

Year in Review

I am happy to report on the organization's 2023 performance today. The organization has seen some major successes in 2022. Our membership has grown, our fundraising has been strong, our programs have been well received and our reputation in both national capitals is stronger than ever.

Membership

We started off the year with approximately 109 members. Our ranks have now grown to 236 individual and regional members with significant growth being seen in the United States and Ontario. We have seen an annual growth rate of 74 percent since 2020.

Programs

The Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative (RCPI), a fully funded program to assist cities within the basin in preparing and gaining funding for coastal resilience projects, has already assisted over 25 cities in the United States with plans to help another 65 U.S. cities and 50 Canadian cities over the next two years.

Starting next fall, the Cities Initiative will begin working with five cities on "pre-design" for their projects which includes additional modeling and expanded community engagement, readying these cities for final design and permitting. We are happy to announce that we received a $1 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to complete this work.

So far, we have raised $2.1 million to assure basin communities are able to break ground on projects.

We have also conducted seven webinars with members to continue to educate them on the important issues facing the basin. Our AGM was also a tremendous success in St. Catharines this past June.

Commissions

The Cities Initiative has been operating two commissions this year, the Mayors Commission on Water Equity and the recently renamed Mayors Commission on Coastal Resilience. Both commissions reported out policy and program recommendations and staff have already begun to execute against those recommendations. Staff has worked with commission leadership to successfully secure more than $50 million in additional freshwater investments for 2022 in Canada. The groups also helped secure $2.6 billion for coastal communities and climate resilience in the United States.

Policy Successes

The following is a summary of our policy successes in 2022. Please click here to see our full report card for this year.

- Secured Substantial Resources for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin Cities including $50 million in additional freshwater investments in Canada and $34.6 billion in federal funding in the United States.
- Strengthened Government Support for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin Restoration and Protection including:
    - Canada - Renewed commitments to launch a Canada Water Agency, advanced funding commitments by Ottawa in Budget 2021 for a Natural Infrastructure Fund, secured commitments from the Ontario and Quebec governments around source water protection and water royalties from private companies, respectively.
    - United States - Sustained support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative on Capitol Hill; increased funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study; advocated for a more equitable federal-local cost share via the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 for the Brandon Road Interbasin Project to prevent an established presence of invasive carp.

Funding

Our organization is more financially sound than ever.

- U.S. Revenues are expected to exceed $700,000
- Canadian Revenues are expected to exceed $600,000
- We have now secured over $2.2 million in grants for programs over the next three years
- Account balances are expected to exceed $500,000 in the United States and $500,000 in Canada by year's end

Our funding will continue to improve in 2023 with planned revenues of $1.5 million in the United States and $813,000 in Canada. This major financial support is a sign that our organization is stronger than ever going into 2023.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have about the organization.

Wishing you a happy and healthy New Year.

Jonathan Altenberg
President/CEO
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative