

Appendix 1: Niagara Economic Strategic Action Plan Report Card 2019

2019 has been an impressive year for the Niagara region in terms of the continued economic growth, new investments in Brock Linc, the Canada Summer 2021 Games, the recently announced Ryerson University and City of Niagara Falls Innovation Hub, and many more. Despite these successes it is imperative that the Niagara Region continue to take a proactive approach to supporting economic growth and attracting new investment to the region. With a forward looking agenda we will continue to report to Committee and Council on a quarterly basis in 2020 to ensure that our community stakeholders are informed of the actions and work being done by Niagara Economic Development.

Niagara Economic Development, in collaboration with local businesses, associations, community stakeholders, and post-secondary education institutions, has developed a five-year strategic action plan. The activities included below are based on strengths of the Niagara economy and addresses identified weaknesses, or gaps, that affect the region's competitiveness and ability to retain and attract investment. Most importantly, based on the extensive stakeholder engagement that was conducted throughout 2018 the result is that many of the activities reflect the input provided by the participants of the consultations. The success of Niagara Region Economic Development's Action Plan will only be achieved through meaningful partnerships and collaboration with our partners across Niagara.

Throughout the consultation process it became clear that no single department, government, association, institution, or business is capable of supporting the continued growth and success of the Niagara economy alone. It is with this in mind that the proposed Niagara Economic Strategic Action Plan has identified leaders and partners that will be necessary to enact this plan and support the continued economic growth of Niagara. This five-year plan provides a high-level overview and has been divided into seven target areas/goals based on the findings from the Stakeholder Consultation Plan:

- Economic Development: Supporting Business Growth and Diversification across Niagara Region
- Employment Land Strategy: Identifying and Creating a Provincially Significant Employment Zone
- Marketing Niagara Region: Raising the Profile of Niagara as a Place to Live and Do Business
- Streamline Planning Processes: Expediting Approvals Process
- Increase Niagara's Competitiveness: Addressing Unnecessary Regulatory Burdens on Businesses
- Workforce: Meeting Current and Future Talent, Professional, Skilled Trades and Labour Needs
- Advocacy: Improving Transportation Infrastructure Ensuring Niagara Remains Competitive in Global Economy

Each of the target areas will be operationalized through identified activities and associated timelines, activity leads, partners, and performance measures. Within the next five years Niagara Region Economic Development will undertake a long-term strategy review with a 20-year time

horizon. A successful Niagara Economic Strategic Action Plan will include increased job creation and retention; accelerated economic and greater competitiveness and prominence of the region through the action taken in associated with each of the seven target areas/goals.

The following Action Plan should be read using the following:

- **Time-Line:** The expected time horizon for the successful completion of the described economic development activity:
 - On-going: No assigned timeline
 - Short: One to two years (2019-2020)
 - Medium: Three to four years (2021-2022)
 - Long: Five plus years (2023+)
- **Activity:** The described activity to support regional economic development
- **Lead:** Identified organization(s), departments, or community stakeholder who will be responsible for the success of the Activity
- **Partners:** Identified organization(s), departments, or community stakeholder who will be necessary partners for the success of the Activity
- **Performance Measure:** How the success of the Activity will be measured

Economic Development: Supporting Business Growth and Diversification across Niagara Region

The Niagara region is home to a diverse economy that includes strong agri-business, manufacturing, and tourism sectors. The economic success of the region will be founded on supporting local businesses to grow and expand as well as attracting new businesses to the region. Niagara Region Economic Development is orientated towards facilitating inward investment, but has an important and critical role to support local economic development offices to facilitate growth within existing businesses.

