



Niagara
Transit



**2026
Provincial
Pre-Budget
Submission**

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

On behalf of Niagara Transit and our Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit our 2026 pre-budget submission. As you make decisions related to Budget 2026, we respectfully request that our priorities and recommendations be taken into consideration. Support for transit is needed across Ontario, but by working together we can ensure we have a connected province that moves people efficiently and reliably.

Transit is integral to ensuring equitable access to critical services and opportunities for all residents. Reliable transportation connects residents to healthcare, education, childcare, employment, and social services, particularly for those who do not have another viable option. It promotes equity and inclusion by supporting mobility for seniors, youth, students, people with disabilities, and lower-income households, ensuring full participation in community life and reducing the cost of living.

Transit will be a pivotal component in solving the housing crisis and gridlock; two key provincial issues. Developments in areas with well-connected, reliable transit can reduce parking standards, enabling higher densities and greatly reducing the cost to build. Meeting the demand for transit will also reduce traffic on our streets and highways that costs the province billions of dollars each year.

Niagara Transit is appreciative of provincial investments like the Dedicated Public Transit Fund and matching ICIP dollars that have been critical for fleet replacement and operating budgets. Cost pressures have also continued to increase however, and greater support from higher levels of government is needed to meet rapidly rising costs and the demand for service.

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 provincial 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
Mayor, City of St. Catharines



Our Requests

1 Match the CPTF
Baseline Stream

2 A new fund for local
transit operations

3 \$10M in capital funding for
microtransit.

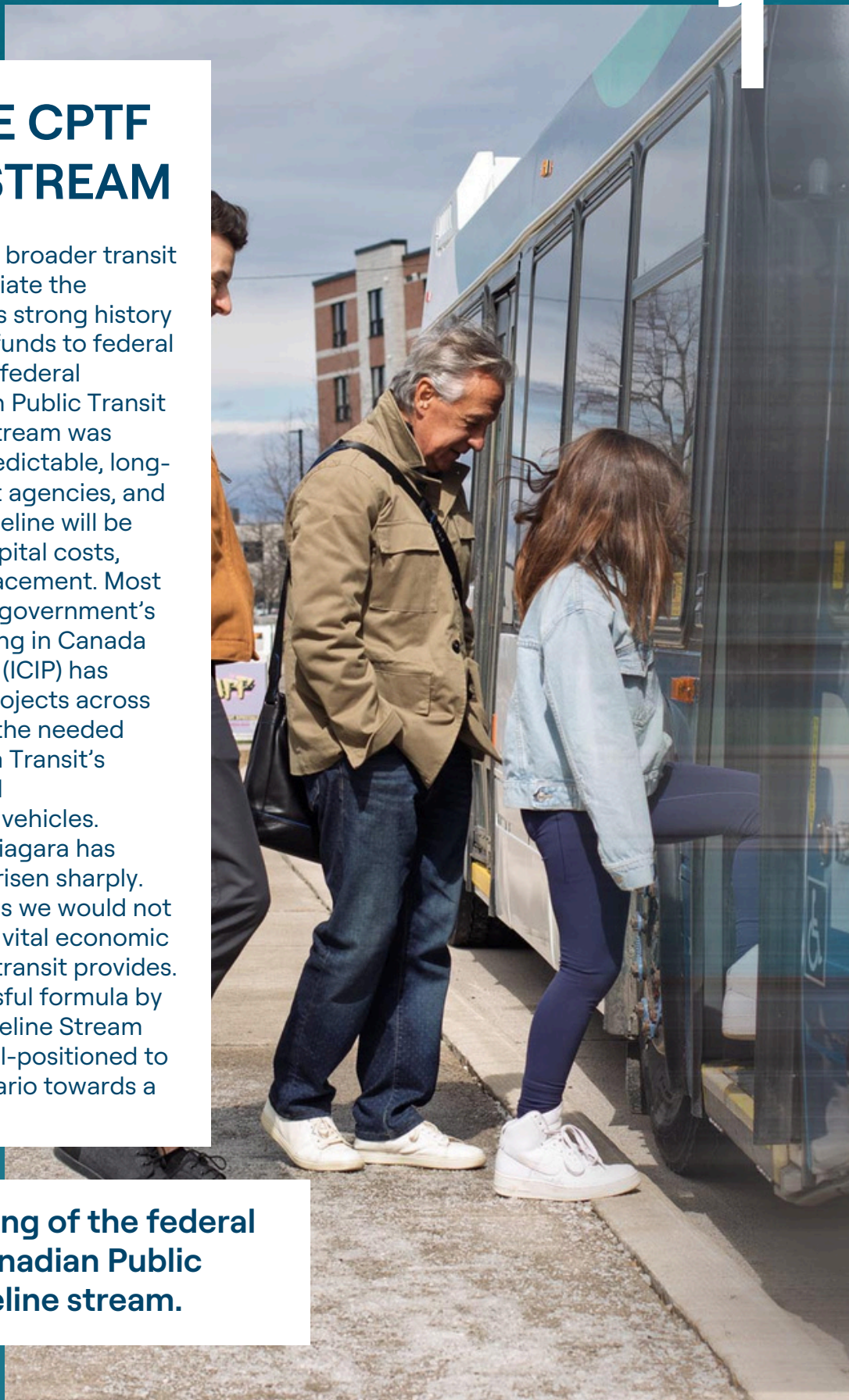
4 Funding to meet AODA
requirements for transit.



