



Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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REPORT #: CAO-25-015

COMMITTEE DATE: 2025-04-29

DUE IN COUNCIL: 2025-04-29

REPORT TO: Council

SUBJECT: Tourism Strategy – Referred Staff Review

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council **RECEIVE** Report CAO-25-015 Revised Tourism Strategy – Referred Staff Review
- 1.2 Council **APPROVE** revisions to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan presented in Appendix I in conjunction with the referred Staff Recommendation Report CAO-25-011 Staff Review – Tourism Strategy.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The revised Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan reflects the culmination of extensive consultation, strategy development, and subsequent refinements in response to public delegations received at the March 25, 2025, Council meeting. This report presents the updated version of the draft strategy, which incorporates staff-recommended amendments to ensure clarity, alignment with current governance structures, and practical implementation.

Key changes include the removal of redlining as requested, a refined vision statement to reflect the broad diversity of tourism offerings throughout the Town, and updates to implementation frameworks to establish clearer role accountability by identifying a single lead for each action. The revised strategy also clarifies the Town's role in special event hosting, emphasizing facilitation over delivery, and modifies terminology related to performance indicators to balance tourism interests with broader municipal considerations.

Notably, references to specific staff roles and committees (e.g., MAT Committee) have been generalized or removed to preserve flexibility, while affirming Council's ultimate authority and oversight.

This Strategy has been revised to reflect that successful destination management requires collaborative governance. The Town, DMO, and broader tourism sector must work in unison to deliver a fulsome tourism model. Formalizing this partnership will remove ambiguity, clarify responsibilities, and improve governance outcomes. Ongoing engagement with interested parties, through mechanisms such as community town halls, will ensure tourism growth remains aligned with community values.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, once finalized and branded as a Town document, will serve as a key guiding framework to support Niagara-on-the-Lake's long-term tourism development, economic vitality, and community well-being.

3. PURPOSE

This report provides information on revisions in response to delegations received in response to Report CAO-25-011 Staff Review – Tourism Strategy at the Council meeting on March 25, 2025.

4. BACKGROUND

The background on the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan was provided in Staff report CAO-25-011 Staff Review – Tourism Strategy. The report was referred to staff for revisions for the April 29, 2025 meeting. This report should be read in conjunction with CAO-25-011.

5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Following the receipt of delegations at the March 25, 2025 Council meeting, staff have further considered the requests. As a result, the following table address revisions to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (Appendix I):

Items Discussed	Revision Incorporated in Appendix I
Redlined Report Remove redlining from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy, Masterplan, and Action Plan.	Appendix 1 has track changes removed.
Vision Statement Niagara-on-the-Lake is an extraordinary wine country destination, known for its natural beauty and unrivalled cultural experiences.	Niagara-on-the-Lake is an extraordinary destination, known for its natural beauty, food and wine and unrivalled cultural experiences. By explicitly acknowledging the Town's vibrant culinary and agricultural sectors, the updated language promotes a more inclusive and competitive destination profile that aligns with evolving industry trends and visitor expectations. This change does not preclude the use of "Wine Country Destination" from marketing materials used by the DMO.
Special Event Hosting (e.g. Peach Festival)	Staff recommend that reference to Special Event Hosting be removed, as the coordination and delivery of special events are not core responsibilities of the Town, nor the DMO. Rather, the development and execution of such events should be initiated and led by qualified third-party organizations, with the Town and DMO playing a supportive or facilitative role, where appropriate.

Items Discussed	Revision Incorporated in Appendix I
<p>Lead Partner</p> <p>The Committee's final plan included both the Town and the DMO (Tourism NOTL) on action items and signified the lead using bold type.</p>	<p>Staff recommend that all partner organizations be removed from the lead column of the implementation framework, leaving only the designated lead. This change is intended to ensure clear accountability and ownership of each action. While the lead will be responsible for driving progress, ongoing collaboration with partner organizations remains essential to the successful implementation of the strategy. This approach reinforces the importance of collective effort while clarifying roles and responsibilities.</p>
<p>Town Staff Position</p> <p>1.1 Create a dedicated Economic Development and Tourism staff position to manage Tourism at the Town of NOTL, reporting to the CAO; whose role includes effective implementation of the subject NOTL Tourism Strategy, support tourism-related infrastructure projects, community and government relations, and liaise with the Council-appointed DMO</p> <p>1.9 Include the Economic Development and Tourism Officer in regular Town Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings to ensure tourism initiatives are communicated and needs of the tourism industry are considered</p>	<p>1.1 Maintain a tourism lead staff position at the Town of NOTL, reporting to the CAO; whose role includes effective implementation of the subject NOTL Tourism Strategy, to support tourism-related infrastructure projects, community and government relations, and liaise with the Council-appointed DMO.</p> <p>1.8 Ensure tourism related initiatives are communicated with the Town's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and needs of the tourism industry are considered</p> <p>Staff recommend that staff role be generalized (e.g., "Tourism Lead") rather than naming specific positions, recognizing that this is a strategic guiding document for the Town and that roles may evolve over time.</p>
<p>Indicator of Success (1.9 – 1.13)</p> <p>Request to delete indicator, as implying that "all municipal decisions are assessed through a tourism lens" would necessitate a broader discussion on Council's Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>Staff recommend narrowing the scope to tourism-related matters, ensuring decisions directly impacting the sector are thoughtfully considered. It reinforces the importance of evaluating the potential effect on the visitor experience and aligning investments with strategic tourism outcomes. The intention is to balance the needs of residents and visitors by thoughtfully incorporating</p>

