

MAKING WAVES



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

The Cities Initiative releases its newsletter, “Making Waves,” once per month. Stay up to date on current initiatives, important government programs, webinars, etc.

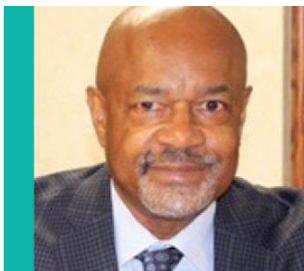
## Letter from Chair Billy McKinney - 2022 Annual General Meeting Overview



June 22-24, 2022

**POWERING  
THE BLUE  
ECONOMY**

Leveraging the potential of our freshwater resources



My name is Billy McKinney and I am the Mayor of Zion, Illinois, and the new Chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. I am reaching out to you today to report on this year’s successful Annual Meeting, which was held in St. Catharines, Ontario, June 22-24, 2022.

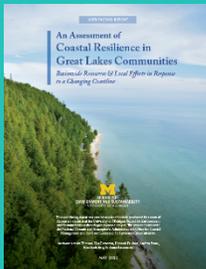
First, I would like to thank our members for nominating me and providing me with the privilege and honor to serve you as our Chair. Our organization serves an extremely vital purpose for communities across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin, and I promise to serve you well over the next year.

I would also like to express my strong thanks and appreciation to Mayor Walter Sendzik and Mayor George Cornell for their outstanding service to the organization. Under their leadership, our organization has grown and prospered in its efforts to support our communities, and it's my hope to build on their tremendous achievements.

Additionally, I would like to welcome the incoming Board and Executive Committee and say how excited I am to work collaboratively with them. We have a tremendous amount of work to do, and I know we will continue to make a difference. [Read more.](#)

## Updates from the Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience

In the spring, the Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience wrapped up their first year of exploration and collaboration. This was bookended by the release of a final report which outlines key priorities and recommendations to respond to the most pressing coastal needs facing the basin's coastal municipalities. Looking ahead in 2022, the Advisory Council has successfully transitioned to new leadership and outlined a comprehensive plan of action which will be advanced via Binational, Canadian, and U.S. working groups. [Learn more about these recent updates here.](#)



## University of Michigan Students Complete Research Project on Coastal Resilience Resources

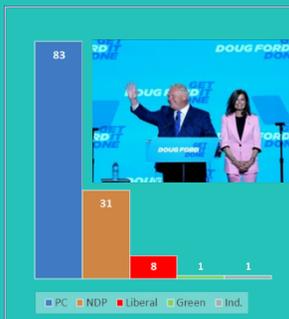
From early 2021 through spring 2022, the Cities Initiative and NOAA Office for Coastal Management served as co-clients to a research project completed by masters students at the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability (SEAS). The six students took a deep dive into understanding the current landscape of Great Lakes coastal resources and assistance and we are now excited to share their recent findings which were released in May 2022. [Read more.](#)

## New Canadian Funding Opportunity - Natural Infrastructure Fund

The Government of Canada is accepting applications for new projects through the Small Projects Stream of the Natural Infrastructure Fund (NIF).

The \$200 million NIF supports building community awareness of the value of natural infrastructure. Municipalities, local governments, public sector and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to apply for up to \$1 million in federal funding to restore and enhance natural infrastructure like urban forests, street trees, wetlands, living dykes, bioswales, and naturalized coastal restoration. Interested applicants can visit the [NIF applicant guide](#). *(Please note that discussions are ongoing between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec regarding the implementation of this program in Quebec, in accordance with the Quebec legislative framework).*

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## Ontario Election Update

Ontarians went to the polls on June 2, resulting in another Ford majority, with the NDP forming the Official Opposition once again. Both NDP and Liberal leaders resigned on election night, following their parties' underwhelming performances.

Although there were no major Great Lakes commitments in the Ford government's pre-election Budget (which also served as their electoral blueprint), the Cities Initiative will continue to build relationships with key players, like Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks David Piccini and Ontario's Agent-General in Chicago, to advance our priorities. [Read more.](#)

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## Quebec Working Group Update - Priorities for the St. Lawrence

The Cities Initiative has assembled a working group of Quebec mayors to identify issues and propose policy solutions to inform political leaders ahead of the Quebec provincial election this October. The working group, which includes Mayor Gino Moretti (Saint-Anicet), Mayor Maja Vodanovic (Lachine, Montreal), Mayor Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny) and Mayor Guy Caron (Rimouski), came together over the spring to identify St. Lawrence River priorities for our member municipalities in the context of the upcoming provincial election in October. [Read more.](#)





## U.S. Policy Update

As the Biden administration begins implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Congress is in the midst of considering consequential water-resource legislation and federal appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

The [House](#) and [Senate](#) have completed markups of their respective versions of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022. WRDAs are omnibus measures that authorize the civil-works missions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to facilitate commercial navigation, address flood risks, and restore aquatic ecosystems. In recent years, Congress has considered WRDAs on a biennial basis. [Read more.](#)

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## New U.S. Policy Director

We are excited to announce a new addition to the Cities Initiative's staff. Travis Wheeler joined the organization on May 9 as our new U.S. Policy Director. Travis will be replacing Matt Doss, who retired at the end of June.



A graduate of Tufts University with a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy, Travis comes to us with a plethora of legislative and policy experience. [Read more.](#)

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## White House TA Announcement

On May 18, 2022, the White House [released](#) a technical assistance guide to assist state and local governments in accessing funds from the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The guide summarizes opportunities to obtain technical assistance in applying for water-infrastructure and resilience funding administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other federal entities. [Read more.](#)

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## Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative July 2022 Update

The Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative is entering its final stages in Wisconsin. Twelve communities along Lake Michigan will receive technical assistance for priority coastal projects, with mayors reconvening for a project close-out and next steps by October. Projects in Wisconsin include off-shore resilience measures such as breakwaters that

add habitat and protect the coastline from storm surge events and erosion; onshore green infrastructure and related flood management solutions. [Read more.](#)

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## Cities Initiative Staff Road Trip

Cities Initiative Staff, along with Mayor Ryan Sorenson, Sheboygan, WI, finished a week-long road trip visiting mayors along the lake from Illinois to Wisconsin.

Pictured left to right: Mayor Ryan Sorenson, Sheboygan, WI, Travis Wheeler, U.S. Policy Director, Bridget Brown, Special Programs Director, The Fonz and Jon Altenberg, CEO and President.



## 2022 Webinars

The Cities Initiative will continue its monthly webinar series in 2022. Mark your calendars for the upcoming webinars.

- **September 1:** Preparing your Grant Applications for Infrastructure
- **September 22:** Back to the Future – 50 Years of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement
- **October 27:** The Blue Economy Series – Sustainable Waterfront Development
- **November 17:** The Blue Economy Series – Building Up Your Blue Tourism Brand
- **December 8:** The Cities Initiative Year In Review

