

## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Region Announces Record-Breaking 2023 Cruise Ship Season**

*US\$235 million worth of economic impact for region*

(KINGSTON, ONTARIO) – Today aboard the *Canadian Empress* at Crawford Wharf in downtown Kingston, Ontario, leaders from St. Lawrence Cruise Lines, Cruise the Great Lakes and Ontario's Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport commemorated the start of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence cruise ship season by announcing that 2023 is set to break records with 800 port visits generating US\$235 million in economic impact across the international Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River waterways.

During the event, leaders from Cruise the Great Lakes, an international organization focused on attracting more cruise passengers and ships to the region, shared the 2023 forecast.

Key takeaways include:

### **2023 Forecast**

25,000 cruise passengers, an increase of more than 20% from 2022.

170,000 total cruise passenger traffic, up 13% from 150,000 in 2022.

### **Economic Impact**

US\$235 million in economic impact (onshore spending, average price per voyage per passenger), an 80% increase from 2022's total of US\$125 million.

### **Ships**

Ships sailing the waters this cruising season: Pearl Mist, Ocean Navigator, Ocean Voyager, Canadian Empress, Viking Octantis, Viking Polaris, Le Bellot, Le Dumont-D'Urville, MS Hamburg, Hanseatic Inspiration, Ocean Explorer

The increase from 9 ships in 2022 to 11 this year represents a year-on-year increase of over 20% and we expect to see more ships in 2024.

"Great Lakes and St. Lawrence cruising has proven to be a growth industry that brings significant value to the region's ports," said Dave Lorenz, chairperson of the Cruise the Great Lakes board of directors and vice president of Travel Michigan. "More passengers, more port

visits, increased shoreside spending and a growing price premium for Great Lakes cruises are the leading contributing factors.”

Jason Clark, president of St. Lawrence Cruise Lines echoed the sentiment that the region continues to gain attention from an international audience.

"Our cruises have been designed to showcase the tremendous beauty and history of the St. Lawrence River and North America's inland waterways," said Clark. "We believe wholeheartedly that as more travelers around the world discover our waterways, the popularity of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River cruising will continue to grow."

David Smith, Parliamentary Assistant, Ontario Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, representing Minister of Tourism Neil Lumsden, spoke at the event and touted Ontario's natural beauty, variety of waterways and shore excursions as a reason for increased ports of call and visits.

"Our government knows how important the travel and tourism industry is to economic growth and the creation of good paying jobs that benefit local communities across Ontario and, specifically, the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence region," said Neil Lumsden, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. "We're optimistic that by working together, more residents and visitors will explore Ontario by boat and vacation with Cruise the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cruise Lines."

Speaking to attendees at the event, David Naftzger, Executive Director, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers, who manages Cruise the Great Lakes, referenced the year-over-year increase in ships, visits and passengers as being attractive to more investment in infrastructure projects to accommodate cruise ships.

"The total number of ships and the total number of passengers cruising on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence continues to increase year-on-year," noted Naftzger. "As we travel around the Great Lakes region, we regularly encounter communities that seek more information on what it takes to be a port city for Great Lakes cruise ships. 2024 is going to be even more exciting!"

2022 was also a record-breaking year for Great Lakes cruising with nearly 150,000 passenger visits to Great Lakes ports, an increase of more than 25% from 2021

"The intimate ships make it easier on a port to accommodate the ship, which in turn allows passengers to step off the ship and be minutes from a shore excursion," added Lorenz. Our region's destinations are the reason why Condé Nast Traveler named Great Lakes cruising as one of its top 22 travel destinations of 2022. This is a list we hope to remain on for some time!"

*Cruise the Great Lakes is the region's cruise marketing program focused on attracting more passengers. It is a forum to bring together the States, Provinces, cruise lines, ports, convention*

*and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce, associations, and others to work toward shared goals. For more information about Cruise the Great Lakes: [www.cruisethegreatlakes.com](http://www.cruisethegreatlakes.com)*

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