MATCH THE CPTF BASELINE STREAM

Niagara Transit and the broader transit sector sincerely appreciate the provincial government's strong history of providing matching funds to federal support programs. The federal government's Canadian Public Transit Fund (CPTF) Baseline Stream was designed to provide predictable, long-term support for transit agencies, and its ten-year funding timeline will be crucial to assist with capital costs, most notably fleet replacement. Most recently, the provincial government's matching of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) has successfully enabled projects across the province including the needed replacement of Niagara Transit's conventional buses and specialized/paratransit vehicles. Demand for transit in Niagara has soared and costs have risen sharply. Without these programs we would not be able to maintain the vital economic and social service that transit provides. Continuing this successful formula by matching the CPTF Baseline Stream will ensure transit is well-positioned to continue to propel Ontario towards a successful future.

ASK: Match funding of the federal government's Canadian Public Transit Fund baseline stream.



NEW TRANSIT OPERATIONS FUNDING

Niagara Transit is grateful for the funding the provincial government has provided since our amalgamation. It has been vital in ensuring our riders have a reliable and consistent service to connect them with every corner of the Niagara Region. Our ridership has increased significantly year over year, and so to has our need for funding, specifically operational funding. The province also has exciting plans for investment in Niagara tourism which will increase the demand for local transit. Municipal budgets are strained and it is increasingly difficult to both maintain and expand service to meet the growing need. The province has been strong with their capital funding support, and we are asking that the government work with the Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA) and local transit agencies on a fund and a formula that supports operations based on the ridership and unique needs of local transit.

ASK: Work with OPTA and local agencies to develop a new provincial fund tailored to the operational needs of transit.



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.

