

Executive Summary – Niagara Region

Socio-Economic Factors

Socio-economic indicators describe and quantify a municipality's wealth and economic conditions and provide insight into a municipality's collective ability to generate revenue relative to the municipality's demand for public services. An evaluation of socio-economic factors contributes to the development of sound financial policies. An examination of local economic and demographic characteristics can identify the following situations:

- Changes in the tax base as measured by population, property value, employment, or business activity
- A need to shift public service priorities because of demographic changes in the municipality
- A need to shift public policies because of changes in economic conditions

Socio-Economic Factors	2025 Pop Density per sq. km.	2016-2021 Pop Increase %	2024 Building Construction \$ per Capita	2025 Estimated Avg Household Income	2025 Weighted Median Value of Dwelling	2025 Unweighted Assessment per Capita	2025 Weighted Assessment per Capita
Fort Erie	218	7.1%	\$ 4,622	\$ 100,440	\$ 247,126	\$ 122,682	\$ 131,564
Grimsby	462	5.7%	\$ 8,211	\$ 145,125	\$ 407,339	\$ 165,443	\$ 176,686
Lincoln	176	8.1%	\$ 3,489	\$ 139,342	\$ 374,422	\$ 158,961	\$ 159,390
Niagara Falls	523	7.2%	\$ 1,877	\$ 98,717	\$ 266,813	\$ 120,930	\$ 146,066
Niagara-on-the-Lake	164	9.0%	\$ 9,957	\$ 144,983	\$ 522,048	\$ 281,080	\$ 295,794
Pelham	157	6.3%	\$ 5,860	\$ 158,310	\$ 385,693	\$ 161,424	\$ 161,164
Port Colborne	182	9.4%	\$ 3,328	\$ 98,067	\$ 212,286	\$ 95,118	\$ 106,912
St. Catharines	1,578	2.8%	N/A	\$ 98,252	\$ 255,391	\$ 105,701	\$ 121,811
Thorold	340	26.7%	\$ 5,326	\$ 105,521	\$ 252,878	\$ 116,912	\$ 127,449
Wainfleet	35	8.1%	\$ 2,976	\$ 123,602	\$ 338,828	\$ 163,154	\$ 146,833
Welland	763	6.6%	\$ 3,328	\$ 93,705	\$ 218,427	\$ 91,513	\$ 102,701
West Lincoln	43	6.6%	\$ 2,295	\$ 140,091	\$ 365,634	\$ 150,397	\$ 137,835
Total Survey Avg	573	5.8%	\$ 4,330	\$ 127,959	\$ 364,259	\$ 168,920	\$ 168,431
Niagara	387	6.7%	\$ 4,661	\$ 120,513	\$ 320,574	\$ 144,443	\$ 151,184

Financial Indicators

The Municipal Financial Indicators section of the report includes a number of measures such as the financial position, operating surplus, asset composition ratio, reserves, debt and taxes receivables.

Key financial indicators have been included to help evaluate each municipality's existing financial condition and to identify future challenges and opportunities. A number of industry recognized indicators that are used by credit rating agencies and/or recommended by Government Finance Officers' Association (GFOA) and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing have been included. Indicators related to **Sustainability**, **Flexibility** and **Vulnerability** have been included. It should be noted that Water and Wastewater indicators have also been included in the Water/Wastewater section of the report.

The tables on the following page provide highlights from this section of the report.

Sustainability

The ability to provide and maintain service and infrastructure levels without resorting to unplanned increases in rates or cuts to services.

2024 Sustainability Indicators	Financial Position per Capita	Tax Asset Consumption Ratio	Net Financial Liabilities Ratio
Fort Erie	\$ 2,293	44.6%	(1.2)
Grimsby	\$ 2,015	31.7%	(1.5)
Lincoln	\$ (330)	43.9%	0.2
Niagara Falls	\$ 1,552	38.3%	(0.7)
Niagara-on-the-Lake	\$ 1,864	39.7%	(0.9)
Pelham	\$ (368)	40.3%	0.2
Port Colborne	\$ (495)	45.8%	0.2
St. Catharines	\$ 833	46.1%	(0.5)
Thorold	\$ 1,358	31.3%	(0.8)
Wainfleet	\$ 9	40.5%	(0.0)
Welland	\$ 1,098	45.5%	(0.6)
West Lincoln	\$ 294	33.5%	(0.3)
Total Survey Average	\$ 1,013	44.1%	(0.6)

Vulnerability

Addresses a municipality's vulnerability to external sources of funding that it cannot control and its exposure to risks.

