



Niagara Catholic recognizes the urgency of mitigating the climate crisis and has committed to reduce our impact on the environment by implementing the Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability Policy and its associated administrative operational procedures or AOP.

In the words of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, “If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. The quest for peace by people of good will surely become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation.”

“The land is our mother; it is part of us just as we are part of it. What happens to the land, happens to us. We take only what we need from the Earth and endeavor, in return, to understand its mysteries; to appreciate it’s beauty; and to ensure that it will be here for our children.” Lame Deer, Sioux holy man

The following AOPs follow the six priorities provided in the Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability Policy. In addition, these procedures provide the necessary tools and references to make a marked and measured improvement upon the overall environmental impact created by Niagara Catholic across the Region, while promoting transparency and communication across our school communities.

1. ENERGY CONSERVATION

- 1.1. In 2015, 196 countries adopted the landmark Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change. The goal of this agreement is to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial age levels. Niagara Catholic will align with both Canada and the Province of Ontario’s target of 30% Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction from 2005 levels by 2030. An important requirement of achieving this target is the measurement of our estimated GHG produced on a yearly basis. This information will be gathered and shared with the school community for educational purposes and to engage the participation of staff and students.
- 1.2. Where financially feasible, Facilities Services will incorporate Net-Zero carbon emission strategies in the design of all new construction and major renovations/additions affecting 50% of the building area or more. In order to assess this, Niagara Catholic will request a cost-benefit analysis of the inclusion of this standard. Where the benefits exceed the costs and/or a maximum 5 year return on investment, the Net-Zero or most energy efficient standards will be included in the design. As a minimum, Net-Zero readiness will be a requirement of new construction and major renovations/additions. This will ensure the basic requirements for inclusion of this standard are implemented into the designs, and will permit Niagara Catholic to upgrade building components in the future when feasible to do so.
- 1.3. Facilities Services will conduct an energy audit of all school facilities to identify opportunities for energy efficiency improvements. The overall carbon footprint of individual schools and administrative buildings will be estimated and will be shared on the Board website in order to educate staff and students, while encouraging sustainable practices.

- 1.4. Energy efficient capital improvements will continue to be implemented by the Facilities Services Department including the use of a centralized building automation system or BAS across all school facilities, the conversion of interior and exterior lighting to energy efficient LED lighting complete with dimmers, timers and motion sensors where possible, upgrading heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, and ensuring new facilities are as environmentally friendly as possible.
- 1.5. Each school and administrative building shall create a voluntary Green Niagara Committee, who will be responsible for helping to communicate sustainable initiatives being implemented across the Board. They will also ensure their own facility is doing their utmost to reduce energy usage, ensuring lights are off at the end of the day, recycling goes into the correct bins and is being disposed of properly, and identify opportunities for further reductions including requesting water bottle filling stations. The Committee should include at least one caretaker, teacher, and student at each location. Meetings are to be on a monthly basis with the meeting highlights shared with the Principal and Controller of Facilities.

2. EDUCATION

- 2.1. Niagara Catholic shall continue to promote the sustainability of the environment and shall include this important role within the curriculum and through mandatory participation in the EcoSchools Program. Facilities Services will share the results of EcoSchool certification, energy consumption, and waste audits with the school communities and will promote a healthy competition between schools in order to integrate the knowledge gained and strive to produce marked improvements Board-wide.
- 2.2. The Board will endeavor to include professional development opportunities via subject-matter expert presentations and/or workshops at least twice per year for all school administrators and educators in order to reinforce the Board's commitment to a sustainable environment.
- 2.3. The Board shall include a sustainability component in their school curriculum and shall include opportunities for class trips and presentations by subject matter experts surrounding energy conservation and sustainability. A yearly class tour of the Niagara Region Community Recycling Centre, Composting facilities, and Regional Landfill shall be integrated into the curriculum where possible to enhance the student experience and reinforce this important aspect of society.
- 2.4. Facilities Services shall work with Information Technology Services to create a green dashboard for use on the Board website (public and private) and each school website, indicating the real time usage of their utilities, waste management progress, EcoSchools progress, and their estimated carbon footprint, as well as other relevant information surrounding sustainability within the schools and across the Board. The overall intent of this initiative is not only to encourage healthy competition between schools, but insert a level of transparency with respect to environmental stewardship & sustainability across the Board.

