



COUNCIL OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION

***United Nations Global Compact (UNG)  
Communication on Engagement (COE)  
2020-2021 period***

## **Statement of Continued Support by the CEO**

The bi-national Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR) is proud to be a participant of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and support the advancement of its ten principles with respect to human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption. We commit our full support to driving action; and through this document, our first Communication on Engagement, we further aim to uphold transparency and accountability with our stakeholders as we demonstrate the steps we are taking and the progress we are achieving towards strengthening the sustainability of the Great Lakes region.

As stated in our Letter of Commitment to UNGC submitted in March 2022, we are committed to implementing partnerships on corporate sustainability and engaging with other stakeholders; supporting the UN Global Compact business participants as they implement and report on their sustainability efforts; engaging with Global Compact Local Networks in Canada and USA; and joining and/or supporting issue platforms and workstreams where relevant to CGLR programs.

Sincerely,

Mark P. Fisher  
President and CEO

## About Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR)

The Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR) is a nonprofit organization that is incorporated in both Canada and the United States, created to think strategically about the binational Great Lakes region as a shared economic region and watershed, which holds the largest freshwater system in the world.

By harnessing the economic strengths and assets of the Great Lakes region, CGLR works across borders and sectors to enhance regional collaboration and cross-border integration in the North American Great Lakes Region. Through its diverse platform, it serves as a gathering point for leaders from all levels of government, business, academia, and the non-profit sector who are committed to strengthening the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the binational Great Lakes region.

The Council is a member-based organization led by an independent and volunteer Board of Directors, with guidance from a larger Advisory Board. Under the CGLR umbrella sits the CGLR Foundation (an Ohio-based 501c3 public charity), CGLR USA (Ohio-based 501c6 trade association), and CGLR Canada (Ontario-based not-for-profit corporation), with funding primarily coming from three main sources—sponsorships, memberships, and grants.

### Vision

Our vision is to create the most prosperous, innovative, sustainable, livable, and welcoming region in the world.

### Mission

CGLR will lead a new era of economic growth, environmental protection, and individual well-being by **connecting** diverse interests and sectors across the Great Lakes Region to one another, **discovering** solutions to region-wide policy challenges, and cultivating a regional voice to **influence** decisions that affect the region's socio-economic and environmental interests.

For more information, please visit the CGLR website: <http://councilgreatlakesregion.org/>

## Description of Actions and Outcomes 2020-2021

The Great Lakes make up the largest freshwater system in the world, containing roughly 20% of the world's and 84% of North America's surface freshwater. The lakes sustain life for thousands of species and provide drinking water for over 40 million Americans and Canadians. The region, which spans across eight US states [Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York] and two Canadian provinces [Ontario, Quebec], is home to 107 million people, provides 51 million jobs, and accounts for roughly 50% of all US-Canada bilateral border trade. This mega-region is the powerhouse of North America and must be safeguarded, but no single organization can do this alone, which is why CGLR prioritizes cross-sector and cross-industry partnerships and collaboration through its programs and research.

Connecting regional leaders through forum and sector dialogues, CGLR serves as a unified voice for the region's varied economic, social, and environmental interests. The following initiatives have been developed to raise awareness and create impactful change through collective action.

### **Business and Sustainability Program**

It is only with the involvement of all stakeholders, including the participation of the business community, that a truly sustainable regional economy and environment can be achieved. Therefore, with initial funding from the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation, CGLR set out to engage companies headquartered and/or operating in the Great Lakes region to build business support for a healthy Great Lakes ecosystem and regional economy through a platform that enables trusting relationships and collaborative solutions and actions to be fostered.

In addition to essential business network building, foundational sustainability-focused programs have been developed to engage companies with on the ground action that support their material sustainability interests while at the same time addressing the needs of the region. Outreach efforts to engage Great Lakes businesses remain ongoing, and as business sustainability priorities become more defined, new programming will be developed to support the region's corporate sustainability ambitions. The following initiatives are underway and facilitated by CGLR:

#### **Circular Great Lakes – Forging a Future Without Waste.**

According to a recent [report](#), it is estimated that 81% of the Great Lakes post-consumer waste is lost to landfills, including valuable materials like plastic. Redirecting these materials from being landfill-bound to being reused or recycled/upcycled is of utmost importance and a mission of one of CGLR's newest initiatives – the Circular Great Lakes.

Creating a binational Great Lakes circular economy and cleaning up marine litter is one way to close the loop and keep critical materials cycling through the regional economy. The Circular Great Lakes (CGL) initiative is a catalyst for identifying transformational projects, forming partnerships, and mobilizing public-private sector investments required to ensure valuable materials never become waste or pollution in this mega-region, starting with plastics.

Following the initiative's launch in March 2021, CGLR along with the CGL Activation Partners went to work initiating a regional gap analysis to assess six areas of best management practices: Collection, Processing, End Markets, Education & Engagement, Supporting Policies, and Public-Private Funding. The gap analysis findings are informing a cohesive 5-year strategy and action plan to achieve a regional circular economy for plastics, which will be published in mid-2022.

