



People having a sense of belonging and being connected to their community is vital to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of everyone and everything.

Happening Now

- Municipal governments across Niagara are putting strategies in place to consider inclusion, diversity, connectedness and gender equity in their planning and decision-making.
- Almost all local municipalities in Niagara have established Youth, Seniors, Age-Friendly and/or Wellness Advisory Committees.
- Public Libraries in Niagara are increasingly recognized for being welcoming community hubs that offer comprehensive access to information and digital resources. They help citizens to bridge the technology divide; provide reliable access to the internet, computers, and technology; and they partner with human service agencies to offer opportunities for satellite outreach. (This statement also appears in the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector of this report.)
- The importance of making culturally-appropriate mental health services accessible to newcomers is being recognized in Niagara.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is resulting in increased efforts to reduce social isolation and remove barriers to participation, by making equitable access to virtual connections possible for everyone. Examples include: agencies providing clients with access to devices; an emphasis on digital skills training; young volunteers mentoring older adults to strengthen their tech skills; 'seniors centres without walls' telephone events; and renewed attention to closing gaps in high-speed internet infrastructure across Niagara.

What's Emerging

- The onset of COVID-19 is highlighting the vital role that non-profits and charities play in community well-being. Nationally, these organizations account for 8.5% of GDP and employ 2.4 million Canadians, of which 70% are women.
- Disruptive effects of the pandemic on volunteer levels, access to volunteer labour, and paid staff capacity to engage volunteers is causing charitable and non-profit organizations to assess their capacity and approaches going forward.
- Experiencing the pandemic is reminding us of the proven health benefits, for everyone and for the whole community, of people being able to connect with others and participate.
- Intentionally engaging newcomers (im)migrants and black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) in community development is seen as essential to strengthening Niagara.
- Plans are underway to engage thousands of volunteers to support the work of hosting the Canada Summer Games in Niagara in 2022.



Suggested Community Action Steps

- Acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on charitable and non-profit organizations, and keep an eye on their ability to stabilize. These organizations provide essential services, play an important role in economic growth, create jobs, and are employers in our community.
- Implement measurable actions for reducing barriers to participation, across the Social Determinants of Health. Do this to strengthen Niagara as an equitable, diverse, inclusive, welcoming community for all people.
- Support organizations' efforts to re-establish their volunteer base and enhance volunteer training, in response to pandemic-related changes. Increase engagement of a younger, diverse pool of volunteers.
- Create the conditions for increasing voter turnout rates in Niagara by supporting equitable access to voting for vulnerable individuals.

Indicators

- **Charitable Giving**
- **Immigrants, Refugees, and International Students in Niagara**
- **Sense of Community Belonging**
- **Trust in Others**
- **Volunteering**
- **Voter Turnout**



Indicator: Charitable Giving

Proportion of Charitable Donors Among Tax Filers

The following table shows the number of Canadian tax filers in the St. Catharines – Niagara CMA* (Census Metropolitan Area) from 2009 to 2019, and the proportion of charitable donors among tax filers. This data only includes amounts given to charities and approved organizations for which official tax receipts were provided and claimed on tax returns. It does not reflect the variety of other ways that Canadians contribute, such as:

- Charitable donations promoted through crowdsourcing platforms for individuals or organizations who are not linked to registered charities
- Donations for small amounts, such as donations by text message

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Tax Filers	293,620	292,990	292,430	295,730	297,540	302,060	306,760	310,790	313,190	320,050	316,520
Number of Charitable Donors	73,830	73,650	72,280	70,850	69,220	69,190	68,670	68,010	66,470	6,6240	63,610
Charitable Donors as a per cent of Tax Filers	25.1%	25.1%	24.7%	24.0%	23.3%	22.9%	22.4%	21.9%	21.2%	20.7%	20.1%

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

Source: Statistics Canada

Retrieved from:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110000201&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.21>



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Niagara Community Foundation

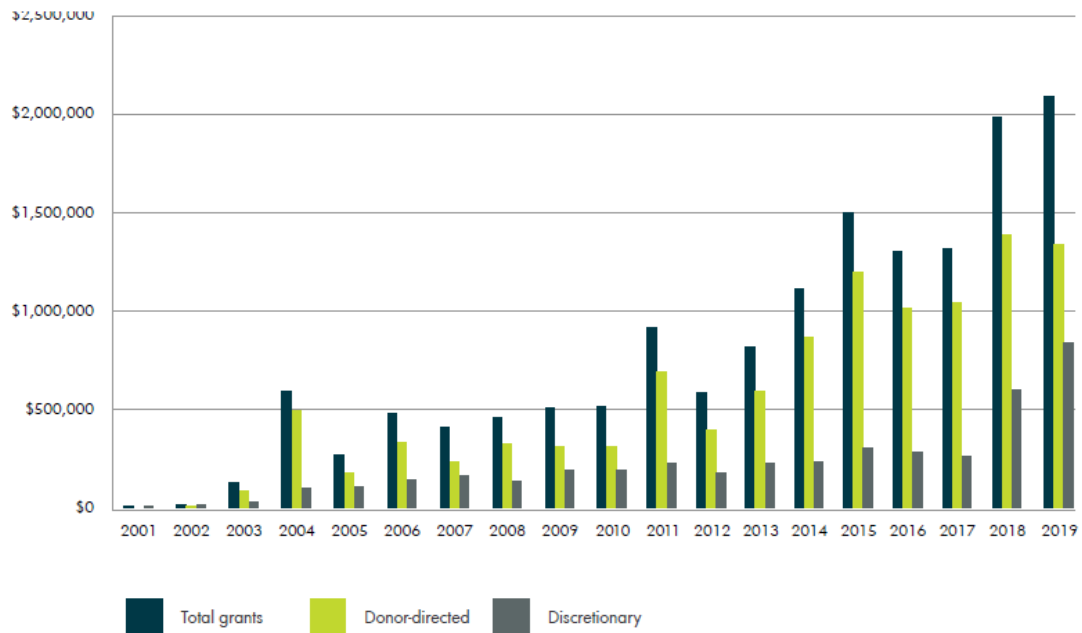
The Niagara Community Foundation (NCF) 2019 annual report states that since 2001, NCF has granted over \$ 15 million to local charities. The following table provides an overview of gifts received and grants awarded from 2016 to 2019.

Niagara Community Foundation Financial Highlights 2016-2019		
Year	Gifts Received	Grants Awarded
2016	\$2,740,250	\$1,300,000
2017	\$17,693,530	\$1,300,524
2018	\$8,351,831	\$1,984,261
2019	\$4,502,696	\$2,146,940
Total	\$33,288,307	\$6,731,725

2019 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

GIFTS RECEIVED: \$4,502,696 **GROWTH IN ASSETS:** 13.7%
GRANTS AWARDED: \$2,146,940 **OPERATING EXPENSES** (excluding special projects): 0.91%

GROWTH IN GRANTS 2001 - 2019



Source: Niagara Community Foundation. *Annual Reports*

Retrieved from: <http://niagaracommunityfoundation.org/about-us/publications>





To find out more about the impact of the Niagara Community Foundation, please see this [interactive map](#). It represents a significant portion of the more than \$5.5 million that the Niagara Community Foundation has awarded since 2013 to great causes and organizations from one end of the region to the other. The vast majority of these grants come from the Foundation's endowment funds, established to ensure each fund and donor's legacy continues to serve the community now and in perpetuity.

Source: Niagara Community Foundation

Retrieved from: <http://niagaracommunityfoundation.org/about-us/map>

United Way Niagara

In 2018, the three United Way agencies in Niagara merged into a single agency, to become United Way Niagara (UWN). UWN raises funds annually, to invest in creating positive community change. Programs are funded according to three priority areas:

1. Strong communities
2. Poverty to possibility
3. All that kids can be

United Way Niagara's 2018 annual report shows investment in 103 programs at 48 agencies. As a result:

- 50,736 people benefitted from programs helping to meet their basic needs and move out of poverty.
- 12,972 children and youth were encouraged to reach their full potential.
- 65,935 of Niagara's most vulnerable people were connected to supports, increasing their wellbeing and safety.
- Overall, 129,643 unique individuals were impacted and supported through programming.

Source: United Way Niagara

Retrieved from: https://www.unitedwayniagara.org/assets/pdf/2018_annual_report.pdf

United Way Niagara's 2019 Impact Report shows they exceeded their \$5,250,000 fundraising goal, and that their funding investments helped:

- 37,263 individuals living in poverty
- 43,511 individuals and families improve their mental health
- 3,257 people secure and maintain housing
- 37,159 people improve their food security
- 5,449 women and their families break the cycle of violence and abuse

Source: United Way Niagara

Retrieved From: <https://www.unitedwayniagara.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Impact-Report-2019-for-web.pdf>



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Indicator: Immigrants, Refugees and International Students in Niagara

Social and Economic Concerns of Immigrants During the COVID-19 Pandemic

While all Canadians are concerned about the health, economic and social ramifications of COVID-19, immigrants to Canada may be more concerned about the impact than Canadian-born people.

