



Living in Niagara – 2023 Report Economic Prosperity

Community prosperity spans the socio-economic sectors. It includes the vibrancy of our economy; and the well-being of the people who live here.

This Sector aligns with SDGs # 3 – Good Health and Well-Being, #8 – Decent work and Economic Growth, and #9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Happening Now

- The 2022 [Niagara Official Plan](#) projects, by 2051, a minimum population of 694,000 people, and 272,000 jobs. From 2016 to 2021, Niagara’s population grew by 6.7 per cent, compared to 5.8 per cent for Ontario. Related data is presented in the 25 Development, Employment and Growth Indicators in the [Economy and business](#) category of the Niagara Region Community Dashboard provide relevant data.
- [Niagara’s 10 Year Economic Development Strategy](#) 2022-2032 includes core industry sectors: Agriculture, Manufacturing, Tourism, and Professional Services (finance, technical, professional, scientific). Emerging sectors include: Health Care, Film Industry, Sport Tourism/Active Economy, Marine Sector, and Electrification/Clean Tech. Themes include: Consistent support for diversity/equity/inclusion; Education and workforce support; Investment attraction; Green development and sustainability; and Infrastructure and transportation.
- [2023 Ontario Chamber of Commerce Business Confidence Survey](#) results show that business confidence is low, mainly due to cost of living, inflation, housing affordability, and cost of inputs. The survey received 1,857 responses, including 150 from the Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula area.
- A 2023 Workforce Collective report calls for a shift in the way our economy values the non-profit sector, which employs about 1 in 5 employed individuals in Niagara. The sector is working at over capacity, experiencing employee burnout, and facing labour market challenges. In 2020 in Niagara, there were approximately 1,521 active non-profit organizations employing approximately 38,833 people, primarily in the care economy - health, education and social services.
- 2022-2024 Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) priorities include: Children and Families; Housing and Homelessness; Food Security; Domestic Violence; Indigenous Wellbeing; and Living Wage. A comprehensive [Poverty Reduction Strategy for Niagara](#) will be launched in early 2024.



What's Emerging

- Inflation effects are driving both an unprecedented increase in demand for services from Feed Niagara's ten partner food banks, and [a reduction in charitable giving](#), at a time when [one in five households \(20.7%\) in Niagara are food insecure](#).
- In 2023, [Niagara Region Council](#) called for upper-tier levels of government to launch a basic income guarantee project. This builds upon [2021 Niagara Food Security Network Lived Experience Engagement Report](#) findings.
- Recognition is growing, that implementation of Niagara's Poverty Reduction Strategy will be strengthened by intentionally investing in strengthening the collaborative work of the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network.
- Renewed attention is being paid to Niagara's workforce participation rate being lower than the average for Ontario.

Suggested Community Action Steps

- Invest in strengthening the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, to ensure that agencies are supported to collaboratively make a meaningful, measurable contribution to enacting the Niagara Region Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- Continue to prioritize equitable access to technology, the internet, and opportunities to acquire digital skills, for all people in Niagara.
- Emphasize the vital importance of equitable access to participate in our community and economy, for women and their families, and all equity-deserving groups.
- Examine ways that the Niagara Region Housing and Homelessness Action Plan can inform both economic development and workforce planning priorities for Niagara.
- Emphasize the significant contribution that non-profit, culture and sport organizations play in Niagara's economy and community, and identify growth opportunities.

