



South Niagara Falls Wastewater Solutions

Municipal Schedule C

Class Environmental Assessment

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need a new wastewater treatment plant? And why in South Niagara Falls?

Niagara Region is planning ahead with the Cities of Niagara Falls and Thorold. Based on the province's Places to Grow Act, Niagara Region's Niagara 2041 Municipal Review and the 2016 Master Servicing Plan Update, considerable growth is coming to the region. The most significant growth is expected in the southern area. Our current sewer system and capacity to treat wastewater will not be enough to meet the growing demand coming from new communities, businesses and facilities (like the planned new hospital).

Putting a plant near a growing community makes sense. It makes collecting the wastewater easier and lowers costs.

As well, there are suitable lands available for a plant, along with a nearby water body for the treated water to return to the environment.

How will a new plant benefit the region?

A new wastewater treatment plant will be an asset to our community in many ways.

- Protects the environment
 - Reduces pollution into rivers and the environment
 - Allows for enhanced treatment thanks to new technologies
- Provides flexibility for the future
 - Allows for long-term planning because the property size is large enough to ensure the plant can meet future needs
 - Frees up capacity in existing infrastructure such as the Stanley Avenue Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Accommodates growth
 - Increases system capacity
 - Supports economic development
 - Builds communities



Why can't you just expand the current Niagara Falls Wastewater Treatment Plant on Stanley Avenue?

The "Go North" option, which included upgrades to the existing Niagara Falls system and expansion of the existing wastewater treatment plant in Niagara Falls was considered in detail as part of the 2016 Master Servicing Plan. This option was not selected for several reasons: anticipated poor soils; too confined an area for construction and not enough available land in this built-up area to accommodate any plant expansion; the likely need to acquire more properties; technical challenges related to twinning the Stamford Interceptor through the Ontario Power Generation corridor or surrounding area; as well as challenges to manage social and environmental issues. The existing wastewater treatment plant would require significant structural and process upgrades, management of poor soil conditions, and property acquisition would be challenging given the constraints at each property limit.

Through the detailed evaluation process, it was decided a new plant was preferred for the following reasons. It will:

- Support growth in South Niagara Falls
- Strengthen existing development north of Lundy's Lane by offloading flow
- Address the challenges of increased capacity on the existing system and plant
- Help the Region better manage increased flows during wet weather

What is the full scope of this project resulting from the South Niagara Falls Wastewater Solutions Environmental Assessment?

This project is about more than just a new wastewater treatment plant. It includes many components that will enhance the entire systems for decades to come.

The following preferred solution was selected and presented to the public at Public Information Centre (PIC) No. 4 in February 2022:

- New wastewater treatment plant site located at 6811 Reixinger Rd.
- Plant outfall location at Chippawa Creek, east of the QEW
- New trunk sewer that will connect existing and future service areas from the existing South Side High Lift Sewage Pumping Station to the new wastewater treatment plant
- New sewage pumping station, forcemain and trunk sewer connecting existing and future services areas in South Thorold to the new wastewater treatment plant
- Decommissioning of existing sewage pumping station in the study area that are no longer necessary with the implementation of the gravity sewer



Where will the new wastewater treatment plant be located?

The preferred location for the new wastewater treatment plant is 6811 Reixinger Road in Niagara Falls. The land is zoned industrial and Niagara Region's Official Plan identifies it as Resort Commercial.

To view a map of the preferred wastewater treatment plant location, visit the [South Niagara Falls Wastewater Solutions Storymap](#) and click on the tab "WWTP and Outfall Location":

Niagara Region is pursuing purchasing the entire property, which will:

- Provide the maximum buffer from existing and future neighbouring properties
- Ensure available land is secured now for future expansion beyond the current planning horizon
- Optimize wastewater treatment plant layout and process configuration within the preferred site
- Minimize the required archaeological remediation and impact to environmental features
- Allow the Region to coordinate the property purchase with a single landowner

Where will the new trunk sewer be located?

The proposed trunk sewer alignment has been confirmed along Montrose Road, on the west side of the QEW. The gravity sewer ranges from 15 to 25 metres deep and will connect the South Side High Lift Pumping Station catchment area to the new wastewater treatment plant, with connections to existing and future growth areas throughout. The trunk sewer will then flow eastward on Reixinger Road to the proposed treatment site.

