

Council Strategic Priorities Mid-Term Implementation Review



Introduction

Since 2023, Niagara Region has aligned many projects, programs, and services to support the implementation of the Council Strategic Priorities. In addition to aligning current business, Niagara Region also continues to deliver core, essential services to its residents and businesses.






We are committed to being transparent and accountable, while continuing to improve services and programs for all Niagara residents and businesses. Part of this commitment includes reporting back to Regional Council on Council Strategic Priorities milestones, successes, and challenges.

Priority Action Implementation

A total of thirty-seven Actions were 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 per cent of the Council Strategic Priority Actions are initiated. This includes seventeen actions that are ongoing daily operations or long-term projects that will extend beyond the current term of Council.

The table below is a summary of the Actions and their progress over the past two years.

Council Strategic Priorities Actions		37
	Action Status	# of Actions
	Completed	5
	Progressing and On Track	10
	Long-Term Strategies or Capital Projects	7
	Ongoing	10
	Paused/Some Delay	5



Updates on each of the thirty-seven Council Strategic Priorities Actions and status are provided beginning on page 3.



Guiding Principles: Strategic Lens Implementation



Along with the four Priorities, Niagara Region Council identified four Strategic Lenses, including Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Indigenous Relations, Fiscal Responsibility, Innovation and Sustainability and Climate Change.

Within the first two years of implementation, staff has effectively integrated these strategic lenses into the planning, execution, and evaluation of numerous projects and initiatives. The following provides some examples within the Region.

- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** As part of the DEI Action Plan, staff are developing a DEI handbook to provide Niagara Region employees with tools and resources to guide and support incorporating principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion into the Region's operations and services.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Through the annual budget process and the modernization of the Procurement By-law, staff are taking actionable steps to ensure fiscal responsibility. Over the past two years, all Directors have participated in continuous improvement presentations, critically evaluating their Division's efficiency in delivering programs and services. By utilizing benchmarking data, staff have identified areas for budget reductions or improvements focusing on financial stewardship when delivering high quality services to Niagara residents.
- **Innovation:** Continuous improvement is a cornerstone of Niagara Region's approach to making significant improvements in service delivery to the community. Examples of this include the implementation of initiatives such as mobile services in Public Health, new customer relationship management software and Organizational restructuring.
- **Sustainability and Climate Change:** CAMRA (Corporate Asset Management Resource Allocation Model) is an asset management tool designed for corporate prioritization. It incorporates risk assessments, council priorities, and other key factors to help staff identify priority divisional projects. Staff are currently working on integrating the sustainability and climate change strategic lens to better consider the environmental implications of projects.

Moving forward, staff will continue to integrate these four lenses into their work while also actively seeking additional opportunities. This includes better incorporating the lenses into Council staff reports, the procurement process and overlaying them in project scopes and project charters.





Effective Region

Annual Budget and Long-term Forecast Planning

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

Each year, staff diligently work on the annual budget process, approaching it with a fiscally responsible mindset and a focus on long-term forecast planning. Several budget-related projects are currently underway, including the development of an improved budget communication tool, the formulation of a debt strategy, the update of the asset management policy, and the implementation of development charge exemptions for attainable and affordable housing.

Data Management Plan

Timeline: 2025 – 2026

Phase: Development

Status: On Track

The Data Management Plan is making significant progress. A data management platform has been approved to oversee all data across the Niagara Region corporation. This platform will establish standards and governance, providing comprehensive visibility for all data sources. In 2025, the focus will be developing and issuing a request for proposal.

Human Resource Plan

Timeline: 2023 – 2026

Phase: Implementation

Status: On Track

Several projects have been successfully completed as part of the Human Resource Plan, including the design of the compensation policy, the review of non-union benefits, and the establishment of the Human Resource data warehouse. Additionally, critical roles have been defined, and action plan reporting for the 2024 employee engagement results has been carried out.

Shared Services Strategy

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

Staff are continuing to advance the Shared Services Strategy through collaboration with local area municipalities and the formation of a CAO shared services working group. Staff are continuing to support the progress of the Climate Change, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, as well as the Accessibility Compliance Policy Alignments.



Service, Effectiveness and Accountability Reviews

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

Across the organization, several service, effectiveness, and accountability reviews are nearing completion. These include the modernization of the procurement by-law, the strategic review of Public Health, and the EMS 10-Year Facility Master Plan.



Transportation Sustainability

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

To advance transportation sustainability at Niagara Region, staff are conducting a transportation operations rationalization study. They have drafted a request for proposal (RFP) and plan to consult with senior leadership in Q1 of 2025 before issuing the RFP.