GOAL: INCREASED BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
On-Going	Niagara Region Economic Development will support local municipalities in their economic development functions. This includes the services of the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone Manager to engage companies in federal programs to encourage export activity; economic and business research and analysis; expedited development services; and, support to communities without economic development officers on regionally significant projects.	Team Niagara	Niagara Region Economic Development: Director, Economic Development; Economic Development Officer; Manager, Economic Research and Analysis; Manager, Business Development and Expedited Services; NFTZ Manager.	Increased collaborative economic development activities between Niagara Region Economic Development and local economic development offices are achieved.
Throughout 2019, the Niagara Economic Development team has supported local municipalities by providing research and analysis; the services of the Foreign Trade Zone Manager to encourage local companies export activities; advice to municipalities without economic development offices; and expedited development services. In addition, Niagara Economic Development is responsible for external marketing and investment attraction. All of these activities have been reported quarterly to PEDC in reports ED 4-2019, ED 8-2019, ED 11-2019, and ED 1-2020.				
On-Going	Promote the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone programs through marketing activities and support the export diversification of existing Niagara manufacturing companies into new foreign markets.	Niagara Development Corridor Partnership Inc. (NDCPi) Niagara Region Economic Development:	Team Niagara NFTZ Task Force Local chambers of commerce Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade	Performance measures are outlined in the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone Strategy.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
		Niagara Foreign Trade Zone (NFTZ) Coordinator; Manager, Strategic Marketing		
<p>For the past year the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone has been actively involved in supporting the diversification of exports for existing Niagara manufacturers.</p> <p>The performance measure metrics achieved are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Numbers of serviced clients: 110 clients which is 26% of database of exporters. 2. Numbers of prospects: 230 companies representing 52% of database of exporters. 3. Outreach program: 8 meetings with International Trade Centres. 4. CBSA Duty Relief Programs: \$700,000 Duty Relief K90 Claims; \$358,000 Duty Drawback K32 Claims; \$380,000 Surtax Claims. 5. Inbound Missions: 3 inbound missions (Latvia, Czech Republic, and India). 6. Networking Events: 18 (including Innovate Niagara, Spark Niagara, TD Bank, BMO, and RBC). 7. Seminars held: 5 with a total of 62 companies and 81 participants (St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Niagara Region, Lincoln, and Welland). 				
Short	Engage the private sector as advisors to Niagara Region Economic Development through the Economic Development Working Group. Representation will include all sectors and major stakeholders.	Team Niagara Niagara Region Economic Development: Director, Economic Development	Niagara Industrial Association Private sector businesses Brock University Niagara College	Regular Economic Development Working Group meetings to provide input into Niagara Region Economic Development initiatives.
<p>In 2019 the Province of Ontario announced that it would be conducting a Governance Review of Ontario's eight upper-tier municipalities; this included Niagara and the 12 lower-tier municipalities. The purpose of the review was to ensure that municipalities were working effectively and efficiently in relation to governance, decision-making, and service delivery. Due to the uncertainty created by the Governance Review, there were no meetings of the Economic Development Working Group throughout 2019. However, the group will be brought together again in 2020 to allow private sector stakeholders to provide input into the Niagara Region Economic Development initiatives, in particular the Long Term Strategy.</p>				
Short	Participate in a review of Niagara Region development charges, waivers, and other incentive programs.	Niagara Region Planning and Development Niagara ERMS	Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Business Development and Expedited Services	Ensure Niagara Region has competitive development charges and incentives available for investors.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
<p>In 2018 Niagara Region began the process of conducting an internal review of existing grants and incentive programs; not including development charge grants. This resulted in the creation of an advisory committee made up of representatives from Planning and Development, Corporate Services, and Economic Development.</p> <p>Over the course of 2019, a number of meetings and workshops were held to discuss how best to initiate an internal review of Niagara Region's grant and incentive programs. This resulted in the identification of four target areas: affordable housing, brownfield remediation, employment, and public realm. The grant and incentive review will determine if the current suite of grants and incentives are meeting these goals, and if they are not, what changes need to be made. This process also included workshops with the local area municipalities to incorporate their participation into the Niagara Region's Grants and Incentives Review process.</p> <p>In January 2020, Niagara Region's Planning and Development Department will bring a report to the Planning and Economic Development Committee advising on the plan for consultation with the local area municipalities and the development of new grant and incentive policies and programs.</p>				
Medium	Conduct research into the impact of development charges on economic development with a focus on investment attraction, business expansion, and sector development.	Team Niagara Local municipal finance departments Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Economic Research and Analysis	Tourism stakeholders Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Niagara Region ERMS Niagara Region Planning and Development	Development Charge Impact Report is completed and circulated.
<p>The Niagara Region's Development Charge By-Law will expire in 2022. Corporate Services will be issuing an RFP in 2020 to retain the services of a consultant to conduct a new background study to support the creation of the Region's new Development Charge By-Law. This will require incorporating provincially mandated changes under Bill 108. The Development Charge Background Study will be done in tandem with a comparative analysis of Niagara Region to other municipalities and the efficacy of development charge incentives in business attraction, retention and expansion. This will ensure that the Region's by-laws, policies, and programs are positioned to effectively attract new investment to the region.</p>				
Medium	Define the role of Niagara Region Economic Development in tourism including research into new opportunities e.g. sports tourism.	Niagara Region Economic Development: Director, Economic Development; Economic Development Officer	Team Niagara Tourism Sector Stakeholders	Tourism role defined and supported with appropriate resources.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
<p>The Tourism sector plays an important role in Niagara's economy and there is a robust network of stakeholders comprised of the Tourism Partnership of Niagara (RTO2), local Destination Marketing Organizations, Niagara Parks Commission, and others, currently supporting the sector. Report ED 7-2019 Brock University Centre for Sport Capacity on Sports Tourism was presented to PEDC in July and was referred back to the tourism stakeholders for feedback, with a report to PEDC. At the PEDC meeting on September 11th, Niagara Economic Development was also asked to provide a report on Niagara Region's role in the tourism sector including the identification of gaps in the current tourism sector support. Report ED 12-2019 Analysis of Niagara Region's Role in Tourism was presented to PEDC on November 6th. The recommendation was that the staff recommendation, to create a special event bid fund, be referred to the 2020 budget process and that the report be circulated for comment. Regional Council deferred the special event bid fund for consideration in the 2021 budget process. Comments from the Local Area Municipalities and tourism stakeholders on ED 12-2019 will be received until end of December 2019 with a report coming back to PEDC in early 2020.</p>				
Medium	Advance projects of regional significance, including but not limited to opportunities in new agricultural and manufacturing industries, and supply chain development opportunities to support business growth and retention.	Team Niagara	Niagara Region Economic Development: Economic Development Officer Agricultural producers Food processors Niagara Industrial Association Niagara College Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Local chambers of commerce Agriculture federations Niagara Region Agriculture Policy and Action Committee	Key projects are identified and necessary support provided.
<p>Throughout the year, Niagara Economic Development has been involved in a number of regionally significant projects, with other stakeholders, including: Divestiture of the Seaway lands; Regional Employment Lands study; Municipal Comprehensive Review; Economic Trade Corridor/National Trade Corridors Fund; Irrigation strategy; Promotion of skilled trades opportunities; Inter-regional transit; Incentives Review; Expansion of Go Train services, rural Broadband coverage etc. All are mentioned in more detail in other sections of the report card.</p>				
Medium	Support and coordinate facilitated stakeholder events to provide succession planning solutions for Niagara-based companies. For example, this could include identifying	Team Niagara Niagara Industrial Association Local chambers of commerce	Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Business Development and Expedited Services	Succession planning strategies are promoted through stakeholders.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
	opportunities for the purchase of existing operations as a succession strategy.	Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Financial institutions with business advisory services		
Although the issue of succession planning is important for Niagara companies, no strategy has been developed to date. There have been informal discussions with other stakeholders who also have an interest, for example Niagara Industrial Association, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce. As this activity is aligned with the local EDO mandate, this will be brought to a Team Niagara meeting early in 2020 to determine next steps towards supporting a strategy.				
Long	Develop a joint aftercare program with local economic development offices to support new company investments in the region. This program will engage companies that have recently expanded into Niagara and their parent company to acknowledge their investment and the early identification of potential issues.	Team Niagara	Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Trade and Investment; Economic Development Officer; Manager, Business Development and Expedited Services; NFTZ Coordinator	Aftercare program will be in place and functioning.
Providing on-going support to business that have chosen Niagara as the location for their investment is part of providing a high-level of customer service. It demonstrates that we are interested in not only attracting investment, but retaining those companies and helping them succeed. This is a long term objective and has not been addressed in 2019. Under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by all 13 municipalities in 2012, it delineates economic development responsibilities between the Region and the LAMs. Company aftercare would be the responsibility of the local economic development offices. In 2020 Niagara Economic Development will identify if there are any gaps in aftercare provision that could be supported at the regional level.				
Long	Consult with sector stakeholders to explore the need for a formalized collaborative group to support and strengthen the nascent information technology sector in Niagara.	Innovate Niagara Spark Niagara Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Initiatives	Team Niagara Innovation and information technology sector stakeholders Niagara College Private sector partners, if needed Spark Niagara	Explore the need for additional support of the technology sector if required.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
	<p>In November 2019, Brock University's Niagara Community Observatory released, "Elusive Quest or Emerging Reality: Niagara's ICT Innovation Cluster", which took an in-depth look at Niagara's ICT sector. The report, based on research and analysis, demonstrated that Niagara's nascent ICT sector will require on-going support. It should not be considered a standalone sector, rather, it is a platform that will be foundational to every other sector of the region's 21st century economy. As a result, the report found a need for a clearer vision and a more strategic approach to investment in the region's ICT sector.</p> <p>For example, Ryerson University and Spark Niagara recently announced \$3 million in Federal funding for the development of a Ryerson University-Niagara Falls Innovation Hub that will be built in downtown Niagara Falls. This will create a new and unique space that will add to the entrepreneur ecosystem in Niagara. Niagara Economic Development will continue to work with local partners to ensure that Niagara's ICT sector receives the required on-going support.</p>			

