

## Committee of the Whole (2) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, June 18, 2024

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE: NIAGARA UNIVERSITY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
FOR DISCOUNTED TUITION RATES**

**FROM:**

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

**ACTION:** DECISION

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**Purpose**

Through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the City of Vaughan, Niagara University wishes to provide City employees, City Council, and/or their immediate family members, in addition to graduates of the City's Emerging Leader's Program, with certain discounted corporate-level tuition fees toward enrollment in select Niagara University's graduate-level programs.

**Report Highlights**

- Niagara University marks its 40th anniversary of offering post-secondary programs in Ontario in 2024. In January 2019, it opened its new permanent site in Vaughan, located in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. Founded in 1856, Niagara University, with its main campus in Lewiston, New York, chose Vaughan as its new binational site. City staff have worked collaboratively with representatives from Niagara University to advance Council-approved corporate initiatives.
- As part of the MOU, City staff will work with Niagara University to undertake promotional and engagement efforts about these discounted tuition rates available.
- As part of the City's Attraction and Retention Plan, Performance Management and Training Development is a core recommendation as part of the City's Attraction and Retention Plan, and the tuition discounts proposed by Niagara University are another opportunity for the City to deliver on its employees' attraction and retention efforts.

## **Recommendations**

1. THAT, the City Manager or designate be authorized to enter into and execute this memorandum of understanding, with Niagara University, in accordance with this report, on behalf of the City, in a form satisfactory to Legal Services;

## **Background**

***Niagara University marks its 40th anniversary of offering post-secondary programs in Ontario in 2024. In January 2019, it opened its new permanent site in Vaughan, located in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre.***

Niagara University marks its 40th anniversary of offering post-secondary programs in Ontario in 2024. In January 2019, it opened its new permanent site in Vaughan, located in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC). Founded in 1856, Niagara University, with its main campus in Lewiston, New York, chose Vaughan as its new binational site. Niagara University is an important presence in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, the City's emerging downtown core. The school's initial 12,000-square-foot site includes classrooms, faculty and administration offices and student lounge areas. The site is also within walking distance of the VMC subway station and further connected by the VivaNext bus rapid transit service.

***Since the arrival of Niagara University in Ontario to Vaughan, City staff have worked collaboratively with representatives from Niagara University to advance Council-approved corporate initiatives, and specifically, as it pertains to work led by the Economic Development department.***

City staff continue to work collaboratively with representatives from Niagara University to inform, advance and implement Council-approved corporate initiatives, and specifically, as it pertains to work led by the Economic Development department:

- In November 2019, Niagara University participated in the joint City of Vaughan—Vaughan Chamber of Commerce business mission to Israel. The delegation met researchers at Tel Aviv University, Israel's largest post-secondary institution, to discuss the future of Smart City technology and its role in developing autonomous vehicles to improve urban transportation.
- In February 2020, Niagara University participated in the City's annual Vaughan Business Expo, organized and led by the City's Economic and Development department. In May 2020, Niagara University further collaborated with the Economic Development department to launch an online speaker series during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The speaker series featured members of the university's faculty and

alumni, as well as community leaders who explored a series of different topics, including career counselling, working from home and financial security.

- In January 2021, Council approved a [Member's Resolution](#) marking the second anniversary of Niagara University at its Vaughan VMC location, and specifically recommended that: *“City staff continue to collaborate with Niagara University to advance shared priorities that help to enrich the Vaughan community through education, economic and talent development, public information and city-building initiatives.”*
- From 2021 to the present, Niagara University has been the training partner for the City's Summer Company student entrepreneurship program, providing students with access to university-level business training in marketing, business modelling, operations and finance. This arrangement with Niagara University also includes hosting the City's Summer Company student kick-off event in person at the university's VMC campus location each year.
- In October 2023, the Vaughan Business and Entrepreneurship Centre's and the Recreation Services department met with Niagara University's student recruitment team to advise them on ways to engage the Vaughan community through city-led events and broker introductions to external event organizers and events.
- In 2023, Economic Development, working in collaboration with the Filipino-Canadian Association of Vaughan, helped to facilitate a memorandum of understanding between Niagara University with the University of Baguio, Philippines; as part of the Council-approved May 2023 economic and cultural development Philippines mission, the City's delegation also represented Niagara University in Baguio.