Indicators

- **Economic Development in Niagara**
- **Income and Earnings in Niagara**



Indicator: Economic Development in Niagara

Economic Performance and Growth

Niagara Region's 2022 – 2032 Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032 aims to establish a strong and sustainable regional economy over the next decade. Six strategies drive the actions in the plan:

- Investment attraction
- External marketing
- Business and economic research and analysis
- Expedited services and business development
- Sector and local area municipality support including business organizations
- Strategic initiatives and advocacy

Key Sectors include:

- Manufacturing
- Agribusiness
- Tourism
- Emerging Sectors (growth in technical sectors such as: computer systems design, scientific research and development, architecture and engineering; technology & innovation)

Source: Niagara Region Economic Development

Retrieved from: <https://niagaracanada.com/about-us/economic-development-strategy/>

Niagara Region Economic Development provides data in 6 categories:

- Reports - <https://niagaracanada.com/data/reports/>
- Regional Quick Facts - <https://niagaracanada.com/data/regional-quick-facts/>
 - Location
 - Transportation Infrastructure
 - Business (Counts, Size Range, Employment, Largest Employers (Private Sector, Public Sector), Top 5 Sectors by Employment, Top 5 Sectors by Employment Growth, Top 5 Sectors by Employment Growth Rate)
- Economic Indicators - <https://niagaracanada.com/data/economic-indicators/>
 - Retail Sales
 - Consumer Price Index
 - Development and Construction
 - Real GDP (gross domestic product)
 - Total Job Growth
- Trade & Export - <https://niagaracanada.com/data/trade-export/>
- Demographics - <https://niagaracanada.com/data/demographics/>
- Labour Force - <https://niagaracanada.com/data/labour-force/>

Source: Niagara Region Economic Development

Retrieved from: <https://niagaracanada.com/>



Key Economic Sectors in Niagara

Profile reports for 4 key economic sectors are provided by Niagara Economic Development:

- Manufacturing: <https://niagaracanada.com/key-sectors/manufacturing/>
- Agri-Business: <https://niagaracanada.com/key-sectors/agri-business/>
- Tourism: <https://niagaracanada.com/key-sectors/tourism/>
- Emerging Sectors (technical sectors): <https://niagaracanada.com/key-sectors/emerging-sectors/>

Source: Niagara Region Economic Development, Key Sectors

Retrieved from: <https://niagaracanada.com/key-sectors/>

Tourism Industry Performance Reports

'Ontario Tourism Industry Health Check' is a July, 2023 Destination Ontario report. It shows tourism in an overall upward recovery trend, with some performance indicators having fully surpassed 2022 levels in all regions, and still below pre-pandemic levels (2019).

Source: Destination Ontario

Retrieved from: https://rto9.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Ontario_Tourism_Industry_Health_Check-11.pdf

2022 State of the Ontario Tourism Industry Report explores obstacles the tourism industry still faces on the road to economic recovery, and points to opportunities for the future of tourism in Ontario. Key issues are grouped under four broad sections: Economy, Labour, Infrastructure, and the Future of Tourism in Ontario.

Source: Tourism Industry Association of Ontario and Ontario Chamber of Commerce

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/state-of-the-ontario-tourism-industry-report-2022/>

2023 Ontario Chamber of Commerce Business Confidence Survey

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce Business Confidence Survey was conducted from October 10 to November 21, 2023. Of the 1,857 respondents, 150 are from the Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula area. Survey results are highlighted in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce Ontario 2024 Ontario Economic Report:

- Business confidence in the economy has dropped to a record low for the second year in a row, with only 13 percent of businesses feeling confident in Ontario's economic outlook. Confidence is lowest among small businesses (1 to 99 employees).
- Pessimism is mainly attributed to high costs, including both costs of living and costs of doing business.
- The policy priorities of Ontario businesses reflect ongoing pain points, as they seek tax reforms, buy-local programs, workforce development support, and affordable housing for their employees.



- However, 48 percent of businesses are confident in their internal outlooks and a majority expect to grow in 2024, as population growth and a resilient labour market have sustained aggregate consumer demand in most sectors.
- Labour shortages have eased somewhat from last year, dropping from 55 percent to 40 percent of organizations reporting shortages, with elevated shortages in construction, transportation, and manufacturing.
- As businesses grapple with economic headwinds, many are limiting their investments in important social and economic issues, including employee health and well-being, diversity, equity and inclusion, Indigenous reconciliation and climate action.

