



Niagara Research and Planning Council

CALL TO ACTION FOR A BETTER NIAGARA



# A SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

## of all those who made Living in Niagara – 2008 possible

### **The Steering Committee of the Niagara Integrated Social and Community Planning Project ...**

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### **The Research Working Group who oversaw the work of Living in Niagara, 2008 ...**

Catherine Mindorff (Chair), Troy Brooks, Frances Hallworth, Louise Murphy, Willy Noiles, Liz Palmieri, Rick Tarajos and Kirk Weaver.

**Funding sponsors ...** Living in Niagara - 2008 was financially supported by The Niagara Community Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, the United Way of St. Catharines and District, Opportunities Niagara, Bridges Community Health Center and the Region of Niagara.

### **Author, lead researcher and original designer of Living in Niagara – 2008 ...**

Dr. Heather Lee Kilty of the Leadership Institute and Brock University

### **Other researchers ...**

Karen Cudmore, Research Assistant. Other community and organizational researchers in Niagara shared information.

### **Report photos, final format and design for printing...**

Spritz Creative who also donated professional time to the project.  
Photographs of Niagara by Lora Rode.

### **Community graders ...**

A special thank you to the community persons who read the report and rated the indicators and areas of Living in Niagara - 2008.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

What is Living in Niagara – 2008

The context of Niagara and key information about its residents

Arts, Culture and Heritage in Niagara	page 11
Getting Around Niagara: Transportation in Niagara	page 15
Environment in Niagara	page 18
Education in Niagara	page 23
Housing and Shelter in Niagara	page 26
Crime, Safety and Security in Niagara	page 30
Health and Wellness in Niagara	page 33
Work and Employment in Niagara	page 38
Income, Prosperity and Poverty in Niagara	page 41
Belonging and Leadership in Niagara	page 47
Getting Started in Niagara	page 51
Summary and Next Steps	page 54

NOTE: Each section has a cover page with information on why that area is important, what it covers, what we are doing well and where we can improve. Each section describes the key indicators related to that area including trends and available comparative data.

All tables, figures and references are embedded in the report and most references are identified by the source or access hyperlink and were retrieved August, September and October of 2008. A list of Tables, Figures and References are available on request as an Appendix. The full document with tables and charts is at [www.livinginniagarareport.com](http://www.livinginniagarareport.com)



# Welcome to Living in Niagara – 2008

Welcome  
to the  
description  
of Niagara as  
a place to  
live, 2008

**Living in Niagara - 2008** is a description of critical indicators and areas of life in Niagara. It describes the vitality of Niagara as a place to live, learn, work and grow. The document reports on how well we are doing in comparison to provincial and national trends in eleven areas critical to community quality of life. The report is intended to be comprehensive and accessible for the general public to reflect on and to promote future dialogue about planning and actions for improvement. It was funded and conducted by a group of regional community leaders with the assistance of a research team.

Through consultations with the Steering Committee of the Niagara Social and Community Planning Project and its Research Working Group made up of community leaders and stakeholders, 11 key areas were identified that are affecting the quality of community life in Niagara. Within each area indicators were identified and described along with relevant information, data and research about how we are doing in Niagara. The process was an attempt to measure and reflect on the critical indicators of life in our Region and its vitality now and to plan for the future.

It is our hope that this document will be a relevant and vital tool to be used in the coming years and it is offered in the spirit of community capacity building and collaboration. Living in Niagara, 2008 highlights fundamental trends affecting our community's quality of life and was compiled by a team of research professionals using available data from numerous reliable and respected sources.

Who was  
involved in  
bringing  
Living in  
Niagara,  
2008 to  
you?

The group overseeing the production of the report included representatives from the funding agencies, as well as community leaders from across the region. The report was financially supported by a collaboration of Niagara funders, including the Niagara Community Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, the United Way of St. Catharines and District, Opportunities Niagara, Bridges Community Health Center and the Region of Niagara.

**Living in Niagara, 2008 provides a status report of the Niagara Region as a place to live, work and grow.**



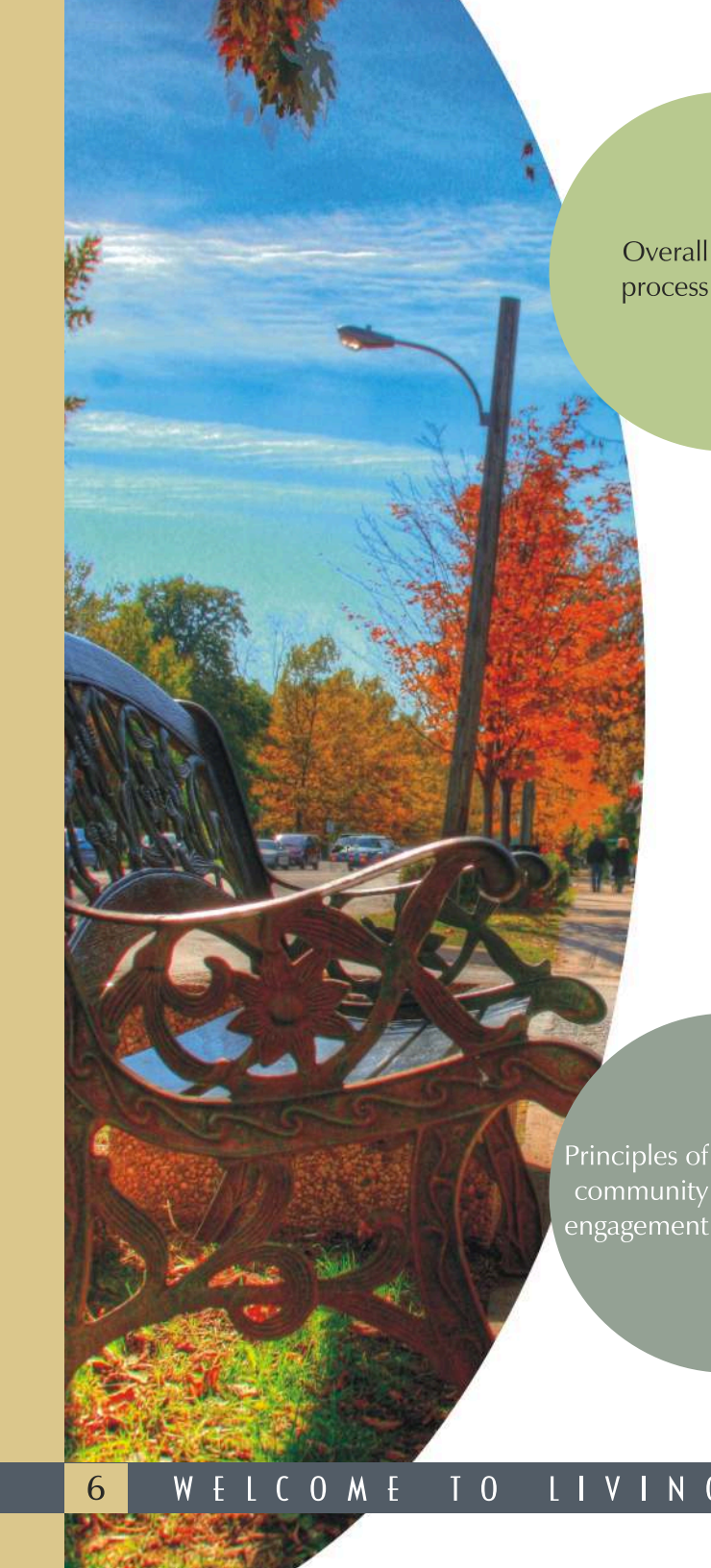
## Hopes, visions and intentions

It is the hope and intention of the planners that we can celebrate with pride the many aspects of life in Niagara and the progress that has been made in this region. At the same time, it is our intent to identify areas of concern that can be addressed and improved for the future health and sustainability of our region. Collectively, we have the capacity to learn and to work together to make positive changes for our future based on the best information we have available and the best strategies we can utilize to make a positive difference. By mapping indicators of our community's vitality, we hope to increase awareness and to identify significant trends that provide insights into issues that matter to the residents of Niagara. It can be used as an effective tool to encourage discussion about key areas of importance to our quality of life, now and for the future.

## Phases of the Project

A researcher was hired to work with the Research Working Group of the Integrated Social and Community Planning Project to plan and implement the report. The following phases were adopted to complete the report:

- **Phase one:** Develop areas and indicators: methodology, survey sample, findings, secondary research, areas and indicators.
- **Phase two:** Prepare report: data collection, review, verification, synthesis and writing.
- **Phase three:** Publish report: design and publication.
- **Phase four:** Disseminate report for grading by a key informant group and members of the general public.
- **Phase five:** Dissemination of report to the general public and presentations for community dialogue, consultations and action planning.
- **Phase six:** Prepare for the next Living in Niagara status report.



### Overall process

This initiative grew out of the work of leaders who had a vision to measure the vitality of our region and to make this information available to engage the public in action and community capacity building to continuously improve Niagara. The Integrated Social and Community Planning Steering Committee embarked on a process to design a social and community planning model for Niagara and engaged community leaders in a process, a forum and dialogue. Out of the discussions, the need was identified to conduct a review of life in Niagara now and as an ongoing endeavour.

The task was challenging because there are many data sources and varied boundaries for how information is made available. Not all available data was current, compatible or comparable, making the task even more difficult than originally anticipated. Reports and data exist from each of the 12 separate municipalities, from the Region of Niagara, and the Local Health Integration Network-(LHIN) that includes Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant. Census data is made available by community profiles broken down by Census Tract Areas, Municipalities, Regions or Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs). Niagara participates in the Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI) gathering data with 25 other Canadian Municipalities for comparative purposes and the Federation of Canadian Communities (FCM) Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS) with 20 Canadian communities representing 40% of the country's population.

Community leaders were consulted via an online survey to help identify the most useful indicators for each of the 11 key areas. Through this process, the planners and researchers learned about existing data that was being collected and reported locally by various organizations that would be useful to this report and groups shared their information generously.

### Principles of community engagement

The principles of community engagement and community capacity building were embedded in the development of the project and its vision for the future. The community was engaged through collecting data, identifying the areas and indicators, responding to surveys, discussing aspects of the data, grading the indicators, planning meetings and a prior community forum to develop a planning model for Niagara and to decide on the need for preparing this document. The principles of collaboration, information sharing, consultation, dialogue, shared decision making and communication were part of the engagement process.





Research  
methodology,  
key areas and  
indicators

An online survey tool was used to contact members who had been part of the Niagara Integrated Social and Community Planning Project (the NISCPP) forum and process to get their input on the key areas that would describe life in Niagara and what indicators were relevant to measuring how Niagara was doing in each area. The suggested list was presented to the NISCPP Steering Committee and the Working Group for review and formed the basis of the research. Indicators were selected using the following criteria:

- Relevance to the issue area
- Perceived public interest
- Understandability
- Measurability
- Ease and cost of data collection
- Frequency of collection for future use and comparisons over time
- Based on the Niagara Region as the scope of the information

Existing research data from Statistics Canada, census data, government reports and research studies were collected, reviewed and analyzed for reliability and validity to be included in this document. Where possible, Niagara data was compared to provincial, national or municipal data or existing standards. When available, trends for Niagara over time were presented. Websites were accessed and data retrieved August, September and October, 2008. It was decided that the data required for the report would be regional in focus at this time. Data by neighbourhoods and municipalities would be presented in the future

Use of the  
Population  
Health/ Health  
Determinants  
/Health  
Indicators  
Perspectives

While there are 11 separate sections in the report, each of them are connected and are all determinants of health that influence an individual living in Niagara and the health of the entire community. Determinants of health from a population health perspective include housing, transportation, lifestyle, the environment, education, employment, recreation and access to health care in addition to genetic and other psycho-social determinants.

A holistic approach to the health of Niagara's citizens includes physical, psychological, emotional, social, environmental, occupational and spiritual health.

Source: Statistics Canada, Health Indicators -2008 no. 82-221-X





# Main findings of the report ...

- Niagara has a high rate of completion of education for high school, trades and college and a low completion rate of university compared to other areas in Canada.
- Our literacy rates are comparable to other cities and regions, but may not be uniform across the region.
- Crime rates are down in Niagara as in other cities and no hate crimes have been reported.
- Niagara has the 4th largest seniors' population in Canada and this population is growing which will be great for a pool of more volunteers, but this means more services and care will be required for seniors over time.
- Niagara has a present and growing shortage of physicians and nurses.
- The rates of obesity, smoking, heart disease and high blood pressure are of concern.
- Many of Niagara's families and children live below poverty line. Low income families are suffering and have little money for food and other necessities of life, especially women led lone-parent families.
- The average earnings and incomes are below those in Ontario.
- Over 40% of the Niagara population spend over 30% of their income on shelter.
- The numbers on the waiting list for affordable housing in Niagara are the highest of all Ontario cities and regions and the wait times are long.
- We have a growing number of singles on social assistance.
- A new hospital with increased services for oncology, emergency care, mental health and cardiac care is being planned for location in the city of St. Catharines.
- Niagara has many engaged in employment in arts, culture and heritage and they could be paid better.
- Millions of tourists visit the region, travel mostly by car and attend arts, culture and heritage functions.
- Niagara has a high rate of smog days and deaths after high pollution times in Niagara.
- Niagara's overall Economic Development Index is one of the lowest of the 24 larger areas in Canada.
- Homelessness is a growing concern in Niagara.
- Transportation across the region for work and to access services is a challenge.
- A low percentage of our citizens use public transit to get to work.
- We have one of the highest unemployment rates and lowest employment rates in Ontario.
- While new employment opportunities are emerging, many of the larger employers in goods producing and manufacturing are shrinking and sales and service sectors are growing.
- Niagara has plenty of leaders and citizen participation in Niagara, but we have some challenges in how to take action collectively at a regional collaborative level.
- Niagara has one of the highest motor vehicle fatality rates in Ontario.

**Enjoy reading Living in Niagara - 2008.**

We hope you decide to get involved to make things even better for the future.





Grading how  
we are doing

It was decided that once the Living in Niagara, 2008 document was complete and key areas were described and quantified, that community citizens would be involved in grading how Niagara was doing. Each area and indicator was graded using the following grading levels:

- Level 1. In dire need of corrective action**
- Level 2. Of concern, needs attention**
- Level 3. Progress is being made**
- Level 4. We're doing well and headed in the right direction**
- Level 5. We're doing great – Niagara is a leader**

Figure 1 Map of Niagara



Source: <http://www.niagararegion.ca/news/2003/nov17-03.aspx>

“No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew. *Albert Einstein*”

“You must be the change you want to see in the world. *Ghandi*”

The Geographical Information System (GIS) is a computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing objects and events. GIS combines the power of a database with the visualization capabilities offered by maps. Niagara Region is developing and expanding the use of an internet portal in Niagara to assist the public to have access to information and locations of regional services and resources. [www.yourniagara.ca](http://www.yourniagara.ca)



## The context of Niagara and key information about its residents

The more we know about our Region and the people we share this community with, at this point in time in history, the better. The context for this report is the Region of Niagara that is made up of 12 unique and distinct municipalities that include the urban and rural areas of: Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Niagara Falls, Welland, Niagara-On-The-Lake, Pelham, St. Catharines, Thorold, Wainfleet, West Lincoln, Grimsby and Lincoln. Niagara residents share space, resources, ideas, talents and time together. They live, shop, work, play and relate. Differences in ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and perspectives make Niagara alive with diversity with a variety of talents, contributions and needs. Identifying relevant trends, patterns and population demographics at this point in time will help Niagara to plan its future.

For statistical data purposes, Niagara is described in different ways and this affects the data collection, trend analyses and possible comparisons with other municipalities. Niagara is described by Census Canada as the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of St. Catharines-Niagara and as the Regional Municipality of Niagara. Its boundaries and statistics are also gathered as a Census Tract by the clusters of postal codes within the area. Niagara statistics are also summarized as part of the Local Integrated Health Network (LIHN) that includes Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant.

## The population of Niagara

Census 2006 reports a Niagara population of 427,421, up 4.1% from 2001. Ontario's population increased 6.6% from 2001 and Canada's rose 5.4%. By 2012, Niagara is projected to have 489,500 residents. The foreign-born population in Niagara was 18% of the population (10.4% recent immigrants from 2001-2006). In 2006, 6,930 people declared they were Aboriginal in Niagara. The median age of Niagara's population was 41.9 years in 2006, compared to 39.0 years in Ontario and 83.2% of the population of Niagara is over 15 years of age (81.8% in Ontario). A total of 16.8% are 0-14 years of age (17.7% of Canada); 65.8% are 15- 65 years of age (68.6% of Canada); and 17.4% are over 65 (13.7% of Canada). By 2006, 13.6% of Ontario's population was 65 and older, up from 12.9% in 2001.

## Households of Niagara

The Regional Municipality of Niagara is home to 73.3% married couple families; 10.3% common-law couple families; 13.1% female, lone parent families; and 3.2% male lone-parent families. A total of 163,334 households are in Niagara.