***The City's Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer has partnered with Niagara University to provide learning and development opportunities for the Emerging Leaders program employees.***

Retaining skilled talent is also a priority and it is why the City implemented its very own Emerging Leaders Program. Emerging Leaders is a succession planning and leadership development program for staff interested in future leadership opportunities at the City. Being selected into the program supports career aspirations by establishing a clear and customized learning and development plan geared to an employee's needs and aligned with the City's leadership competencies.

As part of the Emerging Leaders program, the City has partnered with faculty and staff from Niagara University to provide learning and development opportunities for program employees. The Emerging Leaders program is now in its second cohort. As part of the proposed MOU between Niagara University and the City, Niagara University will offer a twenty percent (20%) discount on all tuition fees for all graduate-level programs, such as Niagara University's Master of Business Administration, by the Holzschuh College of Business Administration and College of Arts & Sciences to Emerging Leaders graduates. This provides further opportunities for the City to continue to retain and develop employees, who, in turn, will expand further skillsets. This opportunity helps better position staff to deliver on the City's mission of citizens first through Service Excellence by being better trained to implement Council-approved priorities.

### **Previous Reports/Authority**

[Tuesday, January 19, 2021, Committee of the Whole \(1\) Member's Resolution: Marking the Second Anniversary of Niagara University in Ontario in Vaughan.](#)

[Tuesday, February 13, 2024, Committee of the Whole \(2\) Report: Employee Attraction and Retention Strategy and Compensation Review.](#)

### **Analysis and Options**

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This initiative provides further opportunities for the City to continue to retain and develop employees, who, in turn, will expand further skillsets. This opportunity helps better position staff to deliver on the City's mission of citizens first through Service Excellence by being better trained to implement Council-approved priorities.

***Performance Management and Training Development is a core recommendation as part of the City's Attraction and Retention Plan, and the tuition discounts proposed by Niagara University are another opportunity for the City to deliver on its employees' attraction and retention efforts.***

The City of Vaughan is dedicated to ensuring its public service effectively meets the needs of residents, businesses and community members. However, the world of work is rapidly changing, particularly in a post-pandemic environment, and employers, including municipalities, are contending with various issues and challenges, including attracting and retaining top talent.

While many of the current workforce challenges facing the City are not unique, there are initiatives and best practices that the City can champion. These initiatives are crucial to bolstering the City's organizational capacity and bench strength, ensuring it remains a top employer in the face of evolving workforce dynamics.

As part of the City's Attraction and Retention Plan, Performance Management and Training Development are core recommendations, and the tuition discounts proposed by Niagara University in the proposed MOU in this report are another opportunity for the City to deliver on its employees' attraction and retention efforts.

This initiative aligns with the City's position as an Employer of Choice. It ensures it has the human capital required to support continued Service Excellence in alignment with its 2022-2026 Term of Council Strategic Plan.

As part of the MOU, City staff will work with Niagara University to undertake promotional and engagement efforts about the discounted tuition for City employees. The proposed MOU would remain in effect for twenty-four (24) months from the effective date and will automatically renew for successive twelve (12) month terms.

***Niagara University in Ontario's VMC site is expanding to include an additional 20,000 square feet. This expansion presents additional opportunities for further collaboration between the City and the university.***

Niagara University continues to be part of Vaughan's city-building future. Economic Development staff have supported Niagara University with the identification and outreach of prospective candidates for the advisory committees for three of their programs in support of their expansion plans. City staff have also committed support where required as part of their planned expansion in Vaughan and will continue to connect university officials with opportunities to contribute to the Vaughan business community.

### **Financial Impact**

The recommendations outlined in this report have no financial impact on the City of Vaughan.

### **Operational Impact**

The recommendations outlined in this report have no new operational impact on the City of Vaughan.

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

The recommendations outlined in this report have no broader regional impacts or considerations.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed MOU in this report is another opportunity for the City of Vaughan to strengthen relations with Niagara University, a critical city-building partner. At the same time, the MOU provides new and innovative ways to support the City's ongoing commitment to retain and attract talent in the corporation by further building off the successful Emerging Leaders program. Existing working relationships between City staff and Niagara University faculty and administration will help ensure successful and ongoing promotional engagement efforts to provide qualifying employees with tuition discounts and program opportunities.

**For more information**, please contact: Michael Genova, Chief, Communications and Economic Development

**Attachments**

N/A

**Prepared by**

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