2024 Vulnerability Indicators	Tax Reserves as % of Taxation	Tax Reserves as % of Own Source Revenues	Tax Reserves / Capita	Total Debt Charges (less WWW) as % of Own Source Revenues	Total Debt Outstanding / Capita	Total Debt Outstanding (less WWW) / Capita	Debt Out. per Own Source Revenue	Debt to Reserve Ratio
Fort Erie	128.2%	96.4%	\$ 1,256	1.7%	\$ 256	\$ 210	13.0%	0.1
Grimsby	113.7%	80.7%	\$ 783	1.9%	\$ 272	\$ 272	20.8%	0.2
Lincoln	42.5%	33.8%	\$ 370	4.1%	\$ 1,057	\$ 942	65.8%	1.2
Niagara Falls	145.4%	76.0%	\$ 1,332	3.2%	\$ 686	\$ 523	29.7%	0.4
Niagara-on-the-Lake	86.5%	49.0%	\$ 736	1.7%	\$ 389	\$ 326	18.2%	0.3
Pelham	53.5%	43.4%	\$ 530	7.3%	\$ 1,220	\$ 1,216	76.7%	2.2
Port Colborne	82.9%	64.3%	\$ 956	6.0%	\$ 1,129	\$ 1,064	50.7%	1.0
St. Catharines	69.4%	52.1%	\$ 565	10.5%	\$ 651	\$ 623	42.2%	1.0
Thorold	160.0%	117.0%	\$ 1,496	0.4%	\$ 11	\$ 11	0.6%	0.0
Wainfleet	74.4%	62.0%	\$ 902	3.6%	\$ 724	\$ 724	49.8%	0.8
Welland	145.4%	113.6%	\$ 1,230	11.3%	\$ 1,036	\$ 720	61.0%	0.8
West Lincoln	135.9%	100.4%	\$ 881	7.5%	\$ 1,256	\$ 1,256	109.1%	1.2
Total Survey Average	98.1%	70.2%	\$ 1,093	3.1%	\$ 686	\$ 502	32.5%	0.5

Flexibility

The ability to issue debt responsibly without impacting the credit rating. Also, the ability to generate required revenues.

2024 Flexibility Indicators	Taxes Receivable as % of Taxes Levied	Rates Coverage Ratio
Fort Erie	9.9%	115.2%
Grimsby	5.1%	93.7%
Lincoln	9.5%	96.1%
Niagara Falls	12.6%	122.5%
Niagara-on-the-Lake	6.5%	100.9%
Pelham	5.0%	100.3%
Port Colborne	9.3%	97.0%
St. Catharines	4.8%	101.2%
Thorold	12.9%	97.1%
Wainfleet	10.8%	98.1%
Welland	11.3%	102.3%
West Lincoln	9.0%	93.0%
Total Survey Average	7.6%	95.9%

Analysis of Net Municipal Levy per Capita and per Assessment

In order to better understand the relative tax position for a municipality, another measure that has been included in the study is a comparison of net municipal levies on a per capita and per \$100,000 basis. This measure indicates the total net municipal levy needed to provide services to the municipality. This analysis does not indicate value for money or the effectiveness in meeting community objectives. Net municipal expenditures per capita may vary as a result of:

- Different service levels
- Variations in the types of services
- Different methods of providing services
- Different residential/non-residential assessment composition
- Varying demand for services
- Locational factors
- Demographic differences
- Socio-economic differences
- Urban/rural composition differences
- User fees policies
- Age of infrastructure
- What is being collected from rates as opposed to property taxes

As such, this analysis is not an “apples to apples” comparison of services but rather has been included to provide insight into the net cost of providing municipal services within each municipality. Further analysis would be required to determine the cause of the differences across each spending envelope and within each municipality. This analysis was completed using the most current information available – net municipal levies as per the 2025 municipal levy by-laws and the 2025 estimated populations.

2025	Net Municipal Levy per Capita	Net Municipal Levy per \$100,000 Unweighted CVA
Fort Erie	\$ 2,181	\$ 1,778
Grimsby	\$ 2,185	\$ 1,320
Lincoln	\$ 2,210	\$ 1,390
Niagara Falls	\$ 2,180	\$ 1,803
Niagara-on-the-Lake	\$ 3,212	\$ 1,143
Pelham	\$ 2,330	\$ 1,444
Port Colborne	\$ 2,143	\$ 2,253
St. Catharines	\$ 1,931	\$ 1,827
Thorold	\$ 1,950	\$ 1,668
Wainfleet	\$ 2,471	\$ 1,515
Welland	\$ 1,786	\$ 1,952
West Lincoln	\$ 1,712	\$ 1,138
Total Survey Average	\$ 1,971	\$ 1,321
Niagara	\$ 2,191	\$ 1,603