**Key Outcomes:**

- 8 corporate activation partners (Charter Next Generation, Dow, Imperial, Pregis, Meijer, American Packaging, Dart, and Rothmans, Benson & Hedges)
- 30 knowledge partners (a growing network representing government, academia, and the nonprofit sector to capture diverse perspectives and interests)
- 1 region-wide gap analysis completed with 6 best practice areas assessed
- 3 priority areas identified: Capture & Cleanup; Collection, Processing & End Markets; and Policy & Consumer Education

More about the Circular Great Lakes can be read here: <https://www.circulargreatlakes.org/>

**Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup** – Taking Action to Clean Up the Waterways of the Great Lakes Region.

It is known that valuable materials are lost to landfills and the environment, especially plastics. In fact, an estimated 22 million pounds (10,000 tons) of plastic pollution could be entering the Great Lakes every year from the U.S. and Canada according to models developed by the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Aligning with the Circular Great Lakes initiative's mission to forge a future without waste, the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup (GLPC) is led jointly by CGLR and Pollution Probe and brings together communities and local partners across Canada and the United States to take action on the plastic pollution problem in the Great Lakes. The GLPC uses innovative technology to remove plastics at marinas from Lake Ontario to Lake Superior and in between. The litter collected is analyzed and valuable plastics recovered, being redirected back into the recycling system and creating reuse opportunities.

2020 data analysis of the debris and litter captured from sites along the Canadian side of the Great Lakes breaks down the waste characterization and identifies the four dominant types of

debris to be: small foam pieces (30.8%), small film pieces (22.2%), small hard fragments (20.5%), and small pellets (13.4%).

With funding support from NOAA, work began in late 2021 to expand the GLPC to include the USA side of the Great Lakes. Partnerships have been established with marinas and organizations in New York and Wisconsin, and capture and cleanup efforts will begin at new US sites in summer 2022.

Key Outcomes:

- 34 Canada partners; 6 new USA partners
- 32 capture and cleanup sites (Canada), new US sites being identified
- Supported by Environment and Climate Change Canada; Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; and US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- An average of 103 pieces of plastic waste per day is removed from GLPC Canada sites

More information about the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup can be read here:  
<https://www.greatlakesplasticcleanup.org/>

**Ontario Materials Marketplace** – Scaling reuse and recycling opportunities.

The Ontario Materials Marketplace connects businesses and institutions to develop and scale new reuse and recycling market opportunities. Undertaken in collaboration with the United States Business Council for Sustainable Development (USBCSD) and Canada-based Pollution Probe, the Ontario Materials Marketplace uses the USBCSD's cloud-based materials marketplace platform to create and pilot a materials marketplace in Ontario for the industrial, commercial, and institutional sector (IC&I) – a first in Canada.

More than 2000 businesses and organizations – large and small – are using the Materials Marketplace across North America, 1300 of which are doing business in the binational Great Lakes economic region. Ontario Materials Marketplace gives manufacturers practical ways to save money, improve supply chain resilience and generate value through the reuse and recycling of materials. Activities facilitated by the Materials Marketplace also help drive new business opportunities and job growth.

Key Outcomes:

- Dedicated marketplace website created for Ontario
- Supported by Environment and Climate Change Canada

More information about the Ontario Materials Marketplace can be read here:  
<https://ontario.materialsmarketplace.org/>

## Great Lakes Carbon Collaborative – Decarbonizing our Future.

The bi-national Great Lakes region has a rich and vibrant mix of businesses from the automotive, chemical, refining, and steel sectors - many of which have aggressive carbon reduction goals already in place.

To support regional carbon reduction goals, CGLR and the US Business Council for Sustainable Development formed the Great Lakes Carbon Collaborative, launched in October 2021, and are spurring conversations across sectors, customers, and suppliers up and down the value stream, to facilitate the development of multi-industry decarbonization projects in the Great Lakes region.

The structure of the Great Lakes Carbon Collaborative enables broad collaboration without losing business focus. It is specifically tailored to businesses and organizations with operations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Ontario and Quebec - but may extend further outside of the region as appropriate.

The region's industry mix, existing infrastructure, and unique attributes with respect to water and ecosystem services has already focused attention and identified some barriers and opportunities for action. Better understanding of carbon reduction techniques helps participating company representatives engage internal decision-makers on potential solutions, leading to de-risked investments in appropriate decarbonization strategies. Potential approach, gaps, challenges, and opportunities were discussed during the Great Lakes Carbon Collaborative's launch meeting, and as a result working groups were formed to include electrification, hydrogen, carbon capture use and storage (CCUS), nature-based solutions, and circular economy.