Highlights from the 2024 Ontario Chamber of Commerce Economic Outlook include:

- Ontario's real GDP is forecasted to grow by 0.4 percent in 2024, following 1.1 percent growth in 2023.
- Conversely, real GDP per-capita has fallen to below pre-pandemic levels and that downward trend is expected to continue into 2024.
- Inflation is expected to ease to 2.9 percent in 2024, after a period of 'sticky' inflation in 2023 in which core inflation measures (such as energy and housing costs) remained elevated.
- Inflationary pressure will continue to weigh on the economy, dampening consumer spending and housing starts.
- Ontario's unemployment rate is expected to increase to 6.8 percent in 2024 in light of the forecasted economic slowdown after remaining relatively unchanged between 2022 and 2023.
- Most regions of Ontario are expected to continue seeing weaker employment growth and elevated unemployment over the next 12 months.
- Faced with these circumstances, Ontario must pursue a principled economic growth strategy focused on addressing its productivity challenge.

Source: 2024 Ontario Economic Report, Ontario Chamber of Commerce

Retrieved from: <https://occ.ca/oer2024/>

Challenges and Opportunities: Current Economic Conditions and Structural Challenges is a December, 2023 Statistics Canada webinar summary outlining current economic conditions in Canada, and factors contributing to structural challenges.

- Affordability challenges in Canada will persist even as consumer inflation eases. Soaring housing and rental prices, owing to strong demand and weak supply, pose substantial risks to social and economic mobility. Financial and economic risks are amplified for certain demographic groups, particularly young families.
- Recent employment gains are not keeping pace with increases in the working-age population, putting downward pressure on the employment rate. Over the first eleven months of 2023, the working-age population expanded by nearly 80,000 per month, almost twice the average pace observed in 2022.



- The improvement of living standards over the longer term will require sustained increases in labour productivity, which has continued to trend lower in recent quarters. Strategies to bolster investment, innovation and skill utilization will be important drivers of improvements in GDP per capita.

Source: Statistics Canada

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/challenges-and-opportunities-current-economic-conditions-and-structural-challenges/>

Chambers of Commerce in Niagara:

Chambers of Commerce have a long-standing history of advocating for businesses in Niagara. The original chamber in St. Catharines was established in 1867 and the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce was established in 1892. There is an ecosystem of 10 Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade organizations in Niagara. Some businesses, organizations and institutions belong to more than one of these groups.

The Niagara Chamber Partnership (NCP) includes 9 organizations that bring a united presence to regional issues, opportunities for additional networking at joint events, and the power of exposure across multiple Chamber websites and communication pieces, such as newsletters and social media channels. Members include:

- Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce
- Grimsby & District Chamber of Commerce
- Niagara Board of Trade and Commerce
- Lincoln Chamber of Commerce
- Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce
- Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Port Colborne-Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce
- Welland-Pelham Chamber of Commerce
- West Lincoln Chamber of Commerce

Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade organizations in the Niagara region	Number of Members (est.)
Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce (est. 2007)	1500
Grimsby & District Chamber of Commerce (est. 1953)	259
Lincoln Chamber of Commerce (est. 1985)	242
Niagara Board of Trade and Commerce (Thorold Board of Trade est. 1893)	150
Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce & Visitor & Convention Bureau (est. 1995)	208
South Niagara Chambers of Commerce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce (est. 1947) • Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce (est. 1892) • Port Colborne/Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce (est. 1902) • Welland/Pelham Chamber of Commerce (est. 1889) 	2000
West Lincoln Chamber of Commerce (est. 1948)	158





Niagara Foreign Trade Zone Point

With its proximity to the US border and robust road, rail, air and port infrastructure, Niagara is a vital link for trade between Canada and the United States.

