



GREAT LAKES AND
ST. LAWRENCE
CITIES INITIATIVE



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Most communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin will spend up to \$10 million over the coming years to protect their coastlines

Basin cities struggle to prepare for climate change impacts as capacity to access federal funding remains low and economic factors constrain municipal budgets.

Chicago, IL – May 25, 2023 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative’s most recent annual survey of cities, villages and other local jurisdictions in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin shows that the majority of communities will spend an additional \$1 million to \$10 million between now and 2026 to make their coasts more resilient. Most respondents spent at least \$500,000 over the last two years to mitigate hazards impacting their coastlines.

By far, the greatest need identified by local governments to further their climate adaptation measures is sustained and accessible funding from their respective federal governments. While the U.S. and Canadian federal governments have made some funding available to support climate mitigation and adaptation, local governments have limited staff capacity to access these funds at a time when inflation, high interest rates and labour shortages are constraining municipal budgets.

The Cities Initiative supports the more than \$8 billion made available by the U.S. federal government via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act for state and local governments to implement climate action plans and coastal resilience measures. The Government of Canada’s recent commitment of \$1.6 billion under its National Adaptation Strategy is also a welcome investment for local and regional disaster mitigation measures. These funding commitments, however, will need to grow in the coming years as climate impacts worsen.

“Climate action is quickly becoming a line item that governments cannot ignore,” said Mayor Billy McKinney of Zion, IL, the Chair of the Cities Initiative. “We welcome recent federal investments and we will continue to work closely with our partners to ensure cities are able to easily access these funds and enhance community mitigation and adaptation.”

The Cities Initiative’s annual survey, which received responses from more than 130 U.S. and Canadian local jurisdictions in the basin, also reveals that communities are struggling to develop climate action plans. More than a quarter of local governments have not yet started developing action plans and only 17 percent are currently implementing their climate action plan. This June, the organization will be providing hands-on training workshops to help cities develop and strengthen their climate action plans at its 20th anniversary Annual General Meeting in Chicago.

Since 2021, the Cities Initiative has worked with more than 55 communities across the basin through its Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative to help them plan adaptation measures for their coasts and connect them with existing funding opportunities. That program will continue expanding this year.

About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a binational, mayor-led coalition of Canadian and U.S. cities dedicated to the environmental and socioeconomic health of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. With more than 230 member cities, the Cities Initiative is the largest municipally-driven organization in the basin focused on these issues.

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