In Ontario, 86% of individuals live in some form of family unit (married, common-law or lone parent families). The remaining 14% live as unattached individuals (12%) or reside with relatives (2%). From 2001 to 2006, there has been a 9% increase in the number of unattached individuals. The divorced population grew by 13.8%, separated couples by 10.8% and legally married couples by 5.5%. *Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006 Community Profiles*



# ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN NIAGARA

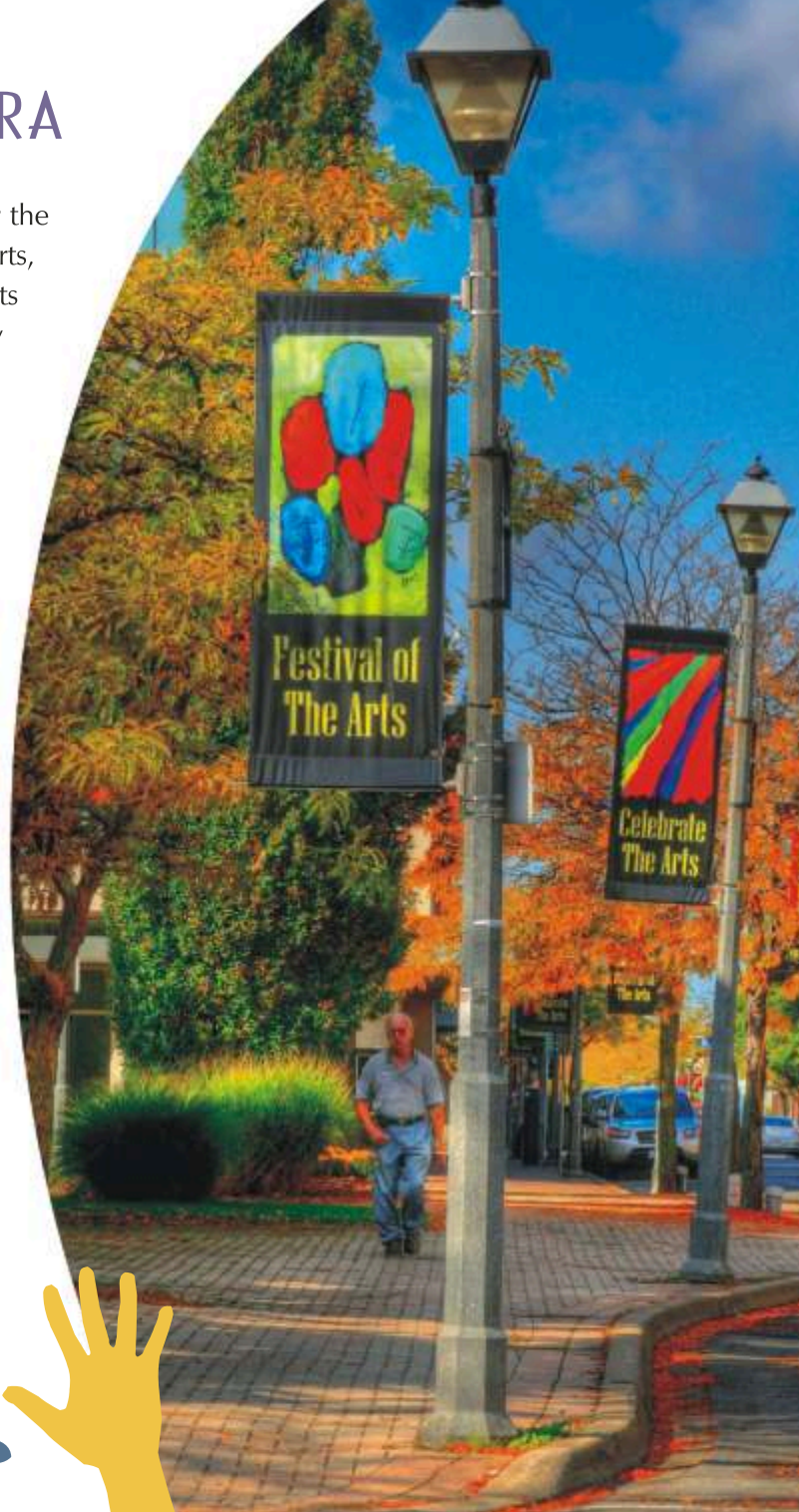
The presence and creative expressions of the arts, culture and heritage provide vibrancy for the community and an atmosphere of creativity, vitality, diversity and inclusion. In addition, the arts, culture and heritage can be significant positive drivers of a sustainable local economy. The arts can include performing, written, visual and media arts. Heritage resources include the history and traditions of an area and are evident in the buildings, collections, sites, events and stories. On a personal level, the arts can entertain, stimulate and inspire.

## What we are doing well ...

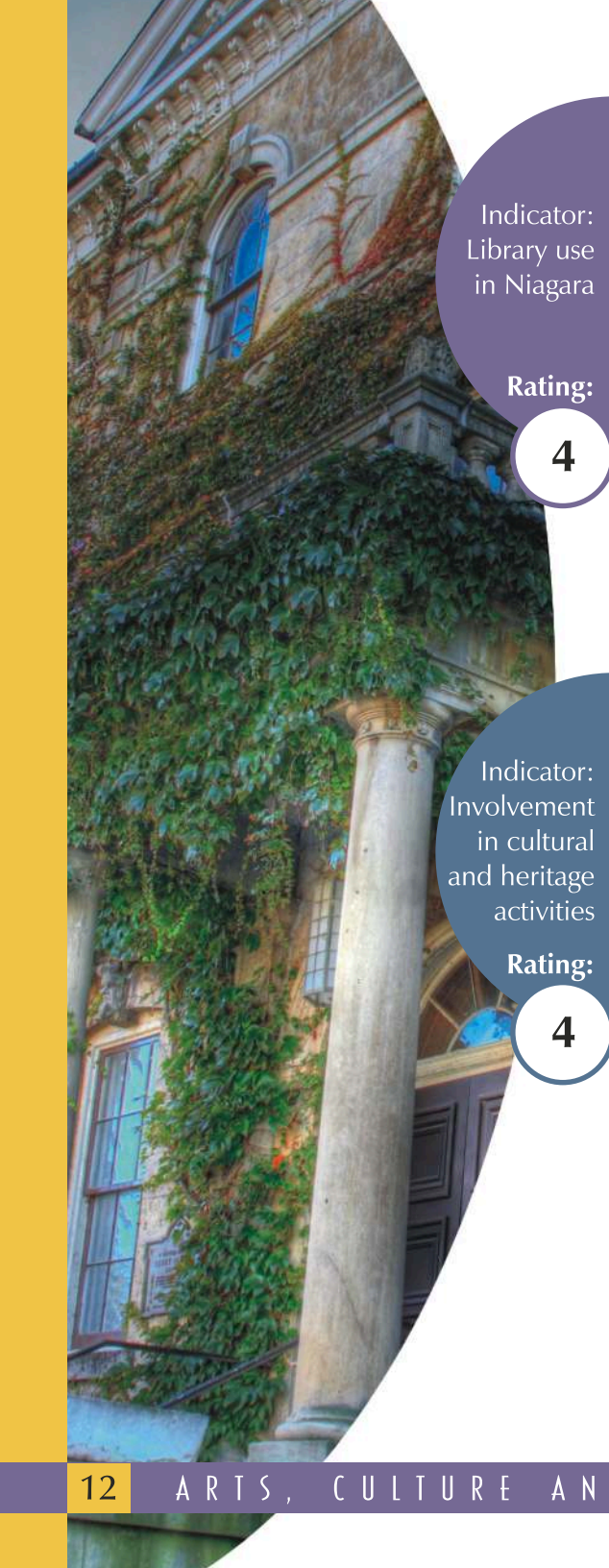
Throughout the year, Niagara offers a rich diversity of multi-cultural and ethnic festivities and celebrations and many musical and cultural festivals. The Shaw Festival, Brock University Centre for the Arts and the Fallsview Casino, along with smaller theatres in Welland, Port Dalhousie, Port Colborne and Niagara Falls attract local and visiting audiences and employ performers. Brock University's School of Fine and Performing Arts offers programs in theatre and the arts, and administers the Rodman Hall Arts Center. Niagara has a Niagara Symphony Orchestra, Chorus Niagara and a Niagara Youth Orchestra and offers a Niagara International Chamber Music Festival. Cultural grants from the Region, municipalities, multi-cultural centers, Trillium Foundation, The Canadian Council for the Arts, The Department of Canadian Heritage and others support a mix of visual, written, performing and media arts. The Niagara Region Culture Committee is developing a cultural plan for Niagara. In Niagara, libraries have increased their number of cardholders compared to the province, and residents visit libraries regularly in person and electronically.

## Where we can improve ...

More could be done to inspire and support the artistic population to come to Niagara, to remain here and to make a better living wage. Plans to build, sustain and involve a strong cultural and heritage sector would foster diversity, enhance tourism and contribute more to a vibrant local economy. We need to develop an improved infrastructure for cultural and heritage networking; promote and support the important role of heritage in our community and in the stimulation of economic and civic engagement; and analyze the impact of culture and heritage on Niagara.







Indicator:  
Library use  
in Niagara

Rating:

4

Increased opportunities to visit the library in-person or with a “virtual” online visit enhances a public's exposure to arts, heritage and culture. Niagara has a wide array of libraries, ranging from small community run facilities to much larger branches. Most notably, in 2004-2005, the provincial libraries reported a decrease of -2.46% in Active Library Card Holders (those that had been used within a 2 year period) while Niagara had an increase in Card Holders, up by 1.05%.

Collectively, there were over 224,382 active cardholders in Niagara in 2005 (175,000 in Waterloo). In Niagara, in 2005 there were 4,642,870 visits to the library which included both physical and online or “virtual visits” (up by 1.05%). The largest jump from the previous year (2,789,600 visits) was in the number of electronic visits, which rose significantly from 615,800 in 2004 to 2,518,070 in 2006. In-person visits however, only dropped slightly even with the increase in access electronically, with 2,173,800 in-person visits in 2004 vs. 2,124,800 in 2005. Source: Ministry of Culture Report: <http://www.culture.gov.on.ca>

Indicator:  
Involvement  
in cultural  
and heritage  
activities

Rating:

4

In most provinces, as in Canada as a whole, cultural and heritage activities attracted about the same percentage of the population in 2005 as in 1992. Given the strong population growth in most provinces between 1992 and 2005, all cultural and heritage activities saw an increase in the number of provincial residents attending, visiting, reading, watching or listening.

Reading (88%), music (83%) and watching videos (80%) are among the most popular cultural and heritage activities reported in all provinces in 2005 for those over 15 years of age. Ontario and British Columbia were the only provinces where heritage activity (visiting a conservation area or nature park) attracted over half of the population in 2005. The number of golf courses and fitness and recreational centers increased in Canada, as they have in Niagara.

In Ontario, larger audiences were brought together for cultural and heritage performances in 2005 than in 1992 (i.e. Aboriginal dance, Chinese opera or Ukrainian dance). Other activities reported were visits to museums, public art galleries and historic sites. Source: The Hill Strategies Report - Profile of cultural and Heritage Activities in Ontario, 2007, from Statistics Canada General Social Surveys 1992 and 2005

In Niagara, the Ontario Arts Council received applications for a total of 2,353 arts and cultural activities in Niagara for 2006-2007 and 473,511 attendees were recorded at those events. The Shaw had the largest attendance figures in 2007 for theatre in Niagara and 265,648 tickets were sold (59.3% Canadian and local; 40.3% from the US; and 4% from overseas). Source: [http://www.shawfest.com/web/content.asp?docid=7\\_1\\_0](http://www.shawfest.com/web/content.asp?docid=7_1_0)



Indicator:  
Spending  
related to  
culture  
in Niagara

Rating:

4

Canada's three largest Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver, are perceived as the culture capitals of our nation, and they led all CMAs in terms of numbers of workers and percent of their labour forces engaged in culture industries in 2001. Together, these cities accounted for 64% of all CMA culture industry workers.

However, Niagara was known for having the highest per-capita spending for arts and culture in Canada (\$51 per person), followed by Winnipeg (\$45 per person) and Ottawa–Hull (\$44 per person).

Source: Statistics Canada, *Census 2006*

Indicator:  
Employment  
and earnings  
in culture  
heritage and  
the arts in  
Niagara

Rating:

2


In 2001, 52,500 people in Ontario reported earnings as artists, nearly twice as many as any other province. The arts labour force comprised less than 1% of the overall labour force (0.8%). St. Catharines – Niagara had 0.06% of its labour force employed as actors and comedians, the same as the national CMA average. However, Niagara reported the highest percentage of the labour force in the performing arts industry (0.26% versus 0.13% nationally), mostly because of the Shaw Festival.

The average earnings of artists in Ontario were \$26,800; 24% less than the average earnings in Ontario (\$35,200). The average earnings of artists in St. Catharines–Niagara CMA were \$19,000; 37% less than other labour force workers. The four municipalities with the highest earnings gap between artists and other labour force workers were St. Catharines (48%), Thunder Bay (51%), Whitby (55%), and Vaughan (55%). Artists make one-half of what other labour force workers make.

Canadian artists accounted for 1.4 billion dollars in earnings in 2001. From 1991 to 2001, the overall growth in artists was 33% in Ontario and 29% in Canada. Niagara-On-The-Lake was identified as the 3rd highest Census Subdivision in Canada, accounting for a 2.2% increase the number of artists in Canada. Fort Erie and Niagara-On-The Lake saw the greatest increase in artists in this period.

In 2005, of the rural areas in Canada, the region of south-western Ontario identified by the LOS postal code, (west of Niagara Falls, including Pelham) had an artist concentration of 1.3%, tied for 8th of rural areas of Canada. Sources: Statistics Canada, *Census, 2001, 2006*. <http://hillsstrategies.com> (2005). *Artists by neighbourhood in Canada*, The Shaw Festival as part of this area in Niagara-On-The-Lake employed the most artists and performers in the Niagara Region. Source: <http://shawfest.com>





Indicator:  
Cultural  
assets in  
Niagara

Rating:

4

Culture includes all the activities, traits, places, events and people who articulate who we are and what we do. Niagara is engaged in Cultural Asset Mapping as a way of presenting information on what cultural assets are in the region that adds to our quality of life. Based on a report by the Region's Culture Committee to Regional Council (2007), Niagara has:

- **117 cultural facilities** (including libraries, museums, art galleries, theatres, archives, aboriginal centers, bars and clubs that provide live entertainment and non-traditional venues that regularly exhibit visual arts, theatre, music readings or film);
- **171 arts and cultural organizations and educational providers**, especially, not-for profit organizations (145 entries include theatre, music, aboriginal and ethno cultural organizations, literary and visual arts groups, historic and genealogical societies, municipal cultural and heritage committees, guilds and "Friends" associations, and cultural providers);
- **405 for profit sector cultural and heritage businesses and industries** (cultural businesses and industries in Niagara including graphic designers, book stores, all types of media, commercial theatres and galleries, photography studios, artists studios, architects, art supply shops, music stores, dance studios, movie theatres, web designers, recording studios, publishers, printing studios).
- **155 cultural festivals and events** (aboriginal events, agricultural festivals and fairs, craft events, arts events, music festivals, ethno cultural festivals, special events and celebrations, interpretive programs, walks and tours and studio and garden tours).
- **1,293 cultural sites** have been recorded.
- **1,490 identified artists.**

Indicator:  
Heritage &  
historical  
sites in  
Niagara

Rating:

4

Heritage preservation is a key component in developing liveable and creative cities by giving a community a distinct identity and fostering a place of belonging and inclusion (St. Catharines Heritage Report, 2006). There is a network of heritage sites and designated areas throughout Niagara. A total of 1,293 cultural sites were recorded by the Regional Culture Committee in Phase I of their data gathering. These sites include cultural landscapes, heritage districts, designated heritage buildings, archaeological sites, sacred places and aboriginal sites that are often marked by provincial and national historic plaques.

Historical centers in Niagara of national and international significance are Upper Canada and the War of 1812; The Underground Railway; Natural History; and Niagara's designation as an internationally known biosphere. The history and international significance of the site of Niagara Falls, historical areas along the Niagara River maintained by the Niagara Parks Commission and the Welland Canal Heritage Corridor are of heritage and tourism importance.



# GETTING AROUND NIAGARA TRANSPORTATION IN NIAGARA

It is important to be able to move from one place to another to be able to work, live, relate, play, volunteer and access services. To have available and accessible means of transportation to get around with ease, at an affordable cost and with low harm to the environment can have a significant impact on positive living in Niagara.

## What we are doing well ...


The region of Niagara is a large geographic area that includes 12 municipalities that make up the region: 5 cities, 5 towns and 2 townships in a rural, urban mix. As with a majority of Canadians, the favourite mode of transportation is the automobile, but this is even more so in Niagara. Niagara Region offers alternative modes of transportation and buses that connect to Brock University and to Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology. Niagara has excellent walking trails and 522 km of cycling networks along the Niagara River, the Welland Canal, the Bruce Trail and in designated municipal areas. The Niagara Public Health Department and others are involved in promoting walking and cycling in the region. A Job Bus operates in the region and the Specialized Transit has been operating for a year.

## Where we can improve ...

Niagara covers a large geographic area and while public transportation exists mostly within cities, transportation between cities and towns is a challenge to Niagara citizens. For those without cars, and those who are disabled, the challenges are immense. Region-wide transportation services have been identified as a priority need. Because of increased urban sprawl, Niagara is not well connected with public transportation across Niagara, especially for those with low income, no car or special mobility challenges. Services, including some health care services are becoming more regional and centralized and this poses a great challenge to the public to be able to access needed services and recreational offerings in the region. Getting to work and to school is also a challenge, especially because of skyrocketing gas prices and for those without cars or with low wages. Peak times of the year and day create congestion on the QEW and the 406, highways that cross the region and connect to the four international border crossings to the United States. The rising costs of transportation and the lack of regularly scheduled inter-municipal public transit make getting from Niagara to other city centers difficult.







Indicator:  
use and  
availability  
of modes of  
transportation  
to work in  
Niagara  
**Rating:**

2

**Modes of transportation to work ...** The General Social Survey (GSS, 2006) explored modes of travel to work for Canadians. As with other parts of Canada, the automobile was the predominant mode of travel in Niagara. In 2006 in Niagara, 89.9% of the population identified using the car as the primary mode of travel to get to work. This number was slightly down from 1996 (90.8 %) and 2001 (91.1%). Out of 35 communities listed across Canada, only 4 other communities used the car more than Niagara as their main mode of transportation.