The Niagara Foreign Trade Zone helps companies access the federal, provincial and regional programs that support Canada's export development efforts. The Niagara Foreign Trade Zone's "one-window" approach makes it easier and more efficient for businesses to navigate their way through the diverse range of supports that exist. This support includes:

- incentive programs
- mentoring services from experienced exporters
- global networking opportunities
- educational assistance

The Niagara Foreign Trade Zone also provides streamlined access to other government agencies, including:

- Canada Revenue Agency
- Canada Border Services Agency
- Transport Canada
- Export Development Canada
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- Global Affairs Canada

Source: Niagara Region Economic Development

Retrieved from: <https://niagaracanada.com/incentives-and-programs/niagara-foreign-trade-zone/>

SWIFT (South Western Integrated Fibre Technology)

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated government investment in internet access as critical infrastructure. By June, 2024, four SWIFT (South Western Integrated Fibre Technology) Broadband construction projects valued at \$21,218,445 will bring better connectivity to an additional 5,646 premises in areas of Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Wainfleet, West Lincoln and Grimsby.

Niagara Region is a partner in SWIFT, a project aiming to provide access to fibre-optic high-speed Internet for 3.5 million Ontarions living in rural areas. In January, 2021, SWIFT announced the \$21.2 million in funding for broadband upgrades to support four fibre-to-the-home projects in Niagara. Bell Canada was awarded funding for two of the projects; Cogeco Communications and Niagara Regional Broadband Network were awarded the other two contracts.

Source: Niagara Region, South Western Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) Initiative.

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/initiatives/swift/> and <https://swiftruralbroadband.ca/>



Open Data in Niagara

[NiagaraOpenData](#) is a portal hosted by the Niagara Region, which includes 401 datasets published by Niagara's community agencies and municipalities.

Open data is data that is freely available for anyone to use, reuse and distribute. The data is provided so people can use it to learn, create new things, or solve problems.

Examples of recently-added datasets include:

- Airports
- Arenas
- Beaches
- Bike Routes
- Building Footprints

Open Data resources that can be accessed through NiagaraOpenData include:

- Local Niagara and Neighbouring Community Data Catalogues
 - [City of Niagara Falls Open Data Hub](#)
 - [Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority \(NPCA\) GIS Open Data](#)
 - [Niagara Regional Police Services](#)
 - [City of Hamilton Open Data](#)
 - [Haldimand County Open Data](#)
 - [City of Brantford Open Data](#)
 - [OpenData Buffalo](#)
 - [State of New York Open Data](#)
 - [City of Toronto Open Data](#)
- Other Government and Agency Open Data Catalogues
 - [Province of Ontario](#)
 - [Land Information Ontario – GeoHub](#)
 - [Government of Canada – Open Government](#)
 - [Statistics Canada – Data](#)
 - [World Bank Open Data](#)
- Open Data Groups
 - [GO Open Data](#)
 - [Canadian Open Data Society](#)
 - [Open Data Index](#)
 - [Open Data Charter](#)

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraopendata.ca/>



Indicator: Income and Earnings in Niagara

Bankruptcies in Niagara

The Government of Canada provides Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act (BIA) statistics by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA*).

Note: *St. Catharines-Niagara CMA does not include Grimsby and West Lincoln

Consumer and Business Insolvency Statistics in St. Catharines-Niagara CMA* 2022					
	Volume			Assets Declared at the Time of Filing (\$) 2022	Liabilities Declared at the time of Filing (\$) 2022
	2022	2021	% Change		
Insolvencies Filed by Consumers in St. Catharines-Niagara CMA*	1,161	973	19.3	57,051,368	72,742,854
Bankruptcies	311	274	13.5	5,763,544	21,801,527
Proposals	850	699	21.6	51,377,824	50,941,327
Insolvencies Filed by Businesses in St Catharines-Niagara CMA*	18	5	260.0	221,438	9,659,844
Bankruptcies	16	3	433.3	149,121	9,356,841
Proposals	2	2	0.0	72,317	303,003

Source: Insolvency Statistics in Canada – 2022 (Tables 7 and 8)

Retrieved from: <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/office-superintendent-bankruptcy/en/statistics-and-research/insolvency-statistics-canada-2022-tables-7-and-8>

