
Subject: 2022 Niagara Climate Change Summit Overview and Next Steps

Report to: Regional Council

Report date: Thursday, August 25, 2022

Recommendations

1. That Report CAO 10-2022 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the 2022 Niagara Climate Change Summit hosted by Niagara Region on June 28th in partnership with Brock University and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA).
- The report also outlines key short-term next steps by the Region to prioritize and integrate significant climate change action in Niagara.
- The Summit brought together diverse community leaders. Appendix 1 provides a list of municipalities, institutions and organizations that participated in the Summit.
- Attendance for the event included 120 in-person attendees, 172 livestream attendees and over 400 livestream recording views.
- The Summit highlighted climate change action taking place in Niagara. Expert speakers and industry leaders joined from across Ontario to share successful climate strategies and best practices.
- The Summit concluded with a call to action for participants to sign as commitment to continue collaborating on climate change action in Niagara.

Financial Considerations

The cost to host the Climate Change Summit was approximately \$25,000, including expenses to build a dedicated website, in-person and livestream production costs, advertising/outreach and materials. Funding for this event was included in the 2022 operating budget. Brock University and NPCA provided in-kind contributions support such as staff time for organizing, delivering, and promoting the event.

Background

In September 2021, Niagara Region Council declared a climate change emergency through a motion brought forward by the Regional Chair. The motion in part directed Niagara Region staff to:

“...organize and host a climate summit for the purpose of evaluating best practices, coordinating climate action and ensuring all of Niagara is committed to climate change adaptation and mitigation by the end of Q2 2022”.

The Niagara Climate Change Summit was delivered by Niagara Region in partnership with Brock University and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, on Tuesday June 28, 2022 from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at Brock University, Pond Inlet. The Summit agenda is provided as Appendix 2.

Niagara Region Climate Change Summit Overview

The Summit was designed with the intention to act as a catalyst for accelerating climate change action in the Niagara community, as demonstrated in the event objectives outlined below:

1. To bring diverse stakeholders together to develop a common understanding of climate change and its impact on our community.
2. To provide a snapshot of climate change action taking place in Niagara Region and to learn from other communities and industry leaders' successful climate change strategies, innovative partnerships, and projects.
3. To collaborate on the development of partnerships and working groups with local leaders (i.e., municipalities, private sector, educational institutions and community organizations) to overcome capacity and resource barriers to implementation.
4. To build a call to action to accelerate climate change initiatives in Niagara Region.

The event was delivered in a hybrid format to include in-person participation and livestreaming for the community. The in-person summit attendance was by-invite only given space constraints and COVID-19 restrictions. The public was able to register, free of charge, to attend the morning portion of the summit via a livestream. The recording is available to be viewed on the [Region's YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxYDHllwD6fAGwgSNvBaaxA) channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxYDHllwD6fAGwgSNvBaaxA>) or at the [Niagara Climate Change Summit website](https://niagaraclimatechangesummit.ca) (niagaraclimatechangesummit.ca). The content of the Summit provided attendees with a detailed overview of climate change action taking place in Niagara, with expert speakers and industry leaders from across Ontario sharing successful strategies and best practices that may be considered for implementation in Niagara.

Keynote Speaker

The keynote speaker was Karen Farbridge, a consultant and the former Mayor of Guelph. The focus of the keynote was to demonstrate the case for climate change action and its urgency. One of the key takeaways was that over 80 million jobs worldwide are at a risk from rising global temperatures, and could erase as much as 18 per cent of global GDP by 2050. Participants were also encouraged to fully embrace a call to action and commit to moving local climate change work forward.

Regional Chair's Youth Advisory Panel (RCYAP)

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Regional Chair's Youth Advisory Panel (RCYAP) gave a powerful presentation and introduced a video regarding climate change impacts in Niagara. They urged participants to commit to a true climate goal, through decisions, programs and funding. They also advised attendees to keep the voices of Niagara Youth at the decision-making table. The RCYAP presentation and video is available to be viewed on the [Region's YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxYDHllwD6fAGwgSNvBaaxA) (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxYDHllwD6fAGwgSNvBaaxA>).

Panel Presentations and Moderated Conversation

Panel sessions were held in the morning of the Summit to set the stage for what is currently happening in the Region, and to introduce successful initiatives taking place in Ontario.

The purpose of the two panel discussions, Leading Environmental & Climate Change Action in Communities and Climate Change Action and the Economy, was for the panelists to share their wisdom and provide insights to create real value and takeaways for the audience. The panel discussions were facilitated by a moderator, who guided the panel and the audience through lively and purposeful conversation regarding various climate change topics. Appendix 3 provides a detailed description of the panel content and presenters.

Facilitated Roundtable Discussion

The purpose of the roundtable session was to identify opportunities and barriers to advancing climate change work in Niagara in each key sector. The roundtable sessions took place within the afternoon portion of the day.

Roundtable discussion topics included Biodiversity, Climate Resilient Infrastructure, Resilience & Emergency Management, Complete Communities, Local Energy

Distribution & Generation, Sustainable Transportation, Home & Building Efficiency, and Agriculture, Local Food & Wine.