- The 2016 census showed that immigrants represented 21.9% of the Canadian population
- Immigrants were more likely than Canadian-born individuals to report that they were “very” or “extremely” concerned about their own health (49% vs 33%).
- Immigrants are more likely to be concerned about civil disorder, social ties and the ability to cooperate than Canadian-born individuals
- Immigrant men are more likely than Canadian-born individuals to report that the COVID-19 crisis would have an impact on their ability to meet financial obligations

Source: Statistics Canada, The Daily, May 01, 2020

Retrieved From: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200501/dq200501a-eng.htm>

2020 Annual Report to the Parliament of Canada on Immigration

This report includes “A Snapshot of Immigration to Canada in 2019”:

- 5,774,342 travel documents were issued to visitors, workers and students.
- 404,369 temporary work permits were issued under the temporary foreign worker and international mobility programs.
- 74,586 individuals transitioned from temporary to permanent residents.
- 341,180 permanent residents were admitted in Canada.
- About 8,500 French-speaking permanent residents were admitted to Canada outside Quebec with additional support for francophone communities across Canada.
- IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) created, implemented, and expanded 10 different programs and initiatives related to GBA+ - Gender-based Analysis Plus, an analytical process to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs, initiatives <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/index-en.html>).
- Permanent and non-permanent immigration accounted for over 80% of Canada’s population growth.
- About 58% of permanent residents admitted under the economic category.
- 30,087 refugees resettled, the highest number of any state worldwide.

Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). 2020 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration. Retrieved From: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2020.html#immigration2019>



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2021-2023 Government of Canada Immigration Levels Plan

401,000 new permanent residents will be welcomed in 2021; 411,000 in 2022; and 421,000 in 2023.

Source: Government of Canada

Retrieved From: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2021-2023.html>

Settlement Services in Niagara

The [Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre](#) (NFAMC) is a charitable not-for-profit organization incorporated as the Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines in 1970, having the mandate to support and assist the ethno-cultural and newcomer community in Niagara through a broad range of programs and services. NFAMC has been active in facilitating and supporting the successful settlement and integration of newcomers since the 1960's. The centre's clients come from all parts of the world and include Landed Immigrants, Canadian Citizens, Convention Refugees and Refugee Claimants.

A full range of programming is offered by 30 full-time staff and over 100 volunteers. English Language Instruction has been offered since 1976 and a Job Search Workshop Program was introduced in 1998. A Community Connections Program began in 1996 to facilitate friendships between newcomers and Canadians and to introduce families to community volunteer opportunities. A Youth Program was successfully added to Community Connections in 2008. All clients are supported by a professional team of Settlement Counselors and a Childminding Program for infants and toddlers.

Services are currently offered at the main Centre in downtown St. Catharines as well as an office in Niagara Falls and itinerant locations in Welland. They are funded from various sources including Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, District School Board of Niagara, Niagara Region Prosperity Initiative and the United Way.

Source: Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre (NFAMC)

Retrieved from: <https://www.folk-arts.ca/>

In 2019, Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre partnered with Niagara Connects to present a webinar, "[Bridging Barriers to Newcomer Mental Health in Niagara](#)". It featured highlights of a 1-year pilot project to address extremely low rates of mental health service utilization and access by newcomers.

Webinar presenters shared how the process of migration and resettlement can be extremely challenging, and often puts the mental health and well-being of newcomers at risk. Despite pertinent and clear mental health issues in the newcomer population, availability and





accessibility of services remain an issue. As this population continues to grow, it is essential to assess the prevalence of mental health issues in newcomers in order to adapt services accordingly.

Source: Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre, Bridging Barriers to Newcomer Mental Health in Niagara. Webinar Archive. Webinar hosted by Niagara Connects, April 24, 2019.

Retrieved From: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/bridging-barriers-to-newcomer-mental-health-in-niagara-webinar-event-recording/>

The [Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre](#) (WHCMC) was founded in 1976 to assist the various ethnic groups in the City of Welland and surrounding areas of Port Colborne, Pelham, Wainfleet, and Fort Erie. The WHCMC is a non-profit charitable service organization helping immigrants to overcome barriers to integration, and develop skills to work and live in Canada. Services offered include:

- Newcomer Settlement Services
- Housing Coordination Services
- Niagara Foreign Credential Recognition Program
- English as a Second Language
- Emergency Shelter
- Employment Solutions
- Youth programming

Source: Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre (WHCMC)

Retrieved from: <http://www.wellandheritagecouncil.com/>

From 2015 to 2018, the WHCMC led a project that aimed to increase the economic prosperity of women business owners in Niagara through implementing solutions to identified barriers.

A gender-based entrepreneurship analysis report produced in October 2017 shows that despite being almost equally represented in the micro-business sector (businesses with fewer than 5 employees), men-owned businesses generate double the revenue. As a result of this project, the WHCMC proposed several modifications to existing entrepreneurial support services offered in Niagara:

- Programming that is targeted to or specifically designed for women entrepreneurs
- Targeted marketing to help business owners find business support services
- Success Circles, a facilitated peer mentoring and networking group in which women from various sectors and stages of business development come together to discuss challenges that they are facing in running their business with the group and receive constructive feedback
- A mentorship program for women



- Business plan writing services based on a more diverse range of business models, which also includes support for business management planning
- A toolkit for women business owners that provides resources and information

Source: Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre

Retrieved from: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/improving-prosperity-for-niagaras-women-business-owners-final-report/>

[Fort Erie Multicultural Centre](#) is a social profit charitable organization, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, committed to carrying out its mission to assist newcomers arriving in Fort Erie to settle successfully into Canadian society. Fort Erie has a strong and consistent history of welcoming and integrating newcomers, its earliest days connected to the abolishment of slavery in 1793 in Upper Canada (now Ontario) and the famous Underground Railroad. Situated at the largest border crossing for refugees in Canada, Fort Erie is both a gateway community and a place that newcomers like to call their new home. Services offered include:

- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)
- Settlement services (eg. information and referrals, immigration and legal assistance, translation, access to primary health, mental health and social services, housing assistance)
- Counselling
- Other support services (eg. youth services, assistance with navigating the information network)

Source: Fort Erie Multicultural Centre

Retrieved from: <http://www.firststepsincanada.com/>

[YMCA of Niagara Newcomer Information Centre \(NIC\)](#) locations are in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. In 2017-18, the YMCA of Niagara NIC connected more than 2,939 newcomers and their families with a wide range of vital community resources as they find their path in Canada. In 2018-19, this number rose to more than 3,186.

Source: YMCA of Niagara. *Annual Report to the Community 2017-18; and 2018-19*

Retrieved from: <https://ymcaofniagara.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Y-Niagara-Annual-Report18-web.pdf> and <https://ymcaofniagara.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Digital-Final-Y-Annual-Report-19-min.pdf>

The [Niagara Local Immigration Partnership](#) (LIP) is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, to better identify local newcomer population needs and service gaps, enhance local capacity and create stronger welcoming communities for newcomers. The Niagara LIP website includes information about the proportion of newcomers in the Niagara population:



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- Around 18% of the Niagara, Canada population is made up of first generation newcomers to Canada, and 41% are first or second-generation newcomers – and these numbers continue to grow.
- There is a large French speaking population in Niagara, and 17% of the population has a first language that is not English or French.
- Historically, Niagara saw much of its immigration from Western Europe. Now, the Philippines and China stand out as the most common and second most common places of birth for newcomers, followed by the United States and India.

Source: Niagara Local Immigration Partnership, Regional Municipality of Niagara
Retrieved From: <https://welcomeniagaracanada.com/local-immigration-partnership/>

International Students in Niagara

In 2018-19, international student enrolment at Niagara College increased to 5,123 full-time equivalent post-secondary students from more than 96 countries.

Source: Niagara College. Annual Report 2018-2019

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagaracollege.ca/wp-content/uploads/annual-report-2018-2019-11202019.pdf>

In 2018-19, Brock University had a total of 1,572 international undergraduate students and 664 international graduate students.

Source: Brock University. 2018-19 Annual Report

Retrieved from: https://brocku.ca/about/wp-content/uploads/primary-site/sites/8/2018_19-AR_Inside-Pages_SCREEN.pdf

Additional information about International Students in Niagara can be found in the Learning and Education Sector of this report.



Indicator: Sense of Community Belonging

According to data collected through the Canadian Community Health Survey for 2017-18, 68.5% of people in the Niagara Regional Area Health Unit report a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging to their local community. In comparison, 70.8% of Ontarians and 68.9% of Canadians also report a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging.

Source: Statistics Canada. *Health characteristics, two-year period estimates*

Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1310011301>

A 2019 Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) Baseline Report for UNICEF Canada measures levels, inequalities and trends in the state of children and youth. This report tracks 125 indicators across nine dimensions of the lives of children and youth, from birth to age 18. It also tracks how Canada is delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), about one third of which are targets for children.

