



## Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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**REPORT #:** CAO-25-026

**COMMITTEE DATE:** n/a  
**DUE IN COUNCIL:** 2025-06-24

**REPORT TO:** Council

**SUBJECT:** Niagara District Airport Master Plan Public Information Session Comments

### 1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council **RECEIVES** this report and **DIRECTS** Staff to submit comments to the Niagara District Airport CEO and Commission as outlined in this report.

### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Niagara District Airport is currently undertaking a 2025-2045 Airport Master Plan.
- Public Information Sessions were held on May 7, 2025 to gather input from the public on the process, opportunities, future of the airport, land use and compatibility considerations, and alignment with the airport's strategic plan.
- Comments on the materials have been requested by July 7, 2025. Comments will be considered through the Draft and Final Master Plan.
- The Public Information Session panels, attached as **Appendix I**, have been reviewed by staff and comments summarized within this report. Staff recommend that the comments, as well as any additional input from Council, be forwarded to the CEO of the Airport and the Commission to be forwarded the study team for consideration.

### 3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Council on the Public Information Session held on May 7, 2025, regarding the Airport Master Plan 2025-2045 (AMP). Comments on the material presented have been summarized throughout the report.

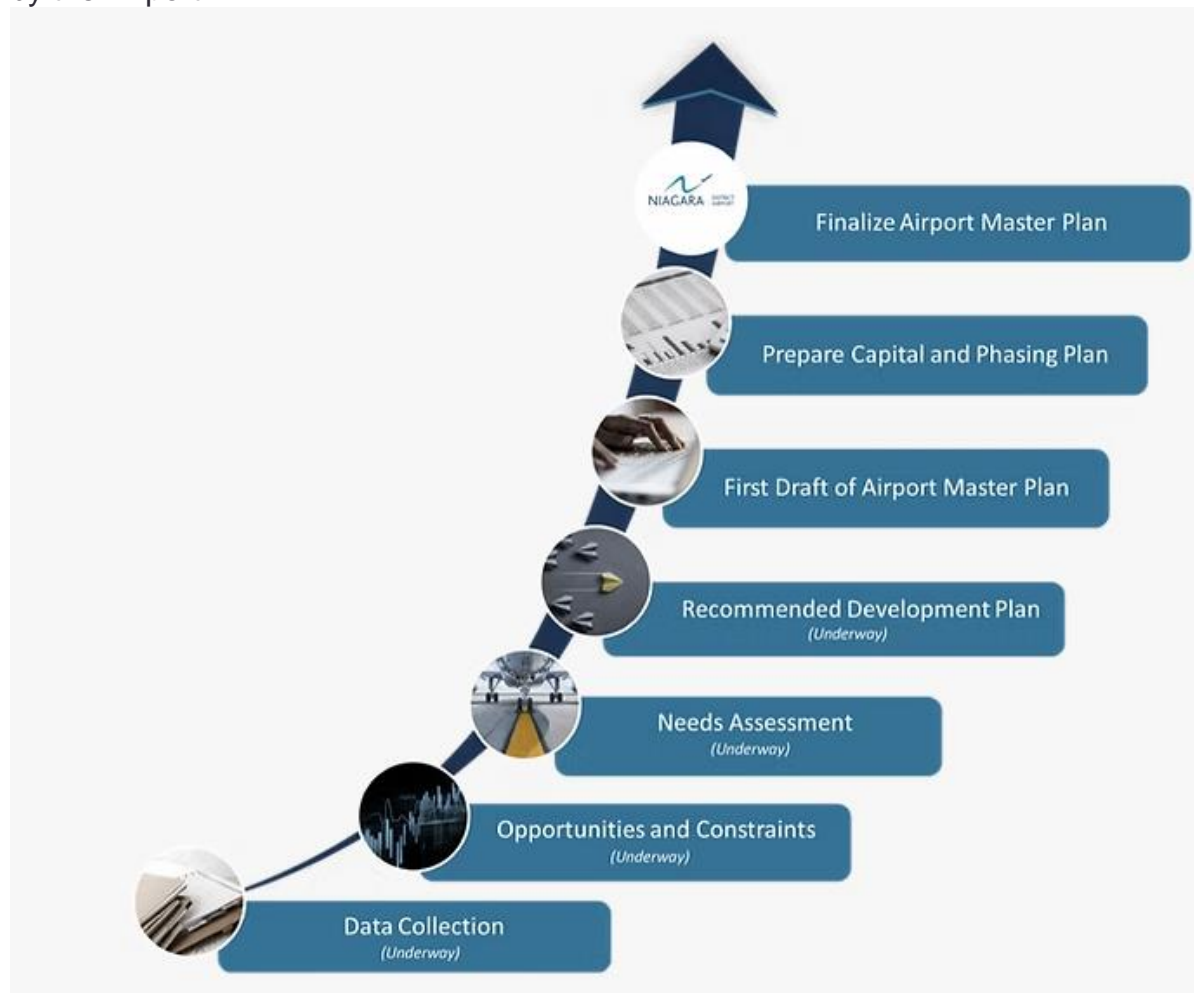
### 4. BACKGROUND

The Niagara District Airport is an important asset to the community, providing increased opportunities for connectivity. In recent years, the Airport has undergone a number of projects to plan and position itself for the future. Its Strategic Plan 2023-2026 set a plan for short term and long term goals to meet the vision of becoming an indispensable aviation gateway. The priorities set out a plan which included advocacy for funding, alignment with partners, enhancing analytic collection, and opportunities to improve the asset.

As part of the asset priority, the Airport initiated the Niagara District Airport 2025 - 2045 AMP. The intent of the AMP is to provide a development vision for the next 20 years, including a road map for improvement requirements and airside development, and assessing the

opportunities and constraints, to deliver an approach for infrastructure and facility improvements.

As identified through the Public Information Session, the following process has been initiated by the Airport:



Source: [Home | CYSN Airport Master Plan](#) website.

Throughout the process, the study will collect data to support identifying opportunities and constraints, as well as an activity forecast to anticipate future conditions and evaluation of options. A needs assessment is also underway to determine the infrastructure, facility, land and other requirements to assess the concepts for a phased approach to airport growth and development. The result is a recommended airport development plan, and a Land Use Plan is developed based on it.

The first draft of the Airport Master Plan is being prepared, followed by the 20-year capital and phasing plan to guide development priority and estimate costs required to undertake such development. With input from the engagement and interested parties, the Airport Master Plan final draft is completed.

## **5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS**

Staff attended the Airport Master Plan Public Information Session to better understand the proposed long-term direction of the Niagara District Airport, including timelines and the approval process. Based on the information shared to date, Staff have identified several potential opportunities and constraints that may be relevant for Council's consideration.

