



Niagara
Transit



**2026
Federal
Pre-Budget
Submission**

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

On behalf of Niagara Transit and our Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit our pre-budget submission for 2026. As you make decisions regarding Budget 2026, we respectfully ask that you consider our recommendations. The challenges facing Niagara Transit are shared by many transit systems across Canada and collaborative efforts will ensure an efficient, sustainable and safe transit network for riders and transit workers alike.

Public transit is a vital service that plays a key role in supporting public well-being, engagement, and access to opportunities. A growing number of riders rely on Niagara Transit for their daily commute and we have increasingly heard calls from employers in the past year that need more service to access workers. It also allows those without personal transportation to affordably access essentials and stay connected with their community.

Transit will be a pivotal component in solving the housing crisis, a key national issue. Developments in areas with well-connected, reliable transit can reduce parking standards, enabling higher densities and greatly reducing the cost to build; increasing their viability.

Niagara Transit is grateful for federal investments that have enabled us to replace aging vehicles from our fleet and contribute to other capital costs, however significant financial pressures remain. Municipal budgets are unable to keep pace with growing ridership demands and rising costs due to inflation, tariffs, and scarcity of manufacturers. Greater support from our federal and provincial partners is needed.

Thank you for your consideration of the recommendations contained within our pre-budget submission. They reflect our top local priorities as they relate to the federal government. We are excited to collaborate to take on these challenges and work with your government to deliver exceptional transit to Niagara Region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mat Siscoe
Chair, Niagara Transit Commission
Mayor, City of St. Catharines



Our Requests

1 Maintain CPTF funding in the new Building Canada Strong Fund.

2 \$10M in capital funding for microtransit.

3 Amend the Criminal Code to protect transit workers.



MAINTAIN TRANSIT'S PORTION OF THE BCSF

The Canadian Public Transit fund is an important source of funding for the transit industry across Canada. As it has now been partially rolled into the larger Building Communities Strong Fund, it is critical that with the rising cost of delivering transit in Canada, the \$3B per year that was previously allocated continues to support transit agencies. While there are many important projects in Canada, transit is both a vital economic and social service. To keep the economy moving we must ensure that labour has a strong network to connect to employment areas. Transit also provides an important social service, connecting people to opportunities and services that otherwise wouldn't be available and is vital for their quality of life. Seeking efficiencies by consolidating funding programs is a reasonable step, but it is critical that funds previously allocated for transit are not lost to other projects and services.

ASK: Ensure that the \$30B allocated to transit through the Canadian Public Transit Fund is maintained in the new Building Canada Strong Fund and expand the baseline stream.



CAPITAL FUNDS FOR MICROTRANSIT IN HOUSE

Niagara Transit currently contracts an external vendor to operate our microtransit service which serves rural areas and provides accessible transit service for seniors and persons with disabilities. While this partnership has been valuable, we have limited control over the service, limited ability to respond and make changes to the service as needed, and no direct management of the staff and vehicles being employed. To be able to ensure we are providing equitable, reliable and optimized service to all our residents we need to bring our rural and intermunicipal accessible microtransit services “in-house” to augment the already in-house accessible and microtransit services we provide in our urban city centres. This would require a significant capital outlay to purchase vehicles and other related costs that cannot be covered by the Niagara Transit budget alone. Support from higher levels of government is needed.

ASK: \$10M in capital funding to purchase the required vehicles and cover other capital expenses to bring Niagara Transit’s microtransit services in-house.



INCREASE TRANSIT SAFETY

Transit workers in Canada are in a vulnerable position while serving the public. Addiction and mental health challenges play an increasing role in our cities and transit is acutely affected. Instances of threats and violence are taking their toll, causing injuries and heightened stress which lead to unwanted leaves of absence and workers leaving the industry entirely. The vital role our workers play must be protected and the federal government can support this by ensuring that the criminal justice system takes the challenges our workers face seriously. Through this submission and previous advocacy, our board had endorsed a request to make the assault of a transit worker an aggravating circumstance in sentencing. Doing so has signalled to our workers that their contributions are valued and this change will act as a deterrent to those who would cause them harm.

We want to thank the federal government for amending the Criminal Code to make assault against a transit worker an aggravating circumstance during sentencing.



Conclusion

Reliable, well-connected transit networks are vital for communities of all sizes across Canada. They drive our economy, moving workers efficiently and are a critical social service, opening opportunities and services to allow millions of Canadians to participate fully in their communities.

Niagara Transit has continued to see rapidly expanding ridership and is poised to continue our strong growth in 2026. In our fourth year in operation as an amalgamated service we will fill longstanding gaps in our network and begin to implement the first stages of our 10-year master plan; the first of its kind in Niagara's history. It is important we keep pace with the demand for service and with the pressures on municipal budgets, we can't do it alone. We need the continued support of our federal and provincial partners to ensure Niagara and Canada have the 21st century transit that is so essential to our success.

We look forward to overcoming our challenges and building Niagara Transit together.



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