User Fees

A number of user fees have been included in the Study including the following:

2025 Fees	Development Charges - Single Detached	Residential Building Permit Fee
Fort Erie	\$ 72,556	\$ 2,894
Grimsby	\$ 57,248	\$ 2,660
Lincoln	\$ 82,464	\$ 2,667
Niagara Falls	\$ 72,507	\$ 3,013
Niagara-on-the-Lake	\$ 49,192	\$ 2,535
Pelham	\$ 67,514	\$ 2,984
Port Colborne	\$ 63,044	\$ 3,164
St. Catharines	\$ 46,146	\$ 3,128
Thorold	\$ 58,634	\$ 2,535
Wainfleet	\$ 43,352	\$ 2,807
Welland	\$ 43,636	\$ 3,074
West Lincoln	\$ 68,646	\$ 2,652
Total Survey Average	\$ 62,958	\$ 2,774
Niagara	\$ 60,412	\$ 2,843

Comparison of Tax Ratios

Tax ratios reflect how a property class tax rate compares to the residential rate. Changes in tax ratios affect the relative tax burden between classes of properties. Tax ratios can be used to prevent large shifts of the tax burden caused by relative changes in assessment among property classes as well as to lower the tax rates on a particular class or classes.

2025 Tax Ratios	Niagara Region	Total Survey Average
Multi-Residential	1.9700	1.6695
Commercial (Residual)	1.7349	1.6588
Industrial (Residual)	2.6300	2.1016

Taxes and Comparison of Relative Taxes

The purpose of this section of the report is to undertake “like” property comparisons across each municipality and across various property types. In total there are 12 property types in the residential, multi-residential, commercial and industrial classes. There are many reasons for differences in relative tax burdens across municipalities and across property classes including, but not limited to:

- Differences in values of like properties
- Differences in the tax ratios and the use of optional classes
- Non-uniform education tax rates in the non-residential classes
- Level of service provided and the associated costs
- Extent to which a municipality employs user fees
- Access to other sources of revenues such as dividends from hydro utilities and casino revenues

2025 Property Taxes	Detached Bungalow	2 Storey Home	Senior Executive Home	Walk Up Apartment (per Unit)	Mid/High Rise (per Unit)	Neigh. Shopping (per sq. ft.)
Fort Erie	\$ 4,131	\$ 5,904	N/A	\$ 1,771	\$ 1,971	\$ 4.72
Grimsby	\$ 5,159	\$ 6,678	\$ 7,959	\$ 1,878	\$ 1,879	\$ 5.20
Lincoln	\$ 5,326	\$ 6,490	\$ 8,928	\$ 2,149	\$ 2,010	\$ 4.26
Niagara Falls	\$ 4,549	\$ 6,392	\$ 8,322	\$ 2,574	\$ 2,475	\$ 5.13
Niagara-on-the-Lake	\$ 5,032	\$ 4,764	\$ 8,995	N/A	N/A	\$ 4.20
Pelham	\$ 4,362	\$ 6,068	\$ 8,209	\$ 1,769	\$ 1,601	\$ 4.14
Port Colborne	\$ 4,479	\$ 7,069	\$ 8,455	\$ 2,076	\$ 2,298	\$ 5.74
St. Catharines	\$ 5,042	\$ 6,388	\$ 8,900	\$ 2,580	\$ 3,060	\$ 6.10
Thorold	\$ 4,036	\$ 5,956	\$ 7,850	\$ 2,212	\$ 2,226	\$ 4.41
Wainfleet	\$ 4,919	N/A	N/A	\$ 1,986	N/A	N/A
Welland	\$ 4,564	\$ 6,430	\$ 7,597	\$ 1,956	\$ 2,686	\$ 5.20
West Lincoln	\$ 4,464	\$ 5,785	N/A	\$ 1,713	N/A	\$ 3.58
Total Survey Average	\$ 4,155	\$ 5,478	\$ 7,675	\$ 1,620	\$ 2,159	\$ 4.13
Niagara	\$ 4,672	\$ 6,175	\$ 8,357	\$ 2,060	\$ 2,245	\$ 4.79

