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**Subject:** Economic Development Q1 and Q2, 2024 Update

**Report To:** Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Report date:** Wednesday, August 14, 2024

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## **Recommendations**

1. That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

## **Key Facts**

- The purpose of this report is to provide Planning and Economic Development Committee (PEDC) with an update on the division's activities for Q1 and Q2, 2024.
- Economic Development continues to implement on the 10-Year Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032 (Inspire, Invest, Grow) approved by Council in 2022.
- Economic Development core activities include Investment Attraction; Strategic Marketing; Business and Economic Research and Analysis; Strategic Growth Services; Area Municipal and Sector Support; and Strategic Economic Initiatives.

## **Financial Considerations**

The activities described in this report are within the Council approved 2024 Economic Development operating budget.

## **Analysis**

Niagara Economic Development (NED) in collaboration with Team Niagara (Niagara area economic development offices) and in consultation with local businesses, industry associations, and community partners developed a 10-Year Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032 (Inspire, Invest, Grow) approved by Regional Council.

This update on the work of the Niagara Economic Development team is organized within our principal functional areas.

## **1.0 Investment Attraction**

Investment attraction is focused on growing and diversifying the economy through targeted business attraction in sectors where Niagara has a competitive advantage, as well as in emerging sectors, where Niagara can demonstrate a strong business case for investment.

Lead generation contracts are currently focused on target sectors in the United States (New York City / Boston / Chicago / Los Angeles / San Francisco Bay Area), Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and Europe (Germany, Italy, France, Spain, UK, Nordics) resulting in 61 leads generated in those priority markets. Sources of these leads are a result of relationships with the Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) / Invest Ontario (IVO) / Invest in Canada (IIC) / Consider Canada Cities Alliance (CCCA) and lead generation contracts with market representatives.

Participation in the CCCA thought leadership webinars provides for updates from the Trade Commissioner Service officers representing Canada in market globally. The Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) leads delegations of economic development organizations (EDOs) from Canada's cities, provinces and territories on international missions where foreign companies can meet directly with Canadian economic developers and receive first-hand knowledge about establishing and doing business in Canada.

### **CONFIRMED INVESTMENT: "Project Eagle" - Asahi Kasei Corporation**

On May 14, 2024, Asahi Kasei announced a \$1.56 Billion investment to build an EV wet battery separator plant in Port Colborne (Phase 1). The successful culmination of this work to attract this investment to Niagara began in July 2023 with the formation of a project team of various partners from government, industry, and academia.

The project team met weekly since September 2023 to discuss process and infrastructure requirements. Participants included Niagara Region Economic Development (NED) as lead, the broader Growth Strategy and Economic Development Team (GSED) inclusive of Water and Wastewater (WWW), and Corporate Services Real Estate division, City of Port Colborne, BMI Group, Invest Ontario, Invest in Canada, Niagara Peninsula Conversation Authority, St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation and others. This team was known as the Project Eagle Task Force.

### **1.1 Prospecting – International**

International foreign direct investment included attendance at the Hannover Messe show (April 22-24, 2024). A total of 20 meetings established by the market lead generation consultant were attended. In addition, WebSummit (April 12-18, 2024) was attended. A total of 16 pre-qualified leads were identified through the lead generation partnership with Global Startups.

### **1.2 Prospecting – USA/ North America**

Foreign direct investment prospecting in the USA and North America included attendance at the Business Facilities Live Xchange (Mar. 17-19, 2024). The results included 11 leads for information with one (1) prospect opportunity. In addition, the Site Selectors Guild (Apr 3-5, 2024) was attended and resulted in seven (7) leads for information.

## **2.0 Strategic Marketing**

Strategy Marketing works to position and market Niagara region as a choice destination for businesses to locate and promote Niagara as a global community.

### **2.1 Website Engagement**

We received 24,119 visits, 19,861 unique visitors and 178 returning visitors to the website. Of note, the majority of the traffic was driven by 8,368 visits from the United States, 343 from China, 293 from Germany, 210 from the United Kingdom and 167 from the Netherlands.

### **2.2 Social Media Engagement**

Niagara Economic Development currently has 716 Facebook followers, 638 Twitter/X followers, 1317 LinkedIn page views, 635 unique visitors to LinkedIn and also 32 custom button clicks on LinkedIn.

Social media was enhanced with the implementation of programmatic campaigns through the use of Google ads, and LinkedIn ads garnering 55,806 impressions, 5,801 NiagaraCanada.ca clicks, with a 10.39% clickthrough rate (CTR) via Google ads, and 18,056 Impressions and 273 Clicks via LinkedIn ads.

### **2.3 Email Marketing**

A total of 1945 emails were sent with an open rate of 54.5% and targeted subscriber base of 624.

## **2.4 Marketing Campaign for Workforce Development**

Niagara Economic Development is committed to inspiring local youth to explore skilled trades, addressing the growing need for certified tradespeople. Targeting students from grades 6 to 11, the campaign promotes trades as a pathway to a prosperous career. Key initiatives include supporting the City of Welland's skilled trades events at local high schools, creating a dedicated landing page on niagaracanada.com and providing tailored handouts and promotional materials. This campaign aims to shape the future of Niagara's workforce by preparing the next generation of skilled professionals.

## **2.5 Geofencing Campaign Report**

We executed one of four event-targeting campaigns for 2024, starting with Business Facilities LiveXChange. The creative for the event can be viewed on [Multiview](https://preview.adpiller.com/HXGWZTHNGA) (https://preview.adpiller.com/HXGWZTHNGA) and the post-event creative can be viewed on [Multiview](https://preview.adpiller.com/PONYTMNN9B). (https://preview.adpiller.com/PONYTMNN9B).