Income Levels in Niagara

The Niagara Region Community Dashboard includes Employment statistics (January, 2024)

- Employment Rate: 56.6% (Female: 54.6%; Male: 58.2%)
- Unemployment Rate: 7.3% (Female: 5.6%; Male: 8.7%)
- Labour Force Participation Rate: 60.9% (Female: 57.9%; Male: 63.8%)

Source: Niagara Region Community Dashboard, Employment

Retrieved From:

https://niagararegion.ca/community_dashboard/category.aspx?q=Economy%20and%20business#category_Employment





Summary Characteristics of Tax filers, St. Catharines-Niagara CMA* (*Census Metropolitan Area - does not include Grimsby, West Lincoln)					
Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of tax filers	320,050	316,520	326,060	329,100	338,880
Average age of tax filers	51 years	51 years	51 years	51 years	51 years
Percent of tax filers aged 35 to 44 years	13%	13%	13%	13%	14%
Total income of tax filers (x 1,000)	\$13,971,065	\$14,114,740	\$15,558,085	\$16,044,025	\$16,769,300
Median employment income of tax filers	\$31,560	\$31,880	\$29,360	\$33,590	\$36,560
75th percentile employment income of tax filers	\$56,860	\$57,650	\$59,180	\$63,090	\$65,650
Median total income of tax filers	\$33,440	\$34,390	\$36,780	\$37,560	\$38,330
75th percentile total income of tax filers	\$56,200	\$57,550	\$60,050	\$61,950	\$64,460
% of tax filers with total income between \$40,000 and \$59,999	19%	19%	20%	20%	20%

Source: Statistics Canada [Table 11-10-0047-01 Summary characteristics of Canadian tax filers \(preliminary T1 Family File\)](#)

Retrieved From: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110004701>

Volunteer Tax Preparation Clinics in Niagara

In 2023, the Niagara West Adult Learning Centre (NWALC) was one agency in Niagara that participated in the [Community Volunteer Income Tax Program \(CVITP\) program](#), in partnership with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The program offers free tax preparation for individuals experiencing lower incomes and other barriers to tax filing. For these individuals, tax filing is crucial to receiving government benefits including Old Age Security, Canada Child Benefit, GST/HST credit, and the Ontario Trillium Benefit. Volunteers in the community who have experience filing taxes, can offer their services by registering through CRA. Volunteers approved by CRA receive training, on different tax situations, and enroll in webinars offered by CRA to stay abreast of any updates and changes. Find a tax clinic in your area:

https://apps.cra-arc.gc.ca/ebci/oecv/external/prot/cli_srch_01_ld.action

Source: Niagara West Adult Learning Centre and Revenue Canada

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/community-blog/niagara-west-adult-learning-centre-a-proud-partner-in-the-2023-community-volunteer-income-tax-program/>



Low-Income Measure (LIM) and Market Basket Measure (MBM)

“Niagara Priority Profiles” are provided by Niagara Region Public Health and Emergency Services, to inform planning and making decisions in any sector, department or organization. The Low Income Priority Profile (updated 2023) includes a range of statistics, including:

- The Median After-Tax Income for Economic Families for Niagara is \$86,000 (lower than \$96,000 for Ontario).
- The percentage of individuals living in low-income, according to the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT) for Niagara is 10.4%, nearly the same as 10.1% for Ontario.
- The 2019 Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth showed that, in the past 12 months, 6.4% of children and youth aged 1-17 in Niagara were unable to visit a dental health professional due to cost; 18.3% of children and youth aged 1-17 in Niagara live in food insecure households; in the week preceding the survey, 82.3% of children and youth in Niagara ate breakfast almost every day, or every day.
- Compared to Ontario, Niagara has a higher percentage of individuals in income groups from \$10,000 to \$59,000 and a lower percentage of individuals in income groups above \$70,000.