### Key Outcomes:

- 225 registrants for the Great Lakes Carbon Collaborative launch event and roundtable discussions (October 2021)
- 4 founding corporate members: AEP, Dow Chemical, DTE Energy, Enbridge
- Growing network of supporting organizations: The University of Notre Dame, Global CO2 Initiative at the University of Michigan, the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center, Illinois State Water Survey, the Ohio Environmental Council, etc.
- 5 working groups formed: Electrification (Energy Transition), Hydrogen, Carbon Capture Use and Storage, Nature-based Solutions, Decarbonization through Materials (Circular Economy)

More information about the Great Lakes Carbon Collaborative can be read here:

<https://greatlakes.carbon-collaborative.org/>

## Great Lakes Higher Education Consortium

The Great Lakes Higher Education Consortium was launched in October 2020 to facilitate a new era of cross-border, institutional collaboration in the bi-national Great Lakes region with a focus on three overarching priorities: skills and talent development, research and innovation, and entrepreneurship. Focused on building tomorrow's workforce, the Consortium provides a forum for creating and funding more regular, impactful, cross-border collaborations amongst Great Lakes higher education institutions, first and foremost, and then between these institutions, companies, and government to find solutions to the most pressing socio-economic and environmental pressures facing the region. Administered by CGLR and co-founded with the University of Toronto and the University of Illinois System, and with members including the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin System, Queen's University, and the McGill University, the consortium has most recently put out a call for proposals that respond to the protection and sustainable use of water in the bi-national Great Lakes watershed, in recognition of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between the United States and Canada.

### Key Outcomes:

- 6 Partner institutions: University of Toronto, University of Illinois System, University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin System, Queen's University, McGill University
- The Great Lakes Higher Education Partnership Pilot Fund created with funding from the United States Mission in Canada
- Call for proposals announced for sustainable water use and Great Lakes watershed protection (up to three awards for up to USD \$35,000)

More information about the Great Lakes Carbon Collaborative can be read here:

<https://councilgreatlakesregion.org/great-lakes-higher-education-consortium/>

## Knowledge-Sharing Platform

The Council of the Great Lakes Region uses its platform as a space, both physical and virtual, for information, dialogue, and collaboration, with a shared vision for economic growth, conservation, and individual wellbeing in one of the world's most important regions, which holds 20% of Earth's surface freshwater. Below are some of the ways we facilitate knowledge sharing with our members, partners, and the wider stakeholder community to connect global and regional thought leadership with local action.

## Annual Great Lakes Economic Forum

First launched in 2015, the Annual Great Lakes Economic Forum (GLEF) is an in-person multi-day event that brings together leaders from all levels of government, business, academia, and the non-profit sector to decipher key trends and find new ways that this binational region can collaborate and capitalize on the region's strategic advantages. Due to the global pandemic, the

in-person forum had to be postponed in 2020 and 2021 and is now rescheduled to take place in June 2022. In response to the two-year hiatus, CGLR utilized this time to develop a new virtual strategy for continuing its multi-sector and sector conversations. As a result, a new revamped section to the CGLR website was created to provide an online space for critical dialogue and thought leadership.

Visit the Annual Great Lakes Economic Forum website here:  
<https://greatlakeseconomicforum.com/>

### **Online Great Lakes Economic Forum**

The Online Great Lakes Economic Forum serves as the 'go to' for relevant information for key business and other stakeholders on a range of socioeconomic and environmental issues considered of material importance to the private sector, primarily, but also the public and nonprofit sectors. Amplifying regional voices and sharing best practice, the online forum houses articles, press releases, and a series of webinars.

Key Outcomes:

- 9 webinars (topics include: Circular Economy, Ecosystem Services, Stormwater Infrastructure, Clean Energy, Electrifying Mobility, Nuclear) with over 2100 registrants
- 2 virtual round tables (topics include: Clean Energy Transition, Great Lakes Carbon Collaborative) with over 140 attendees
- 48 published posts/articles (topics include: Smart Cities, Circular Economy, Sustainable Development, Workforce Development, Clean Energy, Electric Vehicles, COP26, Carbon Capture, Flooding and Contamination, Great Lakes Water Levels, Sustainable Food Production, Conservation Planning)

Visit the Online Great Lakes Economic Forum here:  
<https://councilgreatlakesregion.org/glef-online/>

### **CGLR publications**

In addition to amplifying the voices of our stakeholders, the Council of the Great Lakes Region also publishes its own forward-looking research and policy insight reports on relevant issues to foster discussions that will move the region forward. Having pivoted quickly from planned in-person discussions to virtual dialogues due to the pandemic, CGLR prioritized research collaboration which resulted in the publishing of three policy insight reports during 2020 -2021, zoning in on critical topics like innovation and entrepreneurship, transitioning to clean energy, and measuring sustainability at city and regional levels.

Key Outcomes:

- 3 Policy Insights publications

- 1) June 2020 – [Policy Insights Report: Great Lakes. Great Minds.](#) Report sets the stage for higher education, business and government collaboration in the Great Lakes to drive talent development, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- 2) January 2021 – [Policy Insights report: Powering Forward: Accelerating the Binational Great Lakes Region's Clean Energy Transition](#) The report provides a practical road-map for how the region can lead the way, from regional energy policy harmonization, system planning and investing in cross-border clean energy infrastructure, to greening key freight and passenger transportation corridors and building next generation clean energy technologies and services.
- 3) October 2021 – [Policy Insights Report: Sustainable Great Lakes: A Regional Assessment of Sustainability in the Binational Great Lakes Megaregion](#) This report puts forward a new sustainability framework to assess sustainability by using 60 biophysical and socioeconomic indicators built from open data sources.



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