Following are report highlights that are relevant to the Community Belonging Sector:

- About half (55%) of kids in Canada rate their lives high on the life satisfaction scale
- More (84.6%) feel a strong sense of belonging to their communities. Yet just over half (57.3%) say they receive good support within their families, and less than half (42.9%) get good support at school
- One in four (24.5%) is lonely, but almost all 11 to 15 year-olds (96.2%) have someone they can talk to
- Three in four (74.2%) feel their family listens to them when they speak and a similar number can freely express themselves to their family and friends (77.9%)

Source: Canadian Index of Wellbeing

Retrieved from: https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/sites/ca.canadian-index-wellbeing/files/uploads/files/2019_baseline_report_canadian_index_of_child_and_youth_well-being_0.pdf

The 2016 Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) National Report tracks Indicators from 1994 to 2014, across 8 Domains that align with the Living in Niagara quality of life Sectors. The CIW includes community belonging indicators in the Community Vitality, Time Use, and Leisure and Culture Domains.

Sixty-seven per cent of Canadians express a strong sense of community belonging. Since the 2008 recession, slightly more people report having 5 or more friends. In 2014, 54.7% of people believe most or many people can be trusted, up from 47.7% in 2008. The CIW report notes these numbers have room to grow.

Compared to 20 years ago, we spend 45 fewer minutes a day socializing with others, and the average amount of time we spend with friends has dropped by 28.2%.





Canadians have reduced the amount of time they spend volunteering for culture and recreation organizations by almost 30% since 1998.

Across Canada, voter turnout is increasing, with the gap between older and younger voters narrowing slightly. While numbers are relatively low, more people are volunteering for political and advocacy groups, and more women are serving as Members of Parliament.

Source: 2016 CIW (Canadian Index of Wellbeing) Report: How are Canadians Really Doing? Retrieved from: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/the-2016-canadian-index-of-wellbeing-national-report-how-are-canadians-really-doing/>

A 2019 cross-sectional analysis of baseline data collected for the [Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging](#) highlights a large body of research which shows that social isolation and loneliness have detrimental health consequences, and examines demographic and geographic factors and their association with social isolation and loneliness. This study finds that socially isolated individuals are somewhat clustered into areas with a high proportion of low-income older adults. Additionally, for loneliness, personal characteristics (eg. sex, income) may place individuals at a higher risk than geographic factors.

Source: Menec, Newall, Mackenzie, Shooshtari, and Nowicki. *Examining individual and geographic factors associated with social isolation and loneliness using Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) data*

Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30707719>

[INCommunities](#) is a community information centre providing information and referral and community navigation services through their AIRS (Alliance of Information and Referral Centres) accredited 211 contact centre. They also connect people to community services through the Niagara Community Information Database, professional language interpretation, and a volunteer matching program.

211 is a free, confidential and easy to remember telephone number. Each call is answered by a highly trained Community Navigator The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Individuals can call 211 to ask about:

- Health services and supports
- Financial and social assistance
- Housing and utility help
- Children and youth services
- Food assistance and meal programs
- Seniors services and home care
- Government program assistance
- Parenting and family programs
- Disability support programs
- Newcomer services
- Volunteer organizations
- And much more!

Source: INCommunities. Dial 211

Retrieved from: <https://www.incommunities.ca/en/211-niagara/dial211/>





INCommunities prepares an annual Year End Report for each of the seven geographic areas for which they provide 211 service.

In 2018, INCommunities received 28,041 calls to 211 from Niagara. Of those, 68% of callers were women, and the majority (72%) were adults aged 25-59.

The top 5 reasons for calling in 2018 were:

1. Other Government/Economic Services (20%)
2. Health (18%)
3. Housing (9%)
4. Legal/Public Safety (8%)
5. Information Services (6%)

In 2020, INCommunities received 21,215 calls/chats/emails to 211 from Niagara.

The top 5 Inquirer needs in 2020 were:

1. Government/Economic Services (18.4%)
2. Health (16.4%)
3. Housing (12%)
4. Income support/Financial Assistance (8%)
5. Legal/Public Safety (7%)

Information about calls to 211 in Niagara in prior years, or for other geographic areas can be downloaded at the INCommunities reports link below.

Source: INCommunities. *Summary Report 2018 and 2020 – Niagara.*

Retrieved from: <https://www.incommunities.ca/en/about-us/reports/> and <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/211-niagara-snapshot-january-december-2020/>





211 Inquiries – Unmet Needs

As a general practice, 211 Information Referral Specialists document situations where no referrals were available to meet an inquirer’s assessed need. The situations captured below are intended to inform communities of potential gaps in service. While unmet needs represent a very small percentage of total inquiries, the reasons why needs were unmet may provide valuable information that service providers can use for future planning.

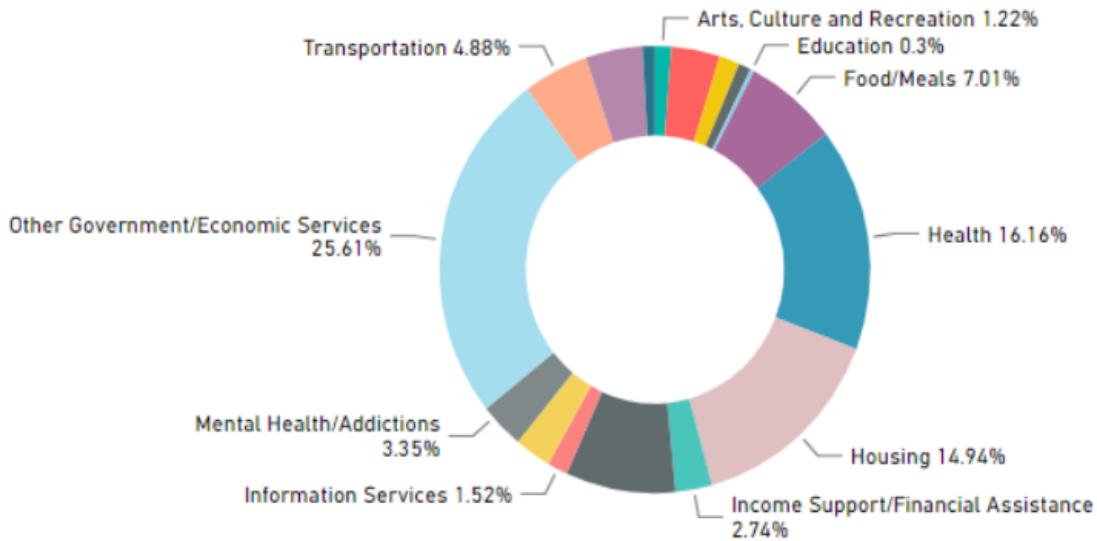
211 Niagara Inquiries – Unmet Needs, 2016 to 2019				
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total number of inquiries	36,379	33,714	28,041	24,792
Total number of unmet needs	471	473	328	414
Unmet needs as a % of total inquiries	1.29%	1.40%	1.17%	1.67%
Reasons Needs Were Unmet				
Reason why need was unmet	2016	2017	2018	2019
Service not available	118	105	122	179
Lengthy/closed wait list	16	102	48	46
Ineligible for service	84	72	61	48
Hours of service	28	55	36	64
Cost	23	37	16	15
Difficulty connecting	35	29	21	23
Transportation	5	19	12	26
Agency/program resources depleted	5	6	9	11
Not reported	-	-	3	2
Total	314	425	328	414
Unmet needs as a % of total calls	1.29%	1.40%	1.17%	1.67%





Unmet Needs – 211 Niagara, January to December 2018

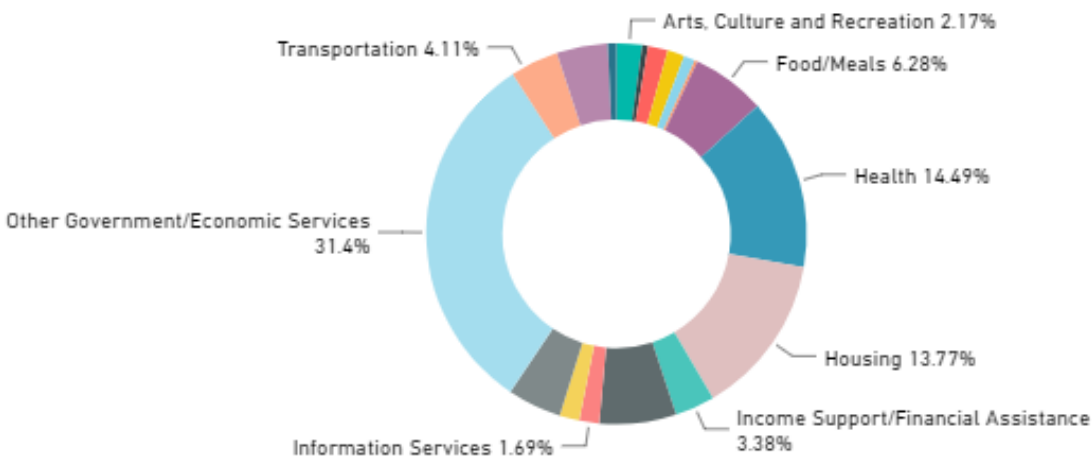
Total Unmet Needs by Category



Source: INCommunities. *Unmet Needs Report, Niagara, 2018*.
Retrieved from: <https://www.incommunities.ca/en/about-us/reports/>

Unmet Needs – 211 Niagara - January to December 2019

Total Unmet Needs by Category





211 Niagara Region released a special COVID-19 report summarizing 211 Inquirer and Unmet Needs from 9,621 connections with Inquirers in Niagara. during the period March 16th to August 31st 2020, the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

The report showed a breakdown of Inquirer Needs during that time period:

Government/ Economic Services	Income Support/ Financial Assistance	Health	Food/Meals	Consumer Services
26%	22%	14%	9%	6%

Source: INCommunities/211 Central South Region Ontario, August, 2020.

