



making waves **newsletter**

*Making Waves* is the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's monthly newsletter. Read on to learn about our events and activities, along with important announcements and updates from our policy and program teams!

## CEO Message

Dear Members and Partners,

In early March, a delegation of 20 Cities Initiative members gathered in Washington, DC, to advocate for our [2026 U.S. Federal Priorities](#) as part of Great Lakes Day. In meetings with 22 Members of Congress and their staff, along with senior officials at the U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Ontario and Quebec offices in Washington, we



called for the reauthorization of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds. We also put forward measures to build a strong and thriving *Fresh Coast Economic Corridor*.

This annual event has become an inspiring testament to our collective impact on matters of economic development and trade, infrastructure renewal, and freshwater protection. Thank you to all our Members who joined us in Washington this year!



With Great Lakes Day behind us, we're advancing our work with **AquaAction** and the **Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers** on this year's binational [AquaHacking Challenge](#) – details are in this newsletter.

We're also in the final stretch of planning for our [Annual Conference](#), taking place **May 6–8 in Hamilton**. Centered on our *Fresh Coast Economic Corridor* vision, the conference will focus on practical strategies to implement our [Economic Transformation Action Plan](#) and advance responsible, water-centered regional growth.

Hamilton offers a firsthand look at a model Fresh Coast city, balancing ambitious economic development with land and water stewardship. [Register by April 15 to save 20% with our Early Advantage Rate.](#)

We hope to see you in Hamilton this May as we celebrate our region's economic dynamism and as we chart its future for the next ten years and beyond.

Warm regards,

Jonathan Altenberg  
President and CEO

## Upcoming Events

**The Seaway's Inland Advantage – March 25, 2026, Montréal, QC** – We are partnering with the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation for a day of dialogue and touring marine operations in the Montréal region. Join us and learn more and engage around the Seaway's priorities around expanding container shipping in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence, developing an Eastern energy corridor, and expanding the Seaway's shipping season. Please contact Gabriel Alves at [galves@glslcities.org](mailto:galves@glslcities.org) to express your interest in participating.

**Annual Conference – May 6-8, 2026, Hamilton, ON** – We're excited to bring our network to Ontario next spring, where we'll gather to discuss building the Fresh Coast Economic Corridor of freshwater-based industries and implementing our Economic Transformation Action Plan. Register by April 15 to get 20% off with our Early Advantage rate. [Learn more](#) and [Register](#) today.

**U.S. Water Leaders Summit - November 12, Cleveland, OH - Save the Date**



**Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Binational AquaHacking** - The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is proud to co-host this year's [AquaHacking Challenge](#) led by AquaAction, and we're inviting municipalities across the region to help spread the word.

AquaHacking is a 7-month entrepreneurship development program offered completely free to students and aspiring innovators.

**We're asking our Member communities to support AquaHacking by sharing the opportunity through your own communication channels**—including city websites, newsletters, social media, and direct outreach—and by helping to connect AquaAction with local universities, colleges, and innovation hubs, so students don't miss out.

The community with the highest number of registrations wins a **standalone water-tech engagement and showcase event for their community**—at no cost. **Please act fast. Registration closes April 6.**

To confirm your willingness to support, please email [Oliver Anderson at AquaAction](#). To make participation easy, AquaAction has also prepared a ready-to-use promotional toolkit you can share directly across your channels: <https://aquaaction.org/promotionaltoolkit-aquahackingbinational2026-eng>

**Basin Bulletin**

## Programs

- We are pleased to welcome three new staff members to the Cities Initiative to support our growing program offerings to members.
  - **Calantha Elsby** joins us from Norfolk County, Ontario as the Ontario Program Manager leading the development and rollout of new programs in Ontario.
  - **Emily Kuzmick** joins us from Sandusky, Ohio as the U.S. Coastal Programs Manager leading our expansive coastal resilience efforts across the eight Great Lakes States.
  - **Farzana Rahman** joins us from Mississauga, Ontario as the Operations and Programs Coordinator supporting water quality and economic transformation programs with our Canadian members.
- The **Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative** will kick off final engineering and design in three member communities this spring, bringing projects in **Two Harbors, MN**; **Cheboygan, MI**; and **Macomb County, MI** to shovel-ready status.

## Policy

- **U.S. Conference of Mayors** – The Cities Initiative team attended U.S. Conference of Mayors’ 94th Winter Meeting in late January in Washington, DC, along with Mayor Ryan Sorenson of Sheboygan, WI, and Mayor Mat Siscoe of St. Catharines, ON. We met with Mayor Sean Ryan of Buffalo, NY, who agreed to join the Cities Initiative and our Great Lakes Lead Pipes Partnership.
- **Lake Erie West Outreach** – In late January, the Cities Initiative team also attended Lake Erie West Regional Council’s Annual Meeting in Perrysville, OH, just outside of Toledo. President and CEO Jon Altenberg and Executive Chris Ronayne of Cuyahoga County, OH, spoke at the event, touting the Cities Initiative’s [\*\*Economic Transformation Action Plan\*\*](#) and our vision for the Fresh Coast Economic Corridor.



