



Individuals and families having access to affordable, safe and reliable housing and shelter is fundamental to community well-being.

What's Emerging

- Effects of inflation are driving an increase in demand for community services, for individuals and families to meet basic necessities. This is amplifying the vital importance of agencies working in partnership to address complex issues and take action so that individuals and families have a safe, reliable, affordable place to call home.
- The REACH Niagara Mobile Health Clinic is putting healthcare within reach for individuals experiencing homelessness or who are marginalized. Clinics are operated in partnership with organizations across Niagara, such as the Hope Centre (Welland); Southridge Shelter (St. Catharines); YWCA Niagara (St. Catharines); Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre; Port Cares (Port Colborne); and Birchway Niagara (Niagara Falls).
- It is important to continue the work being done in Niagara to successfully access both provincial and national funding to address homelessness issues in our communities.
- The Niagara Region Consolidated Housing Masterplan is part of the region's affordable housing strategy and guides the construction of new community housing units to 2045. The plan projects that 479 new community housing units per year are needed to meet anticipated demand by 2045. Co-investment with Federal, Provincial, Municipal, and other partners will be required to create this amount of new housing stock; and 8 specific projects are projected within the plan.

Suggested Community Action Steps

- Increase availability of accessible, in-person mental health and addictions support for vulnerable tenants, with the recognition that this is essential for housing stability.
- Acknowledge the complexity of putting strategies in place for homelessness prevention, and the nuance required to find effective solutions.
- Increase investment in affordable housing:
 - Maintain current supply, e.g., by finding ways to purchase units and/or land that becomes available
 - Make housing units available that are truly affordable, based on household income
 - Provide supportive housing tied to mental health/addictions supports and physical supports
- Encourage increases in Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and minimum wage, so that people living on low income can afford to have a safe, reliable home.
- Address policy gaps that are leading to an increase in evictions. Life in the post-pandemic period is less stable and more traumatizing for already vulnerable individuals, and the emotional burden of being evicted can be re-traumatizing.
- Investigate initiatives and funding opportunities that focus on co-operative models, which may lead to higher rates of people being able to retain their housing.

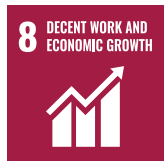
Indicators

- Housing Availability
- Homelessness Prevention
- Housing Affordability
- Municipal Housing Policy and Regulations



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Happening Now



- Niagara is experiencing a surge in housing demand, with forecasts projecting the need, by 2051, for 44,300 single and semi-detached units, 27,400 row and townhouse units, and 31,000 apartment units. The surge has resulted in increased housing costs, which raises concerns about affordability and sustainability.
- In 2023, Housing remained as the most-cited reason for people from Niagara contacting 211. A total of 21,261 calls were made to 211 from all local areas of Niagara in 2023.
- A new five-storey apartment building in Port Colborne, with 41 affordable homes for low-income seniors and female-led single parent households in South Niagara, is expected to be completed by the fall of 2024. This Port Cares affordable housing project is made possible through investment by the Government of Canada, Region of Niagara, City of Port Colborne, and charitable donations of Port Cares donors and supporters.
- Niagara Region is actively maintaining and managing its existing Community Housing stock, comprising 2,981 owned units, 3,354 housing provider units, and 1,400 rent supplement units. Initiatives like the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit contribute to ensuring housing stability for residents.
- Local municipalities and the Niagara Region are working together to take a multi-faceted approach to support new housing construction. This includes streamlining development approvals, and providing development incentives.
- A total of 51 corporations in Niagara are dedicated to providing affordable and community-driven housing solutions. Of these, 25 are non-profit corporations, which contribute 1,614 housing units to the region; and 26 are co-operative entities, which provide 1,552 housing units that foster a unique community-driven approach. The housing units span various types to cater to diverse resident needs: 2,079 apartments; 140 singles/semi-detached; and 947 townhouses.
- Built for Zero Canada progress indicators show that, as of December, 2023, there were 594 individuals who are chronically homeless in Niagara. This is an increase from 550 individuals in December, 2022 and 421 individuals on June 30, 2022
- Peer Support Navigators (individuals with lived experience of homelessness) are working in hospital Emergency Departments (EDs) in Niagara, to ease health systems navigation for individuals experiencing homelessness, and to help hospital ED staff to deepen their understanding of barriers faced by the homeless population.
- Twenty individuals who participated in 2023 lived expert advisory meetings hosted by Niagara Region provided ten recommendations for better addressing homelessness. These include: more barrier-free support for mental health, addictions and other health issues; additional support for victims of violence; meaningfully including individuals experiencing homelessness, to be a part of the solution; and public education to address misunderstanding and stigma.

COMMUNITY POTENTIAL