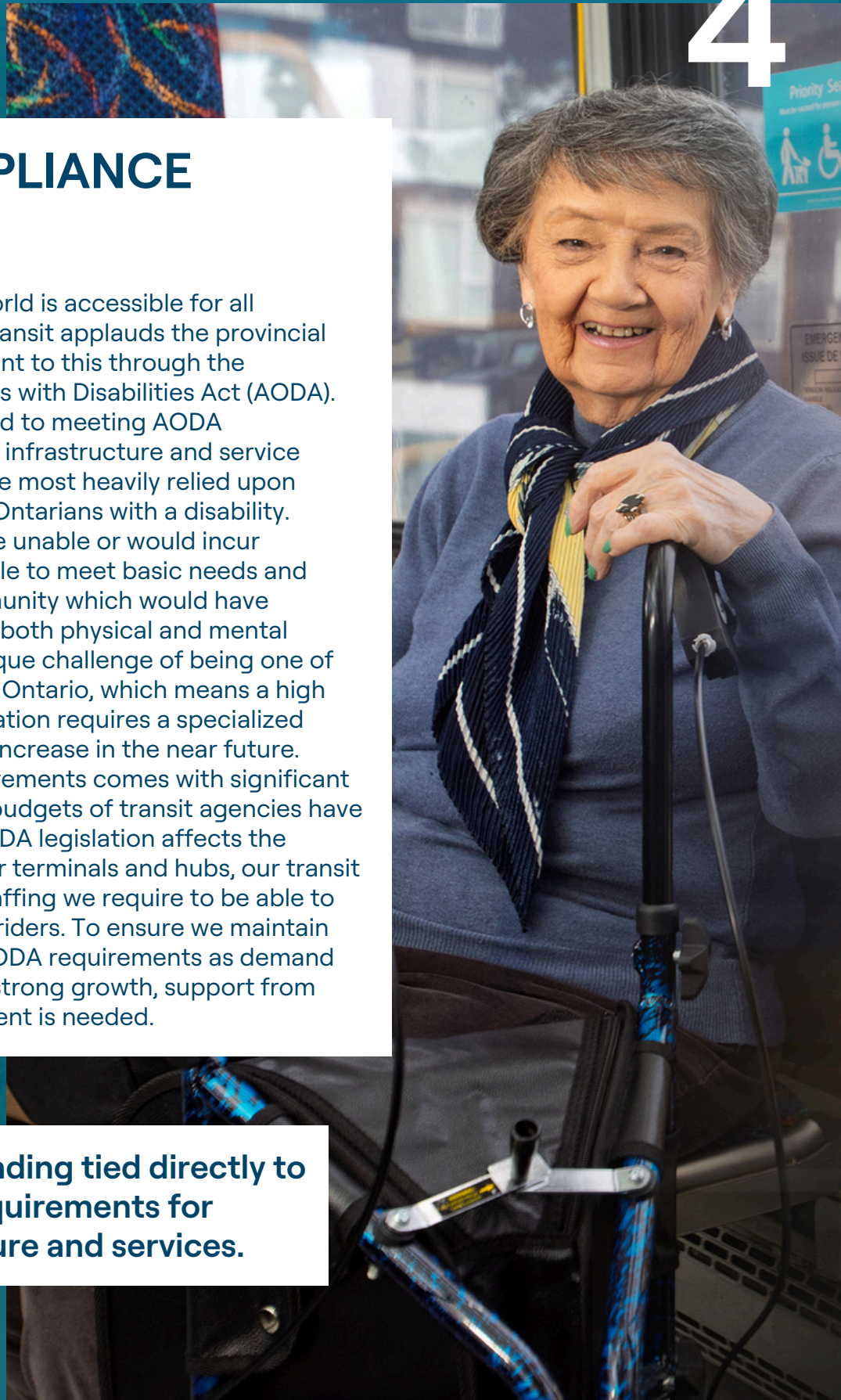
ASK: \$10M in capital funding to purchase the required vehicles and cover other capital expenses to bring Niagara Transit’s microtransit services fully in-house.



AODA COMPLIANCE FUNDING

It is vital to ensure our world is accessible for all Ontarians and Niagara Transit applauds the provincial government's commitment to this through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). We are equally committed to meeting AODA requirements in all of our infrastructure and service areas. Transit is one of the most heavily relied upon government services by Ontarians with a disability. Without it many would be unable or would incur significant costs to be able to meet basic needs and participate in their community which would have considerable impacts on both physical and mental health. Niagara has a unique challenge of being one of the oldest populations in Ontario, which means a high percentage of our population requires a specialized service and this will only increase in the near future. Meeting legislative requirements comes with significant costs, however, and the budgets of transit agencies have struggled to keep up. AODA legislation affects the vehicles we purchase, our terminals and hubs, our transit stops, and the level of staffing we require to be able to support all of our transit riders. To ensure we maintain accessibility and meet AODA requirements as demand for transit continues it's strong growth, support from higher levels of government is needed.

ASK: Provincial funding tied directly to meeting AODA requirements for transit infrastructure and services.



Conclusion

Reliable, well-connected transit networks are vital for communities of all sizes across Ontario. They drive our economy, moving workers efficiently and are a critical social service, opening opportunities and services to allow millions of Ontarians to participate fully in their communities. They are also a key factor in arresting the housing crisis, allowing homes to be built at higher densities with less parking, and are the greatest tool governments have to reduce gridlock on our streets and highways.

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 Ontario have the 21st century transit that is essential to our success.

We look forward to taking on these challenges and building Niagara Transit together.



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