



Deputy Mayor

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CHAIR, GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
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CHAIR, BOARD OF MANAGEMENT OF THE TORONTO ZOO
PRESIDENT, GOOD ROADS BOARD OF DIRECTORS
NIGHT ECONOMY CHAMPION, CITY OF TORONTO

Date: June 2, 2026

To: Mayor Olivia Chow, Chair and Executive Committee

Re: Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's 2026 Annual Conference, May 6-8, 2026

Recommendation:

1. Toronto City Council receive the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's 2026 Annual Conference, May 6-8, update for information.

Background

I am writing to provide an update on my participation at the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's 2026 Annual Conference, held from May 6 to 8, 2026. Acting on behalf of Mayor Chow, I attended the conference to represent the City of Toronto, ensuring our continued leadership and engagement with municipal partners across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region.

Toronto was actively represented at this important gathering of municipal leaders. The conference provided a vital forum for mayors and city leaders to collaborate on shared priorities including economic resilience, trade, infrastructure investment, and the long-term competitiveness of our interconnected regional economy. The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region represents one of the most significant economic areas globally, generating approximately \$9.3 trillion USD in annual economic output and accounting for nearly 30 percent of all economic activity in Canada and the United States.

Given Toronto's role as a major economic hub and trade gateway, participation in this forum is critical. Discussions at the conference focused on addressing current economic challenges, including trade disruptions, shifting supply chains, tariff pressures, and rising infrastructure costs affecting municipalities across the region. A key outcome of the conference was the advancement and adoption of positions through the Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation (MCET), which brought together municipal leaders to advocate for coordinated action to strengthen regional economies and address trade-related challenges.

A motion reflecting these priorities was adopted through the Cities Initiative at its Board Meeting during the conference subsequently adopted by Toronto City Council at the May 20, 2026, meeting, [Agenda Item History - 2026.MM41.9](#). This motion aligns Toronto's advocacy with regional partners and reinforces the outcomes of the Cities Initiative conference.

Ahead of the conference, Toronto hosted a Mayors meeting on May 5, convened by Mayor Chow. This meeting strengthened collaboration and set the stage for discussions at the conference, particularly around economic transformation, trade resilience, and regional cooperation.

Toronto's leadership was highlighted throughout the conference, particularly in areas such as waterfront revitalization, economic development, and infrastructure investment. Major initiatives like the Port Lands transformation demonstrate how cities can integrate housing growth, climate resilience, and economic prosperity.

The 2026 Annual Conference underscored the importance of strong municipal collaboration in addressing complex economic and trade challenges. Through my attendance on behalf of Mayor Chow, and through City Council's adoption of the CUSMA motion, Toronto continues to play a leading role in advancing policies that support economic stability and growth across the region.

Sincerely,



Paul W. Ainslie
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