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## NEWS LOCAL

# Niagara a cheap place to do business: report

By Rob Houle

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### Rankings and cost indices for featured Canadian cities (listed from lowest cost to highest cost)

2014 Rank	City <sup>1</sup>	2014 Cost Index <sup>2</sup>	2014 Rank	City <sup>1</sup>	2014 Cost Index <sup>2</sup>
1	Moncton	90.1	9	Saskatoon	92.8
2	Charlottetown	90.4	10	Sudbury	93.5
3	Quebec City	90.7	11	Toronto	93.6
4	Fredericton	90.8	12	Kamloops	93.6
5	Halifax	91.6	13	St. John's	93.7
6	Niagara Region <sup>3</sup>	91.9	14	Edmonton	94.0
7	Winnipeg	92.0	15	Vancouver	94.6
8	Montreal	92.0			

<sup>1</sup> Cities represent an intentional mix of population, regional geography, major industries and economic circumstance.

<sup>2</sup> Business costs in this table are expressed as an index, with the United States being assigned the baseline index of 100.0. A cost index less than 100 indicates lower costs than the US. For example, an index number of 95.0 represents a 5.0 per cent cost advantage relative to the US.

<sup>3</sup> Niagara Regional Municipality.

KPMG graphic

Niagara is one of the cheapest places in Canada to do business, according to a new report.

In its 2014 Competitive Alternatives report, KPMG ranks Niagara the sixth most competitive place to do business among the 15 Canadian cities in the study. Moncton tops the report while Vancouver brings up the rear. The reports ranks Niagara (the 12 municipalities as a whole), ninth among 107 cities from 10 countries.

"The study is really focused on a cost-competitive place to do business," said Blaine Cameron, a tax partner with KPMG.

The reports says of the 15 Canadian cities Niagara has the lowest facility costs, which include the lowest industrial leasing costs and the second lowest office leasing costs. Transportation costs ranked third and natural gas costs fourth. The report says Niagara has the fourth best digital services and within that sub-sector it ranks first for video-game production.

Glenn Mair, a director with MMK Consulting Inc. and study director for KPMG's Competitive Alternatives study, explained the No. 1 ranking for video-game production was a reflection on Niagara's infrastructure and workforce.

"It's the cost attractiveness for a firm potentially considering establishing a new operation," Mair said. "We're taking a look at the quantitative aspect for a company considering a location wanting these types of employees and this type of space and so on — what's it going to cost to find these people and hire them in a particular location."

Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce chief executive officer Walter Sendzik said the report validates Niagara as a cost-competitive place to do business.

"When you examine our natural assets, if you will — natural assets being the existing infrastructure and assets such as existing industrial lands and commercial space — it does put us in a very competitive light," Sendzik said.

Sendzik said the report's findings could lure to Niagara companies looking to do business in the GTA or upstate New York markets.

"If you were looking at establishing a business, those cost savings, those cost benefits, make for a pretty good picture if you're looking to tap into those market places," Sendzik said.

Sendzik said he sees the potential for growth in the digital and video-game industry because of "the infrastructure investments that have been made to support the gaming sector. The technology is there to support the continued development of that cluster ... but it's still an emerging cluster. It's not something that I would consider to be rooted in Niagara yet, but we've got the investments in the technology to support the cluster. It's still an emerging industry."

KPMG says on its website the study looked at a wide range of issues when assessing competitiveness for business with a primary focus on business costs, but also separately considered population and demographics, education and skilled labour, innovation, infrastructure, economic conditions, regulatory environment, cost of living and personal quality of life.

To view KPMG's 2014 Competitive Alternatives report, go online at: [www.kpmg.com/ca](http://www.kpmg.com/ca)

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