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CHAIR, GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
CHAIR, SCARBOROUGH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
CHAIR, BOARD OF MANAGEMENT OF THE TORONTO ZOO
CHAIR, FEDERATION OF ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES
NIGHT ECONOMY CHAMPION, CITY OF TORONTO

Date: April 21, 2026

To: Mayor Olivia Chow, Chair and Executive Committee

Re: Report on Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative: Great Lakes Day 2026 Advocacy Meetings (Washington, D.C.) March 3–5, 2026.

Recommendation:

1. Toronto City Council receive the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative: Great Lakes Day 2026 Advocacy meetings update for information.

Background

I am pleased to provide this update for your information following my attendance at the recent Great Lakes Day 2026 Advocacy mission to Washington, D.C., March 3–5, 2026, on behalf of Mayor Olivia Chow. The mission focused on high-level advocacy with U.S. federal and congressional leaders to protect shared water resources and preserve the vital U.S.–Canada trade relationship during a period of significant global trade uncertainty.

The delegation's primary objective was to urge the U.S. government to avoid new tariffs or increases on Canadian goods, highlighting that the Great Lakes region facilitates 50% of all bilateral trade and represents the world's third-largest regional economy. In a joint press release issued on March 5, 2026, the Deputy Mayor emphasized that the ongoing USMCA–CUSMA Joint Review should be leveraged to strengthen supply-chain resiliency rather than creating new trade barriers that increase costs and jeopardize regional competitiveness.

In addition to trade, the mission addressed critical environmental and infrastructure priorities for Toronto. Advocacy efforts focused on the reauthorization of the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) and continued federal support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). These programs are essential for addressing aging infrastructure and shoreline resiliency—a key concern for Toronto, as its 46 km of shoreline serves as the city's sole source of drinking water.

During the visit, the delegation conducted intensive **meetings on Capitol Hill** with representatives from several key Great Lakes states to align on regional economic and environmental goals:

- **Michigan (MI):** Engaged with Senator Gary Peters and Representatives Bill Huizenga and Kristen McDonald-Rivet, as well as staff for Senator Elisa Slotkin and Representative Debbie Dingell.
- **Wisconsin (WI):** Met with Senators Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson, and Representatives Bryan Steil and Glenn Grothman, along with staff for Representative Tony Wied.
- **Ohio (OH) & Indiana (IN):** Consulted with Senator Bernie Moreno and Representative Bob Latta, as well as Senator Todd Young (IN) and Representative Frank Mrvan.
- **New York (NY) & Minnesota (MN):** Met with Representatives George Latimer, Nick Langworthy, and Pete Stauber, as well as staff for Representative Tim Kennedy.

The delegation concluded by urging federal partners to maintain stable, predictable market access and to continue binational collaboration to tackle emerging contaminants and climate-related risks to the Great Lakes basin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul W. Ainslie', with a stylized, cursive script.

Paul W. Ainslie
Deputy Mayor, City of Toronto, Councillor
Ward 24 Scarborough-Guildwood