Retrieved From: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/211-niagara-region-covid19-report-march-16-august-31-2020/>

[Leadership Niagara](#) provides the Accelerate Civic Leadership Program (formerly the Community Leadership Program), which encourages civic leadership and positive change within the Niagara region by developing the capabilities of aspiring leaders who care about the community, who understand its strengths and weaknesses, and who are willing to make a personal investment to improve the community’s quality of life.

Source: Leadership Niagara

Retrieved from: <http://leadershipniagara.ca/programs/accelerate-civic-leadership/program-concept/>

The [Niagara Poverty Reduction Network](#) works collectively to wipe out poverty in Niagara through education, collaboration and advocacy to address poverty’s root causes. Network member organizations and community members work together on priorities, such as business engagement, health equity, housing, and wages and work.

Source: Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

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

The [Niagara Prosperity Initiative](#) (NPI) was established by Niagara Region in 2008, to provide an annual investment of \$1.5 million to support poverty reduction and prevention activities. NPI goals include:

- To guide and direct investments on identified initiatives to alleviate poverty in neighbourhoods across Niagara
- To advocate for change that will reduce and prevent poverty in the community
- To develop and enhance collaborative relationships between stakeholders



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- To engage people living in poverty in meaningful ways to ensure that investments reflect need

Source: Niagara Region Social Services

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

In 2018, approved NPI projects (23 projects from 17 agencies) were expected to:

- Serve a total of 11,010 people
- Create 198 jobs to be filled by people who live in poverty
- Generate \$163,020 in revenue from social enterprise projects

Project Type (2018)	\$ for Projects	% of Funding	# of Projects
Housing – Outreach	\$71,101.30	4.7%	1
Housing – Self-Reliance and Improved Stability	\$297,872.30	19.8%	5
Housing – Prevention	\$158,748.40	10.6%	2
Health – Mental Health	\$54,034.42	3.6%	1
Health – Dental	\$231,302.83	15.4%	2
Health – Sustainable Access to Healthy Food	\$45,016.40	3.0%	1
Employment – Social Enterprises	\$268,080.00	17.8%	5
Neighbourhood – Community Hubs	\$376,449.35	25.1%	6
TOTAL	\$1,502,605		23

Source: Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee. *Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2018 Update*

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/council/Council%20Documents/2018/PHSSC-agenda-june-05-2018.pdf#page=25>

In 2019, approved NPI Projects (24 projects from 22 agencies) were expected to:

- Serve 11,582 people
- Create 784 jobs to be filled by people who live in poverty
- Generate \$285,714 in revenue by social enterprise projects





Project Type (2019)	\$ for Projects	% of Funding	# of Projects
Housing – Outreach	\$115,196	7.9%	1
Housing – Improved Stability	\$39,576	2.7%	1
Housing – Prevention	\$142,466	9.7%	3
Health – Mental Health Outreach	\$202,697	13.8%	3
Health – Wellbeing for Children	\$180,389	12.3%	3
Health – Healthy Food	\$88,468	6.0%	2
Health – Dental Needs for Adults	\$184,192	12.6%	1
Employment – Social Enterprises	\$261,021	17.8%	5
Neighbourhood – Sense of Belonging	\$165,630	11.3%	4
Neighbourhood – Creating Leaders	\$84,982	5.9%	1
TOTAL	\$1,464,617		24

Source: Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee. *Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2019 Update*

Retrieved from: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=3903#page=107>

For 2020, Niagara Region Council approved a one-year \$250,000 reduction of funding for the NPI, with \$1.25 million allocated. Total project allocation for 2020 was \$1,204,130 (including \$104,130 in unspent funding from 2019).

Three priority areas were used for the 2020 NPI Request for Proposals process:

1. Housing (outreach, homelessness prevention, enhancing accessibility and improved stability);
2. Health (mental health, addictions, emotional health and wellbeing for children, dental needs for adults and sustainable access to healthy food);
3. Employment (social enterprises and working with Niagara’s businesses to create secure jobs that pay a living wage).

In 2020, twenty projects were approved for funding within the three NPI priority areas.

Anticipated service impacts and outcomes include: 6,215 people served; 201 jobs created and





filled by people who live in poverty; and \$47,997 in revenue generated from social enterprise projects.

Types of Projects (2020)	\$ for Projects	% of Funding	# of Projects
Housing - Outreach	\$184,647	15%	2
Housing – Improved Stability	\$186,149	15%	5
Housing – Homelessness Prevention	\$175,974	15%	3
Health – Mental Health Outreach	\$278,211	23%	3
Health – Healthy Food	\$81,732	7%	3
Health – Dental Needs for Adults	\$139,586	12%	1
Employment – Social Enterprises	\$157,831	13%	3
TOTAL	\$1,204,130		20

Source: Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee. *Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2020 Update*

Retrieved From: <https://pub-niagararegion.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=9309>

Niagara Prosperity Initiative Evaluation Research (2018 – 2020)

Niagara Region Community Services Staff presented an Executive Summary report entitled ‘Connecting the Pieces: An Evaluation of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative and Call for a Broader Poverty Reduction Strategy for Niagara’ to the Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee on March 9, 2021. This report summarizes progress on the three-year (2018 – 2020) research project to review the impact of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) program.

A full NPI Evaluation Report will be presented to Niagara Region Council in September, 2021. The research is supported by \$476,763 of funding from the Ontario Local Poverty Reduction Fund, which that was received by Niagara Region Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities.

There are five key recommendations in the report:



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1. Develop a comprehensive Niagara Region poverty reduction strategy - in order to broaden the scope of NPI and establish a more stable poverty reduction program that looks at impacting systems change through conscious coordination and sustained collaboration. The NPI program needs to be re-situated as one component of a larger and more comprehensive Niagara Region poverty reduction strategy that fits within the framework of the provincial and federal poverty reduction plans.
2. Increase investment in poverty reduction – funding through NPI has remained flat since 2008 and was reduced in 2020 and 2021 due to budget pressures. The social determinants of health are expected to worsen due to the impact of the pandemic especially for the most vulnerable members of our community. The Region needs to ensure that ongoing anti-poverty efforts are supported by an appropriate level of staffing that is comparable with other successful anti-poverty programs outside of Niagara.
3. Make deliberate investments and provide longer funding terms – it is recommended that the initiative should reposition funding towards a more deliberate investment model, and offer longer funding terms, which would change the NPI structure and application process and support a larger scale strategy. Shifting these elements within NPI will create a new model which will mitigate unpredictability and fragmentary services in the community, and emphasize collaborative, reciprocal relationships with stakeholders, such as those inspired by a model of Collective Impact and coalition building frameworks. Included in this recommendation is a stronger coordination between government departments and local funders.
4. Guide investments with enhanced research – in order to accommodate a deliberate approach to funding, investment is needed to collect, develop and share data and strategies with stakeholders and providers. Place-based strategies should continue to be part of a deliberate investment model, but use of subject matter expertise as well as transparent spatial and demographic analyses need to also be incorporated.
5. Design all services for social inclusion aligned with poverty reduction priorities – alignment ensures that poverty is a priority and actions are coordinated in areas like transit, social procurement and more. As a two-tier regional government, Niagara Region must also approach systems change with an openness to considering how lower-tier governments play a role in the delivery of targeted poverty alleviation efforts. Similar to Toronto’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Office, this recommendation includes the appointment of at least one councillor to act as a ‘poverty reduction champion’.

Source: Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee Agenda Package, March 9, 2021, pages 5 to 10.

Retrieved From: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=14923>



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[Niagara Region Council](#) is increasing its capacity to look through an inclusivity lens, to inform planning and decision-making. At its September 19, 2019 meeting, the Council voted unanimously to:

- Join the [Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities](#) (formerly the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination). The Coalition is an international network to help build respectful, inclusive and diverse societies; and to positively impact newcomers, immigrants, refugees, Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, people with disabilities and the LGBTQ2S+ community.
- Endorse establishment of a [Women’s Advisory Committee](#) to: (a) advocate for gender-based issue resolutions and opportunities related to Regional policies, priorities and decisions; (b) promote leadership development that empowers women in Niagara to fully participate in civic life; and (c) research and provide information and resources about women’s gender-based issues to Niagara.