Source: Niagara Region Public Health & Emergency Services Priority Profile – Low Income

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/equity/pdf/priority-profile-low-income.pdf>

Living Wage in Niagara

The 2023 Living Wage for Niagara is \$20.35/hour, a \$2.85 increase from \$19.80/hour in 2022. There are 10 living wage calculations across Ontario. Niagara is grouped with Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk regions in this calculation.

A living wage takes into consideration basic factors, like the cost of housing, food and transportation, as well as child-related costs, recreation, and technology. The living wage varies across the province because the wage is calculated by considering the local costs of where a worker lives.

As of November, 2023, there are 91 Living Wage Employers across the Niagara region, among 628 in Ontario. Employers look to the living wage rate as a calculation that considers the real burdens that workers face, much better than the minimum wage. Results of a survey of Certified Living Wage Employers and their employees in Niagara show that the program has positively impacted workplace culture and staff relationships.

The 2023 Living Wage Niagara Calculation announcement for Niagara notes that:

- Affordability is becoming an increasingly urgent issue in our community
- The rising cost of living impacts those at the bottom of the wage spectrum the most.
- Currently the living wage program is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty for working people in Niagara

Source: Living Wage Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://www.livingwageniagara.ca/site/blog/2023/11/06/niagaras-living-wage-program-announces-2023-living-wage-calculation-at-2035>



Food Security in Niagara

HungerCount 2023 Report, provided by Food Banks Canada, shows that in 2023, food bank visits in Canada have increased by 78.5% since 2019, and 32.1% since 2022. The report reflects almost two million food bank visits in the month of March, 2023, spanning more than 4,750 food banks and community organizations in Canada. The report offers insight into the root causes of food insecurity and poverty issues in our country.

The devastating impact of rapid inflation and inadequate social supports on poverty, food insecurity and hunger are highlighted:

- Food bank use rose to the highest levels in Canadian history in 2023.
- Food bank use among people who are employed continued to increase to record levels. In 2023, 17% of food bank clients reported employment as their main source of income, compared to 12% in 2019.
- The top reasons people accessed a food bank this year were food costs, housing costs, low wages or not enough hours of work.
- One third of food bank clients are children (representing over 600,000 food bank visits in March 2023).
- To create a Canada where no one is left behind, and no one goes hungry, all levels of government must adopt a dual approach to address the root causes of food bank use by addressing low incomes and poverty and the skyrocketing costs of living.

Source: Food Banks Canada

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/hungercount-2023-report/>

Feed Niagara includes ten food banks that are Feed Ontario members. Feed Niagara provides the following statistics:

- Food bank visits are up 20%+ since 2020.
- One-third of food bank clients are children.
- Strong need persists across Niagara as people with disabilities and seniors struggle with the rising costs of living.
- Greater frequency to access food security is growing from single parent families who juggle 2 income sources.

In October, 2023, Feed Niagara reported that several Niagara region food banks are bending under the pressure of inflation impacting how people donate. This was happening at the same time as more people were coming to their doors, especially with the holiday season approaching. With the high cost of groceries impacting people, more residents were not only turning to food banks for help; they were donating less.

Source: Feed Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://feedniagara.ca/feed-niagara/>



2023 Niagara Region Nutritious Food Basket Survey report and Food Affordability in Niagara
Niagara Region Public Health conducted the 2023 Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) Survey. They summarized results in the “2023 Niagara Region Nutritious Food Basket Survey report” and the infographic, “Food Affordability in Niagara”.

Approximately one in five households in Niagara (20.7%) are food insecure. The Survey report summarizes the cost of 61 food items that align with the 2019 Canada’s Food Guide and the eating and purchasing behaviours of Canadians. The food items fall into four categories: Vegetables and fruits; Whole grains; Protein foods; Fats and oils.