To view a map of the preferred sewer alignment, visit the [South Niagara Falls Wastewater Solutions Storymap](#) and click on the tab "Sewer Alignments"

How was the preliminary preferred solution (new plant, outfall location and sewer strategy) decided?

The preliminary preferred solution was selected using a rigorous evaluation process with the following weighted criteria: Environmental (25%); Social/ Cultural (25%); Legal/ Jurisdictional (10%); Technical (20%); and Financial (20%) factors. The preferred solution is based on a weighted result of the five criteria.

The evaluation process and criteria were presented to the public at PIC No. 2 in November 2019. Additional information can be found in the [project display boards](#).

Why did the Region select the preferred site?

At the onset of the project, the project team reviewed the study area to determine suitable sites for the new wastewater treatment plant that were the proper size, close to receiving waterbodies, close to existing and future service areas, and have limited environmental features.

Initial overview of the South Niagara Falls area indicated 10 sites that could potentially accommodate the new plant. These were screened at a high level using multiple bottom-line criteria, which included environmental, social-cultural, legal-jurisdictional, technical and financial. Based on the findings, four of the 10 were potentially suitable.

After that, the four short-listed sites went through more in-depth screening using the same criteria. The Reixinger Road site stood out as the preferred location.

The preferred solution best supports growth in South Niagara Falls and Chippawa, has adequate land size to support expansions well into the future, will be positioned to minimize impact to sensitive land uses and archaeological and environmental features and is close to receiving water body that the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks supports.

I live near the preferred site for the new wastewater treatment plant. Will I smell it?

Niagara Region is very much aware of the perception that treatment facilities have the potential for foul odours. This can happen at plants that are poorly designed or overloaded, or operated poorly. Our commitment is to ensure that this will not be an issue with these new facilities, and that neighbouring properties will not be impacted by the facility.

This starts with the selection of a treatment technology that has minimal potential to create odours, backed up with facilities to capture and treat any air from plant areas that may be creating odours. Such technologies are readily available and proven in operations. As an added precaution, the land area to be used will include a buffer area to further ensure that any potential for odour is dissipated before it reaches surrounding properties.

Also, the public may be assured that the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks will not give Provincial approval of any design that does not take into account how potential odour will be adequately managed.



Won't the plant be an eyesore in the neighbourhood?

Many wastewater treatment plants built today fit within their communities. Not only is a new plant an asset to a community, we will endeavour to design and construct it in a way that is aesthetically pleasing. We will consider the architecture, landscaping and more to ensure the new plant fits visually within the surrounding community.

How will this project benefit the environment?

This project will benefit the environment in several ways, such as:

- New technology will be used where appropriate to enhance environmental protection
- It is being designed to reduce system overflows which will protect the quality of creeks and streams. The existing system that takes untreated wastewater to the Stanley Avenue facility can get overloaded with significant rain. This causes overflows into nearby creeks and streams increasing the risk of contaminants. The new sewer alignment and treatment facility is targeted to reduce these overflows.

How will the Region ensure the natural environment is protected by this new infrastructure?

Protecting the environment is an important consideration when evaluating a site, outfall location and determining a new sewer system. Along with the social and cultural impacts, environmental impacts are weighted the highest in the evaluation criteria (25%).

As part of this Class Environmental Assessment (EA), the project team created an inventory of environmental features in the study area. This inventory was used to identify protected areas and help eliminate sites where the new wastewater strategy could have a negative environmental impact.

As part of next steps, we will conduct further environmental testing on the specific preferred site. This testing will give us a deeper understanding of potential impacts. It will also help inform the actions and measures we'll need to put in place to protect and preserve the environment during design, construction, and operation.

When will construction start and how long is it expected to last?

Following completion of this Class EA in spring 2022, design of the new wastewater treatment plant and the Montrose Road trunk sewer are anticipated to start in 2022. Construction of these components is anticipated to start in 2024, and the plant should be in-service in 2027.

As a homeowner or business owner, will I be able to connect into the new Thorold or Niagara Falls Trunk Sewers that are being constructed?

Niagara Region's project involves new trunk sewers that are extremely deep and intended to move flows from the system to the new treatment plant. The trunk sewer will not have any private service connections from it. Such connections will require a local servicing strategy from the City of Thorold and City of Niagara Falls.