**Public transit ...** Only 2.5% of Niagara residents reported they used public transit to get to work in 2006, up very little from 2.0% in 1996, and 2.0% in 2001. Niagara's use of public transit was far below Ontario's use of public transit at 15.1% and most other CMA's in Ontario (Kitchener - 4.8%; Hamilton - 8.7%). Naturally, larger urban areas in Canada showed the most use of public transit: Toronto (22.2%), Ottawa-Gatineau (21.2%) and Halifax (11.9%).

**Other modes of transportation ...** 5.0 % of Niagara residents reported walking to work, 1.5% cycling to work and 1.1% taking other modes of transportation work. Use of alternatives to the auto and public transit went up only slightly between GSS reporting times. The median commuting distance Niagara residents reported to work was 5.9 km in 2006, and 5.5 km in 2001. Cycling to work in the right season is a possible, but not often chosen option for many Niagara residents.

Source: <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89F0115X&CHROPG=1>

Indicator:  
Use of  
buses and  
specialized  
transit in  
in Niagara  
**Rating:**

2

Only 2.5% of those in Niagara report taking public transit to work. Buses were also used for purposes other than work. Bus transit is operated within each municipality and there are at total of 44 fixed routes and service areas covered in 2006.

In Niagara, Para-transit and Ontario Patient Transit (OPT) services are operational. Cancer Society and March of Dimes offer transportation to patient appointments. In 2007, Niagara Specialized Transit was operationalized. While a majority use the specialized transit for medical reasons, its use for education and work is increasing. Users are accompanied by assistive devices; wheelchairs mostly. Specialized transit use in Niagara increased by approximately 165%. (Jan. to May 2007/2008). When prorated to December 31, 2008, 8,772 rides may be used in 2008. Niagara Falls had the greatest ridership with 1,429 of the yearly rides, or 39% of the rides. Source: <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/government/initiatives/nst/default.aspx>



Indicator:  
Paved roads  
in Niagara

Rating:

3

**Paved and unpaved roads in Niagara ...** since the use of the automobile appears to be essential to live and work in Niagara, the condition of roads, their maintenance and congestion are of relevance to quality of life and work in Niagara. Regional roads are rated using the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) developed by the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA). The 2006 result indicates continued progress in this measure with 61.8% roads paved in Niagara compared to 57% average benchmark in Ontario. <http://www.ombi.ca/index.asp>

Niagara Region maintains 1,626 lane kilometres of paved roads and costs varied over a 5 year period. The Ontario Municipal Benchmark Index (OMBI) regions are developing consistency in reporting data. In 2006, the 1,626 kilometres of paved roads in Niagara was substantially below the average costs for paved roads per lane kilometre compared to the Ontario average benchmark. In 2007, the Niagara costs (\$1,407.16) were much closer to the OMBI average (\$1,542.91).

Indicator:  
Busy transportation routes  
through Niagara

Rating:

2

The Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) is the major trade corridor from the Greater Toronto Area to the Niagara Region and to the four international crossings (Queenston-Lewiston, Rainbow, Whirlpool and Peace Bridges) over the Niagara River to New York State. The QEW carries an average of approximately 79,000 vehicles per day (about 17 percent are commercial vehicles). Summer traffic is significantly higher, with about 100,000 vehicles per day through St. Catharines. The traffic growth on the QEW has risen significantly over the past 10 years and is expected to continue to increase by 40 percent over the next 10 years. Queenston-Lewiston is Canada's fourth busiest crossing, operated by the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, with over 1 million trucks traveling through each year. It is also the ninth busiest passenger crossing, handling 3.3 million vehicles a year, or over 9,000 per day. The Peace Bridge is Canada's third busiest passenger crossing, handling 6.7 million cars and 1.35 million trucks crossing in 2001. <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/news/provincial/2004/050604.htm>







# THE ENVIRONMENT IN NIAGARA

Our environment provides beauty, living space and economic, recreational and tourist potential. It also provides for agriculture, food and nourishment. Geography influences much of where and how we work, live and play and place forms a significant part of our identity. The quality of our air, water and ecosystem support life for Niagara residents. How governments and individuals plan and protect the environment will be a measure of a community's future viability and sustainability and will affect the future health of a community and its citizens.

## What we are doing well ...

Niagara is bounded by Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the Niagara River with its famous Niagara Falls. The Niagara environment provides great beauty, access to an abundance of fresh water, and rich agricultural land for fruits, vegetables and the making of wine. The Welland Canal provides for shipping and tourism opportunities and recreation along its banks. Niagara has a world class rowing course in Port Dalhousie and rowing venues along the old Welland Canal. Niagara is known for its tourism and the environment attracts many visitors. The Niagara Escarpment and the beginning of the Bruce Trail are in Niagara. Monitoring agencies are reporting and tracking air and water quality to build public awareness. A Niagara Watershed Report Card was produced in 2006 and a Niagara Water Strategy has been developed to work on each of the indicators.

## Where we could improve ...

While there is cause for celebration that Niagara is an area with much natural beauty, there is also cause for concern to keep our air and water safe and clean and to deal with urban sprawl on our agricultural lands. While Niagara has recycling and composting programs, a large percentage of waste is still diverted to landfill sites. The costs of treating waste water are high and Niagara reports a higher than average sewage that bypasses treatment. Niagara's smog days are of concern as factories in the US and Canada and high smoke stacks from farther away release pollutants into the air that land in Niagara. The number of deaths after times of recorded high pollution is high in Niagara. The pollution of our Great Lakes and Niagara River and beach posting times are of concern. Fertilizer and pesticides are sent into the Niagara watershed. Companies and factories along the water's edge in Canada and in the United States send waste into the water. Reducing Green House Gas Emissions (GHGE) involves complex strategies for change, including the challenge of increasing the public transit system in Niagara to reduce auto use. Southern Ontario is one of the smoggiest regions and highest ground-ozone level areas in Canada. How to make Niagara more eco-friendly and protect our water, air and land remain a challenge.

Indicator:  
Water use  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

We need fresh water in Niagara for drinking and household, agricultural, industrial and recreational uses. Approximately 10% of water used is for residential use in Canada. Niagara Region's total water demand decreased from 481 litres per capita per day in 2005 to 424 litres per capita, per day in 2006. Environment Canada's calculation of an average Canadian daily domestic use is 343 litres per person and Niagara is well above this. It had been as low as 327 in 1996 and 329 in 2004. Source: [www.caobenchmarking.ca](http://www.caobenchmarking.ca)

Indicator:  
Waste water  
sewage  
treatment  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

In 2005, the rate of sewer bypass was 10 times higher than the provincial average and more costly than the benchmark average of municipalities in Ontario. In Niagara, the percentage of wastewater estimated to have bypassed treatment went up as high as 3.42% in 2004 and down to 1.33% in 2006, still higher than the .95% benchmark average of Ontario municipalities. In 2007, Niagara's wastewater bypass was 2.61% and the Ontario average bypass was lower at .47%. Niagara's cost per megalitre of wastewater treated was \$389.06, higher than the provincial benchmark of \$330.78. Source: [www.caobenchmarking.ca](http://www.caobenchmarking.ca)

Indicator:  
Water  
quality in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

Freshwater samples collected from 2003-2004 from 359 water quality monitoring stations in southern Canada and 36 locations in northern Canada found freshwater was considered good or excellent in 44% of the southern sites and 56% of northern sites. Fewer than 5% of the southern sites and none of the northern sites reported poor water quality.

In 2006, the Great Lakes were monitored and freshwater quality was good or excellent for Lake Superior, Huron, Georgian Bay and eastern Lake Erie. However, the water quality was reported to be fair for central Lake Erie and only marginal for western Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, the two lakes surrounding Niagara.


In 2006, there were 2 community level Boil Water Advisories issued by Public Health; in a portion of the Township of Wainfleet and for a limited area of Fort Erie (Niagara Watershed Report Card, 2006).

Source: <http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/indicator.jsp?lang=en&indicatorid=63>

Source: Environment Canada, statistics Canada and Health Canada. Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators 2007. Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 21007 (Cat. No. 16-251-XIE)







Indicator:  
Beach  
postings in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

The Niagara Region Public Health Unit monitors 13 beach sites along Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, the southern Niagara River and the public beach at Dils Lake. They take weekly samples and post closings when the bacteria levels are high and health could be affected. They check for E.coli that could cause infections, especially for elderly, young children and those with depressed immune systems. Beaches are posted as unsafe for swimming because of floating debris, oil, excessive weed growth or bad odours.

In 2007, the monitored beaches in Niagara were posted 27% of the time. Niagara's number of postings has doubled since 2004 when they were posted 12.57% of the time. The five Lake Erie beaches in Port Colborne, and the three Lake Ontario beaches in St. Catharines had the highest number of swimming days lost at 154 days and 208 days respectively in 2007.

Source: Niagara Region Public Health. (2006). *Niagara Region Beach Monitoring Report*.

Indicator:  
The Air  
Quality  
Index  
(AQI).

Rating:

2

The AQI monitors concentrations of five major pollutants (carbon monoxide, fine particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, ozone and sulphur dioxide) to determine whether the quality of air is Good, Fair, Poor, or Very Poor. Good is the best possible rating and means there are no known harmful effects to human or environmental health. January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007, Niagara's air quality measured Good 77.3% of the time. In 2007, Ontario recorded 59 poor air quality days overall; Niagara recorded 5 poor air quality days; Windsor (17 days), London (3 days) and Kitchener (6 days) over the same time period.

The Ontario Medical Association (OMA), using the Illness Costs of Air Pollution (ICAP) found that in 2007 more than 1,000 of 9,500 premature deaths took place in periods during and immediately after periods of high air pollution. The OMA identified **425** deaths in Niagara after these high pollution periods. Niagara was in the top 6 regions in Ontario in numbers related to premature deaths in these periods and many of those 6 regions were much larger than Niagara (i.e. Hamilton-Wentworth, 445; Ottawa-Carleton, 503). Source: <http://www.newswire.ca/fr/releases/archive/June2008/06/c9192.html>

Indicator:  
Smog  
advisory  
days in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

The number of smog advisory days is known to have a negative impact on breathing, especially for the elderly, young children and those with respiratory problems. While the number of days was low in 2003 and 2004, they reached a peak of 45 days in 2005 in Niagara and southern Ontario and were at 29 days in 2007, which is still much higher than the period prior to 2005. Source: [http://www.airqualityontario.com/press/smog\\_advisories.cfm](http://www.airqualityontario.com/press/smog_advisories.cfm)

Indicator:  
Recycling,  
compost  
and waste  
disposal  
in Niagara  
Rating:

2

Residential waste diverted from landfills by recycling and composting saves land for recreational, agricultural and housing use. In 2005, 178,857 tonnes of residential waste from residential properties with 5 or less units were managed by the Niagara Region and 20% was recycled (35,045 tonnes); 20% composted (34,999 tonnes); and 60% was sent for landfill disposal (108,813 tonnes).

In Niagara, households place an average of 1.7 waste containers at the curb every week. Based on the 2006 Stewardship Ontario Waste Audits, the following is placed in the garbage for curbside collection in Niagara: 24% recyclables; 43% organics (food waste); and 33% for waste disposal. *Source: Niagara Region Report to Council, CSD 100-2007 PWA 105-2007*. According to the Report of the Waste Division Ontario, the overall Ontario residential diversion rate was 46% in 2005 and 41% in 2007. Niagara was below Ontario with a 45.10% diversion rate in 2006 and above in 2007 with a 43.3% diversion rate. Niagara Region Council has set a goal of a 65% diversion rate for the region by the year 2012, which means Niagara would have to increase its diversion rate by 21.6%. *Source: OMBI, CAO 9-2008*

Indicator:  
Green  
space and  
agricultural  
land space  
in Niagara  
Rating:

2


According to a 2004 report from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Niagara's ecological footprint is a little smaller than that of many of our neighbours. The report estimates the average Niagara resident needs about 6.88 hectares of land and water to sustain his or her lifestyle compared to Windsor, Waterloo, Hamilton and York who use a little more land to produce, consume, live and bury waste - anywhere from 7 to 10 hectares. The national average is 7.25 hectares, still one of the largest ecological footprints in the world (FCM, 2004).

In 2005, wetlands covered an estimated 6.36% of the Niagara Watershed. It was estimated that 18.5% of the watershed was covered by natural areas, with a long-term target set for 30% to be covered. (Natural Watershed Report Card, 2006). Niagara covers 1,854.17 square kilometres and has a population density of 230.5 persons per square kilometre. Ontario has a population density of 13.4 persons per square kilometres. *Statistics Canada, 2006, Community Profiles*

Niagara has rich agricultural lands for growing fruit and vegetables and sustains many vineyards and wineries. Niagara has redesignated 129 hectares of land that were originally designated for agricultural purposes for other uses during 2006, higher than the Ontario Municipal Benchmark Initiative (OMBI) average of 77 hectares. A total of 1193 hectares of Niagara's agricultural land has been redesignated for other purposes since 2000, higher than the OMBI average of 318.4 hectares. In 2007, 1,130 hectares of land were returned to agricultural purposes. *Source: OMBI, CAO 9-2008*







Indicator:  
Green  
House Gas  
Emissions  
(GHGE)

Rating:

2

Although Canadians make up 0.5% of the population in the world, our share of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE) is estimated to be 2%. The increase in total greenhouse gas emissions in Canada (25%) outpaced population growth (17%) from 1990 to 2005. Emissions rose from 7.6% per person in 1990-2005 to levels reaching 23 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per person. Source: [GHGE per capita Environment Canada's, National Inventory Report 1990-2004](#)

Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is a leading greenhouse gas. GHGE gas emissions from automobiles emitted an average 2.39 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent according to Transport Canada. Ontario had one of the highest rates of emissions, behind the province of Alberta. While GHGE data for Niagara are not available at the time of writing, our area attracts 13.4 million tourists per year, 90% travel by car and the Niagara population reports a high use of automobiles (89.9%) and a low use of public transit (2.5%) to get to work. These trends add to the GHGE levels in Niagara.

Source: <http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/indicator>

Indicator:  
Pesticide  
use in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

Residential and commercial use and disposal of high levels of pesticides for plant care is suspected to have a negative affect on the land, animals and the water. A 2004 paper from the Ontario College of Family Physicians reviewing studies on pesticides, Gideon Foreman with the Canadian Alliance of Physicians for the Environment said children exposed to such chemicals run the high risk of developing leukemia, childhood non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, learning disabilities and birth defects. <http://www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/Issues/2008/June/CanadianPesticideBanPromised.asp>

Niagara Region has opted to let each of the municipalities govern pesticide use. In 2007, Thorold was the only municipality in Niagara taking action against cosmetic pesticide use. Since the late 1980s, the Niagara Parks Commission has reduced pesticide use by over 50% in their 1,720 hectare (4,250 acres) of parkland. An Ontario ban is being considered for 2009 and an Oracle poll in 2007 showed 71% of the public support restrictions.

Source: <http://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/ArticleDisplayGenContent.aspx?e=3093>

Indicator:  
Ground  
level ozone  
levels in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

Data from 1990 to 2005 show an increasing trend in the ground-level ozone indicator in both southern Ontario (which includes Niagara) and southern Quebec. In southern Ontario, home to over 30% of Canadians, the ozone exposure indicator increased an average of 1.1% per year. Ground level ozone is a gas formed when nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds react in the presence of sunlight. Ground level ozone is the primary component of smog. Significant amounts of ozone and ozone forming compounds are carried into Ontario from the US; an estimated 50% in this way. Source: [Air Quality in Ontario, 1998](#)





# LEARNING & EDUCATION IN NIAGARA

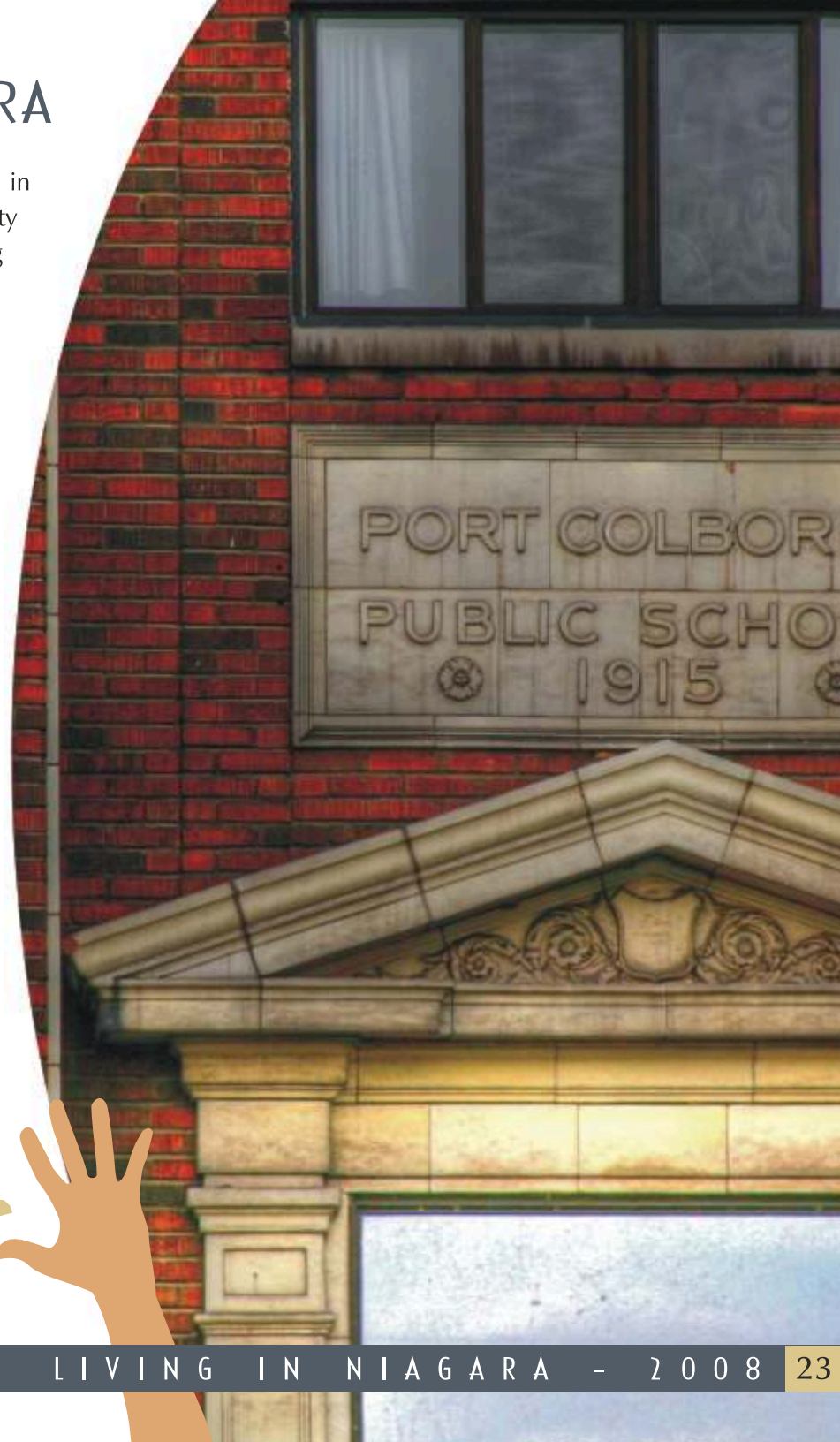
A region that offers many opportunities for its citizens to learn and engage in education provides a measure of the health of the area. Work, creativity, prosperity and health are all linked to education and literacy. Building a strong learning community in the Niagara region will help our citizens to have the skills to deal with change and to create positive change together.

