QC.

About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a multinational coalition of municipal and Indigenous government executives representing communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region who are working to promote economic prosperity in our communities and protect our fresh water for the benefit of current and future generations. With more than 425 communities represented, the Cities Initiative is leading the way in advancing the environmental, economic, and social health of the region by addressing issues impacting its residents. In September 2025, the Cities Initiative launched its *Economic Transformation Action Plan: A Blueprint for Economic Growth and Freshwater Stewardship* in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region.

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