Employment Land Strategy: Identifying a Creating Regionally Significant Employment Lands

Existing employment lands in Niagara are located throughout the region. The development of these lands has historically been aligned with the economic development initiatives of the individual municipalities with little regional involvement. This has resulted in a number of smaller employment areas that have limited the ability to create a truly regional employment area. Niagara Region Planning and Development, with support from Niagara Region Economic Development, is reviewing the opportunity to create a large provincially significant regional employment zone. This will allow Niagara region to be more competitive in its investment attraction initiatives, both foreign and domestic.

GOAL: SUPPORT THE AVAILABILITY OF SHOVEL READY INDUSTRIAL LAND IN NIAGARA FOR DEVELOPMENT

Time-line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
Long	Work with the St. Lawrence Seaway to identify and promote development opportunities for Transport Canada owned lands to attract investment in manufacturing, shipping, and distribution.	Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Business Development and Expedited Services	Transport Canada St. Lawrence Seaway Management Company Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority Niagara Region Planning and Development Niagara Region Public Works Team Niagara NFTZ Coordinator	Identify lands for development and estimate development costs.
<p>The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Company has been experiencing increased year-over-year traffic through the Seaway system that connects ports as far west as Duluth, Minnesota to the North Atlantic. The Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority has also been experiencing increased traffic. The result of the increased traffic and exports is the exploration of new development opportunities in the Niagara region that could result in new local economic growth.</p> <p>Niagara Economic Development has been involved in discussions and meetings with the City of Port Colborne and the St. Lawrence Seaway to identify opportunities that could expedited the servicing of City owned employment lands and a parcel of St. Lawrence Seaway managed lands. As part of an on-going Environmental Assessment to determine the best location to bring services under the canal Niagara Economic Development is ensuring an economic development perspective is incorporated to ensure that the servicing of employment lands is included.</p> <p>Niagara Economic Development has also had on-going meetings with the Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority as they are considering alternative solutions to the expansion their port facilities in Hamilton. This has included looking at locations in Niagara, along the Welland canal, where</p>				

Time-line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
additional port facilities could be located. This would create new job opportunities throughout the region and relieve pressure from the Hamilton facilities.				
Long	Niagara Economic Development will support the Regional Employment Lands Study and act on the recommendations that involve regional economic development.	Niagara Region Planning and Development	Niagara Region Economic Development: Managers, Strategic Initiatives and Business Development and Expedited Services Niagara Region Public Works Local Area Planning Departments Team Niagara	Employment Lands Study will be completed and finalized. Determine the feasibility of creating a Regionally owned provincially significant employment zone within the Niagara Economic Zone & Centre
In 2019 the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing made changes to the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan that directly impact the employment lands and employment areas. This update involved changes to employment lands, areas, and the creation of Provincially Significant Employment Zones. This announcement required Niagara Region's Planning and Development Department to reflect those changes in their on-going Employment Lands Study. Phase One is expected to be completed in early 2020 and allow for recommendations, such as the creation of a new potential employment area, to be incorporated into Phase Two. This will have a direct impact on the Niagara Region's new Official Plan.				
Long	Provide input into the Niagara Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review (Official Plan) to ensure the economic development perspective is considered.	Niagara Region Planning and Development	Niagara Region Economic Development: Director, Economic Development; Manager, Business Development and Expedited Services; Economic Development Officer Team Niagara Local Planning Departments	Collaboration with Niagara Region Planning and Development Department and input into the Official Plan provided.
Niagara Economic Development and the Planning and Development Department have worked collaboratively throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review process to ensure that any policy changes related to employment were through an economic development lens. Niagara Economic Development is participating in the review and implementation of the Regional Official Plan Act 16 – Employment Policies amendment to the current Official Plan. This will in turn inform the new Regional Plan that will be drafted in 2020-2021.				