The report includes information about the NFB Survey; Food Insecurity; and what people can do to Take Action to address food insecurity:

- Be informed
- Join forces
- Advocate for income-based solutions to food insecurity

Access documents at:

- 2023 Niagara Region Nutritious Food Basket Survey report
<https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/11/Food-Affordability-in-Niagara-2023-Report.pdf>
- Food Affordability in Niagara (one-page infographic)
<https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/11/Food-Affordability-in-Niagara-Infographic.pdf>

Source: Niagara Region Public Health

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/food-affordability-in-niagara-nutritious-food-basket-survey-2023/>

Call for Basic Income in Niagara

In 2023, Niagara Region Council passed a Resolution calling for upper-tier levels of government to launch a basic income guarantee project. The Resolution is shared at: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=33588>

This builds upon findings shared in the 2021 “Niagara Food Security Network Lived Experience Engagement Report”. Report highlights include:

- In November, 2020, the Niagara Food Security Network engaged individuals experiencing food insecurity and living in the Niagara region, to gather information about food-related access experiences and other evidence, to inform COVID-19 response policy and planning.
- In 2017-18, 12.7% of households in Canada experienced some level of food insecurity. This represents 1.8 million households, or 4.4 million individuals, including over 1.2 million children under the age of 18. In the Niagara region, during the same time period, the rate of food insecurity was 15.1%.
- Food insecurity is more prevalent among households with children than those without children. [Children First Canada](#) has identified food insecurity as one of the top ten “threats” to the well-being of children in Canada.



- The voices of Niagara residents who shared their experiences facing uncertainty and challenges around accessing healthy (or just daily) food demonstrated how food insecurity impacts them beyond not having access to enough food:
 - Ongoing anxiety
 - Depression
 - Low self-esteem
 - Poor health status and outcomes
 - Negative impacts on child development.
- The report emphasizes: “to effectively and equitably address food insecurity is to address inadequate income for individuals and families”. It calls for all levels of government to build on the work of creating the CERB (Canada Emergency Response Benefit), toward developing a [basic income](#).

Source: Niagara Food Security Network

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/niagara-food-security-network-lived-experience-engagement-november-2020-report-on-findings-february-2021/>

Social Assistance in Niagara

In 2023, the influx of asylum seekers, placed by the Ministry of Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in local hotels, put a significant strain on Niagara Region’s ability to administer the Ontario Works (OW) program. Niagara Region Community Services staff are responding to the work of the federal government to transition asylum seekers from federally-funded hotels and the potential impact on local resources and Niagara’s shelter system. A February 6, 2024 presentation by Niagara Region Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO) staff to the Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee includes additional detail:

- In December 2023, there were 1,400 asylum seeker cases (2,227 people) in Niagara, resulting in a total OW caseload of 12,400, which is a 19% increase over December 2022 (10,400).
- At the height of the influx of Asylum seekers, Niagara’s Ontario Works caseload realized a 28% caseload increase from April 2022 to April 2023. The increase was inclusive of 1,978 asylum seekers cases, which equates to 3,662 people.
- In May 2023, the number of Asylum seekers living in Niagara started to decline as individuals either found housing outside of Niagara or were being relocated by IRCC to alternate municipalities. An average of 18% of asylum seekers, from the hotels, were moving out of Niagara each month.
- In December 2023, given the steady rise in the volume of asylum claimants arriving through Pearson International Airport, Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport and at inland offices, IRCC communicated that due to acute pressures on the City of Toronto and surrounding municipalities, the number of hotel rooms and per room capacity in Niagara would be increased to avoid homelessness for claimants, particularly with the



arrival of colder weather. (This resulted in the increased caseload numbers cited in the first bullet point, above.) Source: Niagara Region, Community Services, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Report to Public Health and Social Services Committee, February 6, 2024

Retrieved from: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=35800>

Niagara Poverty Reduction and Prosperity Initiatives

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network (NPRN) is working collectively to wipe out poverty through education, collaboration and advocacy to address poverty's root causes.

