

The Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Information Report to Council

SUBJECT: Climate Change Initiatives: Summary Report
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on the meaningful progress the Town has made in advancing its climate objectives and sustainability measures.

As climate change continues to threaten infrastructure, the environment, the economy, and daily life, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake faces added vulnerability due to its agricultural prominence. In response, climate action has been embedded in the Town's core planning documents and aligned with Council's strategic priorities. The Strategic Plan incorporates an environmental stewardship lens across all municipal activities, while the Climate Change Adaptation Plan outlines 27 key actions to guide progress. The establishment of a Climate Change Coordinator role further demonstrates the Town's long-term commitment and supports integrated, cross-departmental collaboration toward a unified climate strategy.

Since the declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2020, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has advanced climate action across the Operations Department. These efforts align with Council's strategic priorities and demonstrate a long-term commitment to sustainability and community resilience. Key initiatives have included the continued restoration of the Heritage Trail, the planting of over 400 trees, and the implementation of the Tree Inventory and Maintenance Program.

Operational improvements in the Roads Division featured enhancements to tree management tools, roadside vegetation maintenance through the Green Machine Program, and optimized winter maintenance using GPS technology. The Engineering Division upgraded streetlights along Niagara Stone Road to improve energy efficiency, while the Cemetery Division enhanced irrigation systems and expanded urban forestry and landscape plantings.

Environmental Services focused on infrastructure resilience and water resource management through the Water Loss Program, stormwater facility maintenance, and invasive species control in municipal drains. A sanitary sewer infiltration study was completed alongside a rehabilitation plan for key drainage areas. In Parks, achievements included the Adopt-A-Park

Program, collaboration on the Two Billion Trees initiative, expanded community gardens, and the introduction of the Witness Tree Program. The division also led beautification efforts across over 400 plant beds and displays, earning national recognition at the Communities in Bloom Conference. Together, these initiatives highlight the Town's proactive and integrated response to climate challenges and its ongoing pursuit of a more sustainable future.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Strategic Plan embeds an environmental stewardship lens into all municipal operations, providing the foundation for its current climate change initiatives. Central to these efforts are the ongoing development of the Natural Asset Management Plan and Invasive Species Management Plan, along with the implementation of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan to enhance community resilience. Additional priorities include advancing coastal protection, expanding green infrastructure, and encouraging sustainable development. These efforts require strong cross-departmental coordination and are supported by newly developed tools such as new infographic resources for sustainable development applications, ongoing energy reporting for greenhouse gas tracking, a climate adaptation action database, and an updated climate-resilient tree species list.

Progress continues on the Town's Electric Fleet Strategy, which targets the electrification of 10% of municipal vehicles, with three new electric vehicles expected to be added by year-end. The Town is also active in pursuing funding opportunities, having submitted three climate-related grant applications in the past few months. One of which was awarded \$2,500 for the Heritage Trail Restoration, with two others pending approval, representing a combined total value of \$220,300.

Collaborative initiatives remain a priority, including a shared Corporate Climate Action Plan with Niagara Region and six other municipalities, watershed planning with the NPCA for erosion mitigation, urban forestry case studies with Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, coastal data collection, and the creation of a natural asset inventory. Public engagement has also played a key role, with the Town supporting events, campaigns, and working groups such as the Niagara Invasive Species Strategy and the Phragmites Collaborative. Ongoing participation in committees, networks, and webinars, including a developing partnership with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, continues to foster knowledge-sharing and strengthen regional climate leadership.

NEXT STEP / CONCLUSION

Looking ahead, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is advancing several key climate action initiatives. The Natural Asset Management Plan and Invasive Species Management Plan remain in development and will continue to guide local adaptation efforts. Additional plans, prioritized by anticipated start dates, include a Stormwater Management Plan, identified as an action item in the Climate Change Adaptation Plan and potentially integrated into the Master Servicing Plan, an Urban Forestry Management Plan, and a Flood Preparedness and Evacuation Plan. To embed climate considerations across all operations, the Town is reviewing relevant by-laws and policies, including the Official Plan, engineering standards, tree protection measures, and floodplain mapping. Even small operational changes, such as incorporating emissions-conscious language into hybrid work guidelines, reflect a broader commitment to climate integration.

To provide structure and direction, several new policies are being proposed. These include a Climate Action and Response Policy, infrastructure design standards that incorporate climate

projections, invasive species, net-zero targets, and an ecological offsetting policy. The Town is also exploring future projects such as electric vehicle charging infrastructure and fleet electrification, building retrofits, targeted tree planting in low-canopy areas, low-impact development features like rain gardens and permeable pavement, active transportation enhancements, and invasive species management. These projects will be shaped by available funding, staff capacity, and community involvement. Public engagement remains a vital part of this work, supported through events like species identification days, environmental clean-ups, art displays, stargazing nights, ecological walks, and community plantings. These efforts will be amplified through social media campaigns aligned with global environmental observances, in collaboration with the Communications team, to strengthen awareness and participation.

In summary, this report outlines the progress the Town has made in advancing its climate objectives, with a continued focus on integration, collaboration, and long-term resilience. Climate action is now embedded across municipal operations, supported by coordinated efforts among departments and strengthened through partnerships with regional and community stakeholders.