

Subject: Growing Better Together: 2023-2026 Council Strategic Priorities Mid-Term Update

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Report date: Thursday, April 3, 2025

Recommendations

1. That Report CAO 4-2025, Growing Better Together: 2023-2026 Council Strategic Priorities Mid-Term Update **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of the report is to provide Council with a mid-term update on the implementation of the 2023 – 2026 Council Strategic Priorities Actions.
- In July 2023, Council approved the 2023 – 2026 Council Strategic Priorities, which included four Priority Areas: Effective Region, Green and Resilient Region, Equitable Region, and Prosperous Region.
- Council has received update reports on the progress of the Strategic Priorities throughout 2024. The reports included information on the implementation of the Council Strategic Priorities as well as quarterly achievements related to the Priority Actions.
- The Council Strategic Priorities identifies thirty-seven Actions for implementation. Of the thirty-seven Actions, 97 per cent are initiated. This progress underscores the commitment of Council in meeting its Priorities. Each of these Actions is tracked and reported, providing transparency and accountability to both Council and the community.
- In 2025, staff will continue to report achievements quarterly to Council, launch a Council Strategic Priority Dashboard, and further implement the Operational and Communications Implementation Plans.

Financial Considerations

The 2025 Regional Budget prioritizes fiscal responsibility while advancing the 2023 – 2026 Strategic Priorities. It also addresses fiscal challenges, including increasing resource and supply costs, as well as changes in provincial funding and legislation. Actions that require dedicated funding in the 2023 – 2026 Council Strategic Priorities (CSP) are brought forward for consideration in the annual budget process.

The Region's budget and associated impacts directly affect our ability to achieve Council's Priorities. The budget is designed in part to support the four Priority Areas and any changes to planned allocations would require reassessment of the commitments identified in the Strategic Priorities.

In 2025, the quarterly achievement reports will include the identification of direct budget dollars for large capital projects and highlight the budget implications on actions, activities and initiatives.

Analysis

In July 2023, Council approved the 2023 – 2026 Council Strategic Priorities (CAO 10-2023), guided by the vision of "Modern communities growing better together." To achieve the vision, a mission, guiding principles, four priority areas, objectives and planned Actions were developed.

The four Priority Areas identified by Council to meet key community needs for the 2023 – 2026 term of Council include:

- Effective Region
- Green and Resilient Region
- Equitable Region
- Prosperous Region

In 2024, three reports were presented to Council, including updates on the Operational and Communication plans for the Council Strategic Priorities. The Q2 and Q3 Achievements reports, covered 65 updates on various projects and initiatives aimed at implementing the CSP and highlighted key business plan updates. Additionally, in March 2025, staff provided a Q4 Achievements report to Corporate Services Committee.

Council Strategic Priorities Action Implementation

A total of thirty-seven actions have been identified within the Council Strategic Priorities, encompassing both short-term and long-term initiatives. These actions are designed to address various community needs and drive progress across the four Priority Areas.

Currently, 97 percent of the Council Strategic Priority Actions are underway. This includes five completed actions, ten actions that are ongoing daily operations for the Region, and seven actions that are long-term strategies or projects, which will extend beyond the current term of Council due to the extensive effort and collaboration required for successful completion.

The table below provides a snapshot of the total number of Actions and how they have progressed over the last two years.

Council Strategic Priorities Actions Status	# of Actions
Completed	5
Progressing and On Track	10
Long-term Strategies and Capital Projects	7
Ongoing	10
Paused/Some Delay	5

The following outlines where each of the Actions are categorized:

Completed Actions:

- Agri-Business Strategy
- Attainable Housing Strategy
- Energy Conservation Demand Management Plan
- Signature Sites Strategy
- Water and Wastewater Biosolids Management Plan

Actions to be completed within this term of Council:

- Community Energy Plan
- Community Safety and Well-Being Implementation

- Corporate Climate Change Action Plan
- Data Management Plan
- Government Relations Strategy
- Greening Strategy
- Health Equity Strategic Plan
- Human Resource Plan
- Indigenous ReconciliAction Plan
- Waste Management Plan

Long-Term Strategies and Capital Projects, beyond this term of Council:

- Consolidated Housing Master Plan
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Growth Management and Staging Infrastructure Strategy
- Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Vision Zero Road Safety Implementation
- Waste, Wastewater Master Servicing Plan Implementation

Ongoing or Daily Operation Actions for the Region:

- Annual Budget and Long-term Forecast Planning
- Core and Emerging Sector Focus
- Expansion of GO Transit
- Labour Force Development Partnerships
- Niagara Region Transit Service Support and Growth
- Service, Effectiveness and Accountability Reviews
- Shared Services Strategy
- Support for Affordable and Attainable Development
- Transportation Sustainability
- Water and Wastewater Asset Sustainability

Paused or Some Delay Actions:

- Climate Adaptation Plan
- Green Fleet Policy

- Housing and Homelessness Action Plan/Built for Zero Homelessness Plan
- South Niagara Wastewater Treatment Solution
- Transportation Master Plan Update

Appendix 1 Council Strategic Priorities Mid-Term Implementation Review provides a detailed overview of the progress and current status of each of the Actions identified in the Council Strategic Priorities.