## What we are doing well ...

Niagara is well served by its many schools, learning institutions and organizations that offer literacy, education, skills development, professional development, English as a Second Language (ESL) training and learning opportunities for those in Niagara and for those who come for an education to our region. The contributions of Brock University, Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology, Niagara District School Board and Niagara Catholic School Board to the education of children, youth and adults of our area make an important investment in our people and our future.

## Where we can improve ...

Our region needs to work on improving literacy levels across all parts of the region, so that all our citizens can be employed, earn a living wage and be able to function well and safely in our society. Like other areas in Canada, our region needs to boost our literacy levels, especially for immigrants and aboriginal people. While Niagara rates are higher than Ontario for high school completion and trades certificates, significantly fewer people in Niagara report having completed a university education. The region's rate of high school completion is comparable to other cities and higher than the Ontario average. However, completion of a high school diploma is not uniform across all parts of the region. Access to the internet from home, work and the library is increasing, but Niagara is still slightly behind in overall internet access compared to other parts of Canada.





Indicator:  
Attainment  
of higher  
education in  
Niagara

Rating:

3

In 2006, Niagara had a lower percentage than the province on completion of a university education (13.1% compared to 20.4% in Ontario for those over 15). This trend was also true in 2001, in Niagara for those aged 20 to 34. Only 17.3% completed a university education compared to 25.7% in the province. In 2006, Niagara had a slightly higher percentage than the province on completion of high school (29.9% in Niagara compared to 26.7% in Ontario for those over 15 years of age). In 2006, Niagara had a higher percentage than the province on completion of apprenticeships, trades certificates or diplomas (9.8% in Niagara compared to 8.0% in Ontario for those over 15 years of age). This rate was also higher in 2001. *Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006 data, Community Profiles*

Indicator:  
Composite  
Learning  
Index (CLI)

Rating:

2

The Canadian Council on Learning provided a Composite Learning Index (CLI) as a measure of learning across 4,700 Canadian cities to compare progress at the local and national levels. CLI has been found to correlate with greater economic and social success in an area. St. Catharines, as the only Niagara city with a population over 100,000 had an overall score of 79 in 2006 and 77 in 2008, which was the same as the rating for Canada and below that of Ontario, and many of the larger cities in Canada. Niagara's smaller towns and cities of under 100,000 were included in the data from across Canada for a combined CLI score of 74 in 2006, below the ratings for Canada, Ontario and the city of St. Catharines which had a higher rating of 78 in 2008. *Sources: <http://www.ctf-fce.ca/pdf/TheCanadianLearningIndex.pdf> and <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl/reports/cli?Language=EN>*

Indicator:  
Literacy in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

Literacy level ratings are divided into levels. Level 3 is suggested as the level required to fully function in everyday Canadian society and in the workplace. Literacy Niagara estimates that 1 in 5 Canadians cannot read or write well enough to function adequately. Jobs that require Level 1 and 2 skills have decreased since the 1990s. It is estimated that 39.2% of working Canadians lack the literacy skills required for their positions. Lower literacy skills often put individuals in lowering paying jobs or even make them unemployable (ABC Canada, 2001; Arai, 2008 p. 34).

Niagara compares well to Ontario literacy rates (31.3% for level 3 average compared to 32.2% in Ontario). However, literacy rates across Niagara need to be explored further related to education levels, employment and low income levels that exist in different parts of the region. Canadian studies indicate that literacy levels for immigrants and Aboriginal populations are far below the general population in Canada and this also poses similar challenges in Niagara for these populations. *Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2001*



Indicator:  
Internet use  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

Access to and use of the internet has been seen to add to the education and learning of our citizens. They use the internet at home, at work and in the public library. The internet is used for banking, education, recreation, medical or health information and to purchase goods and services.

Two-thirds, or an estimated 16.8 million Canadians and 61% of Canadian households (7.9 million) were connected to the internet; up slightly from the 2004 Survey on Household Spending (HIUS). Only 58% of residents in rural and small town areas had access, well below the national average. Larger metropolitan centers had rates of 77% (Ottawa-Gatineau and Calgary). In 2005, 80% of those with some post secondary education used the internet, compared to 49% who had less education. About 81% of persons in households with children used the internet, compared to 61% in households without children.

In Niagara (2003), 55.5% of Niagara's households used the internet from all locations, and 45.8% from home, both well below the reported Canadian usage of 64.2% from all locations and 54.5% from home. Other Ontario cities reported much higher access from all locations: Hamilton 66.1%, Windsor 65.9%, Kitchener 63.5% and Toronto 73.5%.

Source: <http://cansim2.statcan.ca/egi-win/cnsmcgi.pgm>

Indicator:  
Scores on  
Grade 9  
testing in  
Niagara

Rating:

3

The purpose of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) is to ensure that students have acquired the essential reading and writing skills that apply to all subject areas in the provincial curriculum up to the end of Grade 9. All students in public and private schools who are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma are required to write the OSSLT in Grade 10. Successful completion of the OSSLT or OSSLC is a graduation requirement.

In 2008, the Niagara Catholic School Board scored 87% on the Grade 9 testing by the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO), above the provincial score of 84% and the District School Board of Niagara scored 82%, only slightly below provincial scores. Source: <http://www.equao.com>





# HOUSING & SHELTER IN NIAGARA

The availability of affordable, safe and appropriate housing and shelter in a community has an impact on creating a healthy community and on the well being of its citizens. It is important to have a place to call home where you build a collective history with others. It is also important to have a familiar and safe place to call home that you can leave and return to each day to rest.

## What we are doing well ...

A variety of housing is available in the Niagara Region and across the 12 municipalities and new housing starts are up. A part of Niagara's population earn a decent wage and own their own homes, although it is taking a higher income or two incomes often to afford to purchase a home in Niagara.

## Where we can improve ...

A high percentage of Niagara residents spend over 30% of their income on housing and shelter and that leaves little for the other necessities of living. The costs of utilities have risen and this adds an extra financial burden, especially on those living on low income. A disproportionately high number of residents are on waiting lists for affordable housing, more than other cities in Ontario, and the time of waiting is often for years, which means that many are struggling or living in cheaper, substandard housing or having little money for food. Once again, the gap between the rich and the poor is evident, even in the area of housing. An increasing number are experiencing temporary times of homelessness or use of shelters as a result. Many working poor are struggling to make ends meet and to pay for housing costs.





Indicator:  
Housing  
situations in  
Niagara

Rating:

3

According to the 2006 Census, there were 156,465 households in Niagara, of which 116,730 were owners and 39,735 were renters. A total population of 382,825 reported living in private households. Of these, 331,505 were persons living in family households, 51,320 in non-family households and 41,840 were living alone. The average household in Niagara was made up of 2.4 persons and this is comparable to the 2.5 average Canadian household. Source: Statistics Canada, Census data, Community Profiles.

Indicator:  
Affordability  
of housing  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

According to Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC, 2008), from a fixed sample, the average rent for a 2 bedroom (new and existing structure) was \$752 in 2006, \$760 in 2007 and \$774 in 2008, representing a 2.8% increase in Niagara. In the summer of 2006, CMHC reported the average price of a home was \$381,000, up from \$342,000 a year earlier for an 11% increase. Only having a full-time job, high earnings or two incomes would make this possible.

Indicator:  
Spending  
over 30%  
of income  
on housing  
in Niagara

Rating:

1

Whether buying a house or renting an apartment, spending more than 30% of one's income on housing creates financial difficulties. The proportion of households spending 30% or more of their income on rent is an indicator of affordability and a potential contributor to homelessness.

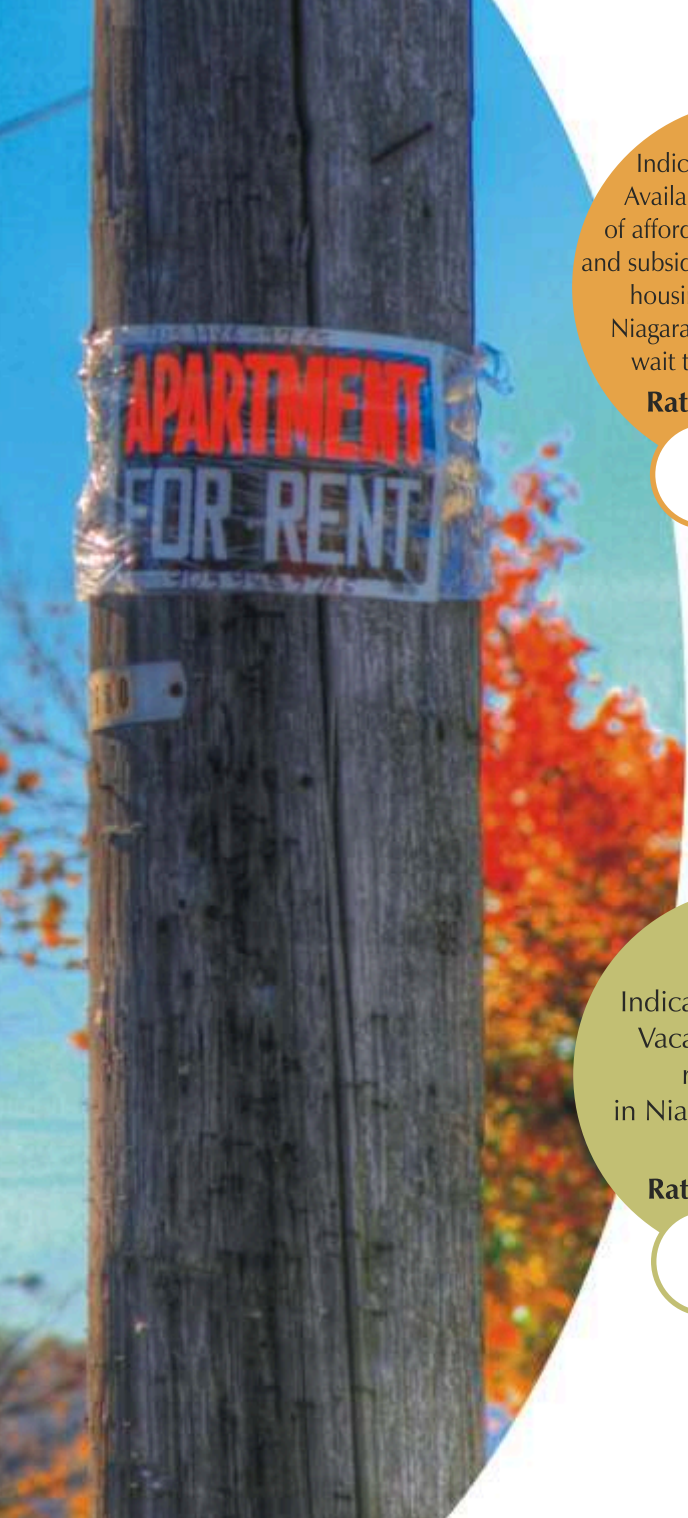
According to a Social Housing Strategist Report (2004), in Niagara, 45.6% residents were spending more than 30% on housing (approximately 19,000 households), with 21.5% paying more than 50%. Spending more than 30% has an impact on the monies available for other needs, including food. A higher percentage of Niagara residents were in this risk category compared to other parts of Ontario.

Source:

<http://www.nrh.ca/images/Niagara%20Region%20Summary%20Document.pdf>;  
[www.shs\\_inc.ca](http://www.shs_inc.ca)

"Housing costs can be the single largest expenditure in a household, leaving little room for other necessities" (Niagara Regional Housing, 2008, p. 2).





Indicator:  
Availability  
of affordable  
and subsidized  
housing in  
Niagara and  
wait times

**Rating:**

1

There were 4,000 applicants on the waiting list for subsidized housing in Niagara, June of 2004. The available number of subsidized rental housing units has not kept pace with the needs in the area.

By 2007, Niagara reported having 6,199 applicants on the waiting list for subsidized housing (ONPHA Report). This figure was significantly higher than what was reported in larger communities such as Hamilton (3,817) and London (3,440). In Niagara, 2,636 subsidized units are owned by Niagara Regional Housing (504 townhouses, 350 single and semi-detached houses, 9 high rises and 25 low rises) across 11 municipalities.

Source:

[http://www.onpha.on.ca/municipalities\\_housing/waiting\\_list/doc/waiting\\_list\\_map\\_2007.pdf](http://www.onpha.on.ca/municipalities_housing/waiting_list/doc/waiting_list_map_2007.pdf)

According to Niagara Regional Housing (2006), the average wait time for affordable housing will take 7.75 years in Welland, 6.25 years in St. Catharines and 6.5 years in Niagara Falls for a 1 bedroom unit. To obtain a 2 bedroom unit, it will take 2.25 years in Welland, 3 years in St. Catharines and 1.5 years in Niagara Falls. To find a 3 bedroom unit, it is estimated that it will take 1.75 years in Welland, 3 years in St. Catharines and 2.5 years in Niagara Falls.

Source: <http://www.nrh.ca>

Indicator:  
Vacancy  
rates  
in Niagara

**Rating:**

3

According to the CMHC, 2008 Spring Survey, the St. Catharines - Niagara CMA vacancy rates for April, 2007 were 3.9% and went down to 3.7% in April, 2008. The availability rate was 6.9% in spring, 2007 and 5.4% in 2008.

Source: [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/homain/stda/suretaanme/suretaanme\\_009.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/homain/stda/suretaanme/suretaanme_009.cfm)

For a competitive rental market, a rental vacancy rate of at least 3% is considered necessary.

Indicator:  
Housing  
starts  
in Niagara

**Rating:**

3

Statistics Canada (2007) reported that \$33.3 million (Canadian) in building permits were filed in the St. Catharines-Niagara Census Metropolitan Area in May, 2007. That figure was up 5.3 % from \$31.6 million (Canadian) in April, 2006...



New  
Housing  
Price Index  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

The New Housing Price Index (NHPI) measures changes over time in contractors' selling prices for new homes. In Niagara, the NHPI has risen 47.5% since 1997. The National average increase was 10.7%. Wages in a region need to keep pace with the costs to make building new homes possible and affordable. For those with low income, it is impossible since their income has not kept pace with this rise in building costs.

In 2007, the New Housing Price Index for Niagara was 150.1, close to the 153.0 rate for Canada, and Kitchener (150.1); higher than Windsor (103.2) and Hamilton (148.4); but not near the growth in Calgary (246.6) or Edmonton (234.4).

Source: <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/manuf12.htm>

Indicator:  
Core  
housing  
needs in  
Niagara

Rating:

3

Estimates of core housing needs in an area are derived by comparing the incomes of households currently living in unacceptable housing with the incomes that are required to access adequate, suitable and affordable housing in their communities. This percentage figure is known as the Core Need Income Thresholds. In 2001, Niagara had a 12.9% Core Housing Need estimate and this was better than 15.1% for Ontario and 13.7% for Canada.

Source: [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/cahoob07/data/data\\_013.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/cahoob07/data/data_013.cfm)

Indicator:  
Homelessness  
and the use  
of shelters  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

In 2006, Niagara Region Community Services staff worked with 1,291 families experiencing different types of homelessness (687 in temporary accommodation; 610 living on the street). Homelessness means one does not have a usual and safe place to call home and to return to at the end of the day. Source: Survey conducted by Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA).

Shelter use has increased substantially since 2001. The total number of clients has increased by 144.4% since 2001 (from 1,278 to 3,123 in 2003). The largest increase was noted for females, increasing from 178 in 2001 to 572 in 2003, a 221.3% increase. These figures do not include independent shelters operated by other sources across Niagara.

