Dear Members and Partners,

This summer has delivered a powerful reminder of why our work matters.

Across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region, communities are confronting **floods, wildfires, tornadoes, and destructive storms** with increasing frequency and cost.

Just a few weeks ago extraordinary rainfall caused widespread flooding in St. Catharines and impacts across Niagara communities. Communities in Indiana and Illinois were battered by storms impacting vital infrastructure and property, with lingering damage and consequences. And wildfires across our regions displaced thousands of people, including First Nations communities who no longer have homes and communities to return to.

These are not isolated warnings. They are part of a larger trend.

In the U.S. Great Lakes states, billion-dollar weather and climate disasters averaged **3.9 per year during the 2000s**. From 2020 through 2024, that rate climbed to **13.8 per year** -more than three times the earlier rate.

Canada is experiencing the same escalating financial burden. Catastrophic weather and wildfire insured losses increased from approximately C$14 billion in 2006–2015 to C$37 billion in 2016–2025, adjusted for inflation.

We cannot ignore what is happening - and we cannot wait for the next disaster to act.

Our communities need infrastructure capable of withstanding the conditions they face today and the risks they will face tomorrow.

QUEBEC

In the United States, we have already invested millions of dollars supporting more than **100 communities** as they develop green infrastructure, erosion-control and flood-resilience projects, and pursue more than **$250 million in infrastructure funding**. We continue to press Congress and federal and state agencies to accelerate – and not retreat from—these critical investments.

In Ontario, we launched the Local Blue Economy Growth Fund, with the support of the Government of Ontario, which **provides project-based funding of up to CA$50,000** for innovative stormwater and wastewater solutions to improve community resilience. Investing in these types of projects is critical to make our communities stronger and secure new economic opportunities.

Extreme weather is not the only crisis our region is facing. A new storm is hitting us - and this one is economic.

U.S.-Canada tariffs could devastate the US$9/CA$12-trillion Fresh Coast economy. For every Great Lakes state, Canada is a top trading partner. Tariffs and counter-tariffs will move through our region like a Category 5 tornado, costing quality jobs, driving up costs for consumers and businesses, and hurting local employers from one corner of our region to another.

That's why mayors on both sides of the border are calling for renewed cooperation. We urge both governments to return to the negotiating table immediately. The U.S. and Canada have built generations of economic cooperation. We must strengthen that relationship, not tear it apart.

That is where you come in.

Over 425 communities speaking together can make it happen. We need to reach beyond party with our message that our communities must receive support.

Join us for **Great Lakes Day in Washington, D.C., March 2–4**, and the **Fresh Coast Forum in Ottawa on December 9**. Respond when we ask members to support letters to our federal, provincial, and state governments. Attend the **Summit on the St. Lawrence in Montreal on October 5** and the **U.S. Water Leaders Summit in Cleveland November 12th** so we can work to collaborate on these issues more. And when you meet federal, state or provincial leaders in your own community, tell them that resilient infrastructure and the protection of our integrated Fresh Coast economy must be a priority.

Together, we can make our region Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Strong for the generations that follow.

Warm regards,

Jonathan Altenberg
President and CEO