

A Message from Councillor Sandra O'Connor

From: Sandra O'Connor (sandra-oconnor-notl.gmail.com@17b0e2.clients.bmsend.com)

To: stockerfrances@yahoo.ca

Date: Friday, February 20, 2026 at 05:21 p.m. EST



A Message From
Councillor Sandra O'Connor
sandra.oconnor@notl.com 289-868-9310
sandraoconnor.ca

[View this email in your browser](#)

You are receiving this email because of your relationship with Councillor Sandra O'Connor.
If you do not wish to receive any more emails, you can [unsubscribe here](#).

Dear Frances,

ST. DAVID'S STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

I'm going to start with some good news. Niagara-on-the-Lake Town Council has [purchased nine acres of land](#) on the northern side of the Sandalwood storm pond in St. David's. The purpose of this acquisition is to construct a new stormwater management facility that will increase both current and future capacity to safely capture rainfall and runoff in the area, potentially as early as next year.

Following the significant flooding experienced in 2024, this investment represents an important and tangible step toward strengthening flood prevention infrastructure. The unexpected availability of such a substantial parcel of land creates an opportunity not only to improve stormwater management capacity, but also to reassure residents that proactive measures are being taken to reduce future risk. The Town has committed to consulting with the community through a visioning exercise, and an Environmental Assessment will be conducted to determine the most effective and responsible approach.

While flood mitigation remains the primary objective, this project also offers an important opportunity to embed climate-conscious and environmentally responsible design into the plan. The facility itself could be built to [LEED standards](#), supporting reduced carbon emissions, improved energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction. Surrounding lands could be landscaped with native species and pollinator-friendly plantings, incorporating rain gardens and other green infrastructure features that enhance biodiversity and reduce environmental impact. Because the Town rarely adds new buildings to its inventory, this project presents a rare chance to create a showcase municipal facility that aligns fully with NOTL's [Climate Change Adaptation Plan](#) and long-term sustainability goals.

Vision Statement

“Niagara-on-the-Lake will demonstrate leadership and innovation to protect the community’s natural beauty, charm and heritage against the impacts of climate change today and into the future.”

Goals

Six goals were developed by the Project Team and Environmental Advisory Committee. The overarching goals include the following:

-  **Integrate Climate Change into Plans, Policies, By-Laws and Standards**
-  **Urban Forest Resiliency**
-  **Reduce Flooding Risks**
-  **Incorporate Climate Change in Design and Construction**
-  **Minimize Health and Safety Risks to Community Members**
-  **Support Public Awareness and Education**

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Council has also [recently adopted](#) its provincially mandated Asset Management Plan (AMP). The scope of the Town’s infrastructure is significant: nearly 23,000 individual assets, including buildings, roads, vehicles, and equipment, with a total replacement value exceeding \$1 billion. Of that amount, approximately \$508 million is invested in roads alone (See [workshop presentation slide #14](#)).

Currently, about two-thirds of these assets are rated in “good” or “very good” condition. However, asset condition is not static; it depends heavily on consistent maintenance, timely rehabilitation, and planned replacement. The AMP indicates that to maintain assets at an optimal level over time, the Town would need to invest an average of \$22.3 million annually. Present funding levels are approximately \$9.2 million per year. This represents a substantial and ongoing funding gap. As Director of Finance Kyle Freeborn explained during the recent [Council Workshop](#), the AMP does not prescribe a single solution but instead provides a structured framework to support informed strategic decision-making as future budgets and service levels are evaluated.

In practical terms, Council will face difficult choices. Closing the funding gap through increased investment would place pressure on taxes, rates, or debt levels. Maintaining current funding levels, however, increases the risk of asset deterioration, service disruptions, and higher long-term costs. The new asset database will allow staff to model various funding and service scenarios, which will help Council weigh trade-offs more clearly.