Source: <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/saeo/hostels-homeless.aspx>

<http://www.nrh.ca/images/Niagara%20Region%20Summary%20Document.pdf>







# CRIME, SAFETY & SECURITY IN NIAGARA

Citizens can fully participate in a community and enjoy their lives when they feel safe and secure in their homes, neighbourhoods, public places or workplaces. We can live more fully when we and our loved ones are not at risk of harm. Rates of crime in an area can affect our personal feelings of safety and security.

## What we are doing well ...

Property crimes and violent crimes are lower in the Niagara Region than in most similar communities in Ontario. Residents are reporting that they generally feel safe whether at home or out alone. Youth crime is down. No hate crimes have been reported in the Region.

## Where we can improve ...

While crime rates are down in Niagara and in Canada, any crime reported in a community affects feelings of safety. The rate of police officers per 100,000 population is often used as a measure of safety in a community. Niagara's rate of police officers per 100,000 populations is well below the province and the nation. Niagara's crime rate is comparable to many cities in Ontario, except property crime is higher than the Ontario municipal benchmark average in Ontario. Niagara has one of the highest per capita accident fatalities rates in the province. We need to address specific areas of the region where crime and accidents are more prevalent.





Indicator:  
Feeling safe  
and secure  
in Niagara

Rating:

3

The General Social Survey (2004) asked those over 15 in Niagara about their **feelings of staying home alone in the evening or at night**. In 2004, 19% said they felt worried and 80% were not at all worried. Of the Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) reporting, the lowest ratings were from Saint Johns (14% worried; 85% not at all). Those reporting being the most worried were from Windsor (27%) and Oshawa (26%). When asked about their **feelings of safety waiting for or using public transportation alone after dark** 13% in Niagara reported feeling worried and 14% were not at all worried. Of the CMAs reporting, the lowest ratings were in Saint Johns (7% worried; 14% not at all). The most worried were from large cities: Toronto (26%), Winnipeg (26%), and Vancouver (30%). When asked about their **feelings of safety walking alone in the neighbourhood after dark** in Niagara, 32% reported feeling very safe; 42% reasonably safe; and 13% somewhat safe. 14% would not walk alone after dark. When asked about their **perception of the job being done by local police in enforcing laws** 56% of those in Niagara said they did a good job (lower than many other CMAs); 34% an average job; and 6% felt they did a poor job.

Indicator:  
Overall  
crime rates  
and violent  
crime rates  
in Niagara

Rating:

3

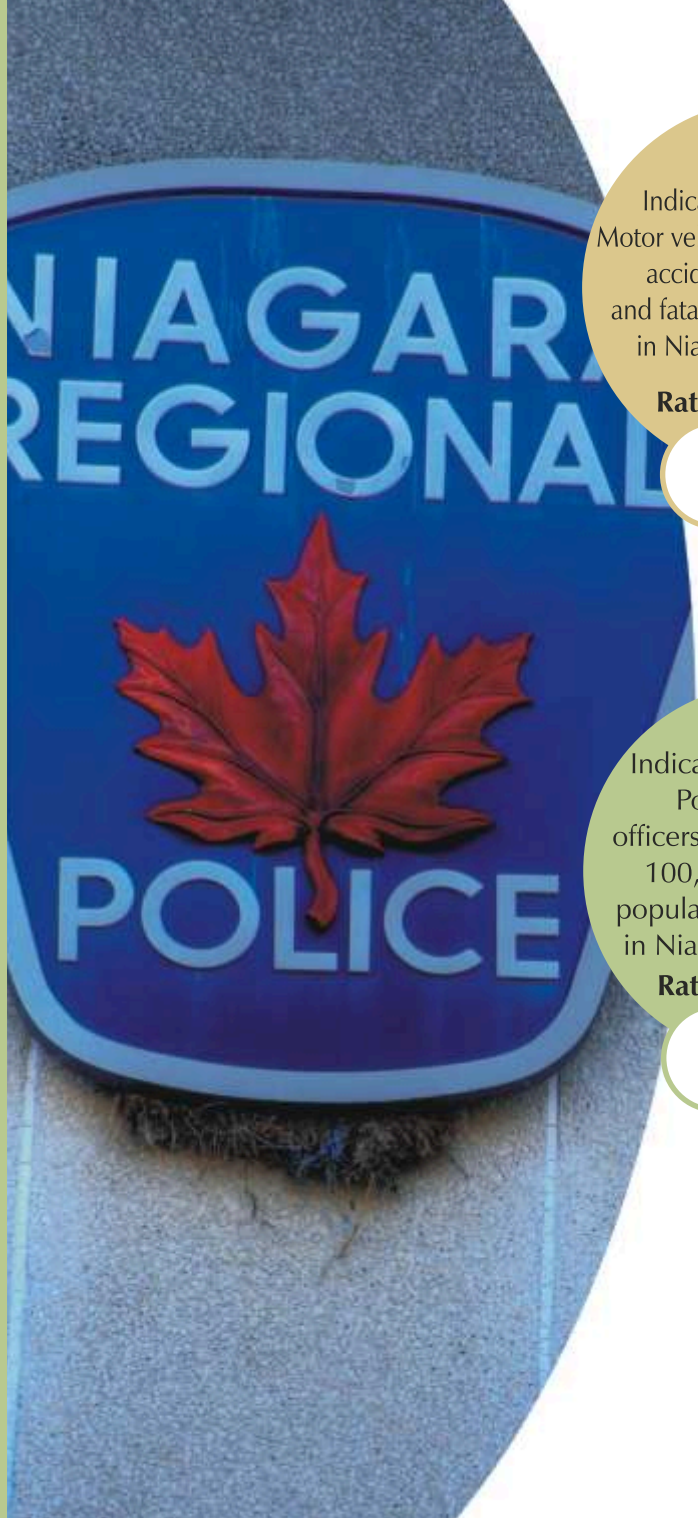
Crime rates for Niagara went down from 2002 to 2007, for overall crime per 1,000, violent crimes, other criminal offences, homicide, robbery, break and enter and motor vehicle crime. They were all below the OMBI average, except for property crimes (41.02 Niagara; 30.09 OMBI average) that remained much higher than the OMBI average in all 5 years (OMBI, CAO 9-2008). In Niagara, in 2005, 69.0 youths per 1,000 were charged, higher than the 55.26 youth per 1,000 averages of other Ontario municipalities. In 2006, Niagara's rate went down to 54.20 youths charged per 1,000 and in 2007 it went up to 74.89, its highest rate since 2003 (88.03) and still higher than the 61.67 per 1,000 average rate for other Ontario municipalities (OMBI, 2007).

Canada's crime rate has generally been falling since 1991, except for an increase in 2003 when it peaked. While the total violent crime rates declined, the national homicide rate increased 12% (1.6% in Niagara). Police reported a crime rate in 2004 that was 12% lower than a decade ago. In 2004, the overall decline in crime in Canada was driven largely by a 5% decrease in Ontario, whose crime rate was the lowest in the country for 2003 and 2004. Most of this decline was due to large decreases in reported crime in the Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) of Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa and St. Catharines–Niagara during that period. In Niagara, 556 violent crime incidents were reported per 100,000 residents, below the provincial rate (748 per 100,000) and below the national rate (943 per 100,000).

Of all the major population regions across all of Canada, only 4 areas were noted as having no reported hate crimes in 2006: St. Catharines–Niagara, Saguenay, Sherbrooke and Saskatoon.

Source: Canadian Center for Justice Statistics Profile Series (2006). Hate Crime in Canada.





Indicator:  
Motor vehicle  
accidents  
and fatalities  
in Niagara

**Rating:**

**2**

The number of motor vehicle accidents in a region is a measure of how safe or unsafe residents are on the roads in an area. Niagara has one of the highest per capita accident fatality rates in Ontario at 7.2% fatalities per registered drivers compared to .01 in Ontario.

Source: [http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/orsar/orsar05/chp4\\_1\\_05.shtml](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/orsar/orsar05/chp4_1_05.shtml)

According to Niagara Regional Police Service Motor Vehicle Collision Data 1999-2003 (2005), the primary cause of the 766 motor vehicle deaths or injuries in Niagara was driver error 50% of the time involving multiple vehicles in 50% of the crashes; single vehicles 25% and pedestrians 12%. Collisions identifying impairment as a primary contributing factor occurred most often in single vehicle crashes (64%) and less often in multiple crashes (25%). For collisions identifying speed as the primary factor, over half (52%) occurred with a single motor vehicle, while one third (31%) involved multiple vehicles and 14% involved motorcyclists. Of the most serious and fatal collisions, 58% occurred on rural roads, most often on Fridays (21%). The greatest number of collisions (22%) occurred between 3 pm and 8 pm and between the months of July and October.

Indicator:  
Police  
officers per  
100,000  
population  
in Niagara

**Rating:**

**3**

The rate of police officers per 100,000 populations is often used as an indicator of the perceptions of safety in a community. Their numbers and visibility in a community affects the public's perception of overall safety and the capacity of police officers to engage in prevention and service and to respond to police calls from the public. Canada had the most police per capita; 195 per 100,000 population in 2007, since 1993. The Niagara rate of police officers per 100,000 populations in 2007 was 5% lower than its peak, time, but 2% higher than in 2006. Niagara is below the Ontario and Canadian ratio of police to population in all 3 years of 2005, 2006 and 2007 (160 per 100,000 compared to 192 in Ontario and 195 in Canada in 2007). Source: Niagara Report: Police Resources in Canada 2007: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 85-225-XIE

Indicator:  
Calls related  
to domestic  
violence in  
Niagara

**Rating:**

**3**

Calls to police have remained relatively stable since the year 2000 (128,215) and are approximately 131,000 a year for 2007. Niagara Regional Police responded to 4,223 domestic violence calls involving partners in 2006. From these calls, approximately 758 charges were laid and children witnessed 50% of the incidences of domestic violence.

Source: Arai, S. (2007) <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/saeo/reports/pdf/PovertyReport.pdf>



# HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN NIAGARA

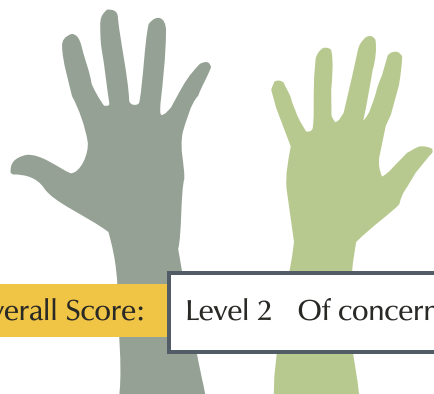
The health of individuals is affected by physical factors, lifestyle behaviours, genetics, environment and psycho-social determinants. The health of a community is influenced by the overall health of its citizens. Access to appropriate and timely primary health care, health promotion, disease and risk prevention, health education and acute care can assist citizens to maintain or restore their health.

## What we are doing well ...

The development of a new acute care facility is on track to start construction in the fall of 2008 in St. Catharines. A new medical school initiative through McMaster University has admitted its first students who will have residency placements for experience in the Niagara Region. Brock University and the Brock Loyalist collaborative program offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. All nursing students have placements in Niagara with a concentration on chronic care and mental health in the last 2 years. Nurse practitioners are beginning to be engaged across the region and Community Health Centers (CHCs) are being developed for expansion in Niagara. We have a network of organizations providing recreational and physical activity throughout Niagara.

## Where we can improve ...

The primary health care system in Niagara is underdeveloped. Such a system needs to include health promotion, disease prevention and acute care. Niagara has an increasing aging population, high levels of obesity and problems with respiratory and cardiovascular health. There is a serious shortage of physicians and many existing ones are approaching retirement. Many Niagara residents do not have a family physician. Niagara, like other areas in Ontario and across the country are facing a nursing shortage and retention and recruitment of nurses for the Region is a priority, especially given the average age of nurses in the area. The Niagara Health System is facing serious fiscal challenges. Wait times at emergency rooms and for diagnostic services and cancer surgeries are of concern. More nurse practitioners are needed and planned Community Health Centers need to be fully operationalized. Increased mental health services are needed.





Indicator:  
Health  
indicators in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

According to our Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN) that includes Niagara, female life expectancy at birth is 81.5 years in HNHB and 82.1 years in Ontario. Life expectancy for males was 76.8 years and 71.5 years in Ontario. The 2005 lifestyle indicators for the LHIN are:

- 19.2% report being daily smokers compared to 16.8% in the province (in 2004, 22% in Canada reported smoking daily or occasionally; 21% in Ontario and 24% in Niagara)
- 10.7% of non-smokers report being exposed to second hand smoke at home
- 43.2% of the population report being physically inactive (47.1% in the province)
- 41.7% report eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables daily
- 23.6% report having a lot of life stress
- 23.4 % report being heavy drinkers of alcohol

Source: Population Health Profile, HNHB, LHIN

Indicator:  
Prevalence  
rates of  
chronic  
conditions  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

Our LHIN rates in 2005 are higher for arthritis and rheumatism (21.5 compared to 17.5), heart disease (8.4 compared to 7.2) and high blood pressure (15.8 to 14.7) than those of the province or the HNHB LHIN. Our rates for diabetes (4.2 compared to 4.6) and asthma (8.4 to 7.2) are slightly lower than that of Ontario. Rates of chronic bronchitis are similar to Ontario's. Chronic conditions require ongoing education, treatment and care and numbers will increase in an aging population. Source: [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/providers/information/resources/profiles/profile\\_hamiltonniagara](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/providers/information/resources/profiles/profile_hamiltonniagara). The leading cause of hospital separations for children 1 to 9 years of age in Niagara and Ontario in 2004 per 100,000 populations was for respiratory disease (10.5 in Niagara and 8.5 in Ontario), followed by digestive disease (4.8 in Niagara and 3.1 in Ontario). Source: Niagara Region Public Health, Community Health Profile, Health Indicators, 2007.

Indicator:  
Obesity  
rates in  
Niagara

Rating:

1

The Niagara Region is noted for having high obesity rates and there is a growing concern about obesity in the younger population. An estimated 51.5% of adults are reported to be in the obese or overweight Body Mass Index (BMI) categories in our LHIN (16% obese and 39% overweight) (55% in Niagara in 2004). Obesity has risen from 2001-2005 in Niagara: 2001 (14.2%); 2002 (15.5%); 2003 (16.2%); 2004 (16.3%); 2005 (19.1%). Overweight trends from 2001-2005 in Niagara were: 2001 (37.7%); 2002 (39.7%); 2003 (36.2%); 2004 (39.2%); and 2005 (40.4%). In 2003, 29.2% of youth, 12-17 years of age in Niagara were considered to be overweight or obese compared to 21.2% in Ontario. In 2005, 21.7% of youth in Niagara were overweight or obese compared to 19.7% in Ontario. Source: Statistics Canada Canadian Community Health Survey, 2003, 2005.

### Rating of perceived health status:

57.4% rated their health as excellent or very good in Niagara compared to 56.8% in Ontario and 65% in Canada in 2005 and 11.3% rated it as fair or poor in Niagara compared to 11.6% in Ontario. Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, Statistics Canada reported by Niagara Region Public Health, 2007



Indicator:  
Mental  
health in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

Health Canada reports that 1 in 5 will experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime including depression, anxiety, substance abuse or other challenges. It is estimated that 2% to 3% of the population has a serious mental illness. In 2004, for females in Niagara, the number of hospital days by leading cause was circulatory disease (20,879), followed by mental disorders (20,194). In 2003, of those who had contact with a health professional, about mental health in the past 12 months 7.2% were 20 to 34 years; 13.8% were 35 to 44 and 5.45% were 45 to 65. Source: Statistics Canada: CANSIM Table 105-0263 and 105-0463

In Canada 4,000 commit suicide yearly. Suicide is the leading cause of death in youth 10-24. In Niagara, there were 805 suicides from 1986 to 2004 (3.5 to 1 ratio of male to female like the national data and highest in males 25-44 and females 25-54). 3,374 were admitted to hospital with non-fatal attempts 1996 to 2001. Source: Niagara Suicide Prevention Coalition, 2006

Indicator:  
Cancer rates  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

Niagara's incidence of invasive primary cancer per 100,000 persons from 2001-2003 was below Ontario's rate, reaching its highest in 2001 at 388.9 per 100,000 of the population compared to 391.5 for Ontario. Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM no. 103-0403 [http://cansim2.statcan.ca/cgi-win/cnsmcgi.exe?Lang=E&RootDir=CII/&ResultTemplate=CII/CII\\_\\_\\_&Array\\_Pick=1&ArrayId=1030403](http://cansim2.statcan.ca/cgi-win/cnsmcgi.exe?Lang=E&RootDir=CII/&ResultTemplate=CII/CII___&Array_Pick=1&ArrayId=1030403) A total of 2,274 cases of cancer were diagnosed in the Niagara Region in 2003. Of the total cancers in males, 57% of the cancers were made up of 3 cancers; prostate (28%), lung (15%), and colorectal (14%). Similarly, 53% of all cancer in women were attributable to breast (28%), lung (13%), or colorectal cancers (12%). Breast cancer rates for females were 38.2 per 100,000 population and 39.2 per 100,000 for prostate cancer in males. Prostate cancer had a 1.8% increase since 1986 and breast cancer did not have a significant increase. Source: Niagara Public Health Community Profiles, Health Indicators, 2007.

