



CAO PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES & DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CAO Information

Name: Nick Ruller

Date Completed: February 6, 2026

Objectives

Objective	Key Activities	Linkages	Timelines	Measures/ Targets
1. Develop a high-performing organizational culture committed to continuous improvement.	Review and reorganize the organizational structure to support the completion of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan.	Optimize Organizational Excellence	Ongoing	Assess the current workplace culture and implement strategies to advance and improve it.
	Filling of vacant positions and ceasing use of temporary assignments.		2026 – Q1	
	Development of comprehensive multi-year corporate and divisional work plans to action strategic initiatives, ensure compliance with legislation and relevant standards for municipalities, and drive transformation that better utilizes existing physical and financial resources.		2026 – Q1	
	Develop a performance management and compensation framework tied to the comprehensive work plans.		2026 – Q2	
	Address the outcomes of the job market, salary, and wage competitiveness review, and monitor them in relation to recruitment and retention.		2026 – Q1	
	Develop a comprehensive succession plan beginning with the senior leadership team, and cascading throughout the broader corporate leadership team.		2026 – Q2	
	Provide organization-wide customer service training in 2026 to provide foundational customer service excellence skills at all levels of the organization.		2026 – Q2	
	Improve Council-Staff relations by increasing opportunities for engagement, communication, and relationship building.		2026 – Q2	
2. Demonstrate commitment to strong fiscal management.	Enhance the budget process by establishing a Budget Office to provide year-round budget oversight and align with new legislation.	Good Governance	Ongoing	Optimize financial management practices by reviewing and enhancing current systems for alignment and report on the Town's overall financial health.
	Build organizational capacity to understand, interpret, and manage budget information across all departments, including developing tools and resources to enhance Council and community understanding of the budget process.		2026 – Q2	
	Complete a Planning Application Fee and Building Fee review and a Development Charge and Community Benefits Charge study.		2026 – Q1	
	Develop and implement a comprehensive Asset Management Plan, ensuring recommendations are incorporated into long-term capital budget planning.		2026 – Q2	

Objective	Key Activities	Linkages	Timelines	Measures/ Targets
3. Develop long-term strategies and plans to prepare for the future.	Develop a new Official Plan, an expanded Heritage Conservation District Plan, a Recreation Master Plan, and a Transportation Master Plan.	Vibrant & Complete Community	2026 – Q3	Drive forward-looking planning by analyzing trends, engaging stakeholders, and translating insights into actionable, strategic initiatives and plans for the organization’s long-term success, ensuring the application of local context.
	Develop a plan for the redevelopment of the 176 Wellington Street property to be presented to Council.		2026 – Q1	
	Develop an Affordable Housing Plan for presentation to Council that identifies actionable municipal tools, financial incentives, and partnership frameworks to increase attainable and affordable housing supply.		2026 – Q2	
	Explore opportunities to reduce reliance on external consultants for updating existing plans and studies.		2026 – Q2	
4. Enhance government relations and foster strategic partnerships to advance organizational priorities and community outcomes.	Develop and maintain a list of government relations issues to advocate on behalf of the Town with the Federal & Provincial governments.	Good Governance	2026 – Q1	Proactively build and maintain relationships with government agencies, community organizations, and key stakeholders to advance strategic plan initiatives, secure financial support, and create collaborative opportunities.
	Complete partnership agreements for Council approval with NOTL Tourism, the NOTL Museum, Niagara District Airport, the Pumphouse, and Niagara Regional Native Centre.		2026 – Q2	
	Develop a comprehensive plan for the re-opening of Niagara Shores Park, including potential opportunities for linking lands associated with the Region's lagoons and DND lands.		2026 – Q2	
5. Proactively address emerging issues and ensure timely, effective communication with Council to support informed decision-making and organizational responsiveness.	Monitor emerging urban and rural road safety issues and provide Council with data-driven recommendations based on speed-minder data, collision statistics, and academic research.	Enrich Community Assets, Environment, & Infrastructure	Ongoing	Anticipates and analyzes emerging issues, communicating effectively with Council while exercising political acuity to guide decision-making and protect the Town’s interests.
	Provide timely proactive correspondence to Council on stormwater-related issues, including policy/project changes, risks and potential mitigation strategies.		Ongoing	
	Prioritize the completion of the Special Events review and ensure the timely implementation of Council-approved recommendations.		2026 – Q1	

Key Objectives Comments

Comment here:

Development Plan

Objective	Key Development Actions	Competency Expectations & Indicators
1. Strengthen the ability to provide strategic advice to Council and lead municipal policy initiatives. Focus Area: Strategic Leadership & Governance	Complete the Osgoode Certificate in Municipal Law and Governance (https://osgoodepd.ca/professional-development/certificates/municipal-law-and-governance/).	Completion of Osgoode certificate by Q2 2026; enhanced strategic policy leadership; applied learning evident in major initiatives.
	Participate in AMO, ROMA, and OMAA conferences, as well as leadership development sessions.	
	Engage in peer learning and informal networking with local area CAOs to exchange governance and management practices.	
2. Expand expertise in housing policy, land use planning, and governance frameworks to support the Affordable Housing Plan. Focus Area: Affordable & Sustainable Community Development	Apply Osgoode course learnings on planning law, by-law authority, and development frameworks.	Affordable Housing Plan adopted with actionable tools; improved internal processes and policy compliance.
	Attend ROMA and AMO housing policy sessions to enhance intergovernmental understanding.	
	Lead internal workshops integrating legal and governance concepts into housing strategy design.	
3. Foster a high-performance culture and strengthen leadership capacity across departments. Focus Area: Organizational Culture & Talent Leadership	Undertake executive coaching on transformational leadership and organizational culture.	Improved staff engagement scores; leadership succession plan in place; innovation pilot completed successfully.
	Participate in OMAA and AMO workshops on leadership, retention, and workforce engagement.	
	Lead an innovation pilot project applying leadership and coaching principles.	
4. Enhance collaboration and advocacy with regional, provincial, and federal partners. Focus Area: Intergovernmental Relations & Partnerships	Participate in ROMA and AMO advocacy sessions to strengthen intergovernmental relationships.	New or renewed partnerships established; increased external funding or support; positive Council assessment of advocacy results.
	Lead preparation of provincial advocacy submissions for housing and infrastructure funding.	
	Build informal peer networks with area CAOs to explore joint advocacy opportunities.	
5. Maintain resilience, adaptability, and effective communication under political and operational pressures. Focus Area: Personal Leadership & Communication	Continue executive coaching (focus: political acuity, communication, resilience).	Positive feedback, enhanced Council and staff communication, and sustained high performance.
	Conduct 360° feedback process mid-year and year-end.	
	Participate in OMAA peer forums and informal CAO networking opportunities across Niagara to share best practices.	

Development Plan Comments

Learning Commitment: Approximately 40 hours of structured and informal professional development annually.

Budget Allocation: Approximately \$5,000 for training, certification, coaching, and travel. Funded through the savings of the recent restructuring.

Review: Mid-year check-in with Lord Mayor (Q2 2026) and incorporated into the annual evaluation as part of CAO performance review.

Signatures

Nick Ruller
CAO, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Date: February 6, 2026

Gary Zalepa
Lord Mayor, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Date: February 6, 2026