Should Council endorse this report, it is recommended that the comments outlined below be submitted to the Niagara District Airport team for consideration in the development of the draft and final Master Plan documents.

### **1. Potential Runway Closure**

The proposed closure of the crosswind runway has been identified in the Stage 1 and Stage 2 redevelopment scenarios. This closure may create opportunities to lessen or remove restrictions related to building heights, unlocking developable land within the Council-approved Glendale Secondary Plan. This potential is contingent on the outcome of the Airport Zoning Regulation (AZR) review and its impact on land use compatibility and restrictions.

### **2. Runway Expansion**

The proposed extension of the primary runway from 5,000 feet to 7,500 feet introduces a number of complexities. These include potential conflicts with existing municipal road infrastructure and the possible need for land acquisition or expropriation. Further technical and land use analysis will be needed to fully understand the implications. It should be noted that the AZR will be reviewed in both scenarios (runway closure and runway expansion) to ensure that the appropriate regulations are in place to protect for the long-term operation of the Airport.

### **3. Airside Development**

Proposed new airside development may present a possible opportunity to attract aerospace and aviation-support businesses to the area. However, clarification is required regarding the intended use and nature of the proposed buildings. Additional detail is expected as part of the upcoming Economic Impact Assessment.

### **4. Economic and Employment Growth**

The modernization of the airport may provide significant economic development opportunities, including direct and indirect job creation in aviation, logistics, hospitality, and supporting services. This aligns with regional objectives to foster innovation and employment in Niagara and would support growth in our local employment sectors.

### **5. Tourism and Destination Development**

The modernization and strategic growth of Niagara District Airport present a significant opportunity to support and enhance tourism across Niagara-on-the-Lake and the broader Region. Improved access to the community by air has the potential to attract higher-spending overnight visitors, support shoulder- and off-season visitation, and facilitate more seamless group and package travel experiences, all of which are key pillars of the Town's Tourism Strategy.

Specifically, the Airport Master Plan aligns with several goals in the Tourism Strategy, including:

- **Diversifying Access to Niagara-on-the-Lake:** Reducing sole reliance on vehicular travel along the congested QEW corridor, particularly during weekends and peak season, enhances the visitor experience and supports transportation resilience.
- **Attracting Value-Aligned Visitors:** Enhanced connectivity opens the door to target markets that align with Niagara-on-the-Lake's tourism brand, including cultural, culinary, and experiential travelers.
- **Supporting Sustainable Growth:** Encouraging air-based travel options can contribute to destination management objectives by dispersing visitor volumes and reducing road congestion, particularly in the historic Queen-Picton area.

As a gateway to the Region, a modernized airport could also serve as a welcome centre or connection point that reinforces NOTL's unique identity, supports local operators through coordinated travel itineraries, and enhances the overall visitor economy.