Marketing Niagara Region: Raising the Profile of Niagara as a Place to Live and Do Business

The success of the Niagara region, in terms of economic and population growth, is dependent on successfully marketing the region to target audiences. Niagara Region Economic Development, through collaboration and partnership with local stakeholders, will manage two distinct marketing initiatives. One will be targeted at foreign and domestic companies that are looking to expand their operations with the goal of raising the profile of the Niagara region as a competitive place to do business. The second will be predicated on the successful attraction of new residents to the region to increase the population for the long-term sustainable growth of the Niagara region. In collaboration with other community stakeholders Niagara Region Economic Development will work towards attracting new and recent immigrants to Ontario as well as families that are looking for an alternative to the lifestyle available to them in the Greater Toronto Area.

GOAL: MARKET NIAGARA TO ATTRACT NEW BUSINESS INVESTMENT AND RESIDENTS

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measures
On-Going	Identify target markets for investment attraction activities in designated sectors and geographies. This includes leading investment missions, qualified lead generation initiatives, and participating in trade shows and events.	Niagara Region Economic Development: Director, Economic Development; Manager, Trade and Investment Team Niagara	Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Niagara Development Corridor Partnership	KPIs in Manager, Trade and Investment work plan achieved including qualified lead generation, trade missions, and trade shows.
Investment attraction activities in 2019 have been focused on the U.S., U.K. and Europe within the target sectors of manufacturing and agribusiness. Investment missions have included participation by economic development officers from the LAMs (in U.S. missions) and have resulted in 152 working leads which by the end of 2019 were converted to 48 active follow up leads. All of these are captured in the CRM. Global events are having a major influence on Foreign Direct Investment (FDi) activity including the uncertainty over BREXIT and the U.S. tariff war with China. A study to review FDi trends as they relate to Ontario and Niagara was completed in December 2019 and will inform the 2020 FDi work plan. A second study to look specifically at potential new U.S. markets was started in December 2019 and will also inform the 2020 work plan. Quarterly Team Niagara meetings have included updates on the FDi work plan throughout the year.				
On-Going	Conduct targeted marketing activities to promote Niagara as a location for business investment.	Niagara Region Economic Development: Managers, Strategic Marketing and Trade and Investment	Team Niagara	Marketing plan developed with the associated KPIs achieved.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measures
An annual marketing review of past results, and an annual marketing plan have been developed on an ongoing basis. In the annual marketing plan, targeted activities include a mix of media relations, digital advertising, social media advertising, print advertising, content marketing, and sponsorships.				
Short	Coordinate with stakeholders to develop a communications and public relations campaign to promote Niagara's business and investment successes.	Team Niagara Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Marketing	Niagara Region Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Economic Development Working Group Niagara College Local chambers of commerce	Communications Plan developed and implemented.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2019 Fall Marketing Campaign was specifically focused on highlighting business and partner success stories, as supporting reasons for why businesses in the GTA should invest in Niagara. Four articles were developed for the Financial Post/National Post, Globe & Mail, and Maclean's Magazine focused on agri-business, manufacturing, the startup/innovation sector, and investment advantages in Niagara. Partners and businesses included or profiled in these articles include: Niagara College, Vineland Research, Brock University, Steelcon Fabrication, Colliers International Niagara, Peninsula Plastics, Niagara Industrial Association, Caddle, Innovate Niagara and Spark Niagara. Additional articles for resident and immigrant attraction were developed for the National Post, Toronto Life, Canadian Immigrant Magazine, and Today's Parent, as well as supplementary digital marketing and social media marketing. The CKTB 610 Business Trip was sponsored to highlight the interesting and innovative business stories in Niagara, to drive more awareness of business activity locally. Interim marketing results demonstrate doubling of website traffic year-over-year, and tripling of business investment inquiries and leads compared to a similar time period last year. 				
Short	Develop and implement a Niagara Ambassadors program with local business leaders from different sectors to promote the region and meet potential investors in Niagara.	Team Niagara Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager of Strategic Marketing, Manager, Trade and Investment; NFTZ Coordinator	Economic Development Working Group Local chambers of commerce Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Niagara-based businesses	Ambassadors identified and engaged in both inbound and outbound investment attraction activities.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measures
<p>The Niagara Ambassador Program was launched in May to positive local reception. There are currently 46 ambassadors: 40 are digital ambassadors, and 24 have opted in to be business ambassadors. Regular digital communications are distributed to the Ambassador group to promote the region, and individual business ambassadors have been engaged to be profiled in marketing initiatives and to attend business delegations held in Niagara.</p>				

Streamline Planning Processes: Expediting Approvals Process

Under the direction of Niagara Regional Council, Niagara Region has been proactive in supporting business growth and economic prosperity. Over the next five years, Niagara Region Economic Development will continue to identify and reduce barriers to new private sector investment. This will be accomplished by ensuring that the Niagara Region and local area municipalities have competitive and complementary permit approval processes. Niagara Region Economic Development with local area municipalities will proactively engage the private sector to have a customer-first approach to business development and investment in Niagara.