All municipal decisions are assessed through a tourism lens, including the Town's share of MAT revenue investment moving forward	<p>the tourist perspective in relevant discussions, without overstating tourism's role in all aspects of governance.</p> <p>All tourism related municipal decisions will consider impact on tourism, including the Town's share of MAT revenue investment</p>
Items Discussed	Revision Incorporated in Appendix I
<p>Profitable Request to remove term "profitable" from Strategic Action 1.10.</p> <p>Develop an overall goal for use of the Town's share of MAT revenue: to ensure NOTL is a profitable and sustainable destination for visitors, businesses and residents</p>	<p>Staff recommend keeping "profitable" as the Municipal Act s.11(2) states that a lower-tier municipality is responsible for "Economic, social and environmental well-being of the municipality"</p> <p>1.9 (No Change)</p>
<p>MAT Committee Request that Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Committee remain included in Tourism Strategy.</p>	<p>Staff recommend references to the MAT Committee be removed from the implementation framework, recognizing that this document serves as a strategic guide for the Town. As such, the Town has been identified as the lead to reflect its central role in decision-making, with all final decisions resting with Council. This change ensures clear leadership and accountability, while reaffirming that ongoing collaboration with stakeholders remains vital to the effective execution of the strategy.</p>

6. STRATEGIC PLAN

The content of this report supports the following Strategic Plan initiatives:

Pillar

1. Vibrant & Complete Community

Priority

1.3 Strategies & Masterplans

Action

1.3 a) Strategies & Masterplans

Pillar

1. Vibrant & Complete Community

Priority

1.2 Economic Development & Community Partnerships

Action

1.2 b) Community Partnership

7. OPTIONS

- 7.1 Option 1: That Council approve the amendments to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan as outlined in Appendix 1 and direct staff to proceed with finalizing the document, applying Town branding, and collaborating with the DMO to define timelines, priorities, and budget. ***(Recommended)***
- 7.2 Option 2: That Council defer approval of the Tourism Strategy to allow for further consultation with stakeholders and additional revisions before final adoption. This action is not recommended as the strategy has already undergone extensive review and delaying approval may hinder implementation efforts. ***(Not Recommended)***
- 7.3 Option 3: That Council reject the proposed amendments and maintain the Tourism Strategy in its current form. This action is not recommended as the amendments provide greater clarity, align the strategy with current governance structures, and ensure an effective implementation framework. ***(Not Recommended)***

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications were detailed in Report CAO-25-011, including items related to Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Allocation.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications, as shared in Report CAO-25-011.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

Communication plans were detailed in Report CAO-25-011.

11. CONCLUSION

The updated Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan represents a forward-looking, community-informed, and adaptable roadmap for supporting sustainable tourism development. The Town-initiated amendments ensure the document reflects current realities, governance changes, and strategic alignment with the Town's organizational structure and objectives.

By approving these revisions, Council will solidify the Town's leadership role in guiding tourism policy, while enabling its Council-appointed Destination Marketing Organization to focus on marketing and promotional execution. The refined strategy supports transparent governance, local business growth, and an enriched visitor experience, anchored by shared priorities between residents, industry partners, and municipal leadership.

Council's endorsement of the revised strategy will enable its implementation phase to begin, ensuring that Niagara-on-the-Lake continues to thrive as a vibrant, balanced, and premier destination.

12. PREVIOUS REPORTS

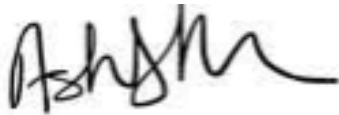
- CAO-23-011 - Staff Review – Tourism Strategy
- CS-23-030 - Municipal Accommodation Tax – Transfer Payment Agreement (September 26, 2023)
- CAO-23-021 - Tourism Strategy Committee Structure and Project Update (February 21, 2023)
- CAO-22-038 - Tourism Strategy Request for Proposal (December 20, 2022)

13. APPENDICES

- Appendix I – Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan

Respectfully submitted:

Prepared and Recommended by:



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Submitted by:



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