Source: Niagara Regional Council Open Session Minutes September 19, 2019

Retrieved From: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=6335>; and Agenda: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=6056495d-6eed-4d59-984e-200b8f832a3f&Agenda=Merged&lang=English>

Age-Friendly Activity in Niagara

2016 census data released in May 2017 shows that the number of Niagara residents aged 65 and older account for 21.4% of the population, which is 95,845 Niagara residents. In comparison, children under 15 years of age make up 14.9% of the population, or 66,760 people.

Below are the Niagara figures compared to the Ontario figures:

	Regional Municipality of Niagara	Province of Ontario
% aged 0 to 14 years	14.9%	16.4%
% aged 15 to 64 years	63.7%	66.8%
% aged 65 years and older	21.4%	16.7%
Median age of population	45.7	41.3





Geographic Area	Total Population	Percentage of the Population Aged 55-64	Percentage of the Population Aged 65+	Median Age
Fort Erie	30,710	17.78%	23.74%	50.0
Grimsby	27,314	14.39%	19.28%	43.6
Lincoln	23,787	13.73%	21.02%	44.5
Niagara Falls	88,071	14.87%	20.27%	45.0
Niagara-on-the-Lake	17,511	19.10%	30.92%	55.0
Pelham	17,110	16.57%	24.34%	49.5
Port Colborne	18,306	17.04%	24.64%	50.0
St. Catharines	133,113	14.16%	21.69%	44.7
Thorold	18,801	14.36%	16.01%	41.1
Wainfleet	6,372	17.34%	18.36%	46.9
Welland	52,293	17.34%	21.28%	45.5
West Lincoln	14,500	13.97%	14.97%	40.5
Niagara Region	447,888	15.12%	21.39%	45.7
Ontario	13,448,494	13.65%	16.74	41.3
Canada	35,151,728	13.97%	16.89%	41.2

Source: Statistics Canada. *2016 Census Profile*

Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3526&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Cou nt&SearchText=niagara&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1>

The Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan (NASAP) was launched in 2015 by the [Age-Friendly Niagara Network \(AFNN\)](#). The NASAP is a 'living document' that serves as a template for planning by service agencies, different levels of government, businesses and the community at large. The NASAP document summarizes input from over 500 individuals to:

- Validate older adults' needs as perceived by older adults, advocacy groups, service providers, and others
- Identify new or emerging needs of older adults, as the population and society changes



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- Provide insights into existing and emerging needs that will help communities and organizations within communities to become more age-friendly and achieve age-friendly characteristics as outlined by the World Health Organization.

Companion documents include an [Action Plan Toolkit](#) and an [Implementation Template](#).

Source: Age-Friendly Niagara Network

Retrieved from: http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/06/niagara_age_friendly_action_plan_booklet_w.pdf

In 2017, the AFNN received Ontario Trillium Foundation funding over 28 months, to advance implementation of the Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan's (NASAP) five goals, and to build a sustainability plan to ensure ongoing development of Niagara as an age-friendly community. An evaluation report was released by the AFNN in 2019, which summarizes both progress toward, and future opportunities for, implementing the NASAP.

Keys to success for implementing the NASAP include:

- Highly engaged, knowledgeable older adult volunteers, using evidence to advocate for improved quality of life as people age
- Three integrated Action Groups advancing the five NASAP goals
- Network mapping to identify likely new partners to help strengthen AFNN impact
- Engagement of elected leaders in all 12 areas of Niagara, to encourage establishment of local municipal Seniors/Age-Friendly Advisory Committees
- A Niagara-wide Collaborative of local municipal Seniors/Age-Friendly Advisory Committees, to share ideas, learn from each other's efforts, and collectively advocate on common issues of concern across our rural-urban mix community
- Investment in skilled, neutral, locally-focused Backbone Support* to allow AFNN leaders to set the pact, build momentum, and keep people engaged and involved

*Collective Impact, Kania and Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011

Several Suggested Action Steps were identified to advance age-friendly movement for Niagara:

- Leverage AFNN membership in the newly-formed Ontario Association of Councils on Aging, to bring ideas, evidence and promising practices to Niagara and to share successes
- Evolve AFNN to act as a Council on Aging equivalent, with an intergenerational focus
- Engage youth in AFNN planning and action





- Strengthen the AFNN Niagara-wide Collaborative of local municipal Seniors/Age-Friendly Advisory Committees, through timely information-sharing and alignment to address topics of common concern
- Advance AFNN advocacy on priority topics – health benefits of social inclusion; and access to: services (transportation, technology), a range of suitable housing options for people of all income levels, and opportunities to benefit from physical activity, recreation and learning activities
- Expand AFNN’s demonstrated success as a nimble framework for decision-makers to connect with what local older people are thinking; and for hosting Niagara-wide learning forums on timely topics
- Continue to engage decision-makers in seeing the benefits of investing in the AFNN

Source: Age-Friendly Niagara Network, 2019

Retrieved from: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/niagara-aging-strategy-and-action-plan-implementation-project-2017-2019-evaluation-highlights/>

The Senior Pride Network Niagara was developed in response to a Spring 2016 Niagara-wide environmental scan that documented a dearth of programs and services aimed at older LGBTQ citizens, and a need for training of service providers. The group aims to improve on and expand the programs and services aimed at older LGTBQ people in the region.

Source: Senior Pride Network Niagara

Retrieved from: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/partners-projects/senior-pride-network-niagara/>

Cyber-Seniors is a non-profit organization that encourages tech-savvy youth to put their knowledge to good use by mentoring older adults in technology. Programs are offered across North America, including Niagara. Niagara College students provide the Cyber-Seniors program at four Niagara Regional Housing locations.

Source: Cyber-Seniors

Retrieved from: <https://www.agefriendlyniagara.com/in-the-news/program-uses-computers-to-bridge-gap-between-seniors-youths/> and <https://cyberseniors.org/about/>





Local Municipal Age-Friendly, Senior Advisory and Youth Advisory Activity in Niagara	
Municipality	Activity
Fort Erie	<p>The Fort Erie Senior Citizen Advisory Committee aims to provide affordable functions for seniors such as meals, theatre, bingo/euchre parties, and other such entertainment in Fort Erie.</p> <p>The Fort Erie Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee discusses, plans and advises Town Council about issues concerning youth of Greater Fort Erie. This committee acts as a positive advocate for youth so that youth are valued and seen as contributors to the community.</p>
Grimsby	<p>The Grimsby Seniors Club Advisory Committee organizes the Grimsby Seniors Club, which offers recreational activities to anyone who is retired and over the age of 55.</p>
Lincoln	<p>Newly established in 2018, the Lincoln Age-Friendly Advisory Committee advises Council on matters related to the achievement of an age-friendly municipality, while developing and implementing an Age-Friendly Strategy.</p>
Niagara Falls	<p>Established in early 2019, the Niagara Falls Seniors Advisory Committee serves in an advisory capacity to City Council and staff on matters that impact the quality of life of seniors (60 years plus) in the City of Niagara Falls. It acts as a liaison to enrich and enhance the lives of seniors, identifies barriers, forms partnerships with the community and acts as a public forum for issues affecting seniors.</p> <p>The Niagara Falls Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee provides a voice for the youth of Niagara Falls, while advising Council of important recreational and social issues concerning the City's younger population.</p>
Niagara-on-the-Lake	<p>The Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Wellness Committee provides guidance to Town Council and staff aimed at making the Town a healthy community, enabling residents of all ages to participate as full and meaningful community members.</p> <p>The Lord Mayor's Youth Advisory Council gives a voice to the youth of Niagara-on-the-Lake, encourages youth involvement within the community, offers opportunities for youth to be a part of local activities and events, provides leadership opportunities and experiences for youth, and allows youth to help build the Niagara-on-the-Lake community.</p>





<p>Pelham</p>	<p>The Town of Pelham is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Pelham Seniors Advisory Committee assists the Town of Pelham Council and staff in making decisions on matters that impact quality of life and provide solutions through the lens of Pelham’s senior residents.</p> <p>The Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council provides a communication link between the youth of Pelham and the Pelham Town Council, in order to address the needs of youth and take action to enrich their quality of life, health and well-being.</p>
<p>Port Colborne</p>	<p>The City of Port Colborne is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Port Colborne Senior Citizens Advisory Council advises City Council with respect to issues which have or will have an impact on Port Colborne’s seniors and the ways in which Port Colborne can become a more age-friendly community for persons of all ages and ability levels.</p>
<p>St. Catharines</p>	<p>Established in 2019, the St. Catharines Older Adult Committee supports the implementation of the Older Adult Plan and comments on strategic priorities, policies, programs and initiatives that impact older adults. This committee is using the Living in Niagara 2017 – Spotlight on St. Catharines report to guide their work.</p> <p>The St. Catharines Youth Forum Task Force is responsible for planning, implementing and coordinating funding for an annual youth forum. These annual forums provide an opportunity for people under age 25 to talk about ideas and actions to help make St. Catharines a better place for young people to live, work and build a future.</p>
<p>Thorold</p>	<p>The City of Thorold is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Thorold Age-Friendly Committee provides recommendations to Thorold City Council to elevate the profile, level of leadership and engagement of seniors in the community. This committee also makes recommendations on how to facilitate active lifestyles for all seniors, optimize health and wellness services for seniors and to improve access and utilization of various services and supports.</p>





Wainfleet	In early 2020, the Town of Wainfleet established an Age-Friendly Advisory Committee to recommend and promote age-friendly initiatives in order for the Township of Wainfleet to become a more age-friendly community.
Welland	<p>The City of Welland is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Welland Senior Citizens Advisory Committee advises City Council and staff on matters that impact the quality of life of senior citizens in the City of Welland.</p> <p>The Welland Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council keeps Council informed of important matters affecting youth, acts as a positive advocate, and seeks input from youth on important matters affecting them.</p>
West Lincoln	The West Lincoln Age-Friendly Advisory Committee provides input and suggestions to Township Council and staff on matters and initiatives aimed at making the Township of West Lincoln a more age-friendly committee, and enabling all residents and visitors to participate as full and meaningful community members.