GOAL: ENSURE THAT NIAGARA REMAINS PRO-DEVELOPMENT AND BECOMES A DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR FUTURE INVESTMENT

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
On-Going	Engage and work with Regional and local area planning staff on industrial and commercial projects. This could include identifying opportunities for closer collaboration with local municipal partners to ensure timely approval processes.	Team Niagara Niagara Region Planning and Development	Local planning and building departments Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Business Development and Expedited Services	Increased investor awareness regarding permit and development timelines.
<p>In November 2019, the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade announced the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund that will provide grants and loans to businesses and support to economic development initiatives. The first round of program intake for this new program will be in January 2020. To ensure that the Niagara region is positioned to take advantage of this new provincial funding a workshop with the Senior Business Advisor for Niagara from the Ministry was organized with representatives from the local area municipalities. This ensures that any applications to the program will be coordinated and adhere to the requirements outlined by the Province.</p> <p>In 2019 Niagara Region's Planning and Development Department, in conjunction with the 12 Local Area Municipalities, agreed to an updated Memorandum of Understanding that confirms that roles and responsibilities of the Niagara Region and the Local Area Municipalities. Key changes to the MOU included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a model that demonstrates how planning services are appropriately resourced and structured; • Deliver timely, accurate, effective, and customers-focused planning services; • Pursue improvements that achieve good planning, streamlining, predictability, and consistency; • Eliminate unnecessary duplication to maximize existing resource, technical expertise, and support departmental coordination. 				
On-Going	Host a facilitated workshop with businesses and stakeholders to identify	Team Niagara	Niagara Region planning and development	Meeting scheduled with development

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measure
	and address barriers to industrial and commercial development.	Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Business Development and Expedited Services	Local planning and building departments Commercial and industrial realtors Industrial, commercial, and institutional construction companies	stakeholders to ensure open communication. Barriers and challenges addressed on an on-going basis.
<p>Niagara Economic Development, in collaboration with Niagara Region Planning and Development Department, coordinated a workshop for commercial and industrial realtors and developers. The workshop focused on providing an update on recent regional policies and initiatives that had been undertaken to address identified barriers to commercial and industrial development. It was also an opportunity for the private sector to provide feedback to the Niagara Region. The majority of the feedback provided focused on changes to the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan and the impact that the new Glendale District Plan will have on future development opportunities.</p> <p>It is important to note that the Greater Toronto industrial real estate market is currently experiencing unprecedentedly low vacancy rates. Some commercial and industrial brokers believe the Toronto market's industrial vacancy rate could be as low as 0.2%. This has led to companies looking outside of the GTA for new opportunities to either lease or build new employment space. The majority of employers, however, are not looking for owner operated and properties. This has created an opportunity for developers to build new industrial buildings to meet a growing demand for businesses that are looking to lease space. This is a great opportunity for the Niagara region to accommodate businesses that considering locating outside of the GTA, but require to be in close proximity to that market.</p>				

Increasing Niagara's Competitiveness: Addressing Unnecessary Regulatory Burdens on Businesses

Niagara Region Economic Development supports the Province's initiative to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses across Ontario. Development in Niagara is regulated by a number of different polices and bodies including, but not limited to, the Green Belt, Niagara Escarpment, Provincial Policy Statement (Provincially Significant Wetlands), Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Niagara Escarpment Commission, and provincial ministries. This complex regulatory environment has the effect of increasing the difficulty of doing business and affecting Niagara's economic development competitiveness. Niagara Region Economic Development will work with local community stakeholders to address concerns regarding the existing regulatory environment and advocate for necessary changes that are aligned with Niagara Region's pro economic development agenda, while ensuring that Niagara's unique environmental landscapes are recognized economic assets and protected.

