



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2024

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MAYOR JOHNSON JOINS BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE WITH LEADING QUÉBEC COMPANIES, WORKS TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT IN THE BLUE AND GREEN ECONOMY

The business roundtable featured leaders in the sustainable development, transportation, water management, and clean energy sectors with an interest in investing or expanding in Chicago.

CHICAGO – This morning, Mayor Johnson joined a business roundtable hosted by Investissement Québec International with leading Québec companies in blue and green industries that have an interest in investing or expanding in Chicago. The meeting is part of Mayor Johnson's commitment to attract businesses in the sustainable development, transportation, water management, and green energy sectors.

“Chicago's proximity to one of the largest bodies of freshwater in the world is a competitive advantage that has been historically underutilized,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “We are working hard to identify and interact with economic sectors where we have an edge so that we can attract sustainable businesses and good jobs to our city for long-term success. My vision for a blue-green economy is centered around growing our overall economy without sacrificing the health and safety of our residents.”

World Business Chicago worked with Mayor Johnson to bring together business leaders who are focused on sustainable, inclusive development in green industries and the blue economy. The “Chicagoland's Green Future” report released by World Business Chicago in October 2023 found that Chicagoland's green economy produced over \$18 billion in economic output in 2022, growing by nearly 180% between 2016 and 2022. In 2022, Chicagoland's green economy employed over 65,000 workers, ranking fifth out of the top ten metro areas for employment in the green economy. Chicagoland's transitioning green economy, which the report defines as “the size of Chicagoland's economy that is either an end user of clean energy or a critical input to the advancement of and transition to clean energy and climate technology,” employed over 500,000 people in 2022.



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“There is a correlation between good policies and business growth,” said **Charles Smith, Vice Chair of World Business Chicago**. “We are working to boldly position Chicago as a global leader in the blue-green economy by leveraging our strategic position as the transportation hub of the Midwest. I’m proud to stand with Mayor Johnson as we make the case for companies to move to Chicago, expand in Chicago, and make foreign direct investment into Chicago.”

Upstream Illinois: Strategies to Boost Illinois’ Blue Economy, a report prepared for Current, a Chicago-area water innovation hub, defined the blue economy as “the collection of companies that develop and provide technologies, products and services that manage the movement, quality and use of water — in addition to inputs to make these products, supporting industries, and the customers that demand these products.” The report found that in 2020, companies that develop and provide technologies, products, and services that manage the movement, quality and use of water in Illinois was a \$16.7 billion industry comprised of 186,000 jobs. The state’s broader blue economy employed nearly 1.5 million people making up roughly 30% of overall employment.

“At Current, we believe that Chicago deserves to be the center of a globally significant blue economy engine,” said **Alaina Harkness, Executive Director of Current**. “Our report found that the blue economy is a significant part of the city and state’s economies and yet nobody was talking about it that way. We are looking at areas where we needed to invest in growth and where we have the right to win by adding things like treatment technologies, monitoring, water infrastructure, water saving products, resource recovery, and the water energy nexus.”

In January of this year, the National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded a grant of \$160 million over ten years to the Great Lakes Water Innovation Engine (ReNEW) initiative, to support the development of water-based innovation in the region. This significant investment anchors Chicago as a leader in the research and development of blue technologies and innovation over the next decade.

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