[‘Addressing COVID-19 Impacts on Niagara’s Older Adults’](#) is an October, 2020 Age-Friendly Niagara Network (AFNN) Bulletin summarizing May and September, 2020 roundtable discussions among Age-Friendly leaders from across Niagara. Themes include:

- Staying Well
 - Mental Health, Physical Fitness
 - Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Staying Safe
 - Food Security
 - Long Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes
- Staying Connected
 - Local Municipal Seniors/Age-Friendly/Wellness Advisory Committees in Niagara
 - Improved Virtual Connections
 - Transportation/Access to Services and Programs

Source: Age-Friendly Niagara Network

Retrieved From: https://www.agefriendlyniagara.com/wp-content/uploads/Age-Friendly-Niagara-Bulletin-October-2020_FINAL.pdf





Municipal Initiatives to Engage Citizens

The City of Niagara Falls community engagement website, *Let's Talk Niagara Falls*, allows for the community to contribute ideas and feedback on City matters.

Source: City of Niagara Falls

Retrieved from: <https://letstalk.niagarafalls.ca/>

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has launched *Join the Conversation Niagara-on-the-Lake*, an online engagement platform that allows residents to follow along and contribute ideas and opinions on community matters, inviting them to be active participants in shaping projects, policies, and initiatives that impact the future of the Town.

Source: Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Retrieved from: <https://www.jointheconversationnotl.org/>

The Compassionate City initiative focuses on strengthening St Catharines as a city that provides dignity, respect and opportunity for all of its residents. A Compassionate City Guide provides phone contact information for social service providers in St. Catharines.

Source: City of St. Catharines

Retrieved from: <https://www.compassionatetc.ca/>

The City of Thorold has launched Thorold Talks, an online engagement site that allows the community to contribute ideas and feedback on municipal issues and projects (e.g. master plans, proposed by-laws, etc.)

Source: City of Thorold

Retrieved from: <https://www.thoroldtalks.ca/>

Niagara Region Council 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

In 2018, Niagara Region engaged the community to gather feedback on what Niagara Regional Council should focus on in the development of their 2019-2022 strategic plan. Input was collected through in-person engagement events and an online survey. The resulting strategic plan was released in 2019.

Of the five priorities that were identified, two are directly relevant to the Community Belonging Sector:

Priority 2: Healthy and Vibrant Community – foster a high quality of life through safe, inclusive neighbourhoods and delivery of quality, affordable and accessible human services

Objective 2.1: Enhance Community Wellbeing

- Foster safe and inclusive neighbourhoods and communities tied to a larger strategic Community Safety and Wellbeing strategy



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- Drive positive and healthy early childhood education and experiences through the delivery of high quality and affordable child care services
- Increase the capacity of long-term care across the region to meet the needs of the aging population

Priority 4: Sustainable and Engaging Government – a commitment to high quality, efficient, fiscally sustainable and coordinated core services through enhanced communication, partnerships and collaboration with the community

Objective 4.1: High Quality, Efficient and Coordinated Core Services

- Promote an organizational culture that values continuous improvement, collaboration, and innovation
- Explore cost-efficiencies through coordinated service delivery and collaboration with local area municipalities
- Commit to customer focused services, improving access such as through digital and online service delivery
- Drive evidence informed decisions by building staff skills and capacity, and by making information and data accessible across the organization

Objective 4.2: Enhanced Communication

- Increase public knowledge through education and promotion of Regional programs and services, initiatives and priorities. Focus on clear and consistent communication on Regional budget, activities and successes, in a simplified manner
- Strive to be inclusive and increase the reach of communications with the community and explore best practice multi-media approaches

Objective 4.3: Fiscally Sustainable

- Build an adaptive environment that employs leading business practices, such as asset management, to foster financial stability in delivering critical infrastructure and services
- Explore opportunities for driving new revenues and generating business

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/niagara-region-strategic-plan-2019-2022/>

In 2016, Niagara Region signed on as a partner to the SWIFT (South Western Integrated Fibre Technology) project. The aim is to better connect 3.5 million residents in rural communities in south western Ontario and Niagara with access to online information and services by building an Ultra High-speed fibre optic Internet Network.

Source: The SWIFT Project

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

The above information is also included in the Economic Prosperity Sector of this report.



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Religious Affiliation

Many people find a place to belong by participating in religious activity. The following table shows the religious affiliation of people aged 15 and older who lived in the St. Catharines-Niagara CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) in 2011. Some examples of “other religions” represented in Niagara include Baha’i, Pagan, and Jain. Note: Statistics Canada will next collect Religious Affiliation data in 2021.

Religion	Number of People Age 15+ Affiliated in St. Catharines – Niagara CMA (2011)
Buddhist	1,295
Christian	246,495
Hindu	765
Jewish	790
Muslim	3,065
Sikh	175
Aboriginal spirituality	165
Other religions	970
Non-religious	71,170
Total population	324,890

Source: Statistics Canada. (2013, May 8). *Religion (19), age groups (10), sex (3), selected demographic, cultural, labour force and educational characteristics (268) for the population in private households, NHS, 2011* [Data file].

Retrieved from: <http://communitydata.ca/content/religion-19-age-groups-10-sex-3-selected-demographic-cultural-labour-force-and-educational>

The Places of Worship dataset from the Niagara Open Data Portal includes 370 records. By municipality: Fort Erie (30), Grimsby (17), Lincoln (30), Niagara Falls (57), Niagara-on-the-Lake (19), Pelham (16), Port Colborne (20), St. Catharines (99), Thorold (13), Wainfleet (14), Welland (38), West Lincoln (17).

Source: Niagara Region. *Places of Worship*

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraopendata.ca/dataset/places-of-worship>





Indicator: Trust in Others

The Edelman Trust Barometer is an annual trust and credibility survey that explores trust in business, government, NGOs and media. The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer surveyed more than 33,000 respondents across 27 global markets, including 1,500 respondents in Canada. The 2019 study reveals that trust has changed profoundly in the past year – people have shifted their trust to the relationships within their control, most notably their employers. Globally, 75% of people trust “my employer” to do what is right, significantly more than NGOs (57%), business (56%) and media (47%).

In Canada, trust has increased across all institutions; 59% of Canadians trust NGOs, 56% trust business, 53% trust government, and 57% trust media. Over 50% of Canadian employees worry about job insecurity (not having the training and skills necessary to get a good paying job, automation and/or other innovations taking their job away, international conflicts about trade policies and tariffs hurting the company they work for). 54% of employees look to their employer to be a trustworthy source of information about social issues and other important topics on which there is not general agreement.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer

Retrieved from: <https://www.edelman.ca/trust-barometer/trust-barometer-2019>

Crowdsourcing Participants’ Trust in Governments, Public Health Authorities, Businesses and Others During the COVID-19 Pandemic is a June 26, 2020 article released by Statistics Canada. It is based on an online questionnaire, “Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Trust in others”. in which approximately 37,000 Canadians participated, from May 26 to June 8, 2020. Readers are asked to note that, unlike other surveys conducted by Statistics Canada, caution should be exercised when interpreting the findings based on crowdsourcing, and no inferences about the overall Canadian population should be made based on these results:

- Crowdsourcing participants generally trust others, but have less trust in the public (positive expectations of the public) during reopening
- About 4 in 10 participants express high levels of trust in businesses
- Most participants express high levels of trust in public health authorities and governments
- Levels of trust are lower among younger participants
- Participants financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic report lower levels of trust
- Trust was associated with participants’ expectations regarding their household spending
- Participants with the lowest levels of trust view the pace of reopening as either too fast or too slow

Source: Statistics Canada The Daily, June 26, 2020

Retrieved From: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200626/dq200626b-eng.htm>





Indicator: Volunteering

Volunteering Practices

Canadian Code for Volunteer Management

- In 2017, Volunteer Canada launched the most recent iteration of the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI). The Code recognizes and reflects the changing realities of volunteer engagement and management practice, and supports the work of those who manage and support volunteer involvement within an organization. It is based on the premise that for volunteer involvement to be effective, the organization's leaders must actively champion a culture and structure that supports and values the role and impact of volunteer involvement.