GOAL: REDUCE REGULATORY BURDEN ON BUSINESSES IN NIAGARA

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measures
On-Going	Support advocacy initiatives to the federal government for the Niagara region to receive the Economic Trade Corridor designation and infrastructure funding through the National Trade Corridors Fund.	The Offices of the Regional Chair and CAO Local Mayors	Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager Strategic Initiatives; NFTZ Coordinator Niagara Region Planning and Development Niagara Region Public Works Local Members of Parliament Local chambers of commerce	Application submitted and infrastructure funding awarded from the National Trade Corridors Fund and the Economic Trade Corridor designation.
In collaboration with Public Works, Niagara Economic Development, assisted in the development of a second Expression of Interest to the National Trade Corridors Fund, with support from MP Vance Badawey's office. Research on trade activity, including exports and imports, conducted by Niagara Economic Development helps to build the case for Niagara to receive the Economic Trade Corridor federal designation and have an Expression of Interest accepted to get to the full application phase of the National Trade Corridors Fund. All of this work would be in support of the start of the construction of the East West Corridor. Niagara Economic Development is a partner in a project with Transport Canada and the McMaster Institute for Transportation and Logistics, 'Exploring Goods Movement and Export Diversification for Niagara Region Firms' to understand issues faced by exporters in Niagara. This study will be completed early in 2020 and initial results support the need for increased infrastructure to support the flow of goods across the border.				
Medium	Support the work of agricultural stakeholders to find solutions to on-going irrigation issues.	Agriculture sector stakeholders	Team Niagara	Identify resources to implement the irrigation strategy.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partners	Performance Measures
			Niagara Region Economic Development: Economic Development Officer Niagara Region Planning and Development APAC	
<p>In 2017, an Irrigation Strategy was funded in part by the Niagara Region in partnership with agriculture stakeholders to address the issue of access to irrigation water for St. Catharines, Lincoln, and Niagara-On-The-Lake farmers as a pilot program. The Irrigation Strategy was completed and circulated to partnering parties, but the action items were never advanced on due to lack of funding and a single point of contact responsible for advancing them. An application was made in 2018 to the EcoAction Plan program for an Irrigation Ambassador position, but the application was not chosen for funding.</p> <p>In partnership with the Planning Department, funding of \$32,000 was provided by the Niagara Region to the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers to revive the commitment from these pilot municipalities to advance the Irrigation Strategy. The Town of Lincoln, the City of St. Catharines, the Town of Niagara-On-the-Lake, and others have all contributed funds and support to create a 12 month-contract Irrigation Ambassador position meant to advance on a number of action items from the Irrigation Strategy 2017. The position was posted in Fall 2019 and will be awarded in early 2020. The position will work out of the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers office and will be accountable to an Irrigation Steering Committee representative of the funding organizations.</p>				
Long	Support regional advocacy initiatives to advance land use planning policies that support agriculture uses and business development opportunities where appropriate.	Niagara Region Planning and Development	Niagara Region Economic Development: Director of Economic Development Local area municipalities Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority Niagara Escarpment Commission Agriculture sector stakeholders	Advocacy plan developed and implemented.
<p>The Niagara Region recently provided a response to the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade's request for information on their "Job Site Challenge" initiative. This provided the Niagara Region with the opportunity to provide direct feedback to the Province regarding its policies surrounding employment lands and the unique assets, but also challenges that face Niagara region in being competitive in attracting new investments that would require large investments that were aligned with the Province's initiative.</p>				

Workforce: Meeting Current and Future Talent, Professional, and Skill Trades and Labour Needs

Access to a talented, professional, skilled, and educated workforce is increasingly a top concern for businesses and essential to ensure the continued growth of the regional economy. The proximity of the Niagara region to significant national and global economic drivers makes the region both attractive to new investment as well and new opportunities build, attract, and retain a talented and skilled workforce within Niagara. Correspondingly, the existing job skills gap is not isolated to Niagara, but affecting communities across Canada. This challenge has been raised not only by local businesses looking to recruit new workers, but also companies looking to expand into Niagara. Finding a solution to this issue will require efforts and action from all levels of government, educational stakeholders, and employers themselves. Niagara Region Economic Development will work with local partners to create a solution that address the challenges directly related to Niagara's workforce. Additionally, developments in other jurisdictions have shown the importance of ensuring that the local workforce has the on-going training and professional development not only for today's jobs, but for the jobs of the future.

GOAL: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO ADDRESS SKILL GAPS THAT ARE AFFECTING TALENT RECRUITMENT

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measure
Short	Niagara Region Economic Development to partner with the Local Immigration Partnership to promote Niagara as a destination for skilled immigrants.	Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Marketing	Local Immigration Partnership Niagara College Niagara Workforce Planning Board Niagara Folks Arts Festival Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Welland Heritage Council (?)	Marketing plan will be developed with associated KPIs achieved.
<p>Niagara Region Economic Development to partner with the Local Immigration Partnership to promote Niagara as a destination for skilled immigrants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development and the Local Immigration Partnership have partnered to update the immigrant attraction website, specifically to increase accessibility and usability to newcomer audiences. Focus groups were conducted in partnership with the Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre in Q1 2019, and website updates planned and executed in Q2 and Q3. Advertising for resident and immigrant attraction, including sponsored content and digital advertising were planned in Q3 and launched in Q4. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Marketing, including programmatic, social media advertising and Pay Per Click advertising Toronto Life article, launched October 28 https://torontolife.com/city/life/eleven-reasons-to-move-to-niagara/ 				