During the event, we achieved 50,011 impressions, 71 clicks, and a CTR of 0.14%, compared to the industry average CTR of 0.12%. Post-event, as of April 3, we recorded 53,174 impressions, 71 clicks, and a CTR of 0.13%, slightly above the industry average of 0.12%.

## **3.0 Business and Economic Research and Analysis**

Niagara's economic data through regional economic and business research and analysis lens was presented to inform policy development and economic development initiatives. This work includes support to Area Municipalities (AMs) with information needs and support to businesses, investors and other economic development partners.

Research projects include:

- Niagara Economic Update report and presentation
- Niagara Region South Niagara Wastewater Treatment Solution Business Case Economic Impact Research and Analysis
- GO Expansion Business Case Research and Analysis
- Niagara Community Observatory Wilson Foundation Project

## **3.1 Research Inquiries**

There were over 92 research inquiries and responses. These requests supported inquiries from Brock University, Niagara College, Niagara Region (Planning, Communications, Finance, Public Health, Strategic Transformation, Government Relations, Corporate Strategy and Community Sustainability), businesses/investors, community partners (ex. Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, Niagara Industrial

Association, District School Board of Niagara), federal government, HOPA Ports, news media, tourism organizations, Innovate Niagara and Area Municipalities.

### **3.2 Presentations and Public Outreach**

Presentations and public outreach included six (6) presentations provided on various aspects of Niagara's economy to community partners as required.

## **4.0 Strategic Growth Services**

Strategic growth services collaborate with internal departments and municipalities to enable and support new industrial and residential investment to grow communities across Niagara.

### **4.1 Industrial Use Development Charge Grant**

Niagara Region approved four (4) Industrial Use Development Charge Grant applications. This resulted in a total of 464 jobs either being created or retained. These grants supported over \$165,000,000 in new construction value and created an additional 143,157 sq. ft. of industrial space in Niagara.

### **4.2 International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) Canadian Convention**

Niagara region will be attending the 2024 ICSC Canada conference to showcase the Niagara Region as an investment destination for Shopping Centres and Retail Development. The Niagara Region will be exhibiting in their own Niagara branded booth. This event will be undertaken as a collaboration with Team Niagara (Area Municipalities).

### **4.3 Niagara Region's Signature Sites**

Niagara Region Economic Development is pleased to announce the launch of 'Niagara Signature Sites', an interactive map showcasing strategic premier industrial and commercial development opportunities in Niagara. This tool promotes investment and economic growth, offering a comprehensive listing of properties for sale or lease, each with a minimum of 50 acres. The user-friendly interface allows potential investors to explore employment land opportunities, highlighting Niagara's economic strength and growth potential.

## **5.0 Area Municipal and Sector Support**

Niagara Region Economic Development supports the area municipalities without economic development offices on regionally significant projects.

### **5.1 Area Municipality (AM) Fund Administration**

Formerly, \$12,000 was available for each AM Fund application annually per municipality. This year, a total of \$7,833.33 annually per municipality can be leveraged for projects that advance the defined priorities outlined in the Niagara Economic Development 10-Year Strategy (Inspire, Invest, Grow 2032).

These projects intend to support the municipalities of Niagara in furthering their plans to facilitate opportunities for creating jobs and growing the economy by developing strategies to enhance business and investment potential. The fund also supports Business Retention and Expansion efforts through Buy Local campaigns.

Area Municipality (AM) Fund Applications received to date:

<b>City</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Project Name</b>
Welland	\$7,833.33	Made in Welland Magazine
Port Colborne	\$2,500.00	Digital Savings Pass
Fort Erie	\$7,833.33	Fort Erie Tourism Strategy

Total amount of AM Funding distributed to date as of July 16, 2024 is \$18,166.66.

## **6.0 Strategic Economic Initiatives**

In order to achieve the vision of the 10-Year Economic Development Strategy there is a focus on projects of regional significance that foster economic and business growth through collaboration with community partners.

### **6.1 Zero Emission Vehicle Framework (ZEV Framework)**

The team is working in coordination with Minister Tassi's office (Federal Economic Development Agency) to create a blueprint for Niagara in consultation with other jurisdictions and partners on how to create a self-sustaining EV mobility ecosystem in Niagara.

Local industrial network connections to the Honda Value Chain opportunity were provided given the company's recent \$15 Billion announcement made at their Alliston plant outlining their commitment to the Ontario automotive sector. This opportunity has allowed Niagara companies to register for further information on how to become suppliers to Honda in the future. A cohort of 27 businesses have already shown interest

and of the 27 businesses three (3) have been linked via Niagara Economic Development (NED) to the Federal Economic Development Agency to learn more about existing and future program funding that may be available to adapt their platforms to supply the EV mobility space.

## **6.2 Workforce Coalition**

Launched in November 2023, the Niagara Workforce Coalition brings together interested parties to build connections, integrate workforce planning and address workforce challenges by promoting collaboration, innovation, and resource-sharing.

Employers and employer-serving organizations play a crucial role in shaping the coalition's initiatives, sharing valuable insights into industry needs and hiring trends. Educational institutions develop the talent pipeline and support students to graduate with the skills to succeed in the job market. Employment services and other non-profit organizations provide labour market information and essential support for job seekers, such as training and career counseling.

## **Alternatives Reviewed**

There are no alternatives to be reviewed.

## **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

Economic development activities of Investment Attraction; Strategic Marketing; Business and Economic Research and Analysis; Strategic Growth Services; Area Municipal (AM) and Sector Support; and Strategic Economic Initiatives described in this report directly support Council's 2023-2026 Growing Better Together Strategic Priorities of:

- Effective Region
- Prosperous Region

## **Other Pertinent Reports**

There are no other pertinent reports.

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