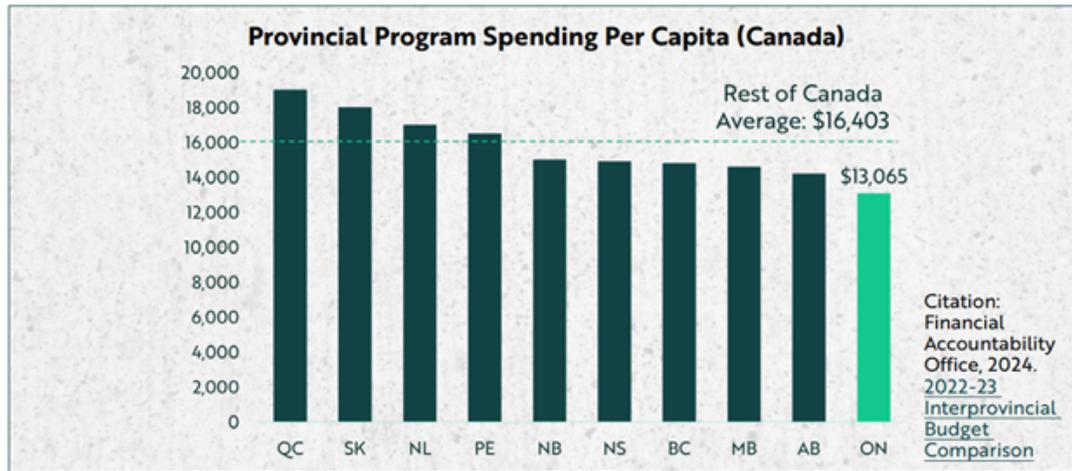
Importantly, this funding challenge is not unique to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Municipalities across Ontario and Canada face similar infrastructure deficits. Federal and provincial funding contributions have been reduced and have not kept pace with sharply rising construction and infrastructure costs in recent years. As a result, municipalities are carrying a growing share of infrastructure responsibility, even as they remain primarily reliant on property taxes as their core revenue source.

Figure 2: Municipal funding for infrastructure continues to increase in 2023



Source: AMO analysis of municipal Financial Information Returns, 2018 to 2023. The number of reporting municipalities in 2023 was 277. All figures in billions of dollars.

Source: [AMO 2026 Pre-budget Submission](#)



Source: [AMO 2025 Pre-budget Submission](#)

Over the coming year, Council will be evaluating service levels and financial strategies carefully. There are no perfect solutions, particularly without stronger and more predictable funding commitments from higher levels of government. Nevertheless, the AMP provides a clearer understanding of the Town's long-term obligations, and better tools for responsible planning.

Regarding the natural assets in the community, according to our Strategic Plan update, the development of a Natural Assets Plan is only 25% complete. This needs to be a priority. We need to inventory the replacement cost value of natural assets, such as street trees and shrubs, forests, wetlands, meadows, and watercourses, and consider more green solutions to infrastructure.

NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

My final item is also related to municipal-provincial relations. The [Province has proposed](#) consolidating Ontario's 36 conservation authorities into seven larger entities. Under this plan, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) would merge with the Halton and Peel conservation authorities, serving approximately two million people across 28 municipalities.

The NPCA was established in 1959 by Niagara municipalities and is rooted in local watershed knowledge and regional expertise. Participating municipalities currently fund approximately 52% of its operating costs, while the province contributes about 0.5%. The authority manages 43 conservation areas held in public trust and plays a vital role in protecting natural water resources, ecosystems, and biodiversity throughout the Peninsula. Niagara-on-the-Lake continues to rely on the NPCA's technical expertise in managing watershed health and environmental protection within Town boundaries. Its locally focused governance structure ensures that board members represent Peninsula communities and understand regional priorities. Consolidation into a larger, multi-regional authority will automatically reduce that local focus.

At January's Council meeting, I introduced a [motion](#) endorsing the NPCA's opposition to the proposed consolidation. The motion was seconded by Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens and passed unanimously. It will be forwarded to the province, joining similar resolutions from many municipalities, individuals, and organizations across Ontario. We

hope that the strength and breadth of community and municipal opposition will influence the province to reconsider its proposal.

Thank you for your attention,

Sandra O'Connor
Niagara-on-the-Lake Town Councillor

RESPECT THE PAST - PLAN FOR THE FUTURE - ATTEND TO THE PRESENT

If this email was forwarded to you, and you'd like to receive your own copy, please contact me at sandra.oconnor@notl.com.

This message was sent to stockerfrances@yahoo.ca by sandra-oconnor-notl.gmail.com@17B0E2.clients.bmsend.com
225 Ricardo St. #206, Ontario, L0S 1J0, Canada Niagara-on-the-Lake Ontario Canada

 [Unsubscribe](#) | [Manage Subscription](#)