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Post article, launched November 4 https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/life-sponsored/niagara-attracts-newcomers-with-social-supports-and-lower-cost-of-living ○ Canadian Immigrant article, launched Nov 19 https://canadianimmigrant.ca/living/niagara-a-welcoming-place-for-everyone ○ Advertising in multicultural publications (Canadian Immigrant, Sing Tao, Latinos Magazine, CanIndia News) – October 3- November 15 • Additional advertising in Today's Parent, and the National Post will launch in January and February 2020. • Website traffic to the immigration site has increased almost 7-fold. Traffic from October 1 to December 15 was 7,060 in 2019 vs. 1,085 in 2018. <p>Economic Development sits on the LIP Regional Council, as well as the Community and Inclusivity Working Group which is also led by the LIP, and works in partnership with local community partners like the Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre, Fort Erie Multicultural Centre, and others to advance immigrant attraction and inclusivity in the Niagara region.</p>			
Medium	Develop an educational campaign aimed at parents and students to promote skilled trade occupations in collaboration with other stakeholders.	Niagara Workforce Planning Board Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Marketing	Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Niagara College Local boards of education Team Niagara Local chambers of commerce	Educational campaign developed and promoted.
	<p>Educational campaigns are being developed at different levels of government, industry associations and school boards. All have the same objective to promote skilled trade occupations. In 2019 both the federal and provincial governments set up advisory boards to look at this issue. Locally, the Niagara Industrial Association is reaching out to high schools via its members to recruit apprentices directly, with some success. The Niagara Workforce Planning Board, in collaboration with Niagara College, is partnering with local school boards to bring in panel members from industry to speak to students and their parents.</p>			
Long	Facilitate the development of stakeholder partnerships to meet current and future talent, professional, skilled trades, and labour needs through collaboration with Brock University and Niagara College.	Niagara Workforce Planning Board Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Initiatives	Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Brock University Niagara College Team Niagara Local Boards of Education Local Chambers of Commerce	Alignment of stakeholder strategies to develop a work-ready labour force.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measure
The availability of a skilled workforce is a priority for a number of stakeholders in Niagara. Each organization or company is addressing this issue as part of their strategic plan. At the moment these strategies are not formally aligned, although there is collaboration between the various stakeholders. As a Long Term Economic Development Strategy will be developed in 2020, in partnership with stakeholders, there will be an opportunity to bring the strategies together and strengthen the work to develop a skilled workforce for Niagara.				
Medium	Support the capacity for increased innovation, science, and technology transfer between post-sector educational institutions and Niagara-based businesses to increase their competitiveness.	Brock University Niagara College Niagara Industrial Association Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Initiatives	Team Niagara Niagara Workforce Planning Board Local board of education Local chambers of commerce MEDJCT	Alignment of research and academic programming to support regional economic development, including ongoing training, professional development for individuals participating in the workforce across the region.
<p>Brock University announced in 2019 the official launch of BrockLinc, which will provide local industry, entrepreneurs, and community members access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity to participate in hard and soft skill development through experiential learning. • General business and skills development through resources of the Goodman Group, Innovate Niagara, and other community resources • The implementation of a curricular/co-curricular program that will allow for life-long learning opportunities <p>Niagara College is also home to the Walker Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Centre and the Canadian Food and Wine Institute. These two institutes are mandated to work with small businesses to assist companies adopt new technologies and adopt “lean” production best practices. Niagara College is actively investigating opportunities to identify where increases increase competitiveness can be achieved via technological adoption and increased productivity.</p> <p>Staff from Niagara Economic Development sit on the advisory boards for the Walker Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Centre and the Canadian Food and Wine Institute to ensure that economic development remains at the forefront of these two institutions.</p>				

Advocacy: Improving Transportation Infrastructure Ensuring Niagara Remains Competitive in Global Economy

The Niagara region is strategically located on one of the key transportation corridors into the eastern United States. This provides businesses the opportunity to move goods in and out of the region, which is fundamental to their success. To further leverage our geographic advantage it is critical that transportation infrastructure can support increased trade with the United States. This requires key investments, in partnership with the federal and provincial governments, in regional infrastructure to increase Niagara's competitiveness and attractiveness to new businesses.

In 2019 there were a number of new initiatives that were focused on improving Niagara's transportation and other supporting infrastructure that is seen as critical to supporting the business and economic growth. This ranged from Federal transportation corridor funding applications, increased support for public transportation, and continued investment in broadband infrastructure just to name a few. These are all areas that are critical not only to economic growth, but the sustainability of Niagara as a whole.

GOAL: IMPROVE NIAGARA'S TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measure
On-Going	Support advocacy efforts to the provincial government for funding of the East/West Corridor highway.	The Offices of the Regional Chair and CAO Niagara Region Public Works Niagara Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Initiatives	Niagara Region Planning and Development NFTZ Coordinator Local area municipalities City of Hamilton Regional MPs/MPPs	Solid business case established and presented to the provincial government.
On-going conversations are taking place with Vance Badaway, MP's office regarding Niagara region as an Economic Trade Corridor. The Niagara Region is looking forward to another submission opportunity to the National Trade Corridors Fund. After the last Expression of Interest submission, the Niagara Region participated in a debriefing with the Federal Government. Going forward Niagara Economic Development will work with the Government Relations Specialist and their strategy. This will include engaging the Provincial government; the Local Area Municipalities, and building the relationship with the City of Hamilton to demonstrate a start to finish partnership for the East West Corridor.				
Short	Support advocacy efforts for the development of a fully integrated intra-regional transit system with schedules that support employment.	Niagara Region Public Works	Niagara Region Planning and Development Niagara Region Economic Development: Director of Economic Development	Regional transit system developed.

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measure
			Local area municipalities Local chambers of commerce Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Brock University Niagara College Tourism stakeholders Niagara Workforce Planning Board	
The 2020 budget provides funding for a pilot project to provide on-demand transit in West Niagara providing connections into existing transit services in Niagara ultimately allowing for intra-regional travel throughout the entire region. There is also a governance study in progress that will review governance models and recommend a preferred model for Niagara Region going forward to ensure full integration of transit in Niagara.				
Medium	Ensure access to broadband is available to all areas in Niagara, both urban and rural.	SWIFT NRBN The Office of the Regional Chair and CAO Appointed Regional Councilor	Niagara Region Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Initiatives Niagara Region IT Local area municipalities Agriculture sector stakeholders	Progress in achieving regional broadband coverage for Niagara.
<p>The Niagara Region is providing on-going investments in IT infrastructure that will help address the needs of residents and businesses in rural Niagara. Currently, 54% of Niagara's population lack access to reliable and affordable broadband service. The Niagara Region is incentivizing the construction of fiber and other digital infrastructure in areas that will not be immediately served by the private sector therefore trying to serve the widest area possible. Agribusinesses that are primarily located outside of Niagara's urban areas are continuously adding new technologies to their operations. Increasingly, rural businesses require broadband internet access in order to compete in a global market place.</p> <p>Niagara Region's IT department has been actively involved with Southwestern Integrated Fiber Technology (SWIFT) to address the lack of broadband internet access in rural Niagara. In 2019 SWIFT began the Request For Proposal that will release upwards of \$180 million in Federal funding to build out high-speed internet infrastructure in underserved Southwestern Ontario regions. It is expected that Niagara Region and community partners like the Niagara Region Broadband Network (NRBN) will be able to access this funding in late 2020. This should result in the rapid roll-out of new IT infrastructure beginning in 2021.</p>				

