

# Press Release

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University Marketing & Communications
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# Brock report: Liquid Assets, Assessing Water's Contribution to Niagara

Being aware of Niagara's "water vulnerabilities" - weaknesses that threaten water quantity and quality - and adapting to these vulnerabilities are key for the region to deal with climate change, according to a new report released jointly by Brock University and Niagara Region.

"For example, one of the major vulnerabilities related to water is the limited storage capacity to provide water for peak demand periods," says the report, titled *Liquid Assets: Assessing Water's Contribution to Niagara*.

"Adapting in this circumstance may occur in the form of policies to limit water usage during peak periods, or actions to increase Niagara's total storage capacity."

Recent studies predict a range of impacts of climate change within the next few decades in Niagara, including rising temperatures, abnormal freeze-thaw cycles, droughts and extreme weather events.

"By uncovering and acknowledging water vulnerabilities in Niagara, individuals and organizations become better able to adapt to climate change," says the report.

Liquid Assets, funded by Niagara Region's WaterSmart Incentive program and researched by Brock's Environmental Sustainability Research Centre (ESRC), is a first-ever, comprehensive, full-scale assessment of the area's water supply and demand.

"The point of this report was to give us a snapshot in time of exactly how water is being used in the Niagara Region, the value of the various contributions that water makes to the region and how this water is governed," says Diane Dupont, economics professor and head of the ESCR research team.

"We need to think about what kind of adaptive capacity the region might have for dealing with shocks that are likely to come at the region for the next 15-20 years that will have potential impact upon water resources."

The report acknowledges that there is little water information and research specific to Niagara. It recommends that a central agency be set up to maintain a water information database.

It also calls for more research on Niagara's water vulnerabilities, ways to adapt to climate change and a deeper understanding of "the complex web of water governance" in Niagara.

#### For media interviews:

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- \* Katelyn Vaughan, project manager, Niagara Water Strategy, Niagara Region, 905-685-1571 x3544; Cell: 289 969 5146; katelyn.vaughan@niagararegion.ca

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## BACKGROUNDER: Some Niagara region water facts:

- \* More than 13 million tourists travel to Niagara each year, and many take part in, or enjoy, water-related activities.
- \* Interviews with community members indicated that water played a role in the location of many organizations in the Niagara Region. Of the 22 organizations that were interviewed, representing 15 different sectors, the majority agreed that they were based in Niagara in part or as a result of water availability.
- \* Based on available Canadian data, water values for Niagara are potentially very large, with many sector calculations resulting in estimates in the hundreds of millions of dollars.
- \* Water uses requiring withdrawal of water from the system alone amount to up to an estimated 537 million cubic metres per year. That is equivalent to using a volume of water similar to a full Olympic-size swimming pool every two and a half minutes!
- \* Consumptive use of water in Niagara may amount to between 149 million and 163 million cubic metres of water per year (178 Olympic swimming pools per day) for agricultural, commercial and industrial uses.