



It is essential for Niagara residents to see their role in ensuring a sustainable future, by protecting and restoring our natural assets; reducing and recycling household waste; and responding to climate impacts.

# What's Emerging

- Work is underway to build a Community Energy Plan for Niagara, drawing upon what was learned at the 2023 Niagara Climate Change Summit. The summit focused on energy resilience and advancing carbon reduction efforts, to inspire and encourage climate action. The intent is to transform what was learned at the summit into a plan for Niagara to manage its energy use, and transition toward more sustainable and efficient energy sources, with NCCAN playing an important role in shaping the plan.
- Many local municipalities in Niagara have created plans to improve climate resilience, address climate-related risks, reduce impacts of extreme weather events, and integrate climate change adaptation practices into their operations.
- Natural asset accounting initiatives are being led by several local municipalities and the NPCA. This involves evaluating local natural resources (e.g., wetlands, forest, meadows, etc.) and the communal benefits they offer, such as stormwater management, erosion prevention, air and water quality improvements, wildlife habitat, urban heat reduction, and recreation opportunities. Understanding and valuing these natural assets promotes data-informed decision-making when leaders seek to implement actions for managing more climate resilient communities.
- A variety of volunteer opportunities exist with several organizations doing work in the Environment Sector. For example, in 2023 the NPCA engaged a total of 846 active volunteers who contributed over 8,200 hours to support environmental programming, including the planting of 4 new pollinator gardens and participating in 51 stewardship events, such as tree plantings and invasive species removals within the Niagara Peninsula watershed.
- Food security is a topic of growing local and national concern. The Food Affordability in Niagara 2023 Nutritious Food Basket survey shows that approximately one in five households in Niagara are food insecure. More than half of Canadians are either very or extremely concerned about the impact that climate change could have on food security, according to a 2023 Dalhousie University Agri-Food Analytics Lab survey.

# Suggested Community Action Steps

- Emphasize that it is urgent for people in Niagara to take action to reduce climate and environment impacts. The conversation has shifted from planning for the future, toward acting now. "The great acceleration" of climate change is upon us, and the health of our environment is connected to all socio-economic sectors.
- Acknowledge that social inclusion and social justice are at the centre of people and communities taking action to deal with climate and environmental impacts.
- Enhance communication about, and mobilize knowledge to Niagara's people and communities, to make them more aware of the state of the environment, and inspire them to take practical actions to deal with climate and environmental impacts.
- Encourage more community science and volunteerism to build baseline awareness about the environment in Niagara, spark a feeling of ownership, and inform local decision-making.

# Indicators

- Air
- Biodiversity
- Climate Impacts
- Land
- Waste
- Water

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## COMMUNITY POTENTIAL

LIVING IN NIAGARA REPORT 2023

# Happening Now

- In 2021, the Niagara Community Foundation launched the \$5 million Dorothea Thomas Foundation endowment fund, directed exclusively to supporting environmental causes in Niagara.
- The Niagara Region Community Dashboard includes a total of seven Environment Indicators: Corporate building energy consumption; Residential solid waste diverted from disposal; Residential organics collected; Residential hazardous waste collected; Wastewater estimated to have bypassed all treatment; Treated wastewater; Emerald ash borer beetle tree remediation.
- In 2022, the Niagara Climate Change Action Network (NCCAN) was formed, to support and accelerate a progressive, collaborative, and equitable approach to addressing the effects of climate change in the Niagara region. A total of 51 NCCAN member organizations are working together, with a focus on: a pathway to net zero; biodiversity; and climate resilient infrastructure.
- Niagara Region Blue/Grey Box recycling collection services are evolving to a more circular economy model in January, 2024. Materials are collected, recycled and returned to producers, for use as recycled content in new products and packaging. Niagara Region maintains collection of: curbside garbage; large household items; organics (Green Bin); leaf and yard waste; and all materials from industrial, commercial and some institutional establishments.
- In 2023, the Niagara Geopark Trail Network was formed, as an outcome of the Niagara Geopark Trail Summit. The intent of Niagara Geopark is to share the rich geological and cultural layers of Ontario's Niagara Peninsula, through a sustainable tourism-oriented model.
- In 2021, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) released its 10-year strategic plan which identifies climate change as a critical priority. The plan includes numerous climate-related actions across six strategic priorities. The NPCA plays an important role in climate change mitigation and adaptation through its work in watershed-based natural resource management, water monitoring, flood forecasting and warning, floodplain mapping, sustainable development, ecosystem restoration and stewardship, shoreline coastal resiliency, land securement, and outreach/education.
- Niagara River Remedial Action Plan partners continue to make progress in improving the river's water quality and ecosystem health. In 2021, a Delisting Strategy for the Niagara River (ON) Area of Concern was completed, to guide actions for addressing remaining ecosystem impairments. An updated plan is underway in 2024.
- In 2023, the NPCA, in collaboration with Ontario Nature and Conservation Ontario, announced the addition of 11 local natural areas toward Canada's ambitious goal of protecting 30 per cent of its lands and waters by 2030. The 830 hectares encompassed in these areas play a critical role in the conservation of the local ecoregion and its characteristic species, including species at risk such as barn swallows, monarch butterflies and butternut trees.
- In 2022, the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network (NEBN) incorporated in Ontario. NEBN supports the management of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere as a community-led, grassroots organization, working to meet the criteria and standards required by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Biosphere runs west from Niagara, and then north to Tobermory, extending some 725+ kilometres. Plenty Canada, an Indigenous non-governmental organization is partnering, nurturing, and assisting in NEBN's development, with support from Environment and Climate Change Canada.