Water and Wastewater Asset Sustainability

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

To ensure the sustainability of water and wastewater assets for the Niagara Region, staff have completed a hauled biosolids rate review. Public consultation was utilized to update the user fee, which has been approved and will be effective in Q1 of 2025. Cyclical reviews will be incorporated into future workplans to ensure the fee remains current.





Green and Resilient Region

Climate Adaptation Plan

Phase: Planning

Status: Some Delay

The Climate Adaptation Plan has faced some disruptions; however, Public Health staff have completed a climate change vulnerability assessment, which is being circulated internally. The next steps involve generating an executive report for public distribution and determining the implementation strategy.

Community Energy Plan

Timeline: 2023 – 2025

Phase: Planning

Status: On Track

Staff are making great progress on Community Energy Plan. In 2025, the focus will be to submit a funding application to the Provincial government and continuing to collaborate with local partners on developing the plan.



Corporate Climate Change Action

Timeline: 2023 – 2025

Phase: Development

Status: On Track

Senior leadership has reviewed the Corporate Climate Change Action Plan and it will be presented to CLT in Q1 of 2025. Staff are also collaborating with Corporate Communication to design a 5-page high-level summary of the plan and preparing for a Council Workshop.

Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan

Timeline: 2023 – 2024

Phase: Development

Status: Completed

The Energy Conservation & Demand Management Plan has been completed and published. Staff will now focus on implementing the plan, with the goal of achieving a 20% reduction in emissions across all departments with buildings by the end of 2028.

Green Fleet Policy

Timeline: Paused



Greening Strategy

Timeline: 2024 – 2026

Phase: Development

Status: On Track

The Green Strategy development began with the completion of a baseline inventory of canopy coverage in Niagara. The next steps of the strategy include developing a web brochure for distribution, sharing the inventory data upon request, and creating a greening strategy framework.

South Niagara Wastewater Treatment Solution

Timeline: 2016 – 2041

Phase: Planning

Status: Some Delay

The South Niagara Wastewater Treatment Solution has experienced some disruptions due to unknown funding sources. Currently, staff are working on the detailed design phase and pursuing advocacy efforts for provincial and federal funding.

Water and Wastewater Biosolids Management Plan

Timeline: 2021 – 2024

Phase: Development

Status: Completed

The Biosolids Master Plan has been completed. The plan aims to explore and identify future management strategies for biosolids within the Region. Staff are currently working on implementing the recommendations outlined in the report.

Waste Management Plan

Timeline: 2023 – 2025

Phase: Development

Status: On Track

Staff conducted community engagement to support the development of the Waste Management Plan through public open houses and an online survey. The feedback gathered set the stage for a detailed analysis of potential options. In 2025, the recommended system, targets, and implementation plan will be presented to interested parties before it's finalized.

Water, Wastewater Master Servicing Plan Update

Phase: Development

Status: On Track

Staff are actively working on updating the Water and Wastewater Master Servicing Plan. They have gathered and sent the necessary information to the consultant. The primary focus for 2025 will be the development of this plan.





Equitable Region

Attainable Housing Strategy

Timeline: 2024 – 2026

Phase: Development

Status: Completed

The development of the Attainable Housing Strategy is complete. Staff are working towards implementation through the Priority and Land Optimization Framework and the creation of a Student Housing Strategy.

Community Safety and Well-Being

Timeline: 2021 – 2025

Phase: Implementation

Status: On Track

The Building Safer Communities grant program funded nine programs, serving over 550 children, youth, and young adults. As well, Niagara Situation Tables ran weekly, spanning all 12 municipalities. Next steps are to conclude the current CSWB plan and draft an update for 2025 – 2029.

Consolidated Housing Master Plan

Phase: Planning

Status: On Track

Staff are actively working on advocacy efforts to support the development of the Consolidated Housing Master Plan. This project was included in the 2024 and 2025 pre-budget submissions and was discussed at Niagara Week and the Association of Ontario Municipalities (AMO) conference.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

Timeline: 2024 – 2027

Phase: Implementation

Status: On Track

The DEI Action Plan is 38% complete. Completed activities include a program that recognizes staff for advancing DEI and the establishment of a DEI community of practice. In 2025, staff will continue to work on developing a DEI handbook, DEI learning modules, and DEI recruitment, hiring, and promotion processes.

