



NEWS RELEASE

Niagara-on-the-Lake Voices Community Priorities at 2025 AMO Conference

For Immediate Release

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Niagara-on-the-Lake Councillors and Staff participated in the annual Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) Conference, held from August 17 to 20 in Ottawa, Ontario. AMO provides municipalities with a platform to bring forward local issues, advocate for provincial support, and collaborate directly with ministries on solutions that shape communities.

This year, Town representatives participated in eight delegations, focused on critical priorities such as infrastructure, transportation, on-farm diversification, job creation, reconciliation, and heritage preservation. Participants included:

- Erwin Wiens, Deputy Lord Mayor/Councillor
- Maria Mavridis, Councillor
- Andrew Niven, Councillor
- Nick Ruller, Chief Administrative Officer
- Kirsten McCauley, Director of Community and Development Services
- Ashleigh Myers, Government Relations, Economic Development, and Tourism Officer

Delegation Highlights

Irrigation and On-Farm Diversification – Minister Jones, Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agri-Business

Council and Staff thanked the Province for its \$41 million investment in Niagara's irrigation infrastructure, a critical step to strengthen farm resilience and food security. The delegation also urged a review of the 2016 Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas to allow responsible diversification through agritourism, value-added processing, and local retail, while protecting green spaces. By balancing innovation with stewardship, Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Province can ensure the long-term success of Ontario's farming communities.

Plan, Build, and Protect – Minister Surma, Ministry of Infrastructure

The Town met with Minister Surma to discuss how Niagara-on-the-Lake can better plan, build, and protect the infrastructure that sustains the community. The delegation highlighted the need for provincial tools and resources to support investments in roads, water systems, and servicing studies; foundations that are essential to housing and economic growth. With stronger planning capacity and support for climate adaptation, Niagara-on-the-Lake can grow responsibly and sustainably.

Investing in Rural Transit and Trails – Parliamentary Assistant Bob Bailey, Ministry of Rural Affairs

Niagara-on-the-Lake emphasized the need for investment in rural transit and active transportation. A proposed Glendale Transit Hub would connect workers with jobs and provide sustainable travel options for visitors, while expanding multi-use trails like the Heritage Trail, and would improve mobility, reduce congestion, and support rural tourism. Dedicated funding for feasibility studies and early-stage planning would ensure more projects roll out, enhancing both quality of life and economic opportunity.

Tourism Economy – Minister Cho, Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Gaming



Council and Staff highlighted Niagara-on-the-Lake's role as a cornerstone of Ontario's tourism economy, with world-class wineries, the Shaw Festival, and vibrant heritage districts. The delegation welcomed alignment with the Province's "Destination Niagara" initiative and called for investments in trails and the Glendale Transit Hub to enhance visitor experiences and reduce congestion. Strengthening tourism infrastructure will promote sustainable growth while ensuring the Town remains a vibrant, inclusive community.

Interprovincial Trade Barriers – Minister Fedeli, Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation & Trade

The Town expressed appreciation for progress in reducing interprovincial trade barriers for Ontario wines, which is helping local wineries expand into new markets and build long-term sustainability. At the same time, the delegation urged further advocacy for a minimum shelf space allocation for Canadian wines in provincial liquor stores and simple, transparent direct-to-consumer frameworks that support producers. These measures will help Niagara-on-the-Lake strengthen Ontario's competitiveness while keeping growth sustainable and inclusive.

Advocating for Niagara College – Minister Quinn, Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence & Security

Town representatives joined with the City of Welland to advocate for Niagara College, a cornerstone of education, skills training, and workforce development. The delegation called for increased provincial investment to expand programs that address workforce shortages, strengthen program delivery, and support applied research that fuels innovation and partnerships with local businesses. These investments will ensure Niagara College continues to prepare career-ready graduates and drive Ontario's long-term economic growth.

Advancing Reconciliation – Minister Rickford, Ministry of Indigenous Affairs & First Nations Economic Reconciliation

Niagara-on-the-Lake reaffirmed its commitment to building strong relationships with Indigenous partners, including the Niagara Region Native Centre. The delegation emphasized the need for provincial guidance, training, and frameworks to help municipalities fulfill their duty to consult in culturally appropriate and consistent ways.

Heritage Preservation – Minister McGregor, Ministry of Citizenship & Multiculturalism

Council and Staff discussed the importance of heritage preservation in Niagara-on-the-Lake, home to historic buildings and cultural landscapes that are central to its identity, economy, and tourism sector. The delegation raised the need for support related to the 2027 heritage designation deadline to allow meaningful preservation with proper consultation and alignment with provincial goals. Support for *Ontario Heritage Act* reforms that simplify designation processes was also emphasized.

Building on Recent Successes

Niagara-on-the-Lake's participation in AMO and other municipal conferences demonstrates the importance of direct dialogue with provincial and federal partners.

Advocacy efforts in recent years have delivered significant results, including:

- \$41 million in Provincial funding for irrigation infrastructure
- The addition of feasibility study funding to the Province's Rural Affairs funding stream
- \$35 million in Provincial funding for the Shaw Festival's Royal George Theatre
- \$2 million in Provincial funding for Niagara District Airport feasibility studies
- \$1.8 million in Federal funding for irrigation infrastructure
- Extension of the Municipal Heritage Register deadline to 2027
- Recruitment of a Nurse Practitioner to serve Niagara-on-the-Lake residents



These achievements highlight how strong municipal advocacy delivers results. By engaging directly with decision-makers, Niagara-on-the-Lake continues to secure critical investments and policy changes that strengthen the community, protect its heritage, and support long-term growth and prosperity.

Quotes

“The AMO Conference provides Niagara-on-the-Lake with a unique chance to bring our community’s priorities directly to provincial leaders. We truly appreciate the continued openness of Ministers, Parliamentary Assistants, and Ministry teams who took the time to hear our perspectives and engage in meaningful discussions on the issues that matter most to our residents.” - **Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens**

“The 2025 AMO Conference was an invaluable opportunity to connect with provincial leaders, share local priorities, and collaborate with municipalities across Ontario. The insights and relationships we gained will directly support our strategic goals and help us deliver better outcomes for Niagara-on-the-Lake.” - **CAO Nick Ruller**

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