Indicator:  
Low birth  
weight of  
babies in  
Niagara

Rating:

3

Low birth weight refers to the percent of babies born weighing less than 2,500 grams and is an indicator of the general health of newborns and a key determinant of infant survival and development. Low birth weight infants are at greater risk of dying in their first year and of developing chronic health problems. According to Statistics Canada, in 2005 6.2% in Ontario and 6.0% in Canada were low birth weight babies (CANSIM Table 102-2005). Canada's rate of 6.0% was the best of the G7 countries (8.1% in the US and 9.5% in Japan) (OECD). According to Statistics Canada in Niagara the combined low birth rate in Niagara for 2006/2007 was 4.06% based on the ISCIS database (Niagara Region Public Health, 2008) and lower than our LHIN rates. The infant mortality rate per 1000 live births 1999-2001 was a little higher in HNHB – LHIN at 5.8% per 1000 live births, compared to 5.4 per 1000 live births in Ontario, 2001 (5.6 in 2005). Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM, Table 102-0504 and no. 84F0211X.





Indicator:  
Emergency  
response  
times per  
100,000  
population in  
Niagara  
**Rating:**

4

As a result of improved call processing, new methods for vehicle deployment and redeployment, and implementation of new technologies, Niagara EMS has improved ambulance response times to 9:39 minutes and this is better than the 2005 Ontario average time of 10:58. Variation may occur for rural areas and relative proximity to services.

In Niagara, the number of emergency calls per 100,000 population increased from 76 to 87 from 2005 to 2006 (slightly below Hamilton (96), considerably below Windsor (10.4) and Sudbury (111) and higher than Waterloo(61) and Peel (56).

Source: <http://www.ombi.ca/docs/db2file.asp?fileid=190>

Indicator:  
Wait times  
for diagnostic  
scans and  
cancer  
surgeries in  
Niagara  
**Rating:**

3

Waiting for cancer diagnosis and surgery can affect health, stress levels and treatment outcomes.

- Our wait times from January to March of 2008 are notably lower than the province for surgeries for breast cancer, lung cancers, head and neck cancers and thyroid and endocrine cancers.
- Our wait times are higher than the province for prostate cancer and liver and pancreatic cancers, and well above the standard that has been set for 84 days for cancer surgery waits.
- Our wait times for bypass surgery and angioplasty are considerably lower than the standard. Our wait times for joint hip replacement are much lower than the province and slightly lower for joint hip replacement. Our wait times for diagnostic imaging are on par with the province.
- Surgery for prostate cancer, head and neck cancers and liver and pancreatic cancers are now close to a 2 and 3 month wait (89 days and 110 days respectively).

Source: Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Indicator:  
Mortality  
and hospital-  
ization rates  
per 100,000  
population

**Rating:**

2

From 2000-2001, the mortality rates for HNBN LHIN (including Niagara) were higher than provincial rates (629.9 vs 602.6 per 100,000), especially for circulatory system diseases. Hospitalizations rates were higher than the province for injury and poisoning; endocrine nutrition disorders; digestive system disorders; circulatory system disorders; and musculoskeletal diseases. Source: Population Health Profile, HNHB LHIN; Data Source: Ontario Hospital Inpatient Database Data Source: Ontario Vital Statistics, Mortality Database



Indicator:  
Physicians  
per 100,000  
population in  
Niagara

Rating:

1

While physicians are not the only professional group involved in primary care and nurse practitioners are increasing at the community level, it is important to have enough physicians and specialists in Niagara to provide care. According to the Niagara Health System (NHS) Report (2005) there were 560 physicians with admission privileges in Niagara and according to the LIHN report there were 502 physicians in Niagara in 2007 (278 physicians; 224 specialists). The number of physicians in Niagara is below those needed for our population. Niagara is identified as having 94 family physician vacancies as required by the Underserved Area Program (UAP) of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

Source: [http://www.ices.on.ca/file/FP-GP\\_aug08\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ices.on.ca/file/FP-GP_aug08_FINAL.pdf)

The Ontario Medical Association and Metroland West Media Group (2007), claim that one million adults and 130,000 children do not have a family doctor in Ontario. One in 10 physicians is taking new patients and 64% have no one to take their practice if they retire. About 200,000 patients without a doctor live in the Milton-Niagara Region covered by the Metroland study. Ontario ranks 8th in Canada in terms of doctors per 100,000 population, according to the Ontario Medical Association. Source: <http://www.healthiercare.ca/doctors.html>

In 2004, Ontario had 86 physicians per 100,000 and our LHIN had 75 per 100,000

Source: Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN Community Profile, 2006

Indicator:  
Presence of  
hospitals and  
community  
health care  
facilities in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

Community Health Centers are being developed to offer comprehensive primary health services in parts of the region. Four Centers have been approved for Niagara and 2 are in operation.

The Niagara Health System (NHS) is the largest multi-site amalgamation in Ontario and has 6 hospital sites and an ambulatory care center serving 434,000 residents across the 12 municipalities of Niagara. The NHS provides care to almost 35,000 in-patients annually; and 200,000 are treated annually at the five 24/7 Emergency Departments and one 14-hour Prompt Care Center. The NHS has an estimated 945 beds including long term care and addictions recovery programs (525 acute care, 58 Mental Health, 169 complex continuing Care, 78 Addictions Services, 115 Long Term Care). Source: <http://www.niagarahealth.on.ca> The new acute care hospital in St. Catharine's will have a regional cardiology program, a mental health program and an oncology program.

Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Center provides complex continuing care and rehabilitation services in Niagara. They employ 400 staff, 10 medical staff and have 124 in-patient beds. The average length of stay for complex continuing care is 59.2 days; 33.4 for rehabilitation; and 6-8 weeks for out-patient rehabilitation. Source: <http://hoteldieushaver.org>







# WORK & EMPLOYMENT IN NIAGARA

Having opportunities to work, contribute and earn a living wage are important to the well being of a family, an individual and a community. The sustainability of a community is reliant on the employment of its citizens and putting their talents and human capital into creative and purposeful work.

## **What we are doing well ...**

Niagara has a skilled labour force in some areas and has an Economic Development Council, Regional Council, City Councils, a college, a university and community groups working on further economic and skills development. Many organizations are dedicated to assisting clients with employment and language training. A Niagara Immigrant Employment Council (NIEC) was established to enhance the integration of the skills of immigrants in Niagara through employment. The Niagara Training and Adjustment Board (NTAB), now called the Niagara Workforce Planning Board, conduct studies related to general labour force trends and in specific sectors and with specific populations. There is evidence of collaborative labour force planning to work on employment and labour force strategies for Niagara. While jobs are decreasing in some areas, they are increasing in other sectors.

## **Where we could improve ...**

While we have many groups working on employment issues, it is challenging to create overall Niagara collaborative and effective planning initiatives. Our tourism and service sectors have increased labour needs, while our manufacturing sector has diminished. We have an educated immigrant population who cannot have their prior credentials recognized for a faster integration into the appropriate labour area. Our youth often leave our region to seek employment after graduation. The employment and earnings of women lags behind that of men.



Indicator:  
Employment  
rates in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

The employment rate for Niagara went down slightly from 60.7% in 2005 to 59.0% in 2007. In 2007, Niagara's employment rate was lower than that of Ontario (63.6%) and Canada (63.5%).

In 2006, Niagara's total labour force was 225,985 and Niagara had a work participation rate of 64.6%, lower than Canada (66.7%) or Ontario (67.1%). Males in Niagara had a 69.9% work participation rate and females had a lower participation rate at 59.7%. *Source: Statistics Canada, Community Profiles.* Niagara's employment has fluctuated over the years and reached a high in the year 2001 and a low in the middle of 2006 and there is some indication of seasonal variances.

Indicator:  
Employment  
for specific  
groups in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

In Niagara, as in the rest of Canada, employment opportunities and earnings are different and more challenging for women, immigrants, the Aboriginal population and those with disabilities.

*Source: Statistics Canada, 2003 (Cat No. 89-587-XIE* In 2001, Canada had an employment rate of 61.5%, while recent immigrants had an employment rate of 56.5%.; Aboriginal people (49.7%); people with disabilities (41.5%) and lone parent families (61.5%).

In 2005, 58% of men and 42% of women made up the workforce. However, 68% of women worked part-time compared to 32% of men. In Niagara, 78% of females worked full-time in 2005 (CRIAW, 2006), compared to 80.5% in Windsor, 81.9% in Ontario and 81.6% in Hamilton. A majority of women work in retail sales, education, health industries and small firms. *Source: Statistics Canada, 2001, 2005.*

The unemployment rate of Niagara's most recent immigrants is 12%, close to double the general population. The rate was 13% in Ontario (TOP Report NTAB, January, 2007). In 2005, 29.8% of recent immigrant male university graduates worked in occupations requiring no more than high school education (twice the rate of 11.5% of their Canadian counterparts). Recent immigrant women with a university education were employed on low-skilled jobs. *Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Catalogue no. 97-563-x in the TOP Report* In Canada, in 2007, 8.9% of those over 65 years of age worked; up from 7.5% in 2003. *Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM 282-0002* The unemployment rate for people with disabilities in general is at least 50% nationally and provincially. *Source: ON Association of Food Banks, 2006.* In Niagara, 2001 the unemployment rate for the Aboriginal population was 10%, a full 4% higher than the general population.

Indicator:  
Unem-  
ployment  
rates in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

The unemployment rate for Niagara increased from 6.1% in 2005, to 6.2% in 2006 to 6.6% in 2007 (6.4% in Ontario and 6.0% in Canada). In May of 2008, the unemployment rate was 7.2% compared to 5.6% in Kitchener and 7.2% in London. *Source: Statistics Canada, Community Profiles*



Indicator:  
Work and  
employment  
sectors in  
Niagara

Rating:

2

Having sustainable employment that provides living wages for residents of an area is an indicator of individual and regional success. In the 2005 Census, the main employment sector Niagara residents reported working in was in the sales and service occupations (over one third). The service sector grew by 38% compared to 26% for goods producing industries and dominated the economy from 1996 to 2006, accounted for two-thirds of the Canadian GNP in 2006 and expanded 17% over the last 5 years. Such jobs often pay less, are part-time and provide fewer benefits.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006  
[http://www41.statcan.ca/2007/0163/ceb0163\\_000-eng.htm](http://www41.statcan.ca/2007/0163/ceb0163_000-eng.htm)

Indicator:  
Jobs lost in  
Niagara

Rating:

1

Niagara has lost an estimated 4,400 jobs from August 2002 to January, 2005, mostly in the manufacturing, goods producing sector -- General Motors small engine block (600 jobs lost); GM Axle (750 jobs lost); Ferranti Packard (275 lay offs); Atlas Specialty Steel (500-600 jobs lost); Welland Pipe (200 jobs lost); General Drop Forge (50 jobs lost); GM-Delphi (500 jobs lost); Dana Corp (600 lay offs); Bazaar Novelty (200 lay offs); and Affinia (250 jobs lost).

In 2008, John Deere of Dain City/Welland reported their plant will be closing and 800 jobs will be lost.

Indicator:  
Largest  
employers  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

In 2008, the employers who employ 1,000 employees and over in Niagara include: Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort (4,279), Niagara Health System (4,200), General Motors of Canada (3,999), the District School Board of Niagara (3,705), the Regional Municipality of Niagara (2,591), Niagara Catholic District School Board (2,537), Casino Niagara (1,820), Brock University ((1,784), Canadian Tire Financial Services (1,500), Algoma Central Corporation (1,300), Seaway Marine Transport Inc. (1,200), Niagara Parks Commission (1,080), Sitel (1,000) and Converger Customer Management Canada (1,000). Larger employers are no longer in the manufacturing areas, but in sales, service and tourism.

Indicator:  
Places  
where  
people do  
their work  
in Niagara

Rating:

3

In Niagara (2005), 13,670 reported they worked at home (.06%), 2,135 worked outside Canada (.01%), 18,505 (.75%) worked at no fixed address and 177,940 (84%) worked at a usual work place.

The number reporting working from home or at a usual place of work went up 4.4% from 2001 to 2006 in St. Catharines-Niagara CMA. Only Windsor went down by 1.7%. Barrie went up 20.2% and Kitchener up 11.8%. Working from home makes more opportunities and increased social isolation.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006, Community Profiles



# INCOME, PROSPERITY AND POVERTY IN NIAGARA

Economic development in a region needs to be enjoyed by all of its citizens. Regional development involves creating a place for individuals, companies and families to prosper. The gap between the rich and poor is widening and broadening in many communities, including Niagara. The level of poverty, child poverty, low income and homelessness affects the health and well being of individuals, families, regions and society as a whole.

## What we are doing well ...

Individuals and organizations are studying the impact of poverty in Niagara and working on a framework for action. Shelters and food banks throughout the region are dedicated to supporting those in need. Regional leaders in business, labour, union and government are in dialogue to work together on economic development strategies. The Niagara Regional Community Services Department offers financial assistance, Ontario Works, subsidized housing and subsidized day care. Groups have been established to address issues of homelessness and the integration of new immigrants into the region.

## Where we can improve ...

The gap between the highest and lowest income earners is steadily growing. We have little to cheer about when a large percent of Niagara's children and families struggle to get by living below the poverty line. The statistics are made up of real people who struggle each day to keep their housing, to find work, to raise families and to eat well in our midst. There are variations across our region where unemployment, low income and poverty are higher. In addition, populations who experience higher levels of poverty also experience housing, health, education, wage earnings and unemployment unequally. It is important to address all the underlying issues that contribute to poverty to make our region robust and liveable for everyone.



Indicator:  
Overall  
economic  
development  
in Niagara

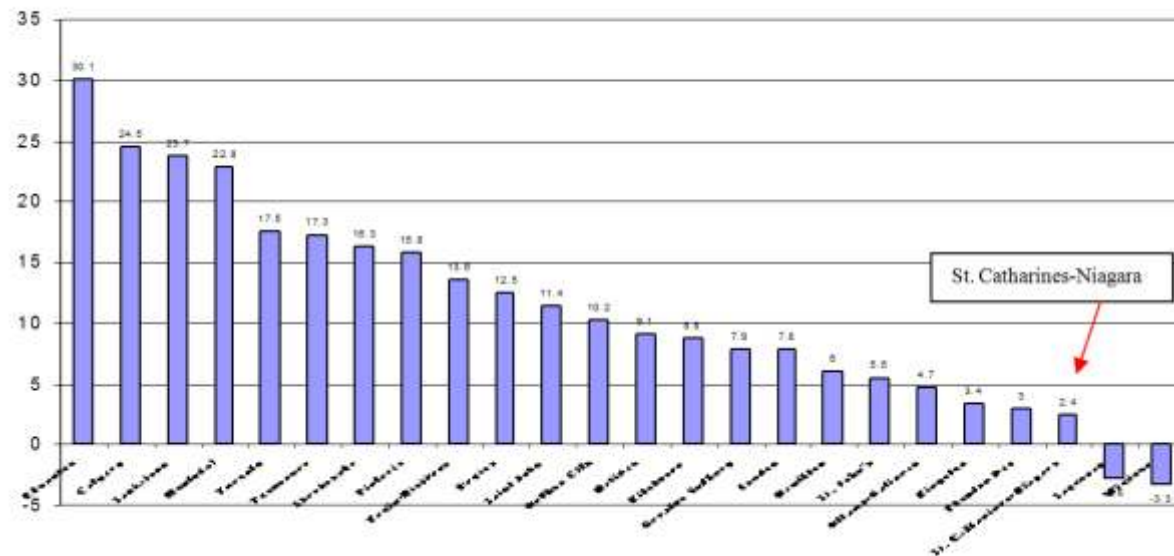
Rating:

1

The CIBCWM Metropolitan Economic Activity Index (2007) is a measure designed to rank economic development in Canada's largest CMAs. Nine macroeconomic variables and drivers of economic growth comprise the index: population growth, employment growth, unemployment rate, full-time share in total employment, personal bankruptcy rate, business bankruptcy rate, housing starts, MLS housing re-sales, and non-residential building permits. This index provides a consistent way to compare performance with other cities.

Niagara was rated an overall 2.4 on the Metropolitan Activity Index and was way down in ranking on this index in comparison to other municipalities. Overall, Niagara ranked 22nd – the 3rd lowest out of the 24 other largest municipalities measured in Canada.

CIBC WM Metropolitan Economic Activity Index (2007 Q3)



Source: [www.research.cibcwm.com](http://www.research.cibcwm.com)

[http://research.cibcwm.com/economic\\_public/download/metro\\_monitor.pdf](http://research.cibcwm.com/economic_public/download/metro_monitor.pdf)

Niagara ranked near the bottom on the employment rate (22nd); full-time share of total employment (22nd); housing starts (18th); non-residential building permits (21st); and MLS Unit sales (20th). Niagara's unemployment rate ranked 4th highest in Canada compared to the 24 Canadian metropolitan area comparators.



Indicator:  
Income and  
earnings in  
Niagara

Rating:

1

Niagara had the lowest median, after tax employment income in all of Ontario at \$23,396 in 2005. In 2005, in Niagara, the median earnings of those employed full-time for a year was \$41,807. Niagara's and Canada's median earnings for those working full-time for a year were well below that of Ontario and many other municipalities in Ontario.