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measure
NRBN has applied to the Connect to Innovate Federal program that will invest \$500 million to bring high speed internet to rural communities across Canada. The Niagara Region has committed \$1.4 million, and should NRBN's application be successful, will be used.				
Medium	Support the creation of a business case for expanded services in Niagara with Metrolinx.	GO Implementation Team Metrolinx	Niagara Economic Development: Manager, Strategic Initiatives Tourism Stakeholders	Maintain on-going support.
In November 2019 Metrolinx released an updated Initial Business Case for the Niagara Expansion project with a recommended service option. The Niagara Expansion project will now proceed to a Preliminary Design Business Case to refine costs and scope of the proposed service option. Work with Metrolinx continues with respect to service expansion. Niagara Economic Development is a member of the GO Implementation Team.				
Long	Support expanded economic opportunities at municipally owned airports.	Niagara Region Planning and Development Niagara Region Public Works: Director of Transportation Niagara Region Economic Development: Director; Economic Development Officer	Niagara District Airport Niagara Central Airport Local area municipalities Tourism stakeholders Team Niagara	Maintain on-going support to the Airport Strategic Plan.
In July 2019 the Niagara Airports Feasibility and Future Business Modelling Study RFP was awarded to HM Aero by Niagara Economic Development. In December an internal and external presentation was made on the draft report to get stakeholders' feedback. The final report is due to be presented to Regional Council in February 2020. This report identifies potential business opportunities for the Niagara District Airport and the Niagara Central Dorothy Rungeling Airport. It does not address potential governance models or potential transition planning to the Region. It will be used, in conjunction with other reports, to inform Regional Council as they consider ownership of the airports in 2020.				
Long	Research the feasibility for public-private partnerships to extend natural gas into rural areas of Niagara.	Niagara Region Economic Development: Director, Economic Development; Manager, Research and Analysis	Private-sector natural gas providers Team Niagara Local area municipalities Niagara Region Public Works Niagara Region Planning and Development Federations of Agriculture	Completed feasibility report.
The Province of Ontario is currently focused on increasing broad band internet access to rural and northern communities across the province. As a result, the desire to extend natural gas servicing areas into non-urban areas is not a priority. It would therefore be a better use of Niagara				

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measure
Economic Development's resources and time to focus on the areas that are aligned with the Province. At this time, however, we need more information about the rural areas that are most in need of servicing and what Enbridge, and other natural gas providers, business plans are for the near future.				
Long	Support advocacy efforts to the provincial government for lower electricity costs to regain the manufacturing sector's competitiveness in southern Ontario.	The Office of the Regional Chair and CAO Niagara Region Economic Development: Director, Economic Development	Team Niagara Local offices of Niagara's Members of Provincial Parliament Local chambers of commerce Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Large scale users of electricity	Provide business case research to support advocacy efforts.
In 2019, the Niagara Industrial Association contracted with Armstrong Strategy to provide a response to the Province about high electricity pricing. This is an issue for large hydro users. Niagara has lower transmission costs due to our proximity to the source but still pays the same prices as the rest of the province. Our direct competitors in the New York State have lower hydro costs which give their manufacturers a competitive advantage.				
Long	Support the Region's advocacy efforts to develop a provincially funded campaign to promote skilled trades and labour and the available careers in manufacturing and other sectors to parents and students to ensure positions are filled.	The Office of the Regional Chair and CAO Niagara Economic Development: Director of Economic Development; Manager Strategic Initiatives	Team Niagara Niagara Industrial Association Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade Niagara College Brock University Local chambers of commerce Niagara Workforce Planning Board	Provincial campaign in place with results.
Both the Federal and Provincial governments are starting to address the need to educate parents and students about careers in skilled trades. In 2019 the Federal government has set up an industry advisory committee to lay the groundwork for a national campaign to encourage apprenticeships and promote the skilled trades as a career of choice. The Province has recently appointed two Training and Skills Advisors to consult with industry and stakeholders on modernizing the skilled trades and apprenticeship system. Locally, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities has set up the Niagara Strategic Engagement Apprenticeship Team to support the growth of apprenticeships locally.				
Niagara Economic Development and the Niagara Industrial Association recognize the importance of encouraging youth to enter the skilled trades. Niagara Economic Development will continue to work with community stakeholders and educational institutions to ensure that skilled trades and other opportunities in the manufacturing sector are recognized as viable careers.				

Time-Line	Activity	Lead	Partner(s)	Performance Measure
Long	Collaborate with and support key stakeholders to determine the feasibility of a Niagara port facility.	Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority St. Lawrence Seaway Management Company	Niagara Region Economic Development: Director, Economic Development; Manager, Strategic Initiatives; Manager, Trade & Investment Team Niagara Transport Canada	Feasibility study competed.
<p>Niagara Economic Development is actively involved in on-going conversation with both the Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority and the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Company on the possibility of new investment and the creation of port facilities in the Niagara region. There have already been significant investments in 2018 and 2019 at the Port Weller Dry Docks by Heddle Marine and the St. Lawrence Seaway. These investments will enhance Port Weller's ability to expand its operational capacity beyond its current capacity. In a presentation to both Planning and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council Heddle Marine outlined its proposal to become Canada's third official shipyard in a National shipbuilding Strategy. Heddle Marine had requested a Letter of Support from the Niagara Region, which Niagara Economic Development was in complete and full support.</p>				