

## Katherine Hebert

**From:** Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative <admin@glslcities.org>  
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making waves **newsletter**



**GREAT LAKES AND  
ST. LAWRENCE**  
CITIES INITIATIVE

**2025**

*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,

Let's keep the momentum going—together, we can continue to lead the charge in protecting our shared waters.

From May 14–16, join over 200 municipal, Tribal, and First Nations leaders, environmental experts, industry representatives, and freshwater advocates in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for our 2025 Annual Conference, centered around the timely theme: *The Future of Fresh Water: Leading the Way in an Era of Scarcity*. [Click here to join us in Milwaukee!](#)



With about 20% of the world's surface fresh water, the communities of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region are on the frontlines of this challenge. At the same time, cities are being asked to do more with less, as residents struggle with an affordability crisis. Local government leaders across the region are championing the investments and innovations needed to safeguard our most critical resource. Because when water is at risk, so are our economy, our health, and our future.

Don't miss this opportunity to collaborate, innovate, and lead. Hosted by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, this conference will spotlight

the essential role that local governments, industries, and innovators play in addressing both regional and global water issues.

Together, we'll explore solutions at a time when cities face shrinking budgets, workforce challenges, and growing pressure on binational governance.

Our region must act as one to protect what matters most. Be part of the conversation—and the solution—in Milwaukee. [Register Now](#)

In other news, we've reached a major milestone—our membership has grown to 325 municipalities, Tribes, and First Nations. In just four short years, we've tripled in size. This growth is a testament to the power of collective action and the critical impact our work has on the region's economy and environmental well-being.

We've also seen a surge in media coverage, with over 200 news articles featuring our work in the past five months alone. You can explore some of these highlights in our [Media Report](#).

In today's political and economic climate, it's more important than ever that we work together to ensure the health and prosperity of our communities. Thank you for your continued commitment—and I hope to see you in Milwaukee at our Annual Conference.

Warm regards,

Jonathan Altenberg  
President and CEO

## Upcoming Events

May 14-16, 2025, **Annual Conference**, Milwaukee, WI. [Register](#) now and join more than 200 attendees as we explore the Future of Fresh Water in our region. [View our preliminary program](#).



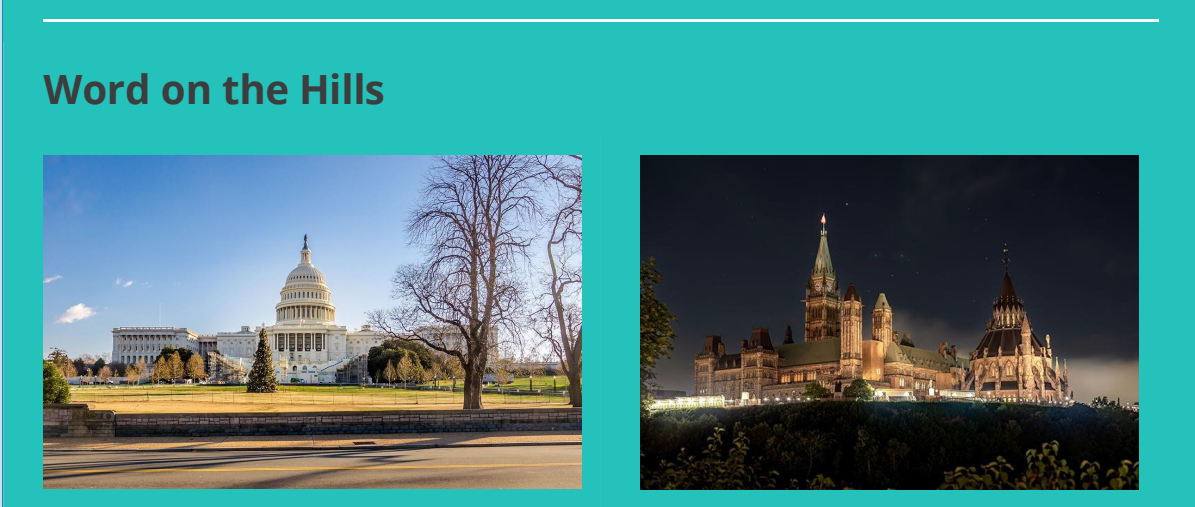
## Basin Bulletin

### **Program Updates**

The **Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative (RCPI)** will launch a second round of planning and capacity-building support in Michigan this spring, in collaboration with the Michigan Coastal Management Program.