In Niagara, average earnings for those with a university education was \$45,559, compared to \$22,422 with less than high school; \$25,189 for those with high school and some post-secondary education; \$32,555 with a college education; and \$36,063 with a trades certificate or diploma. There is a connection between earning and learning. Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2006, Community Profiles

Indicator:  
The Low  
Income Cut-  
Offs (LICO)  
poverty  
measure in  
Niagara

Rating:

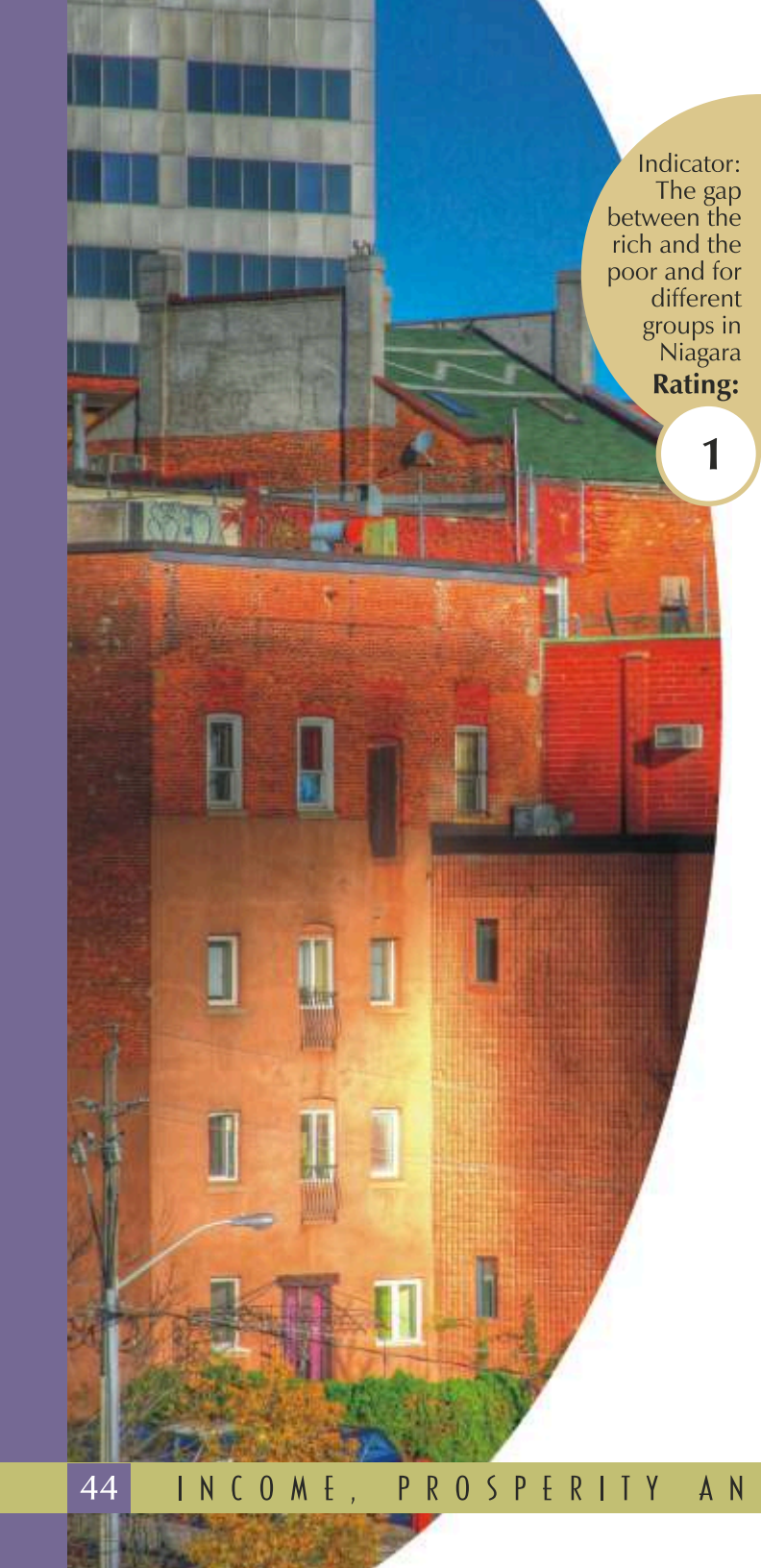
2

The Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) is a measure based on total income before or after tax and is expressed as the percentage of families or persons 15 years and over who live below the LICO level and live in poverty.

In 2006, the percentage of those living below the low income cutoff in Niagara was 14.2% of the population before taxes and 9.9% after taxes. The rates for Niagara are below the rates of 19.5% in Canada before tax and 14.6% after tax and for Ontario at 18.4% before tax and 14% after tax. Niagara's present rate has improved from 2005 when it was 21% before taxes and 14.8% after taxes. While, the percentages may have improved, it still means that many individuals, families and children live in poverty in Niagara.

In 2005, the before-tax Low Income Cutoff Point for a single person living in a community with a population of 100,000 to 499,999 such as Niagara was \$17,895.28. Source: Statistics Canada, 2006.





Indicator:  
The gap  
between the  
rich and the  
poor and for  
different  
groups in  
Niagara  
**Rating:**

1

The gap between the rich and the poor is widening in Niagara, as in all parts of Canada. According to the National Council of Welfare (2006), in 2004 for every \$1 earned by the poorest 10% of families with children, the richest 10% of families with children earned \$14.48. The Council report stated that even after the impact of government transfer payments and income taxes, the poorest 20% of the population in Canada had only 5% of the income in 2003, while the richest 20% had 43.7% of the income.

There are higher percentages of those living below the low income cutoff point in certain populations: new immigrants (35% female, 35% male), lone-parent families (48.9% female, 20% male) Aboriginals (44.0% female, 20% male) and those with disabilities (26% female, 20% male) population. In Canada 17.1% of all Canadian women and 14.7% of men. Niagara Poverty Report (2006). Women and female-led single parent families experience the greatest depth of poverty. In 2003, poverty for unattached women was 17.1% compared to 14.7% for unattached men and single-parent women poverty rates were 48.9% compared to 20.0% for male single parents.

Source: <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/saeo/reports/pdf/PovertyReport.pdf>

Source: <http://www.criaw-icref.ca>

In 2005, in Canada, the average earnings of women were 61% that of men, regardless of the occupation. Education helps, but does not reduce the gender gap in wages. Niagara's rate of poverty for those less than 18 years of age was 9.8% in 2001 and went up to 16.5% in 2005 and way down to 6.5% in 2006. Source: Statistics Canada, 2006.

Two-parent families with children are the most common family type with children in Canada and Niagara. While they have the lowest poverty rate of all family types with children (9.8% in 2003), their large numbers live approximately \$9,900 below the poverty line (National Council on Welfare, 2006). In 2005, in Niagara the median income for all families was \$60,600 and for couples with families was \$67,300, while the median income for lone-parent families was \$30,300 (down 1.5% from the year before). Female lead, single-parent families continue to be the highest group affected by poverty. According to the National Council of Welfare (2006), the average female lone-parent family lives \$9,400 below the poverty line and single-parent mothers account for 80% or more of all single-parent households and more than 90% of poor single-parent families.

Source: <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/saeo/reports/pdf/PovertyReport.pdf>



Indicator:  
Market  
Basket  
Measure  
In Niagara

Rating:

2

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) considers the cost of food, shelter, clothing, transportation and other costs of living related to a household and recreation and what proportion of the market basket that an individual living on Ontario Works is able to afford. Source: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/sdc/pkrf/publications/research/2002-000662/page04.shtml>

Those who receive government transfer payments such as Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) do not receive adequate income to meet basic needs or to live above the poverty line. Two parent families with two children are the population with the lowest ability to meet their basic needs, with Ontario Works providing only 59.4% of the costs of the Market Basket over the course of one year; 64.8% of the cost for 1 adult and 2 children; and 66.9% of the cost of for 1 adult, 1 child. Source: <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/saeo/reports/pdf/PovertyReport.pdf>

Indicator:  
Food bank  
use in  
Niagara and  
the Hunger  
Count Survey  
in Niagara

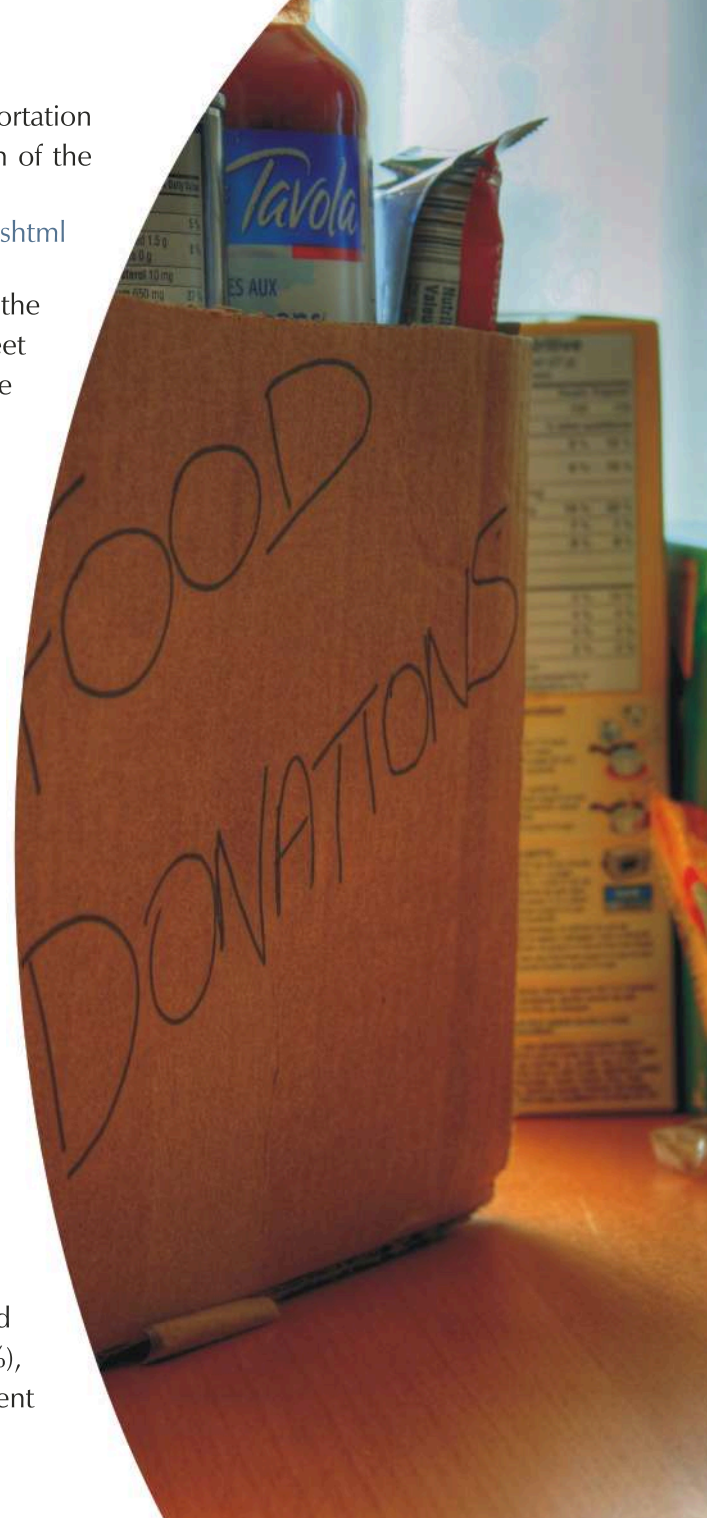
Rating:


2

The annual Hunger Count Survey provides a national snapshot of food bank use in Canada. The total number of individuals who receive groceries from food banks and other agencies are recorded during the month of March. March is chosen because it is an unexceptional month, without predictable high or low use patterns and is used consistently, to make relevant comparisons in use patterns over time. According to their figures, use has gone down slightly.

Niagara's use of food banks according to the Hunger Count Survey decreased 1.05% from 2006 to 2007, but was slightly above the national and provincial changes in use. Source: Ontario Association / Canadian Association of Food Banks

In 2007, according to local data, 12,540 individuals used the food banks in Niagara and 37% or 4,640 of them were children under the age of 18 years. This was up from 2006 when 9,037 individuals used the food banks in Niagara, representing 4047 households and 3391 children. Community Care, an agency distributing food in St. Catharines/Thorold reported that they serve approximately 1337 individuals each month (67 people each day). A Community Care survey with 833 respondents indicated that the highest proportion of people accessing services were single males (35.1%), followed by 22.0% single females; 18.7% single-parent female-led; 14.8% two parent families; 7.3% couples without. Source: Arai, S. (2007). <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/saeo/reports/pdf/PovertyReport.pdf>





Indicator:  
Social  
assistance  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

Children and their families make up 52% of the people receiving social assistance in Canada. In Niagara (2006) children under 18 years make up 42% of the Ontario Works (OW) caseload and 32% of the ODSP caseload. The number of children relying on OW payments in Niagara was 2% higher than the provincial average. The number of children relying on ODSP was 12% more than Ontario's average.

Source: Niagara Regional Social Services Department, 2006 cited in the Niagara Poverty Report <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/saeo/reports/pdf/PovertyReport.pdf>

In Niagara, there are 6,582 (1 or more persons per case) cases receiving Ontario Works (OW) assistance and 9,608 people receiving support from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The majority of people on OW and ODSP in Niagara are single adults (approximately 50% OW and 76% ODSP). According to Niagara statistics, 39% of the OW caseload is made up of sole support parents and 9% of the ODSP caseload is sole support parents.

In 2008, a total of 15,500 individuals are on Ontario Works in Niagara, of which one half are children (7,750) and one half of those are between 0 and 6 years of age (3,875). The number of single persons receiving social assistance in Niagara has been increasing.

Source: Niagara Community Services Department, 2008

The number of cases receiving social assistance in Niagara per 100,000 households. In 2005 the monthly caseload was 3,996 per 100,000 households, below the Ontario median of 4, 136.

Source: <http://www.ombi.ca/index.asp>

Indicator:  
The number  
of personal  
and business  
bankruptcies  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

The number of personal consumer and business bankruptcies in a region are a measure of whether individual or business finances are healthy and able to withstand difficult times. Personal bankruptcies were up 10% in Niagara from 2006 to 2007 but below many other municipalities in Ontario.

<http://www.hoyes.com/personal-bankruptcy-statistics-2007-2006.htm>

While business bankruptcies are down to a 25 year low in Canada, Niagara had an increased number of business bankruptcies filed from 2007 to 2008, up by 11.5%, and topped only by Oshawa in the province of Ontario.

<http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/bsf-osb.nsf/en/home>



# BELONGING AND LEADERSHIP IN NIAGARA

A community builds what is called social capital when its citizens have a well developed sense of civic responsibility and generosity that is expressed through their voluntarism and involvement in the community. Citizens can engage in political, recreational and charitable activities and give generously of their time, talents, energy and money. When they participate as leaders at the neighbourhood, town, city and regional levels, the community benefits and so does the individual. Trust, social networking and a sense of community belonging are built in this way.

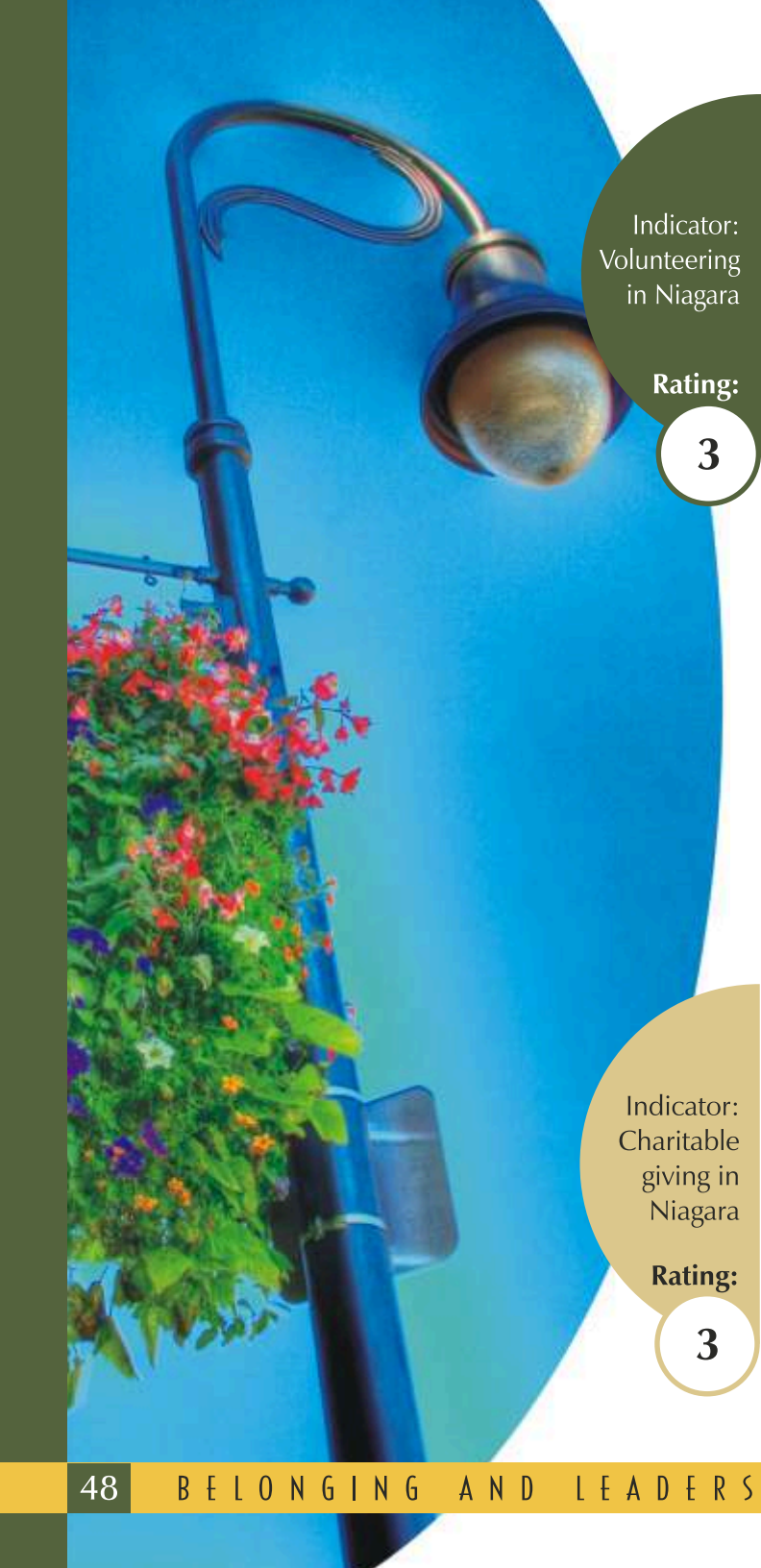
## What we are doing well ...

