

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION ACTION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative has released the *Economic Transformation Action Plan: A Blueprint for Economic Growth and Freshwater Stewardship in the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence River Region*, which provides a 10-year blueprint to help the region's communities prepare for and capitalize on the historic opportunity to transform the regional economy into a world-renowned Fresh Coast Economic Corridor.

Through the Action Plan's implementation, the Cities Initiative, in collaboration with key partners and regional stakeholders, seeks to contribute to achieving the following regional goals by 2035:

- 1. ATTRACT** HALF A MILLION NEW BUSINESSES
- 2. CREATE** OVER 18 MILLION JOBS
- 3. AVOID ANY INCREASE** IN % WATER LOSS
- 4. IMPROVE WATER QUALITY** FROM "FAIR" TO "GOOD"
- 5. REDUCE EMISSIONS** BY 300 MILLION MT



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



AN ERA OF WATER SCARCITY

OVER 75 PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S
POPULATION CURRENTLY FACES
WATER INSECURITY

GLOBAL FRESH WATER IS DWINDLING RAPIDLY, exacerbated by rising temperatures, excessive groundwater extraction and other trends. Over 75 percent of the world's population currently faces water insecurity, yet many of North America's most water-stressed regions continue to grow at breakneck speeds due to expanding populations and an unprecedented spike in new, water-intensive industries. These dynamics are unsustainable. In the face of an increasingly water-scarce world, businesses and people may have no choice but to seek more resilient, resource-rich communities prepared to innovate for the future.

OUR SHARED VISION:

With abundant fresh water and other comparative advantages, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region is poised for a new era of economic growth. However, meeting this moment will require a new transformative model of economic development that balances economic goals with freshwater protection. The region must build a Fresh Coast Economic Corridor that safeguards its unparalleled freshwater resources, futureproofs its businesses and communities and ensures economic benefits are broadly shared.

WHY THE GREAT LAKES & ST. LAWRENCE RIVER REGION?

For industries seeking a stable, long-term home amid rising water scarcity elsewhere, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region offers abundant fresh water, a highly integrated regional economy, strong governance frameworks like the Great Lakes Compact, access to international markets via the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway, a highly skilled workforce, superior quality of life and prime sites for relocation – ensuring sustainable operations and continued growth.

84% of
North America's
Surface Fresh
Water

Highly
Integrated
Economy –
the 3rd Largest
in the World

Access to
Global Markets
via the Great
Lakes-St.
Lawrence
Seaway

Skilled
Industrial
Workforce and
a Legacy of
Manufacturing

Strong
Governance
Frameworks Like
the Great Lakes
Compact

ACTION PLAN:

Developed by the Cities Initiative's Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation, the Action Plan includes 17 strategies and 76 actions to be implemented by local governments and other actors, organized under the following transformational pillars:



INDUSTRY

Strengthening and expanding the region's economic base and creating jobs by attracting and retaining industries that are committed to sustainability through water stewardship, emissions reductions or waste minimization.



TRANSPORTATION

Supporting the modernization of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway to encourage regional economic growth by enabling faster, safer, more cost effective and more sustainable movement of goods through an integrated intermodal network while expanding cruise tourism and waterborne mobility.



WATERFRONTS

Creating world-class, mixed-use waterfronts to generate job opportunities, strengthen community resilience, improve quality of life, boost recreation and tourism and drive long-term economic growth.



ENERGY

Building a sustainable, independent and North American-produced clean-energy grid to meet the growing energy needs of the region's businesses and communities.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

To contribute to region-wide economic transformation, the Cities Initiative will develop a suite of programs that directly support its members in implementing the strategies and actions contained in the Action Plan. Strategic collaboration with like-minded partners will be critical to the Action Plan's effective implementation and the Cities Initiative's ability to deliver value to its members. Initial program concepts include:

FRESH COAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR MARKETING

The Cities Initiative would convene partners and marketing experts to develop a Fresh Coast Economic Corridor marketing campaign. The program will develop a branding strategy and executional elements to attract development, tourism and a younger workforce to the region's communities.

FRESH COAST INDUSTRY INCUBATOR

The Cities Initiative would provide technical assistance to municipalities to prepare for and recruit new sustainability-oriented industries to grow local economies, including supporting the development of incubator sites, the identification of target industries and the preparation of pitch materials and requests for proposals.

MUNICIPAL INNOVATION EXCHANGE

The Cities Initiative would develop a water technology and security fund and learning exchange that matches municipal needs with private industry solutions to accelerate local innovation, growth and water and energy efficiencies and protect vulnerable freshwater resources.



**Scan to download
the full plan**

ABOUT THE 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 and protect our fresh water for the benefit of current and future generations.



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