

**Subject:** Motion – A New Deal for Niagara

**Date:** April 15, 2026

**To:** Corporate Services Committee

**From:** Councillor Bateman (Seconded by Councillor Redekop)

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WHEREAS the Niagara Region is a critical economic driver within Ontario and Canada, and a globally recognized tourism destination, welcoming approximately 14 million visitors annually (Niagara Falls Tourism/Ontario's Destination Niagara) and generating approximately \$3 billion in tourism-related economic activity;

WHEREAS the Niagara Region is one of the busiest border crossings between Canada and the U.S. and is bounded on 3 sides by water, which increases vehicular traffic traversing Niagara and policing and rescue responsibilities for our municipalities;

WHEREAS Niagara's visitor economy and border location place unique and sustained pressures on regional and local infrastructure, including roads, waste management (Public Works), transit (Niagara Transit), policing (Niagara Regional Police), paramedic services (Niagara EMS), water and wastewater systems, and public spaces;

WHEREAS Niagara municipalities are responsible for delivering essential services that support both residents and visitors, while relying only on property tax revenues that do not scale with tourism or trade corridor demands;

WHEREAS the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has identified that Ontario's current provincial-municipal fiscal framework is unsustainable, citing ongoing provincial downloading and a structural mismatch between municipal responsibilities and available revenue tools;

WHEREAS AMO has called for a comprehensive review of municipal service delivery responsibilities ("who does what") and the development of new fiscal tools to ensure municipalities can meet growing service demands;

WHEREAS the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has advocated for a modernized federal-municipal partnership, including predictable, long-term infrastructure funding, expanded housing investments, and direct federal engagement with municipalities to address national priorities;

WHEREAS Niagara Region is experiencing increasing financial pressures related to housing affordability, homelessness, transit expansion, climate adaptation, and state-of-good-repair infrastructure, all of which are compounded by population growth and visitor impacts; and

WHEREAS the economic benefits generated by Niagara's tourism sector and commercial trade significantly contribute to provincial and federal revenues, yet municipalities bear a disproportionate share of the costs required to sustain this economic activity.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:**

1. That Niagara Regional Council **CALL UPON** the Province of Ontario to initiate, in partnership with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), a comprehensive review of the provincial-municipal fiscal framework, including a reassessment of municipal service responsibilities; the elimination or mitigation of ongoing provincial downloading; the identification of new, sustainable municipal revenue tools, with the Region of Niagara as the pilot;
2. That Niagara Regional Council **ADVOCATES** for a "New Deal for Niagara" that recognizes the Region's unique role as Canada's leading tourism destination and includes dedicated, predictable funding for tourism-supporting infrastructure; investment in regional transit and transportation networks; all emergency services; public health; support for housing and homelessness initiatives; revenue-sharing mechanisms that reflect visitor-driven economic activity;
3. That the Province of Ontario **BE REQUESTED** to ensure that any future transfer of responsibilities to municipalities is accompanied by full and ongoing funding in line with inflation;
4. That the Government of Canada, consistent with recommendations from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), **BE REQUESTED** to expand permanent, direct federal funding streams to municipalities; increase investments in affordable housing and enabling infrastructure; recognize and support high-impact tourism and trade corridor regions such as Niagara;

5. That Niagara Regional Council **REQUEST** that both the federal and provincial governments formally recognize the infrastructure and service demands associated with hosting approximately 14 million visitors annually and generating approximately \$3 billion in tourism activity, as reported by Niagara Falls Tourism and Ontario's Destination Niagara; and
  
6. That this motion **BE CIRCULATED** to the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario; Rob Flack, Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Jennie Stevens, MPP for St. Catharines, Sam Oosterhoff, MPP for West Niagara, Jeff Burch, MPP for South Niagara, Wayne Gates MPP Niagara Falls, Prime Minister of Canada; Mark Carney, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO); the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM); and all Niagara-area municipalities requesting their support.

#	Category	Context	Niagara Context	Financial Pressures	Estimated Niagara Impact	Implications
1	Development Charge Revenue Reductions (Bill 23)	Province-wide loss of ~\$5.1B in DC revenue	\$30K–\$32K per residential unit; 2,810 starts (2023), 1,743 (2024)	Exemptions, discounts, deferrals reduce growth funding	\$12M+	Infrastructure funded via property taxes, debt, deferrals
2	Housing & Homelessness	Niagara is Service Manager	Oversees shelters, supports, homelessness response	Shelter ops, encampments, supportive housing, loss of services	Multi-million annual increases since 2022	Increasing reliance on municipal tax base
3	Paramedic Services (EMS)	Cost-shared with Province	539,180 residents; 14M visitors; 36% part-time workforce	Call volume, labour/overtime, staffing pressures	Millions annually above baseline	Municipal share exceeds intended cost split
4	Transit	Not fully cost-recovered via fares	Regional system; fares cover 10.8–22.3%	Low fare recovery, reliance on tax funding	Tens of millions annually	No stable provincial funding model → structural pressure
5	Infrastructure Funding Gap	Municipalities own 60% of infrastructure, get 9–10% tax revenue	Water, wastewater, roads, waste systems	Aging assets, growth expansion	\$2.76B backlog; \$585M/year need; \$392M annual deficit	Structural mismatch between responsibilities and revenue
6	NPCA	Watershed/environmental management	Covers all Niagara; flood & conservation	Reduced provincial funding; climate	\$16.2M budget (2026); 52.5% municipal	Heavy reliance on municipal taxpayers
7	Police (NRPS)	Municipally funded, provincially regulated	539,180 residents; 14M visitors	Labour + service demand increases	\$188.5M operating; \$7.9M capital; 39% of budget	Largest cost driver; major tax pressure
8	Public Health	Provincially mandated programs	Disease control, mental health, immunization	Capped provincial funding; rising demand	\$57M total; tens of millions municipal	Increasing municipal burden for mandated services
9	Overall Impact	Combined system-wide pressures	Applies across all services	Multi-sector financial strain	\$12M+ DC loss; multi-million service increases; large infrastructure gap	Growing structural fiscal imbalance