This month, the RCPI kicked off preliminary design for six new projects, with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Members participating include: Dunkirk, NY; Grand Marais, MN; Sheboygan, WI; Toledo, OH; Two Rivers, WI; and Waukegan, IL.

We continue to seek opportunities to partner with members in the U.S., Ontario and Quebec to develop and fund new programs. If you have specific requests or ideas, please reach out to Bridget Brown (**[bridget.brown@qlslcities.org](mailto:bridget.brown@qlslcities.org)**) at any time.



## **Parliament Hill**

The votes are in, and the Liberals managed to clinch a fourth mandate with 169 Members of Parliament, three seats short of a majority. The Conservative Party had their strongest showing since 1988. But with the collapse of the NDP and Green Party vote, they were unable to secure enough seats to form government. Pierre Poilievre, the Conservative leader also lost his own seat but has pledged to stay on as the leader of the opposition.

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While it is in Québec that Liberals managed to get the seats for their win, it is in Ontario that the Conservatives secured most of their growth, confirming that the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Region our region remains the key election battleground.

As the Liberals look towards implementing their agenda in yet another government and with a new Cabinet, the Cities Initiative will be engaging MPs and government officials on key election promises, including:

The **launch a municipal stream under the Fresh Water Action Plan** for regions facing freshwater challenges and the **development of a National Water Security Strategy**

- Enhancing climate resilience through **direct investments to households to protect against floods** and other weather disasters, **disaster mitigation and recovery funding**, the new **Indigenous Climate Readiness and Adaptation Fund**, and stand up **Canada's high-risk insurance program** by next April
- **Infrastructure investments to grow the economy**, connect Canada, and support more housing development, **including water and wastewater infrastructure**.

Given the focus on "Build Baby Build", we intend to imprint the necessity to invest into our aging municipal water to be able to let promoters build more housing. We'll also highlight the importance of keeping the current housing stock safe from extreme weather events to expand the housing supply, and the importance of healthy lakes and rivers to support our cities and their economies.

We will therefore work with our Mayors Commissions to prepare positions to present on the various topics and prepare priorities to share with the incoming ministries to shape their agenda.

Our immediate next steps will therefore include:

- Sending congratulations letters including an introduction to the Cities Initiative and our priorities to the MPs from the region, asking for an introduction;
- Sending targeted letters to elected ministers adapted from their mandate letters;
- Re-introduction to new staffers in ministers' offices to advocate for our positions.

If you want to contribute in shaping this effort, please contact our Sr. Policy Manager, Max Hayet at [mhayet@glslcities.org](mailto:mhayet@glslcities.org).

## New Members

### **Mayor Daniel Côté** Gaspé, QC

"As the main hub of Gaspésie, a region surrounded by the St. Lawrence, Gaspé intends to assume its role as regional leader within the Cities Initiative. Our economy lives to the rhythm of the St. Lawrence. The fisheries, shipbuilding and tourism industries are just a few examples, in addition to the crucial role that has been played by the natural port of Gaspé for 500 years. Gaspé is also at the heart of climate hazards, bearing the brunt of warming waters and eroding shorelines. These are just some of the reasons why we decided to join this great coalition, to position our city, to contribute to public debates, to benefit from the Cities Initiative's leadership, and to ensure that it includes more of our region's reality in its work across borders."



[Read more](#)

### **Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council Inc.**

"Protecting our environment is a foundational value for our people—to ensure clean water for future generations," said Joey Awonohopay, Chairman of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and board member of the Cities Initiative. "Our engagement with mayors and communities along these waterways is vital to making sure Indigenous voices are heard and respected in this collective effort."



[Read more](#)

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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