3. WASTE REDUCTION

- 3.1. Niagara Catholic will actively participate in the restoration of the environment and the conservation of our natural resources by maintaining our sustainable principles such as our 3R program (Reduce-Reuse-Recycle) and organics collection. The key performance indicators for this shall be the Ministry of the Environment mandated, yearly waste management audits of our facilities. These audits indicate the volume of the waste we are disposing into landfills versus what we are recycling. The results will be shared Board-wide on the website with a goal of 60% diversion of waste from landfills by 2030.

- 3.2. Niagara Catholic has effectively banned the use of single-use plastics as of September 2022 in conjunction with the Government of Canada's recent Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations (June 22, 2022), under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999. The Regulations phase-out the manufacture, import, export and sale of the following categories of single-use plastics by 2025: checkout bags, cutlery, food-service ware, ring carriers, stir sticks, and straws. Further to this list of single-use plastics is commercially sold bottled water. Empty water bottles are a major source of world-wide pollution and have been banned for use at all facilities across the Board since 2012. Two major opportunities for the reduction of single-use plastics include 1) providing water bottle filling stations throughout the Board; and 2) revising procurement standards to prohibit the use of single-use plastics, packaging, and bottled water. The progress of this strategy shall be measured by the results of the yearly waste audit as mandated by the Ministry.
- 3.3. All administrative and educational functions and gatherings shall adhere to this Policy and AOP and will strive to minimize the use of single-use plastics as much as possible.
- 3.4. These AOP shall apply to all Board-wide purchasing of goods and services including long-term contracts by not later than 2025 in line with the Environmental Protection Act (1999).
- 3.5. If access to safe, potable water is not available due to a water advisory, or emergency, any Board site may use water from commercial sources until such time that potable water has been restored, subject to the approval by the Medical Officer of Health and government regulations.

4. TRANSPORTATION

- 4.1. The Board understands the impact that fossil fuel fired emissions has on the environment and climate change. Going forward, the Board will strive to source alternative means of transportation for staff and students, utilizing energy efficient vehicles where financially feasible to do so. This includes the use of electric and hybrid powered vehicles.
- 4.2. In order to encourage the use of alternate powered vehicles, the Board shall work towards providing at least one electric vehicle charging station in all schools when the opportunity arises during renovations or upgrades of their parking lots. New school construction shall include multiple charging stations proportionate to the number of parking spaces provided (1 charging station per 150 parking spots with a minimum of 1).
- 4.3. The Board shall investigate the use of a green incentive for staff who modify their daily commute to ride-share with their colleagues, walk, or take public transit to their school or place of work. The timing and type of bonus shall be discussed by senior administration and implemented by the Director. Examples of these incentives could be monetary, gift cards, lieu time, or simply recognition among others.

5. RENEWABLE ENERGY

- 5.1. As stewards of the environment, the Board acknowledges our ability to explore opportunities to generate renewable energy on Board-owned properties where financially feasible to do so. Some of these opportunities available include solar, wind, and geothermal. The financial feasibility of these options will be decided by obtaining a cost-benefit analysis with a maximum of a 5 year return on investment.
- 5.2. Where the Board chooses to implement renewable energy on any property, the energy production, consumption and overall reduction in demand shall be measured and shared with the school community, staff and students so they can see the positive impact of these measures.

6. PARTNERSHIPS

- 6.1. The Board shall explore partnerships with various levels of government and/or utility providers to collaboratively reduce our reliance on fossil fuels across the Board. Wherever possible, Facilities Services will engage with local utilities and government to identify financial incentives and opportunities to partner with, share capital or operational costs of our sustainable initiatives to reduce costs to the Board.

- 6.2. Where renewable energy sources are implemented on school buildings, the Board will endeavor to partner with the local utility to augment power to the electrical grid and investigate opportunities for long-term cost savings via cogeneration. This information will be measured and shared with senior administration and the Board on an annual basis.

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