



## NEWS RELEASE

# Niagara-on-the-Lake Celebrates a Year of Community Progress and Innovation in 2025

For Immediate Release

January 15, 2026

The Town is proud to celebrate a successful and impactful year of progress, community engagement, and strategic growth. Throughout 2025, Council and Staff advanced initiatives that support a connected and resilient community. This year-in-review highlights key accomplishments aligned with [Council's 2022–2027 Strategic Plan](#) pillars.

### **Vibrant & Complete Community**

In 2025, Niagara-on-the-Lake continued to foster a vibrant and inclusive community through events, programs, and partnerships that brought residents together and celebrated local identity.

The Niagara District Court House experienced a historic visitor season, welcoming tens of thousands of visitors and reinforcing the Town's role as a cultural and heritage destination. Seasonal and signature events, including summer community programming, the Senior Citizens' Strawberry Social, the Tree Lighting Event, the Tractor Parade, and the Christmas Parade, continued to draw strong participation and support for local businesses.

The Town welcomed several new businesses throughout the year, contributing to economic vitality, local employment, and the continued growth of vibrant commercial areas across the community.

The Town also invested in community well-being through recreation programming, expanded cultural opportunities, and continued support for local organizations through the 2025 Discretionary Grant Program, helping community groups deliver services and events that enhance quality of life.

### **Good Governance**

Council and Staff made steady progress advancing governance priorities and strengthening long-term planning throughout the year. By late 2025, more than 70% of



Strategic Plan initiatives were complete, on target, or exceeding expectations, reflecting consistent progress across all focus areas.

Key planning milestones included the adoption of the Glendale Secondary Plan, advancing growth management and infrastructure coordination in one of the Town's most dynamic areas. Heritage preservation remained a priority, with work on the proposed expansion of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District supporting the protection of historic neighbourhoods. Niagara-on-the-Lake's heritage was recognized at the April event "Celebrating NOTL's Heritage", which acknowledged 17 properties designated from 2019 to 2025.

The Town also advanced work on its Official Plan Update, including public engagement sessions, draft plan development, and opportunities for community input, to ensure future growth reflects local values, sustainability, and responsible land use.

Community engagement remained central to major projects, including the wrap-up of public consultation for the Former Hospital Site (176 Wellington Street) in December, with engagement findings presented to Council. The Town also continued work on its Asset Management Plan, supported by community engagement held during the summer months.

The Town was once again recognized for financial transparency and accountability, earning its 12th consecutive Canadian Award for Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association. Council approved the 2025 Operating and Capital Budgets, balancing fiscal responsibility with continued investment in infrastructure, emergency services, parks, facilities, and community programs.

### **Enrich Community Assets, Environment, & Infrastructure**

Investments in infrastructure, accessibility, and environmental stewardship supported Niagara-on-the-Lake's long-term resilience in 2025.

Council endorsed the Parks and Recreation Masterplan, providing a long-term framework to guide future investments, programming, and enhancements to parks and recreational facilities across the community.

The Town secured provincial funding for irrigation infrastructure improvements, supporting agricultural sustainability and strengthening the local agri-food sector. Accessibility enhancements were achieved through the StopGap Ramp Program, which expanded barrier-free access to nine local businesses and reinforced the Town's commitment to inclusion.



Heritage and environmental stewardship were celebrated throughout the year. The restoration and unveiling of historic ordinance boundary stones preserved local history, while natural heritage gained provincial recognition when a nearly 400-year-old White Oak was named the 2025 Ontario Tree Pageant Winner, highlighting the importance of protecting significant natural assets.

Ongoing investments in roads, parks, facilities, and waterfront infrastructure further supported safe, functional, and welcoming public spaces for residents and visitors alike.

### **Optimize Organizational Excellence**

2025 marked a year of organizational evolution and strengthened leadership. In July, the Town welcomed Nick Ruller as Chief Administrative Officer, bringing extensive municipal experience and a strong focus on collaboration, service excellence, and organizational effectiveness. Under this leadership, the Town has already advanced initiatives to modernize internal processes and support Staff in delivering high-quality services.

The Town launched work on a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software system to improve service delivery, streamline internal workflows, and enhance how residents interact with municipal services. This system will be implemented by the end of Q2 2026.

In November 2025, a new organizational structure was implemented to improve alignment, clarify roles, and enhance service delivery across five departments. This restructuring positions the organization to better respond to community needs and Council priorities.

Progress also continued on a consultant-led Special Events Review, supporting a comprehensive evaluation of event processes, community impacts, and opportunities for improvement.

Throughout the year, Council and Staff actively represented Niagara-on-the-Lake at regional and provincial forums, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conferences. These advocacy efforts strengthened partnerships, advanced local priorities, and ensured the Town's voice was heard on matters impacting residents and municipalities across Ontario.

### **Looking Ahead**

As we enter 2026, the Town remains committed to building on this momentum. Residents can look forward to continued community engagement opportunities,



strategic planning milestones, and investments that enrich the quality of life for all who live, work, and visit our beautiful community.

View the [Town's Strategic Plan Dashboard](#) to check in on the status of action items and goals.

#### **Quotes:**

“The progress made in 2025 reflects Council’s commitment to the priorities set out in the 2022–2027 Strategic Plan. From community well-being and heritage preservation to long-term planning, Council and Staff worked together to advance initiatives that strengthen Niagara-on-the-Lake today while laying the groundwork for the future.” – **Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa**

“This past year highlighted the importance of collaboration and a continued focus on improvement. Through organizational modernization, thoughtful planning, and a commitment to service excellence, Staff made meaningful progress in delivering the programs, infrastructure, and services our community relies on.” – **CAO Nick Ruller**

*Follow the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) for immediate alerts.*

#### **Media Contact:**

**Marah Minor, Corporate Communications Lead**  
905-468-3266 | [communications@notl.com](mailto:communications@notl.com)