The discussion was an important first step to develop a network for collaboration and identify issues, risks, and potential partnerships or leads in each area. Information was recorded to help shape key themes and priorities for future climate action planning. Staff are working through the information collected for use in the development of a Niagara Climate Change Action Network. The Network will be a partnership of diverse organizations focused on implementing climate change action in Niagara.

Call to Action

The Summit concluded with an invitation to all Summit attendees to sign a call to action as a demonstration of their commitment to form partnerships, share critical data and accelerate action on climate change and green house gas emissions in Niagara. Many individuals, representing dozens of local organizations, signed the pledge. The pledge formed a foundational first step for Niagara's municipalities, institutions and businesses to work collaboratively to take meaningful action on climate change. The call to action is a precursor to developing a formal Niagara Climate Change Action Network and a consistent Region-wide emissions target and plan that will be established soon. The call to action can be found in Appendix 4.

Summit Engagement, Communications and Outcomes

Communication Tactics

Various communication methods were used to encourage participation in the Summit including direct email invitations (in person only), news release, social media advertising and posts (organic and paid), a media advisory, as well as promotion by the event partners Brock University and the NPCA.

[The Niagara Climate Change Summit website](http://niagaraclimatechangesummit.ca) (niagaraclimatechangesummit.ca) was the main platform for disseminating event information.

Feedback

A feedback survey was sent to in-person participants following the event. Overall, respondents were satisfied with the event as 97% reported that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the Summit.

Respondents stated that they enjoyed being provided with the opportunity to network with likeminded individuals from different industries. They also reported that the

collaborative, hybrid and Niagara-centric information provided great insight into climate change and its effect on our community. Many survey respondents highlighted that they enjoyed the keynote address and having the Regional Chair’s Youth Advisory Panel representing Niagara’s youth voice.

For a future Summit, respondents suggested that highlighting Regional/partner projects or programs that have incorporated climate change action and expressed the need for accountability as we build on the success of this Summit and move forward with making the event a yearly endeavor. A few respondents stated that more prominent Indigenous representation is needed. A consistent over arching comment for future improvements noted that there should be more focus on tangible goals, actions and next steps.

Next Steps on Accelerating Climate Change Action in Niagara Region

To support climate change action and the development of a cohesive, coordinated network on climate change in Niagara, the Region will implement the next steps provided in the table below. A more comprehensive report will be brought to Regional Council in Q1 2023 with updates on each of the initiatives described.

Action	Description	Timeframe
Niagara Region corporate climate change policy and planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build an inventory of current and past climate actions at Niagara Region (as requested through the climate emergency resolution of Regional Council). 2. Update the corporate greenhouse gas emissions Inventory. 3. Update Region greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. 4. Develop a corporate Climate Action Plan 	<p>Q4 2022</p> <p>Q4 2022</p> <p>Q1 2023</p> <p>Q3 2023</p>
Climate Change Public Reporting	Continue to update and engage with the community on climate change progress.	Q3 2022
Niagara Official Plan Implementation	Region staff will begin the implementation of the Niagara Official Plan including the climate change policies through collaboration with the community and the 12 local area municipalities.	Q4 2022

Action	Description	Timeframe
Community Energy & Climate Planning	Initiate the process to develop a community energy plan, with support from the Province through its Municipal Energy Plan Program Funding (https://www.ontario.ca/page/municipal-energy-plan-program#section-3).	Q4 2022
Niagara Climate Change Action Network	Host the first meeting to form a Niagara Climate Change Action Network focused on accelerating climate change action in the community. As well, to support the development and implementation of a Niagara Community Energy & Climate Plan.	Q4 2022
Niagara Climate Change Working Group	Create a collaborative working group with staff from Local Area Municipalities, NPCA, Brock University, Niagara College, utilities, and other interested parties. The focus of the working group will be on land development, energy management and local generation, biodiversity, climate resilience and adaptation, and green infrastructure.	Q4 2022
Region-wide Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Targets	Coordinate consistent greenhouse gas emission reduction targets throughout Niagara Region, aligned with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change science and the Niagara Climate Change Summit Call to Action.	Q1 2023
Host an Annual Climate Change Summit	Plan and host the annual Niagara Climate Change Summit event.	Q3 2023

Alternatives Reviewed

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Climate Change Summit delivered on June 28th. As such, alternatives are not applicable.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report and the Niagara Climate Change Summit contribute to, and support all of Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Priorities, including:

- Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth
- Healthy and Vibrant Community
- Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning
- Sustainable and Engaging Government

Other Pertinent Reports

CAO 21-2021 Climate Change Action Program Update, December 9, 2021.

PDS 6-2021 Climate Change Work Program Update, January 13, 2021.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 List of Participating Municipalities, Institutions & Organizations

Appendix 2 Niagara Climate Change Summit Agenda

Appendix 3 Detailed Panel Descriptions

Appendix 4 Niagara Climate Change Summit Call to Action