



Belonging, Volunteering, Giving and Leadership in Niagara

When people engage in charitable giving, voluntarism and community leadership, it strengthens Niagara. Helping others gives one a sense of satisfaction, belonging, self-worth and connectedness. Creating opportunities for people to participate socially and belong to networks is important for quality of life for people of all ages.

When individuals choose to share their talents, wisdom, encouragement, support, leadership or resources, it has a positive ripple effect throughout the community.



Rating

3b

a lot of
progress
is being
made

Things we are doing well!

The Niagara Age-Friendly Community Network is engaging people, businesses and groups in applying World Health Organization Age-Friendly principles to their planning.

Each year, Leadership Niagara helps 40 to 45 emerging leaders to connect, build leadership skills and engage in service projects to strengthen our community.

The Niagara Connects network of people gathers diverse players in Niagara and assists them in 'getting where they want to be, together'. The Niagara Knowledge Exchange tool enables evidence-informed planning, and sharing of relevant, reliable data and knowledge.

The Niagara Community Foundation, United Way and Ontario Trillium Foundation collaboratively offer the Niagara Neighbourhood NEW Idea Fund. Over 5 years, this fund has provided 46 grants to organizations from Grimsby to Wainfleet.

RAVA (Regional Association of Volunteer Administrators) has 50 members representing 43 agencies in Niagara, who meet regularly to learn, network, and share ideas.

INCommunities hosts the Volunteer Connection database for Niagara. In 2013, 388 new profiles were created and the database saw a 42% increase in the number of individuals clicking on "Yes, I'd like to Volunteer".

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

The Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan will be released in 2015, to help identify assets and challenges to drive action that improves the lives of seniors.

2

The building of the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter, launched in 2014, is an example of leadership coming together from across 65 diverse organizations in Niagara to impact change that will benefit the whole community.

3

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network is engaging partners to increase the number of clinic host sites for the Canada Revenue Agency Community Volunteer Income Tax Program; demand in Niagara far exceeds the number of available clinics. By accessing this service, low income earners have the ability to receive various tax benefits, credits and monthly incomes such as Old Age Security.

4

The Niagara Community Observatory is preparing policy briefs to help inform voter turnout and participation rates in the Niagara context.

Suggested Action Steps

Identify opportunities to leverage and weave together initiatives around Age-Friendly, and youth engagement in Niagara, to strengthen sharing of wisdom, encouragement and empowering social connections for people of all ages. Engaging young people in community leadership, volunteerism, philanthropy, and promoting their interest in fulfilling board and governance roles is good for Niagara.

Work together to increase the profile of community-built information assets, such as 211 Niagara, and the Niagara Knowledge Exchange.

Raise awareness about opportunities for intentional volunteer recruitment, to create a diverse pool of volunteers more reflective of the Niagara community at large. Develop strategies to encourage broader and deeper volunteer participation.

Expand the number of clinic host sites in Niagara for the CRA Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, to meet growing demand.

Raise awareness among agencies of the opportunity to post needs for donated goods on the Niagara Region Donations of Goods Portal, to make it easier for those looking to donate. In 2013 the 3,776 record views on the portal outweighed the total of 39 specific donation opportunities.

Encourage increased participation among Niagara voters in federal, provincial and municipal elections.

Indicators

- Charitable Giving
- Economic Contribution of Volunteers
- Participation in Social Activities
- Religious Affiliation
- Sense of Community Belonging
- Trust in Others
- Volunteering
- Voter Turnout

Voter Turnout for Municipal Elections 2000 - 2014

	2000	2003	2006	2010	2014 (unofficial)
Fort Erie	29.0	34.0	37.0	41.0	43.7
Grimsby	46.1	47.3	44.8	39.0	42.4
Lincoln	33.4	35.8	34.0	37.0	37.5
Niagara Falls	40.3	47.8	41.3	43.0	36.7
NOTL	N/A	44.0	47.0	49.0	48.5
Pelham	42.5	49.4	48.6	45.0	43.9
Port Colborne	29.4	49.6	51.7	51.0	45.7
St Catharines	27.0	29.7	40.7	31.0	34.3
Thorold	47.6	39.0	40.7	40.0	36.9
Wainfleet	43.6	33.6	43.4	49.0	52.6
Welland	55.0	44.8	42.4	41.0	35.8
West Lincoln	38.8	39.3	37.3	37.0	37.5
Average	39.3	41.2	42.4	41.9	41.3

*All figures courtesy of Niagara Region and/or municipal websites
Note: 4-year terms started in 2006; prior to that, the term was 3 years.

Source: NCO Policy Brief#21/September 2014; and 2014 statistics retrieved from local municipalities in Niagara