The Code consists of three important elements:

1. The value of volunteer involvement
2. Guiding principles that frame the relationship between the volunteer and non-profit organization
3. Standards of practice for involving individuals in meaningful ways to ensure successful integration of volunteers while meeting the needs of both the organization and its volunteers

Volunteer Canada provides complementary resources for adopting and implementing the Code, including a checklist and guidelines for involving board members, senior leadership, volunteer and human resource managers, staff, and volunteers in its implementation.

Source: Volunteer Canada. *Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement*

Retrieved from: <https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=346>

Virtual Volunteering

- Virtual volunteering is done online, via computers, tablets or smartphones, usually off-site from the non-profit organization being supported. Increasingly, organizations are engaging people who want to contribute their skills and time virtually. This practice opens up opportunities, as it is not limited by geography, physical ability or work arrangement.

Source: Volunteer Canada

Retrieved From: <https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=419>





Volunteering and the COVID-19 Pandemic

- [Volunteering in Canada: Challenges and Opportunities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) is a Statistics Canada report based on the 2018 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating.
 - In 2018, almost 12.7 million Canadians, aged 15 and older (41% of Canadians in this age group), volunteered for charities, non-profits and community organizations. They devoted approximately 1.7 billion hours to their formal volunteer activities, equivalent to more than 863,000 full-time year-round jobs.
 - Matures (born 1918 to 1945) and Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1965) are more likely to be top volunteers (spending 132 hours or more on volunteer activities)
 - iGen (born 1996 and up) had the highest rate of formal* volunteering across all generations (*volunteering with the involvement of organizations or groups)
 - Some organization types are likely to be more impacted than others by suspension of volunteering due to the pandemic (eg. hospitals, religious, sports and recreation, arts and culture gatherings/events, social services)
 - Formal volunteers, who volunteered on behalf of specific organization types, dedicated more than 100 hours, on average to arts and culture (104 hours), sports and recreation (105 hours), religion (110 hours), and hospitals (111 hours). Formal volunteers gave about half as many hours to education and research (51 hours), grant-making, fundraising and volunteer promotion (52 hours), and health (58 hours).
 - Almost three-quarters of Canadians 15 year of age and older (22.7 million people, accounting for 74% of Canadians in this age group) were engaged in informal** volunteering in 2018. They devoted about 3.4 billion hours to volunteer activities, representing approximately 1.8 million full-time year-round job equivalents.
 - Going into the pandemic, iGen (born 1996 and up) were more likely (78%) than Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1965) (73%) and Matures (born 1918 to 1945) (58%) to volunteer informally** (**includes the provision of direct help to people outside the household and community improvement not on behalf of a group or organization)

Source: Volunteering in Canada: Challenges and Opportunities During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Statistics Canada, June 26, 2020.

Retrieved From: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00037-eng.htm>

- [Ongoing Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis on the Charitable Sector](#) is an Imagine Canada Sector Monitor report released in February, 2021. It provides findings of a national survey of 1,089 charities conducted in November, 2020. The report states: Beyond providing



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essential services to millions, Canada's nonprofit sector is a critical engine of economic growth and jobs. Nonprofits and charities account for 8.5% of GDP and employ 2.4 million Canadians, of which 70% are women.

Key survey findings include:

- Charities are experiencing a growing gap between demand and capacity, with organizations being stretched to do more while grappling with staff and volunteer shortage. The increased pressure is taking a toll on employees.
- The financial situation of most organizations remains fragile, despite a slight improvement since the spring of 2020. Organizations are unevenly impacted, depending on their revenue model.
- Support measures introduced by the federal government are playing a significant role in preserving employment within charities. To operate at their current level, a significant number of charities are reliant on programs (the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy in particular).
- Organizations are adapting, innovating, and demonstrating resilience, but their long-term sustainability may be at risk.
- The diversity of the sector is being challenged; some groups have been particularly affected by social distancing measures and revenue shortfalls. This threatens the diversity of programs and services offered to communities.
- Charities are more likely to be pessimistic rather than optimistic when forecasting their financial situation, even though they reported a more positive situation than in the early stages of the pandemic.

Source: Imagine Canada

Retrieved From: [https://imaginecanada.ca/en/360/ongoing-impacts-covid-19-crisis-charitable-sector?utm_source=Imagine+Matters&utm_campaign=debc5df1da-Imagine_Matters_English_Aug_14_2018_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_88a308d2fd-debc5df1da-292743905&ct=t\(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_8_14_2018_COPY_01\)](https://imaginecanada.ca/en/360/ongoing-impacts-covid-19-crisis-charitable-sector?utm_source=Imagine+Matters&utm_campaign=debc5df1da-Imagine_Matters_English_Aug_14_2018_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_88a308d2fd-debc5df1da-292743905&ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_8_14_2018_COPY_01))

Value of Volunteering

Value of Volunteering in Canada

- A 2018 report prepared by the Conference Board of Canada highlights the value of volunteering in Canada. Economic benefits of volunteering include:
 - Even if volunteers are unpaid, their contribution adds to economic activity through the value of services provided



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- Volunteers added over two billion hours to Canada's work effort in 2017
- The volunteer contribution is valued at \$55.9 billion in 2017 – equivalent to 2.6 per cent of GDP
- If volunteering were an industry, it would employ nearly as many people as those currently working in education

In addition to the economic value, services provided by volunteers help to strengthen and empower individuals and communities, and benefit volunteers and their employers by expanding their experience, skills, and social and business networking opportunities.

Participating in charitable activities can improve the life satisfaction of volunteers and may improve their health. Research suggests that volunteers gain a wide range of business-relevant skills and can improve their work-related outcomes.

Source: Conference Board of Canada. The Value of Volunteering in Canada, 2018
Retrieved from:

https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/Campaigns_DOCS/Value%20of%20Volunteering%20in%20Canada%20Conf%20Board%20Final%20Report%20EN.pdf

Volunteerism in the Workplace

- In the past decade, Employer-Supported Volunteering has become a mainstream practice. Companies that support the volunteering efforts of their employees experience lower staff turnover rates. Research indicates that 80% of employer-supported volunteers believe that group volunteering strengthens their relationships with colleagues. It also helps individuals learn new skills. Volunteer Canada provides resources to help businesses of all sizes with this practice.

Source: Volunteer Canada

Retrieved From: <https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=345>

- A June, 2017 Deloitte Volunteerism Study of working Americans found that creating a culture of volunteerism may boost morale, workplace atmosphere and brand perception.

Key findings include:

- 89% of respondents believe that companies who sponsor volunteer activities offer a better overall working environment than those who do not
- 77% say that company-sponsored volunteer activities are essential to employee well-being
- 74% think that volunteerism provides an improved sense of purpose



- 75% of working American millennials said they would volunteer more often if they had a better understanding of the impact they were making, compared to 61% of all respondents
- 69% say they are not volunteering as much as they would like to
- 62% say they cannot dedicate time during the day to volunteering

Source: Deloitte Development LLC. 2017 Deloitte Volunteerism Survey

Retrieved from: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/us-2017-deloitte-volunteerism-survey.pdf>

Volunteering in Niagara

Niagara's Volunteer Centre

- INCommunities is Niagara's Volunteer Centre, aiming to strengthen Niagara through volunteer, leadership, community engagement and connecting potential volunteers with local organizations. From 2017-2020, the INCommunities Volunteer Connections program connected 4,280 volunteers to meaningful opportunities that matched their interests and skills.

The emergence of COVID-19 in 2020 has had a considerable impact on the volunteer sector. A survey conducted by INCommunities, of community agencies with volunteer programs revealed:

- 29% offered virtual volunteering opportunities pre-COVID
- 82% offered virtual volunteering opportunities by the end of 2020
- 75% are interested in creating digital volunteer roles moving forward

Source: INCommunities. 2018 Annual Report; and special COVID-19 survey

Retrieved from: <https://www.incommunities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/INCommunities-2018-Annual-General-Report.pdf>

Regional Association of Volunteer Administrators (RAVA)

- In 2019 more than 45 organizations in Niagara belonged to [RAVA \(Regional Association of Volunteer Administrators\)](#). Established in 1991, RAVA offers local volunteer management professionals with access to industry resources and news, affordable professional development, and regular opportunities to network, troubleshoot, and collaborate with partners from all social profit organizations throughout Niagara. RAVA members implement best practice strategies in all areas of volunteer program management including recruitment, screening, training, placement, supervision, recognition and evaluation.

