



NEWS RELEASE

Niagara-on-the-Lake Attends Annual AMO Conference

For Immediate Release

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This week, Town representatives were in Ottawa attending the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference, an important opportunity to advocate for Niagara-on-the-Lake's priorities, connect directly with provincial ministries, and advance conversations on issues that matter to our community.

This year, Town representatives participated in various provincial delegations, a workshop focused on flood mitigation and emergency preparedness, and a plenary panel on protecting democracy and local governance. Through these opportunities, the Town continued to advocate for provincial partnership, funding and solutions to support Niagara-on-the-Lake's current and future needs, while contributing to broader discussions on the future of municipal governance in Ontario.

Delegation Highlights

Protecting Democracy and Local Governance, AMO Plenary Panel

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa joined municipal leaders from across Ontario for a plenary panel on Protecting Democracy and Local Governance. The discussion explored how municipalities can adapt to evolving governance structures while protecting strong local leadership, transparency, collaboration and community decision-making. The session provided an important opportunity to ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake was represented in the province-wide conversation about the future of municipal governance.

Flood Mitigation Workshop, Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response

Following recent flooding in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Town representatives participated in a flood mitigation workshop facilitated by Minister Jill Dunlop. The session explored real-life emergency scenarios, impacts on critical infrastructure and community recovery, and Provincial resources available to municipalities. The discussion reinforced the importance of strong partnerships and proactive planning as the Town continues strengthening its emergency preparedness and response efforts.



Growing Agritourism in Ontario, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Council and Staff advocated for a Provincial investment of up to \$40,000 toward the development of on-farm diversified use policies, complementing \$80,000 already committed by the Town and Greenbelt Foundation. The project will develop modern agritourism and on-farm diversification policies that provide farmers with greater opportunities to diversify and strengthen farm viability while continuing to protect prime agricultural land.

Putting Ontario VQA on the Menu, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Recognizing Niagara-on-the-Lake's important role in Ontario's grape and wine industry, the Town called for the VQA Wine Support Program or related Provincial initiatives to be expanded to include restaurants that actively feature and promote Ontario VQA wines. The initiative would encourage greater connections between Ontario wineries and restaurants, increase exposure to locally produced wine and support both the agricultural and hospitality sectors.

Queen Street Destination Planning, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming

With Queen Street at the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake's visitor experience, Council and Staff sought up to \$100,000 in Provincial support for the Queen Street Secondary Plan and coordinated destination planning. The funding would build on existing investments and help advance improvements supporting heritage conservation, accessibility, mobility, public spaces, cultural experiences, business vitality and year-round tourism.

Ontario VQA: Part of the Experience, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming

The Town highlighted an opportunity to strengthen Ontario's wine and culinary tourism experience by expanding the VQA Wine Support Program to recognize licensed restaurants that prominently feature Ontario VQA wines. Greater representation on wine lists and by-the-glass offerings, along with stronger restaurant-winery partnerships, would help connect visitors' dining and winery experiences while supporting wineries, grape growers, restaurants and tourism communities across Ontario.

Queen Street Secondary Planning, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

To support coordinated planning for the future of Old Town, the Town requested up to \$100,000 to advance the Queen Street Secondary Plan and associated technical work. The Plan will bring together land use, infrastructure, servicing, transportation, parking, public spaces and heritage conservation, helping manage future change while protecting the character that makes Niagara-on-the-Lake unique.



Glendale: Coordinating Airport and Community Planning, Ministry of Transportation

As Glendale prepares for significant growth, Council and Staff emphasized the importance of coordinating community development with the long-term operation of the Niagara District Airport. The Town encouraged continued Provincial partnership on the Airport Zoning Regulation Review to provide greater certainty for housing, employment and infrastructure investment while protecting airport operations and supporting implementation of the Glendale Strategic Growth Area.

Supporting Safe Housing and Strong Farms, Ministry of Health

Highlighting the importance of temporary foreign workers to Niagara-on-the-Lake's agricultural sector, the Town advocated for a stronger legislative and financial framework for worker housing inspections. The request included establishing a clear mandate for public health units and adjusting Provincial base funding to recognize inspection costs, helping protect worker health while reducing pressures on growers and supporting Ontario's agricultural workforce and food supply.

Recreation Facility Renewal, Ministry of Sport

Building on recently endorsed plans for the future of the Town's community assets, Council and Staff sought Provincial partnership through CSRIF (Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund) and other funding opportunities as Niagara-on-the-Lake identifies and advances priority recreation infrastructure projects. Future investment would help address aging infrastructure and growing participation while supporting accessible, inclusive, energy-efficient and sustainable recreation facilities.

Senior Programming Support, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

The Town advocated for more stable and accessible Provincial funding for seniors, accessibility and intergenerational programming in small and rural municipalities. This included improved access to Seniors Community Grants and age-friendly supports, operating funding, and more flexible, sustainable funding models. Long-term support would help Niagara-on-the-Lake expand programming, reduce social isolation, promote healthy aging, and strengthen connections among seniors, youth, families, and community organizations.

Quotes:



“Niagara-on-the-Lake has ambitious plans for the future, and strong partnerships with the Province are essential to moving them forward. This year, we brought forward practical opportunities to support our agricultural and tourism economies, invest in recreation, plan responsibly for growth and protect the qualities that make our community unique. These conversations allow us to advocate for solutions that respond directly to the needs of Niagara-on-the-Lake.” — **Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa**

“Our advocacy at AMO was focused on turning well-developed local priorities into action. From the Queen Street Secondary Plan to recreation infrastructure, agritourism and community programming, the Town has done significant work to establish a strong foundation for these initiatives. Provincial partnership can help us build on that work, advance implementation and deliver lasting benefits for our community.” — **CAO Nick Ruller**

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Media Contact:

Marah Minor, Corporate Communications Lead
905-468-3266 | communications@notl.com