Staff recommend that final iteration of the Airport Master Plan be integrated with the Tourism Strategy to actively explore joint initiatives to leverage the airport as a key enabler of sustainable tourism development.

## 6. Connectivity

Enhanced air access through a modernized Niagara District Airport offers meaningful potential to improve connectivity and address long-standing transportation challenges for Niagara-on-the-Lake. At present, visitor and resident access to the community is heavily reliant on the QEW corridor from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), which is frequently congested and unpredictable, particularly on weekends and during peak tourism seasons.

The Airport Master Plan introduces an opportunity to integrate air travel into a broader multimodal transportation network that better connects Niagara-on-the-Lake to the rest of the region, province and beyond. This includes:

- **Transit-Supportive Development:** Improved airport infrastructure could complement future investments in local and regional transit services, including connections to GO Transit, Niagara Regional Transit, and inter-municipal shuttle systems.
- **Enhanced Travel Options:** For both visitors and residents, direct air access offers a more flexible and efficient option for reaching key destinations, including major urban centres, academic institutions, and cross-border locations.
- **Support for Sustainable Transportation Goals:** Reducing vehicle dependency aligns with the Town's environmental objectives and climate lens by encouraging the use of shared or alternative transportation modes.

Staff recommend continued advocacy for seamless integration between the airport and existing transit systems, the future transit hub, and collaboration with regional transportation agencies to ensure that future investments prioritize equitable and sustainable mobility.

## **7. Research, Innovation, and Strategic Investment**

While the Niagara District Airport is not envisioned as a cargo hub, it is important not to overlook the broader economic opportunities that can be enabled by enhanced aviation infrastructure. In particular, there is potential to attract corporate head offices, specialized firms, and anchor institutions that value regional access, connectivity, and prestige associated with proximity to a modernized airport.

There is also strong potential to explore synergies between airport development and the research and innovation ecosystem, particularly in areas such as:

- Aviation and aerospace technology;
- Advanced transportation systems and logistics;
- Green mobility and sustainable infrastructure.

Strategic partnerships with post-secondary institutions, research centres, and private-sector innovators should be actively pursued as part of future phases of engagement. These collaborations could position the airport precinct as a hub for innovation-led economic development, further enhancing the Town's competitiveness and capacity for job creation.

## **6. STRATEGIC PLAN**

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

### **Pillar**

1. Vibrant & Complete Community

### **Priority**

1.2 Economic Development & Community Partnerships

### **Action**

1.2 a) Economic Development

### **Pillar**

2. Good Governance

### **Priority**

2.3 Advocacy & Government Relations

### **Action**

2.3 a) Advocacy Strategies

### **Pillar**

2. Good Governance

### **Priority**

2.3 Advocacy & Government Relations

### **Action**

2.3 b) Government Relations

## 7. OPTIONS

- 7.1 **Option 1:** Support Staff's review of Airport Master Plan information, provide any additional input, and direct Staff to submit comments to Niagara District Airport on behalf of the Town. (**Recommended**)
- 7.2 **Option 2:** Receive this report only. Staff are not directed to send comments. (Not Recommended)

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report has no immediate financial implications; however, Staff will consider the long-term financial implications of the recommendations of the Airport Master Plan, the Province's Feasibility Study funding announcement, and other funding or grant opportunities.

Of note, the Niagara District Airport is encouraged by the recent provincial budget, which highlights "Supporting Destination Niagara" and includes a study to improve air access to the region. The study will assess opportunities and demand for air travel to Niagara, and examine how existing infrastructure, including airports, can be utilized.

## 9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications associated with this report. Town Staff will continue to monitor the future implementation with regard to environmental impacts.

## 10. COMMUNICATIONS

There is no notification requirement associated with this report. Following the Council's receipt of this report, a letter will be prepared with the Town's comments to the Airport. The final letter will be provided to Council in a future information package.

## 11. CONCLUSION

The Airport Master Plan presents a range of opportunities and constraints that could significantly impact Niagara-on-the-Lake's economic development, tourism growth, transportation network, and land use planning. While certain elements, such as runway expansion and airside development, require further clarification, the overall direction aligns with several of the Town's strategic priorities and emerging opportunities in innovation and connectivity.

Staff recommend that Council endorse the submission of the comments outlined in this report to the Niagara District Airport team, ensuring that the Town's perspective is incorporated into the draft and final versions of the Master Plan.

Town Staff appreciate the opportunity to review the information, participation in the engagement, and provide this summary of comments. The Town recognizes the Airport as an important asset in the community and look forward to ongoing opportunities to contribute to this project.

## **12. PREVIOUS REPORTS**

N/A

## **13. APPENDICES**

- Appendix I – Public Information Session Information

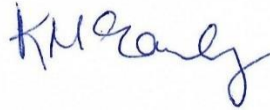
Respectfully submitted:

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**Recommended and Submitted by:**



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