RAVA's objectives include:



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- Promote the profession of volunteer management
- Support proper involvement of volunteers
- Share industry knowledge and contacts
- Facilitate exchange of information and experience

The profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the volunteer sector is demonstrated by a reduction in RAVA membership numbers. In 2020, RAVA's membership declined by almost 50%, due to many organizations having to suspend volunteer programs in line with public health protocols.

Source: RAVA (Regional Association of Volunteer Administrators)

Retrieved from: <https://www.incommunities.ca/en/volunteer-connections/regional-association-of-volunteer-administrators-rava/>

Post-Secondary Volunteering Opportunities

- [ExperienceBU](#) is an ongoing, online volunteer recruitment tool at Brock University that gives students a one-stop location for all the ways they can engage in the community, both on and off campus. Community organizations are invited to create a profile for their organization and post information about volunteer opportunities and upcoming events.

Source: Brock University

Retrieved from: <https://experiencebu.brocku.ca/>

- The Get Involved NC Portal is dedicated to getting Niagara College students involved on and off campus, in the Niagara community and surrounding regions, whether it be to get hands-on, real world experience or make a positive change in the community. Students are able to browse through a vast array of volunteer opportunities, choose what is best for them, and see how to get more information on community agencies. The Get Involved NC portal also helps promote community events and campaigns in which students might be interested. Community organizations are encouraged to register their organization and post their volunteer opportunities.

Source: Niagara College

Retrieved from: <https://getinvolved.niagaracollege.ca/>

Canada Summer Games in Niagara Volunteering Opportunities

- The [Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games](#) will be held August 6 – 21, 2022 in the Niagara region of Ontario. The Canada Games, held every two years, alternating between summer and winter, are the largest multi-sport event in the country. Originally, the Games event to be hosted in Niagara region was scheduled for August, 2021. Due



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to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the date was rescheduled to 2022. The Games will feature 18 sports and 5,000 participants. Thousands of volunteers will be recruited to support the Games, including three types of volunteer roles:

1. Leadership Volunteers to help in the planning stages leading up to the Games
2. Pre-Games Volunteers to support various events being held until Games-time
3. Games-Time Volunteers to assist during the actual Games

Individuals interested in volunteering opportunities are encouraged to find information at <https://niagara2022games.ca/sponsors/volunteering>

Source: Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games
Retrieved from: <https://niagara2022games.ca/>

Measuring Volunteerism in Niagara

- Family and Children's Services (FACS) Niagara reports that during the 2018-2019 year, 174 active volunteers donated 61,220 hours of their time and volunteer drivers travelled 2.2 million kilometers helping to get kids and families to important appointments, visits, and programs.

Source: Family and Children's Services Niagara. *2018-2019 Annual Report*

Retrieved from: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/family-and-childrens-services-facs-niagara-2018-19-annual-report/>

- YMCA of Niagara states, in their 2019 annual report that 817 volunteers donated their time and talents through the YMCA to help the community. This was an increase from 670 volunteers in the previous year.

Source: YMCA of Niagara. *2019 Annual Report to the Community*

Retrieved from: <https://ymcaofniagara.org/about-the-ymca/publications/>

- Niagara Region Seniors Services reports annually on volunteer activities in regional seniors' programs and services. The value of volunteers' contributions extends beyond the number of hours and dollars, as they provide an invaluable contribution to the quality of life of residents and clients.

The table at the top of the next page provides 2017-2019 statistics for volunteer contribution to Niagara Region Long-Term Care Homes.



Volunteer Contribution to Niagara Region Long-Term Care Homes (2017-2019)			
	2017	2018	2019
Number of volunteers	552	480	461
Volunteer hours	54,352	52,445	45,441
Monetary value of volunteerism at minimum wage	\$630,483	\$734,230	\$636,174
Number of students competing placements	403	456	522
Student volunteer hours	74,112	75,555	82,403
Monetary value of student placements at student minimum wage	\$792,998	\$993,548	\$1,083,599
Funds raised through donations	\$249,606	\$261,828	\$154,904
Total value of contribution (volunteer hours, student placements, fundraising)	\$1,673,087	\$1,989,606	\$1,874,677

Source: Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee

Retrieved from:

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/council/Council%20Documents/2018/PHSSC-agenda-march-06-2018.pdf#page=20> (2017 figures)

<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=2939#page=70> (2018)

<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=9131> (2019)

- The Niagara Health 2018-2019 annual report shows over 850 hospital volunteers and auxiliary members provide invaluable support that complements the work of staff by sharing skills, abilities, experience and talent to benefit their community. Volunteers from all walks of life range in age from 16 to 96. Through service, they learn new skills, make new friends, explore career options, network and remain actively engaged in the community during retirement.

Source: Niagara Health. One Team, One Purpose: Annual Report 2018/2019

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagarahealth.on.ca/site/accountability-transparency/annual-reports> and <https://www.niagarahealth.on.ca/site/volunteer-resources>



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- Through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, community organizations host free tax preparation clinics and arrange for volunteers to complete income tax and benefit returns for eligible individuals who have a modest income and a simple tax situation. [The CRA provides a directory of volunteer tax preparation clinics.](#)

As of February 2020, the CRA directory listed 12 clinics in Niagara in total:

- 1 clinic in Fort Erie
- 1 clinic in Lincoln
- 2 clinics in Niagara Falls
- 1 clinic in Port Colborne
- 5 clinics in St. Catharines
- 1 clinic in Thorold
- 1 clinic in West Lincoln

The above list does not include all such volunteer assistance available throughout the region.

Source: Canada Revenue Agency

Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/community-volunteer-income-tax-program.html>

The above information is also included in the Economic Prosperity Sector of this report.



Indicator: Voter Turnout

Federal Election Voter Turnout

The following table shows the voter turnout (percentage of registered voters who cast a ballot) in each of Niagara's electoral districts in the October, 2019 Federal Election. Comparative figures are also shown for overall voter turnout in Niagara and across Canada.

Electoral District	Votes Cast	Population Represented	Number of Electors on List	Voter Turnout – 2019	Voter Turnout – 2015
Niagara Centre	58502	109067	90968	64.3%	65.6%
Niagara Falls	70370	136292	113232	62.1%	63.0%
Niagara West	54176	90838	74983	72.3%	73.3%
St. Catharines	60619	111691	91215	66.5%	67.7%
Total	243667	447888	370398	66.3%	66.9%
Average Voter Turnout Across Canada					68.3%

Source: Elections Canada. *43rd General Election: Official Voting Results*

Retrieved from:

<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/43gedata&document=summary&lang=e>

Provincial Election Voter Turnout

The following table illustrates voter turnout (percentage of registered voters who cast a ballot) in each of Niagara's electoral districts in the June, 2018 Provincial Election. Boundaries for Niagara's electoral districts have shifted since the previous election in 2014. Therefore, voter turnout at the electoral district level cannot be compared year to year. Overall voter turnout for Niagara was 54.4% in the 2014 Provincial Election.

Electoral District	Votes Obtained	Voting Population	Voter Turnout
Niagara Centre	49,554	88,287	56.13%
Niagara Falls	60,032	110,035	54.56%
Niagara West	46,769	73,913	63.28%
St. Catharines	52,206	89,924	58.06%
Total	208,561	362,159	Average 57.59%

Source: Elections Ontario. *Data Explorer*

Retrieved from: <https://results.elections.on.ca/en/data-explorer?fromYear=1867&toYear=2019&levelOfDetail=district>



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Municipal Election Voter Turnout

Municipal elections are held every four years in Ontario. Prior to 2007, they were held every three years.

The following table shows the voter turnout (percentage of registered voters who cast a ballot) in each of the lower-tier municipal elections in Niagara for October, 2018, compared to the four prior municipal elections. The average across the Niagara region is also shown.

Further details can be found at each lower-tier municipality’s website.

Municipality	Municipal Election Voter Turnout (per cent)				
	2003	2006	2010	2014	2018
Fort Erie	34.0	37.0	41.0	43.7	41.1
Grimsby	47.3	44.8	39.0	42.4	43.8
Lincoln	35.8	34.0	37.0	37.5	39.4
Niagara Falls	47.8	41.3	43.0	36.7	39.2
Niagara-on-the-Lake	44.0	47.0	49.0	48.5	59.0
Pelham	49.4	48.6	45.0	43.9	50.4
Port Colborne	49.6	51.7	51.0	45.7	43.6
St. Catharines	29.7	40.7	31.0	34.3	33.6
Thorold	39.0	40.7	40.0	36.9	36.1
Wainfleet	33.6	43.4	49.0	52.5	48.6
Welland	44.8	42.4	41.0	35.8	34.5
West Lincoln	39.3	37.3	37.0	37.5	38.4
Average Turnout (per cent)	41.2	42.4	41.9	41.3	42.3

Source for 2018 figures: Association of Municipalities Ontario. *2018 Municipal Election Results*
Retrieved from: <https://elections.amo.on.ca/web/en/home>

Source for prior years: Local Municipalities’ websites. Table compiled by Niagara Connects.