The NPRN built the foundation for the Living Wage Niagara Program (including Certified Living Wage Employer and the Cost of Living calculation for Niagara). This work is now administered through United Way Niagara – see <https://www.livingwageniagara.ca/site/home>

Source: Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

Retrieved from: <https://wipeoutpoverty.ca/>

The Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) was established by Niagara Region in 2008, to provide an annual investment to support poverty reduction and prevention activities. The NPI distributes resources where they will have the greatest effect. The 2022 NPI Initiative targeted needs in the areas of:

- Indigenous wellbeing
- Early childhood development
- Housing and homelessness
- Food security
- Domestic violence
- Living wage

Objectives:

Through projects in these target areas, the NPI aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Low-income people become more self-sufficient
- The conditions in which low-income people live are improved
- People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities
- Partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved
- Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results
- Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive environments

Source: Niagara Region Social Services, Niagara Prosperity Initiative

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/niagara-prosperity-initiative/default.aspx>



Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2022/2024 Projects include:

Additional Supports for the Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound Program

Niagara Region Native Centre

Contract: \$599,880

This project will provide further support for participants of the Homeward Bound program in maintaining their home, parenting while working through the program and additional supports such as access to transportation and rent subsidy.

Early Childhood Development Program

Port Cares

Contract: \$373,396

This project will establish an evidence-based early childhood development program in the community, in accessible locations that are comfortable for program participants. The program will reach high-risk, low income populations of parents with children aged zero to six.

Pop-Up Food Markets

United Way Niagara

Contract: \$797,603

This project will coordinate and implement food markets in key locations in Niagara through pop-up markets. Consistent locations, times and produce will be decided based on community need and will run throughout the winter months. Volunteers from the community will be actively engaged and the markets will act as a community place-making tool.

Community Integration

Gateway Residential and Community Support Services of Niagara Inc.

Contract: \$499,890

This project will establish a compliment of Housing Stability Worker(s), who will require a background in a relevant social science, humanities, health or rehabilitation discipline. Housing Stability Workers would work with individuals who are newly housed to retain housing. Referral pathways will be established with other service agencies.

After-Care for Domestic Violence Survivors

Women's Place of South Niagara* (*now known as Birchway Niagara)

Contract: \$149,120

Gillian's Place

Contract: \$183,344

These projects will establish a compliment of After-Care Advocate(s), who will require a background in a relevant social science, humanities, health or rehabilitation discipline and has experience working with victims of domestic violence and trauma survivors. After-Care Advocates will work with individuals and their children who have transitioned out of shelter. Referral pathways will be established with other service agencies.



Living Wage Project
United Way Niagara
Contract: \$196,767

This project will support full coordination of the living wage program, including social marketing, liaising with the Ontario Living Wage Network to conduct annual cost of living and living wage calculations, report writing, increasing outreach to businesses and aiding employers in becoming certified living wage employers.

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/niagara-prosperity-initiative/projects.aspx>

Poverty Reduction Resources (related strategies and statistics) are provided at: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/niagara-prosperity-initiative/resources.aspx>

Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

The 2021 [Niagara Prosperity Initiative \(NPI\) evaluation](#) called for developing a comprehensive [Poverty Reduction Strategy for Niagara](#). The 2024-2028 Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy was launched in early 2024.

The goal of the 2024-2028 strategy is “working together to prevent and end poverty, and increase well-being in Niagara”. The strategy includes 8 focus areas:

- Indigenous well-being
- Food security
- Housing
- Income
- Early child development
- Employment
- Mental health and addiction
- Transportation

To create the necessary change for each of the focus areas, the strategy looks at:

- Access to services
- Coordination and capacity
- Leveraging voices of lived expertise
- Diversity equity and inclusion
- Changing mindsets
- Advocacy and funding

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=36145>

Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy 2024-2028 supporting documents are available at: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/community-safety/poverty-reduction-strategy/default.aspx>

A 2-page infographic summary of the 2024-2028 Niagara Region Poverty Reduction Strategy can be found on pages 80 and 81 of the March 7, 2024 Niagara Region committee of the Whole Agenda Package, at: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=36143>