## **New Members**

## Buffalo, NY

### Mayor Sean Ryan

“The City of Buffalo is proud to join the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and stand alongside more than 425 mayors committed to protecting our shared waters. Lake Erie has always been at the heart of our community — driving our economy, sustaining our residents, and providing opportunities for recreation and natural beauty. Today, however, our communities face growing challenges from environmental pressures and aging infrastructure – and meeting these challenges will require purposeful collaboration with cities across our region.”

[Read press release.](#)



## Elgin County, ON

### Mayor Dominique Giguère

“The County of Elgin is thrilled to join the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and work with other like-minded partners to protect our freshwater resources, while also supporting local economic growth. As a community situated directly on Lake Erie, safeguarding our lakeshore and waterways is vital to the health, prosperity, and well-being of our residents. Being part of this network helps us explore forward-thinking solutions that ensure communities along the Great Lakes waterways continue to flourish.” [Read press release.](#)



## Member Spotlight



**Mayor Patrick Pélouquin of Sorel-Tracy: committed to preserving 400 years of our maritime heritage!** Sorel-Tracy is located at the confluence of the St. Lawrence River and the Richelieu River. A city of 36,000 residents, our economy has developed around the maritime industry. The area is home to major industries, four private ports, a shipyard that built the reputation of our city, as well as large marinas that attract tourists from Quebec and the United States.

It's safe to say that water is part of our identity!

It gives us access to major global trade routes that sustain our industries, while also connecting us to the exceptional natural environment that surrounds us. Indeed, Sorel-Tracy is the gateway to the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve of Lake Saint-Pierre, which is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its designation this year. With its archipelago of 103 islands, it is the largest heronry in North America and an area of extraordinary biodiversity.

We have a duty to protect this heritage!

Thanks to the expertise of the Centre for Industrial Ecology Technology Transfer, an applied research centre at the Cégep de Sorel-Tracy, our economic development is now guided by the principles of the circular economy.

In other words, the waste outputs of one company become the raw materials of another. Several local businesses are already applying this principle, generating economic activity while optimizing our resources.

At a time when we must both combat and adapt to climate change, the City of Sorel-Tracy is also committed to creating a resilient territory. To this end, we established an Environment Office, a team of three specialists who guide our decision-making, collect scientific data, and implement environmental protection initiatives. In parallel, the city has also appointed a Chief Scientific Advisor who volunteers to conduct research and propose strategic directions.

As you can see, Sorel-Tracy is already well engaged in preserving its industrial and environmental heritage. Yes, the challenge is significant. But science can help us bring industry and ecology together.

## Other Updates

To support our member communities in their efforts to remove and replace lead service lines while preserving residents' access to safe and affordable water, the Cities Initiative is pleased to highlight "[Filtered Not Bottled: Safe Drinking Water Without Plastic Pollution](#)", a resource developed by the [Plastic Pollution Coalition](#) (PPC). This brief equips policymakers with best practices, funding tools, community testimonials, and case studies for administering effective filter programs to address public water contamination within their districts and states. It outlines key strategies to protect public health, reduce plastic pollution, and rebuild trust in public water.

You can find ways to get involved with PPC's efforts [here](#).

## Capital Updates



## **Washington D.C.**

- **SCOTUS Decision** – On February 20, the **U.S. Supreme Court** ruled against the use of the **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)** to impose sweeping tariffs on several countries, including Canada. While this ruling invalidated the 35% tariffs on select Canadian goods, the United States subsequently instituted a 10% global tariff under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 that applies to these goods for the next 150 days. However, like the IEEPA tariffs, the Section 122 tariffs will have a limited impact on cross-border trade since approximately 90% of Canadian exports to the United States are exempt from tariffs under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The sectoral tariffs that have been imposed under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 – including 50% on steel and aluminum and 25% on cars/auto parts – remain in effect and continue to impact our regional economy.
- United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) – The Canadian American Business Council, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and nearly 70 industry groups **sent** a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer encouraging the United States to extend the USMCA. This letter broadly aligns with the **resolution** recently approved by the Cities Initiative’s Board of Directors, which also called on Canada and the United States to preserve and strengthen the USMCA.

Please get in touch with Travis Wheeler at [twheeler@glslcities.org](mailto:twheeler@glslcities.org) if you have any questions.

## **Ottawa**

- In March 2026, the Government of Canada launched a **new call for proposals under the [Trade Diversification Corridors Fund](#), a \$5-billion federal program aimed at strengthening Canada’s supply-chain infrastructure and improving access to global markets.** The program supports projects that enhance the efficiency and resilience of ports, transportation corridors, and intermodal logistics networks across the country. These investments are intended to reduce transportation bottlenecks and

improve the movement of goods between Canada and international markets. This federal funding opportunity could be particularly relevant for municipalities and port authorities across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway, where investments in port modernization, marine infrastructure, and multimodal connections could support regional economic development and cross-border trade. Please get in touch with Gabriel Alves at [galves@glslcities.org](mailto:galves@glslcities.org) if you have any questions.

**Together, we're protecting the Great Lakes for generations to come. Stay connected and be a voice for our waters. Follow us on social media to stay engaged and take action!**



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