How much traffic will be generated during construction and when the plant is operational?

Truck traffic is expected for the duration of the construction period, within the limits of local noise bylaws, due to the haulage of materials to and from the site. During regular plant operations, daily traffic would be expected related to operators attending the site, septage being received at the plant and biosolids hauled from the plant. Less frequent truck traffic on a weekly or monthly basis related to chemical and fuel deliveries would also be required. More infrequent, seasonal Recreational Vehicles visiting the plants for discharge at the treatment plant may also be expected, depending on demand.

Has the project been supported?

The project team has been working diligently to develop a solution that will support servicing for growth, minimize sewage pumping stations, reduce combined sewer overflows and maximize flexibility for the future. The project team is continuing to conduct extensive consultation with key stakeholder groups, approval agencies, property owners, residents, and Indigenous communities.

There have been four (4) public information centres held (May 2019, November 2019, March 2020 and February 2022). PIC No. 1, 2 and 3 were held prior to COVID-19 restrictions and were open house format with representation from residents in the study area. They were also streamed live over Facebook, and the video posted on the Region's website. PIC No. 4 was held virtually over Zoom with good participation. The Region invited Councillors and media to dedicated sessions prior to the PICs.

Who has been involved in the decision making?

Deciding where to locate a new wastewater treatment plant, outfall location, and sewer collection system requires a great deal of testing and input from many experts, stakeholders, and the public.

For South Niagara Falls Wastewater Solutions, we are following the Class EA process, which is a decision-making process that Ontario municipalities are required to follow when building new infrastructure. Success of the Class EA process requires active public and stakeholder engagement.

Niagara Region has directly consulted with: the City of Niagara Falls; the City of Thorold; the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; Ontario Power Generation; Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority; and property owners of short-listed sites for feedback to help inform the decision-making process.

Example of key stakeholders include:

- Federal Ministries
- Provincial Ministries
- Local Municipalities
- Indigenous Communities
- Ontario Power Generation
- Public Service Providers
- Conservation Authority
- Property Owners
- Communities (including businesses and residents)
- Rail/ Transit
- Utilities

In addition, we have been listening to the public and key stakeholders as we consider how the community may be impacted by the project. At the most recent PIC in February 2022, the project team presented the preferred alternative. We are now finalizing all the study reports which will be posted for public review. Once the Environmental Study Report is ready, it will also be available for feedback from the community.

What does the \$399M estimate include?

Class D planning level cost estimates (+/- 50% level of accuracy) indicate that the total capital cost for the entire program could be \$399.64M (indexed to the year of cashflow), which includes design, property acquisition, construction and commissioning of all components.

Cost estimates have been reviewed as part of constructability reviews. Final Class C estimates will be reviewed by a certified cost estimator at the completion of the Class EA. Further to this cost estimate, the costs will continue to be refined and estimated with greater accuracy and detail as the projects move through detailed design and prior to tendering for construction. The cost estimates have been developed in accordance with Canadian construction cost estimation standards and industry best practice.



How will the project be paid for?

This project is intended to support growth and address existing wet weather issues. Costs will be shared through development charges and the rate based budget. A big part of the rationale for the facility is due to growth and as such new development will pay through development charges such as lot levies. However the project will likely include some minor oversizing of specific components, as well as some upgrades to facilities serving the existing community, and these costs will be likely reflected in water/wastewater rates.

Niagara Region is also aware that both the Provincial and Federal governments frequently provide grants to municipalities to invest in new infrastructure that protects the environment, or promotes growth. Whenever possible these avenues will be pursued.

Won't a wastewater treatment facility negatively impact neighbouring property values? Will there be compensation?

The new facility is well integrated into the surrounding land use with no negative impacts. Good design combined with features such as landscaping and buffer zones, will make this facility an asset to the area.

Niagara Region's focus is on the success of the project, and thus does not see compensation to neighbours as being required.

How can I have a say before the final decision is made?

Comments are welcome anytime. You can fill out the feedback form on the [project webpage](#), or you can provide comments or concerns by email to the project team at New.Treatment.Plant@niagararegion.ca

In May 2022, the project team is expecting to issue the Notice of Completion and initiate the public review process for the Environmental Study Report. This will be advertised and available on the [project webpage](#).