Growth Management and Staging of Infrastructure Strategy

Phase: Planning

Status: On Track

As part of the Growth Management and Staging of Infrastructure strategy, staff are advocating to the provincial and federal governments for infrastructure needs in Niagara, specifically for the South Niagara Wastewater Treatment Solution. Research is being conducted to identify funding sources that align with this project, and it has been included in the 2025 pre-budget submission.



Health Equity Strategic Plan

Timeline: 2020 – 2025

Phase: Implementation

Status: On Track

As part of the Health Equity Strategic Plan, six programs across two divisions have been trained to collect sociodemographic data. So far, 1,000 forms have been collected, and preliminary analysis has begun. In 2025, the focus will be to update the Health Equity Strategic Plan through staff consultations to support the development of a new plan.

Housing and Homelessness Action Plan/Built for Zero Homelessness Plan

Timeline: 2024 – 2027

Phase: Planning

Status: Paused

The development and implementation of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan has been paused. The Ministry has requested municipalities refrain from completing the new 10-year plan until further guidance is provided.

Indigenous ReconciliAction Plan

Timeline: 2024 – 2026

Phase: Development

Status: On Track

The Indigenous Relations Action Plan is continuing to be worked on and finalized. In preparation of the plan, Indigenous cultural awareness training was provided to 1,207 Senior's Services employees.

Poverty Reduction Strategy

Timeline: 2024 – 2028

Phase: Implementation

Status: On Track

The focus areas of the Poverty Reduction strategy have been finalized, and actions are being implemented. Alongside the strategy, staff have selected applicants for the Niagara Prosperity Initiative grant funding.

Support for Affordable and Attainable Development

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

During the 2024 AMO conference, staff met with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and presented a portfolio detailing the costs and housing unit impacts of six ongoing projects, including 320 Geneva St. This portfolio will be included in the 2025 provincial pre-budget submission.

Vision Zero Road Safety Implementation and Complete Streets Guidelines

Timeline: 2024 – 2027

Phase: Implementation

Status: On Track

This strategy has been shared with the Local Area Municipalities, Niagara Regional Police, and Niagara Student Transportation Services, for review. The consultant report is currently undergoing final revisions before a Council report is finalized.



Prosperous Region

Agri-Business Strategy

Timeline: 2024 – 2028

Phase: Development

Status: Completed

Staff are actively working on the implementation of the Agri-Business Strategy. They have met with the Federation of Agriculture and will leverage this partnership to champion the strategy, identify collaboration opportunities, and explore the possibility of creating a sector specialist position.

Core and Emerging Sector Focus

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

Niagara Region has secured an extension on Federal Funding from FedDev Ontario for the Electric Mobility Sector Specialist position. In 2025, staff will continue to update the ZEV Framework and collaborate with partners to advance this work.



Economic Development Strategy

Timeline: 2022 – 2032

Phase: Implementation

Status: On Track

The 10-year Economic Development Strategy has seen several projects completed within its first three years of implementation. These achievements include a \$1.56 billion investment from Asahi Kasei, enhancements to NiagaraCanada.com, the implementation of a customer relationship management software, and the development of a physician recruitment campaign.

Expansion of GO Transit

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

An advocacy strategy for the expansion of GO Transit has been created and is currently being implemented by staff. Construction on GO Station Development continues in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.



Government Relations Strategy

Phase: Development

Status: On Track

The Government Relations Strategy has concentrated on several advocacy-related projects, including the South Niagara Wastewater Treatment Solution, the Consolidated Housing Master Plan, and the Two-way, All Day GO Service. Additionally, staff have established a local area municipality working group with government relations counterparts and developed an external grant resource.

Labour Force Development Partnerships

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

Staff are actively participating in the Workforce Coalition, established in November 2023, to address the sustainability of a skilled workforce in Niagara. A pilot project, 'Project Phoenix,' was initiated to identify how each partner within the coalition can support meeting the workforce demand. In 2025, the focus will be on advancing the coalition's mandate.



Niagara Region Transit Service Support and Growth

Phase: Ongoing

Status: On Track

Niagara Region staff are working with and supporting Niagara Region Transit to secure and maximize federal permanent transit fund opportunities.

Signature Site Strategy

Phase: Development

Status: Completed

The Signature Site Strategy is progressing well with the completion of the Signature Site tool. This tool has been designed to promote Niagara's investment opportunities and maximize visibility for key development properties.

Transportation Master Plan Update

Phase: Planning

Status: Paused

The Transportation Master Plan has experienced has been paused for now, due to its transition from the Transportation division to the Infrastructure Planning and Development division. In 2025, the focus will be on finalizing the request for proposal and resuming work with the new team.