People have a desire to belong to their community, culture, family and friendship networks and to engage at different levels in the decision making and voting processes of society. Niagara's citizens show this belonging and leadership by devoting their time and energy toward volunteering and charitable giving. Several mentoring projects and leadership development initiatives are emerging in Niagara. Niagara has an increasing number of seniors and they provide significant volunteer time to child care and seniors' care. High schools have mandated community service hours and experiences for students. Niagara residents report a higher sense of belonging to their community than Ontario or Canada and had a slightly higher voter turnout rate in the last Federal election.

## Where we can improve ...

Niagara residents have many competing priorities demanding their time, energy and financial giving. While many of the elderly population in Niagara are well, many also require increased services, friendly visiting, home care, palliative care and meals delivered to home to help them to remain connected to the community and to live independently. It is a community challenge to cultivate an attitude of civic participation, charitable giving, voluntarism, engagement and leadership for our youth. Our gender representation at all levels of government is predominantly male.





Indicator:  
Volunteering  
in Niagara

Rating:

3

Volunteering enriches the volunteer and contributes much to the community, the local economy and the non-profit sector to build the overall social capital of a region. Niagara has a rich array of human and cultural services that actively engage volunteers on their boards of directors and in aspects of their fundraising, public awareness campaigns and direct services. Each organization monitors the recruitment, selection, education and service hours of their participants separately and this makes regional data hard to trend.

In 2004, 47.1% of those in St. Catharines- Niagara volunteered (compared to 69.9% in Guelph, 61.5% in Kingston, 55.7% in Hamilton, 54.4% in Oshawa, 46.6% in Kitchener). Five of Canada's most giving areas were in Ontario and Niagara was not one of them; Niagara was 17th of the 37 included in the report. Source: The Canadian Council on Learning (data originally collected for the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participation, 2004, from Statistics Canada).

This figure was up from 1997 when 34% of Niagara's population volunteered compared to 32% in Ontario and 31% in Canada. (134 average annual hours for Niagara compared to 146 in Ontario and 149 in Canada). Source:

[http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/factsheets/1997\\_on\\_giving\\_and\\_volunteering\\_in\\_st-c-niagara.asp](http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/factsheets/1997_on_giving_and_volunteering_in_st-c-niagara.asp) In 2004, 45% of Canadians aged 15 and over volunteered approximately 2 billion hours; an average of 76 hours. Those over the age of 65 volunteered the most average hours at 111 hours annually and teenagers volunteered the highest percentage of any age group (65%). Source: Highlights from the 2004 Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, Cat. No. 71-542-XIE <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/71-542-XIE/71-542-XIE2006001.pdf>

Indicator:  
Charitable  
giving in  
Niagara

Rating:

3

Niagara residents have increased the amount they give to charity each year from 2001 to 2006. The median charitable donation per year reached \$290 per person in 2006; lower than the \$310 Ontario median, but higher than the \$250 median giving for all Canadians.

In 2004, 85% of the population aged 15 and over made a financial donation to a charitable or other non-profit organization. Canadians, over 65 gave \$490 as the average donation and those 15-24 gave \$111. The largest amount of total donations was given to religion (45%), followed by health organizations (14%), social service organizations (10%), grants, fundraising and volunteer promotion (6%) and hospitals (5%). Those who gave the most to charity tend to be seniors, have lower household incomes, higher education, no children in the household and are religiously active. Source: Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 71-542-XIE). GSGVP



Indicator:  
Political  
involvement  
in Niagara

Rating:

3

Civic participation builds the capacity of a community and a nation. One way to exercise civic participation is through engaging in political activities, leadership and voting. In Niagara, 67.5% of the eligible voters voted in the 2006 Federal election. This was higher than in Ontario (66.6%) and Canada (64.7%). The turnout in the municipal election (2006) was also slightly higher in Niagara than in Ontario as well.

Sources: Election Canada; Elections, Ontario

Nationally, 54.6% of those over 15 years of age reported being involved in at least 1 political activity in 2002; men more than women (58.3% to 51.7%). Younger persons reported more involvement (59% of 15-24 year olds), and 39% of those over 65 participated in at least one political activity.

Source: General Social Survey, 2004.

Indicator:  
Sense of  
community  
belonging  
in Niagara

Rating:

4

In 2005, 69.9% in Niagara reported they had a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their local community, higher than 62.9% in Waterloo Region, 65.5% of those in Ontario and 64.1% in Canada. This higher sense of belonging in Niagara is at the community level, not the regional level.

In 2003, 91% of those in Ontario reported a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to Canada; 77% to their province; and 68% to their community. In all provinces, the sense of belonging was lowest at the community level. Those 65 years and over 79% reported they had a strong highest sense of belonging to their community, higher than all other age groups.

Source: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/82-221-XIE/2006001/tables/1012b.pdf>

Indicator:  
Trust in  
others in  
Niagara

Rating:

3

It takes trust in one another to build a safe community where everyone feels comfortable to engage with others and to turn to neighbours and officials when help is needed. Trust is also required to participate in shared community activities and to share resources and ideas.

In 2003, nearly 6 out of 10 Canadians believed that others could be trusted. The level of trust was slightly greater for men and for those aged 45-64. The level of trust ranged from 34.6% in Quebec to 68.1% in Prince Edward Island and 59 % reported trusting others in Ontario (General Social Survey). Internationally, Japan (in 1999) and Canada (in 2000) were the most trusting nations, with 40% of the Canadian population maintaining that others could be trusted.

We have not conducted a Niagara-wide survey to date – a Social Capital Survey to measure the sense of belonging inclusion, reciprocity, trust, civic engagement, and social networks in Niagara could provide a good measure of life in Niagara.





Indicator:  
Participation  
in social  
networks  
and social  
activities  
in Niagara  
**Rating:**

3

Being socially connected with families, friends and with community contacts through social institutions, clubs and organizations fosters social interaction, increases a sense of belonging and inclusion, provides emotional support and builds possible networks for positive action. In 2003, 61% of Canadians reported that they were involved in at least one social activity, with more men than women involved (63% to 59%). Canadians aged 65 years and over, reported the lowest rate of involvement in social activity groups (52%). Ontario reporting 52% were engaged in social activities; the highest percent reported being engaged in sports or recreational activities (28%); union or professional activities (25%); cultural, education or hobby activities (18%); religious affiliated activities (17%); and school or community activities (16%).

In 2003, 93.7% of Canadians reported having close friends or family members. However, 6.3% reported not having close friends or family. In the same year, the percentage of older Canadians with no close friends or family increased with age, with 10.2% of those over 65 years of age reporting not having any close friends or family members. The two provinces reporting the highest number of residents having no close friends or family members were Quebec (9%) and Ontario (7%).

Source: General Social Survey, 2005

It is important to know how strong the social networks and bonds are in Niagara and how many residents do not have close friends, family and community connections. Not having social connections affects one's capacity to live in the community and to improve our communities.

Indicator:  
Having a  
religious  
affiliation  
in Niagara

**Rating:**

4

Having a religious affiliation is believed to be of benefit to the individual, but also to support building social networks, civic engagement and voluntarism in a region. In Niagara in 2001, 84.09% reported they had a religious affiliation, and 15.65% reported they had no religious affiliation. In this study, the term affiliation was not a measure of the level of affiliation or how current or active the engagement was. Niagara reported more religious affiliation than most other regions and municipalities in the province. Source: Statistics Canada Census 2001, Community Profiles

Philanthropy in the form of volunteering time or donating money is encouraged by all major religions. Those who attend religious services are more likely to volunteer their time than those who do not (62% vs 43%) and they volunteer more time (229 hours vs 147 hours). Those who attend religious services weekly are 19% of the population and they give 35% of all volunteer hours in Canada. Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2004.



# GETTING STARTED IN NIAGARA

A region or city is enhanced when a new child, a new graduate or a new immigrant makes a start in their community. How we welcome them, help them to get established and include them and their contributions is a measure of our community's vitality, inclusiveness and future sustainability and success.

## What we are doing well ...


In Niagara, as refugees and immigrants come into Canada, they are met by the Newcomers' Welcome Center and Canada Border Services at the Fort Erie Peace Bridge point of entry. While many continue on to larger urban centers in Ontario and Canada, others get their start in Niagara where they remain temporarily or permanently. New babies get their start in Niagara and they and their parents benefit from the supports that the Early Years programs and day care facilities have to offer with centers throughout Niagara. Each year, new graduates from high school, colleges, trades, apprenticeship programs and universities look for work and opportunities in Niagara and benefit from work shadowing, internships, on-the-job training and mentoring.

## Where we can improve ...

Immigrants and their families bring diversity and skills to our communities, schools and places of work. Inclusiveness requires our region to develop more of a proactive approach to welcoming and including others, reaching out to get to know the talents of those new to our region and reducing prejudice and misunderstanding. Efforts to recognize prior credentials, to offer language training, settlement services and education need to be more effective and timely. In Niagara, we are challenged to provide opportunities to attract and retain youth so they do not have to leave Niagara for employment.







Indicator:  
Starting  
out as a  
refugee or  
immigrant  
in Niagara  
Rating:

3

Refugees enter Canada at the Fort Erie Peace Bridge point of entry to seek asylum from war, persecution of genocide or to flee famine and natural disasters. Other immigrants enter to reunite with families and to seek new opportunities. (8,695 claimants in Fort Erie compared to 5,240 at Pearson Airport 2000/2001). The Peace Bridge Welcome Center reported that in 2006, 1,829 refugees made a claim for asylum at that point of entry. Of those, 383 remained in Niagara. Many identified that they came to Canada with prior education, credentials and experience as teachers, doctors, engineers, journalists, nurses or business people. Approximately 37% of Canada's immigrants have a university degree and this population often pursue further education in Canada.

In 2006, 18% of the total Niagara population was made up of immigrants, compared to 28.3% of Ontario's population. In 2006, 70,320 foreign-born permanent residents were recorded in the St. Catharines, Niagara CMA, up from 66,046 in 2001. Our numbers are similar to Windsor, the other border area in Ontario. The Niagara immigrant population is made up of 10.4% recent immigrants who arrived from 2001-2006 (17.1% of the Ontario population are recent immigrants). [Source: http://www.cic.gc.ca/English/resources/statistics/facts2006/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/English/resources/statistics/facts2006/index.asp)

Indicator:  
Starting out  
as a child  
in Niagara

Rating:

3

The presence of child care services and supports for children and their parents or caregivers is a measure of the success of a region in giving children an early good start. The Healthy Babies, Healthy Children provincial program is offered by the Niagara Regional Public Health Unit to help children and their parents or caregivers to get off to a healthy start and to be included in the community. In Niagara, approximately 98% of mothers are contacted through this program as early as possible after birth. There are 16 Ontario Early Years sites and 5 drop-in centers across Niagara to support parents/caregivers and children 0 – 6 years of age (11,855 children were served and 62,289 parents/caregivers were served in 2006-2007). [Source: http://www.earlyyearsniagara.org/Niagara\\_Best\\_Start\\_Community\\_Integrated\\_Plan\\_Feb\\_72006\(1\).pdf](http://www.earlyyearsniagara.org/Niagara_Best_Start_Community_Integrated_Plan_Feb_72006(1).pdf)

Each year, the number of licensed child care spaces has increased in Niagara. In 2007, there were 7,870 licensed childcare spaces in Niagara (compared to 5,977) at 167 child care sites (174 infant, 695 toddler, 2,823 preschool, 1,324 JKSK, 2,854 school age). Approximately 2,000 of the child care spaces were subsidized spaces. By the end of 2007, there were 200 children on the waiting list for subsidized child care. The number of licensed child care spaces increased by a net increase of 675 spaces from 2006 to 2007, 553 of the increases were through funding from the Provincial Best Start Initiative. [Source: Niagara Region Children's Services 2007 Year End Report, COM 27-2008. May, 2007.](#)



Indicator:  
Starting out  
as a youth  
and graduate  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

The prevailing belief is that many of our young people leave the region for a post secondary education and many do not return to the region because they find employment and opportunities using their education and skills in larger urban areas. In 2006, 29.9% of the Niagara population was 24 years of age and younger, compared to 31.6% of Ontario's population. Niagara schools are experiencing a slow, but steady decline in student enrolment over the past five years (2001-2006). Source: The Standard, July 18, 2007

In Niagara, children 14 and younger represent 16.6% of the population, which is below the national average of 17.7%. Source: Statistics Canada, 2005, Community Profiles.

Indicator:  
Net  
migration  
for Niagara

Rating:

3

Net Migration data about the rate of migration per 1,000 population was derived by comparing the addresses supplied on personal income tax returns filed in the spring of 2005 and 2006. The rate represents the rate per 1,000 of the population who move out of an area to live somewhere else in a given period of time. The migration rate for St. Catharine - Niagara CMA was lower (6th lowest) compared to 21 other Canadian reporting larger metropolitan areas, and the rate went down from 4.2 per 1,000 population to 2 in the period of reporting from 2004/2005 to 2005/2006. Source: <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/070927/d070927c.htm>

Indicator:  
Leadership  
Diversity  
in Niagara

Rating:

2

A community thrives if there are opportunities for leadership at all levels and involving the diversity of voices and ideas. In Niagara, of 104 Councillors elected across the region 82 (78.8%) are male and 22 (21.1%) are female. All present elected provincial and federal representatives in Niagara are male. We have little data on the diversity related to gender, age and ethnicity representation on Niagara's boards and decision making bodies across Niagara.





# SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS: LIVING IN NIAGARA – 2008

Let us build an even better Niagara as a place to live, work and play.

## What have we accomplished so far?

- We have described Living in Niagara in 2008 in a written and sharable document.
- We have identified 11 key areas to monitor in Niagara with indicators in each area and criteria for their inclusion in a description of Niagara.
- We have engaged community leaders in identifying the indicators and in the data collection process.
- We have identified key sources of reliable and comparable data.
- We have developed an inventory of data at a regional level.
- We have connected with collaborative efforts at the regional, provincial and national levels to collect and make available reliable data in a more consistent manner.
- We have identified some key areas where there are gaps in data or where it has been collected in ways that make comparisons and trending difficult.
- We have begun the process of linking research and analysis with community action and community capacity building.

**Thank you for reading Living in Niagara - 2008.**

We hope you decide to get involved to make things even better for the future.





# What gaps in the data need to be addressed for the future?

- Information needs to be gathered on the variability across the region in regards to literacy, low income, poverty, education, health and employment in each municipality and even broken down further into how neighbourhoods are doing.
- Information is needed on local Green House Gas Emissions and other environmental monitoring data related to the quality of the air and water for Niagara.
- Data needs to be collected in a consistent manner over a period of time for comparative purposes.
- A survey of social capital needs to be conducted at the regional level to explore aspects of civic engagement, the development of social networks and the experiences of inclusion, belonging, trust, and reciprocity.
- We need information on the number of youth leaving our region and why, those who stay in Niagara and why and youth who are attracted to Niagara and why. In addition, we need information on young peoples' experience starting work life, financial life and adult life in Niagara.
- We need more data on the extent of recreational and active living opportunities in Niagara and their accessibility and contributions to the health of individuals and the community.
- We need more information on those who live below the poverty line and the picture of homelessness, child poverty and going hungry in Niagara.
- We need more data on mental health issues and challenges in Niagara.
- We need more data on the trends and impact of having a growing senior's population.
- We need more data on leadership and the actual makeup of the boards and decision making bodies in Niagara to see if we have diversity in leadership and representation.
- The Niagara Region needs to continue to develop the GIS system to make regional maps, information and reports available regarding the region and data available about how we are doing



A circular inset image on the left side of the page. It shows a stone walkway leading through a garden with red flowers. A yellow hand icon is overlaid on the left side of the circle, with five hands reaching out from the left edge. The background of the page is a light blue sky with white clouds.

## What are the next steps in the process?

**Involve** interested Niagara stakeholders in the analysis of the data and in the development of improvement action goals for each of the measures as the next phase of this initiative.

**Prepare** a communication strategy attached to the initiative and how the public will be engaged.

**Identify** what data is missing and what it will take to gather the data and how it will be done and by whom for future research.

**Facilitate** an inclusive process to involve partners to establish clear, measurable and specific goals for the region related to each indicator and area of concern.

**Prioritize** and partner with other existing collaborative efforts in Niagara.

**Develop** meaningful benchmark comparisons to other regions.

**Track** indicators over time to determine the trends and any impact the goals, planning and improvements have on changes.

**Establish** an ongoing way to track indicators and to monitor areas regularly with a plan to keep the public engaged, educated and involved.

**Link** this work with the overall Niagara Community Research and Planning Council and plans to connect research and community action partners in the region.

### How can individuals and groups get involved?

1. Use the information and indicators to stimulate discussion at work and in the community.
2. Join with others in the region to take regional action.
3. Take part in efforts to build an Integrated Social and Community Plan for Niagara.
4. If you are aware of additional data, share the information at the new website being developed.
5. If you are part of a regional planning or action project in any of these areas, please let us know.
6. Your feedback and involvement are essential.
7. Read the whole report at [www.livinginniagarareport.com](http://www.livinginniagarareport.com) and about the Niagara Integrated Planning approach at [www.nrapc.com](http://www.nrapc.com)