Operational and Communication Plan Implementation

In 2024, operational and communication plans were implemented to integrate Council Priorities into daily operations. Key initiatives included:

- People Leaders training with McMaster DeGroot School of Business
- People Leaders Council Strategic Priorities event
- Strategic Priority Operational Teams
- Quarterly Achievement Reports for Council
- Council Strategic Priorities Public Dashboard development
- Social media campaigns showcasing Quarterly Achievements
- Non-union performance objectives
- Annual budget and long-term forecasting

Council Strategic Priorities Public Dashboard

In April 2025, the Region will launch a Council Strategic Priorities Public Dashboard to enhance accountability and transparency. This initiative aims to ensure the Region is open and transparent with the community, as outlined in the Guiding Principles of the Council Strategic Priorities.

The Public Dashboard displays Niagara Region's Priorities for 2023 – 2026, including its vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic priorities, objectives, and key actions. It offers a quarterly update on Action implementation progress and features performance measures for each of the Priority Areas.

2025 Council Strategic Priorities Implementation

Niagara Region will continue to address residents' needs amid changing political and economic conditions, including new local, national, and international pressures that have emerged since the Council Strategic Priorities inception. The 2023 – 2026 Council

Strategic Priorities continues to address key concerns including, alternative funding needs, sustainable infrastructure, affordable housing and homelessness.

The Council Strategic Priorities will support addressing the concerns mentioned above through the continued execution of the Actions already initiated.

In addition to the implementation of Actions, staff will continue to provide Council with quarterly achievements reports, embed the Priorities into the 2026 budget discussions and further address the Strategic Lenses into the Regions daily operations. Other improvements will include:

- **Council Report Alignment:** Staff will work to expand the content provided in the Council Strategic Priorities report section of the Council Staff Report template to clearly demonstrate alignment with meeting Council's objectives.
- **Council Priorities and Budget:** The quarterly achievement reports will work to include the identification of direct budget dollars for large capital projects and highlight the direct budget implications on actions, activities and initiatives.
- **Operationalizing Priorities:** Staff will be improving the centralization of Divisional work plans using a project management tool. This tool will ensure consistent documentation guidelines, facilitate cross-corporate collaboration, and directly link projects to the Council Strategic Priorities.

Conclusion

The Council Strategic Priorities guide the Region's planning, budgets, corporate business plans and day-to-day operations, enabling the organization to dedicate adequate resources to address the Priorities and Actions approved by Council. Embedding the Priority Actions into the organization, along with reporting to Council on the implementation of the priorities is essential to creating trust, accountability, and transparency to the community.

Alternatives Reviewed

No alternatives were reviewed as this report is for Council information only.

Other Pertinent Reports

- [CAO 10-2023 Growing Better Together: 2023-2026 Council Strategic Priorities](https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:knxdu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx%3FDocumentId%3D32290&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwjolK_p_bSMAxU2L1kFHb6pA14QFnoECA0QAQ&usg=AOvVaw2uCM1uJqStTHbQxX_t2Mh0)
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- [CAO 3-2024 Growing Better Together: 2023-2026 Council Strategic Priorities Update](https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:knxdu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx%3FDocumentId%3D39281&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwisj5u0_rSMAxUPKVkFHfGoBhoQFnoECACQAQ&usg=AOvVaw1p0XrQtHAnckD_Iz3F9WhC)
(https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:knxdu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx%3FDocumentId%3D39281&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwisj5u0_rSMAxUPKVkFHfGoBhoQFnoECACQAQ&usg=AOvVaw1p0XrQtHAnckD_Iz3F9WhC)
- [CSD 43-2024 Q2 2024 Financial Update Appendix 2](https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:knxdu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx%3FId%3Da6c5e2bd-d88f-4811-ad69-4050055c83d4%26Agenda%3DAgenda%26lang%3DEnglish%26Item%3D12%26Tab%3Dattachments&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwjp8JOPgLWMAxVTD1kFHRxEMRkQFnoECAkQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3w_1mWTJahvBpDNsLL025H)
(https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:knxdu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx%3FId%3Da6c5e2bd-d88f-4811-ad69-4050055c83d4%26Agenda%3DAgenda%26lang%3DEnglish%26Item%3D12%26Tab%3Dattachments&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwjp8JOPgLWMAxVTD1kFHRxEMRkQFnoECAkQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3w_1mWTJahvBpDNsLL025H)
- [CSD 62-2024 Q3 2024 Financial Update Appendix 2](https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:knxdu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx%3FId%3Deaafe636-7b8e-4ce4-a2dd-a44dd3535c32%26Agenda%3DAgenda%26lang%3DEnglish%26Item%3D16%26Tab%3Dattachments&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwibtMHXgLWMAxV0EVkFHQYAMVUQFnoECAMQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3njH2-y8CkTaXCdDEvQGhG)
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- [CSD 8-2025 Q4 Financial Update Appendix 8](#)
(https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:knxdu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx%3FId%3Dfcdaca46-5a21-4026-ad32-d0836ea36bef%26lang%3DEnglish&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwickqT_gLWMAxWcFFkFHSDNKhUQFnoECAsQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2cVVOhnUROvQnIBZr0sHUP)

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This report was prepared in consultation with Bianca Fucile, Corporate Performance Specialist, and Suzanne Madder, Associate Director Strategic Initiatives, and reviewed by Angela Stea, Director Strategic Initiatives, and Michelle Sergi, Deputy CAO.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Council Strategic Priorities Mid-Term Implementation Review