

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

REPORT EDO-2026-01
April 28, 2026

SUBJECT: Economic Development Office – Annual Update

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**APPROVING
MANAGER:** Lisa Allen, Manager of Economic Development

APPROVER: Lina DeChellis, Director of Economic Development and
Strategic Initiatives

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the General Committee receive for information Report EDO – 2026 – 01 and the annual update presentation from the Economic Development Office on 2025 accomplishments.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This recommendation is aligned with Council’s strategic priority of ensuring “**Economic Growth**” by creating a diverse economy through partnerships and emerging markets to ensure sustainable growth and quality employment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Economic Development Office (EDO) - Annual Update outlines the City of Welland’s progress in 2025 in advancing Council’s strategic priority of ensuring economic growth. The key contributions include economic growth; job creation; attracting investment; community development; supporting small businesses; partnerships; and collaboration.

This report also provides an overview of the EDO’s leadership, in collaboration with other City departments, on implementing the [Charting Our Future: Welland Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#) (Strategic Plan). This includes strategic alignment works; staff engagement and communication; transparency and accountability; and key performance indicators. Collectively, the initiatives described in this report demonstrate the ongoing role of economic development in broadening the tax base, supporting municipal services, and enhancing quality of life for Welland residents.

BACKGROUND:

Economic development improves the economic well-being and quality of life for a community. It is not just about creating more jobs and increasing tax assessment. It also includes:

- Retaining businesses and helping to provide resources to help them expand;
- Securing new investment;
- Preparing residents for new careers connecting them to business in need of skilled workers;
- Developing economic resilience; and
- Facilitating relationships among stakeholders.

The resulting growth and investment strengthen the city's tax base, enabling the provision of essential services such as emergency services, infrastructure, parks and recreation, library services and more.

The City's 2023–2026 Strategic Plan, which was approved on June 6, 2023, focuses on Economic Growth, Environmental Stewardship, Health and Well-being, and Livability, guiding the city toward an active, resilient, sustainable community delivering the best quality of life possible for all. City staff have been implementing the plan through key projects and actions that align with the strategic priorities.

The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of the City of Welland's progress in 2025 in advancing Council's strategic priority of ensuring economic growth. This report also provides an overview of the EDO's leadership, in collaboration with other City departments, on implementing the Strategic Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Welland's EDO plays a vital role in fostering economic growth, attracting investment and creating employment opportunities along with helping lead the Strategic Plan implementation. The significance of the EDO contributions to economic development is evident in several key areas:

1. **Economic Growth:** The EDO helps drive economic growth by supporting existing businesses, attracting new enterprises and identifying emerging industries and their needs. This growth bolsters municipal revenue that is then reinvested into the community
2. **Job Creation:** By cultivating a business-friendly environment and offering essential resources. The EDO helps local businesses expand while encouraging new ventures, ultimately generating employment opportunities for Welland's residents.
3. **Attracting Investment:** The EDO actively seeks external investments from corporations and entrepreneurs through trade shows, networking advertising, incentive programs and helping to create shovel ready land

development opportunities. This leads to infrastructure development, new facilities and capital infusion into the local economy.

4. **Community Development:** Beyond financial growth, economic development enhances residents' quality of life through improved public amenities, support for cultural and recreational activities and strengthened community engagement.
5. **Supporting Small Businesses:** Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) are the backbone of Welland's economy. The EDO provides guidance, resources and incentives to help these businesses succeed and contribute to the city's economic vitality.
6. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Effective economic development relies on collaboration with local businesses, educational institutions, non-profits, associations and government agencies. The EDO serves as a key facilitator, leveraging partnerships to maximize resources and expertise.

In addition to the core economic development functions, the EDO is leading the implementation of the Strategic Plan in collaboration with all City departments. Steps taken to date include:

1. **Strategic Alignment Works:** In early 2025, staff from across the corporation participated in workshops to align department work plans and actions with the strategic priorities and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. These workshops helped to identify how operational activities could support City-wide goals.
2. **Staff Engagement and Communication:** To reinforce understanding and accountability across all levels of the organization, multiple Strategic Plan information sessions were scheduled in April 2025.
3. **Transparency and Accountability to Residents:** In June 2025, a public facing dashboard was launched that focused on measuring progress of each individual action and Strategic Plan objective. This tool, which is updated quarterly, communicates project progress and successes to the residents of Welland. This promotes transparency, engagement and highlight corporate accomplishments while providing timelines on upcoming initiatives.
4. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Through late 2025, all City departments were engaged in action planning workshops to develop KPI's for each respective department. These sessions included prioritizing goals and objectives for each team while also creating quantifiable metrics that measure the progress toward achieving the strategic priorities and objectives in the Strategic Plan. These KPIs will be rolled out for tracking in 2026.

In summary, Welland's EDO helps create a favourable environment for growth, fostering a dynamic economic environment that encourages investment, creates jobs and promotes community prosperity. It is a multifaceted approach that involves all City departments, staff and Council to ensure a sustainable and thriving local economy, while enhancing the lives of residents.

FINANCIAL:

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

ATTACHMENT:

Appendix I - Economic Development Annual Update Presentation