2025 Property Taxes	Office Building (per sq. ft.)	Hotels (per Suite)	Motels (per Suite)	Industrial Std (per sq. ft.)	Industrial Large (per sq. ft.)	Industrial Vacant Land (per Acre)
Fort Erie	\$ 2.87	\$ 1,132	\$ 842	\$ 1.41	\$ 0.55	\$ 2,570
Grimsby	\$ 5.10	\$ 1,452	\$ 1,250	\$ 3.12	\$ 2.31	\$ 15,571
Lincoln	\$ 2.29	\$ 1,857	N/A	\$ 2.18	N/A	\$ 7,964
Niagara Falls	\$ 3.06	\$ 3,759	\$ 1,572	\$ 2.11	\$ 1.20	\$ 7,504
Niagara-on-the-Lake	\$ 3.76	\$ 4,712	\$ 2,028	\$ 2.65	N/A	\$ 9,420
Pelham	N/A	N/A	\$ 995	\$ 1.78	N/A	\$ 947
Port Colborne	\$ 3.99	N/A	\$ 1,270	\$ 2.35	\$ 1.64	\$ 1,649
St. Catharines	\$ 3.49	\$ 1,584	\$ 2,075	\$ 2.55	\$ 1.37	\$ 12,141
Thorold	\$ 3.02	\$ 1,987	\$ 905	\$ 2.15	\$ 0.96	\$ 10,954
Wainfleet	N/A	N/A	\$ 1,162	\$ 2.42	N/A	\$ 924
Welland	\$ 2.98	\$ 1,536	\$ 1,230	\$ 1.55	\$ 0.36	\$ 2,343
West Lincoln	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$ 2.29	\$ 0.39	\$ 2,693
Total Survey Average	\$ 3.40	\$ 1,811	\$ 1,361	\$ 1.75	\$ 1.23	\$ 5,524
Niagara	\$ 3.39	\$ 2,252	\$ 1,333	\$ 2.21	\$ 1.10	\$ 6,223

Comparison of Water and Sewer User Costs

A comparison was made of water/sewer costs in each municipality. The following table summarizes the costs in the municipality for water and sewer on typical annual consumption against the overall survey average.

2025 Water/Sewer Cost of Service	Residential - 200 m ³	Commercial - 10,000 m ³	Industrial - 30,000 m ³	Industrial - 100,000 m ³	Industrial - 500,000 m ³
Fort Erie	\$ 1,884	\$ 51,735	\$ 157,279	\$ 503,821	\$ 2,474,910
Grimsby	\$ 1,004	\$ 33,246	\$ 99,046	\$ 329,346	\$ 1,645,346
Lincoln	\$ 1,669	\$ 71,108	\$ 210,925	\$ 698,516	\$ 3,482,710
Niagara Falls	\$ 1,326	\$ 38,362	\$ 109,496	\$ 350,245	\$ 1,702,733
Niagara-on-the-Lake	\$ 1,484	\$ 37,077	\$ 113,098	\$ 359,132	\$ 1,757,048
Pelham	\$ 1,290	\$ 40,425	\$ 120,227	\$ 392,031	\$ 1,933,957
Port Colborne	\$ 2,126	\$ 45,547	\$ 139,952	\$ 433,863	\$ 2,098,744
St. Catharines	\$ 1,373	\$ 45,986	\$ 139,066	\$ 452,640	\$ 2,239,610
Thorold	\$ 1,487	\$ 43,480	\$ 129,180	\$ 429,130	\$ 2,143,130
Wainfleet	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Welland	\$ 1,655	\$ 57,143	\$ 172,678	\$ 563,276	\$ 2,789,760
West Lincoln	\$ 1,453	\$ 44,380	\$ 127,760	\$ 406,812	\$ 1,983,625
Total Survey Average	\$ 1,469	\$ 47,617	\$ 137,762	\$ 450,999	\$ 2,220,813
Niagara	\$ 1,523	\$ 46,226	\$ 138,064	\$ 447,165	\$ 2,204,689

2025 Property Taxes and Water/Wastewater Costs as a % of Income

This section of the report provides a comparison of the availability of gross household income to fund municipal services on a typical household. This provides a measure of affordability within each community.

2025 Affordability Indicators	Property Taxes as a % of Household Income	Water/Sewer + Taxes as a % of Household Income
Fort Erie	4.5%	6.4%
Grimsby	3.9%	4.6%
Lincoln	4.2%	5.4%
Niagara Falls	4.5%	5.9%
Niagara-on-the-Lake	4.4%	5.4%
Pelham	3.9%	4.7%
Port Colborne	4.7%	6.9%
St. Catharines	4.6%	6.0%
Thorold	4.1%	5.5%
Wainfleet	5.0%	5.0%
Welland	4.4%	6.2%
West Lincoln	3.7%	4.8%
Total Survey Average	3.8%	5.0%
Niagara	4.3%	5.6%

Economic Development Programs

A summary was completed of programs that municipalities have implemented to promote economic development in the areas of retention and expansion and downtown development.