



LIVING IN NIAGARA 2014

Critical Indicators
for Reflecting on
Life in Niagara



Niagara Connects is a Niagara-wide network of people for collaboration, planning, learning, innovation and community action toward a stronger future for Niagara.

Guiding Principles

- Community strengths, research, and evidence are linked in order to plan for a stronger Niagara
- Different interests are engaged to work together mobilizing for change
- Research and activities are guided by communities

www.niagaraconnects.ca

Living in Niagara-2014 report

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Generating knowledge that drives community action.

Contents

	Purpose of Report and Research Methodology	2
	Living in Niagara Sector Ratings: 2008, 2011, 2014	3
	Overall Opportunities and Cross-Sectoral Themes	4
●	Arts, Culture and Heritage in Niagara	5
●	Belonging, Volunteering, Giving and Leadership in Niagara	8
●	Crime, Safety and Security in Niagara	11
●	Economic Development, Poverty and Prosperity in Niagara	14
●	(The) Environment in Niagara	17
●	Health and Wellness in Niagara	20
●	Housing and Shelter in Niagara	23
●	Learning and Education in Niagara	26
●	People Getting Started in Niagara	29
●	Recreation and Sports in Niagara	32
●	Transportation and Mobility in Niagara	35
●	Work and Employment in Niagara	38



The Niagara Region covers 1,852 square kilometers, and is bordered on 3 sides by water: Lake Ontario to the north, Lake Erie to the south, and the Niagara River to the east. The river forms a shared border with the United States; there are 5 border crossings, 4 by road and 1 by rail. The road border crossings link up with the busy Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW), which runs from Fort Erie in the south, north to Niagara Falls and westward, crossing the Welland Canal, running parallel to the south shore of Lake Ontario, onward west to Hamilton. The QEW links Niagara as part of Ontario's Golden Horseshoe, one of Canada's most densely-populated and economically diverse areas, stretching around the southwest end of Lake Ontario to include the Greater Toronto area (GTA).



Purpose of the Living in Niagara report and Research Methodology

The Living in Niagara report is a triennial measure of quality of life in Niagara, across 12 Sectors aligning with the social determinants of health. The report and its Sectors are described, built and owned by the Niagara-wide community, and produced by Niagara Connects.

The report, and its companion tool, niagaraknowledgeexchange.com (NKE) are cornerstones in building a culture of evidence-informed planning for Niagara. The report production process weaves networks among diverse partners who work together to intentionally gather, share and record data and information, as well as agree on Suggested Action Steps to guide the community's planning for a stronger future.

The first Living in Niagara report was built in 2008 by community volunteers, in partnership with Brock University researchers. It included 11 Sectors and related Indicators, each of which was rated by Community Expert Opinion Leaders (CEOLs), on a scale of 1 to 5 to indicate "how Niagara is doing", in 2008. Solid community support for the value of working together to regularly produce the report led to the 2009 formation of the Niagara Research and Planning Council, which rebranded as Niagara Connects in late 2012.

The Living in Niagara-2011 report included a 12th Sector, Recreation and Sports, added at the request of the community. The process for identifying and engaging CEOLs was enhanced. A minimum of three CEOLs per Sector was selected through a Triangulation process. CEOLs are "people with a Niagara-wide view of the landscape in the Sector in which they work, and who have hands-on knowledge of current context and issues related to that Sector". Selection of the CEOLs was guided by the Niagara Connects Council, a group of community volunteers dedicated to leading a culture of evidence-informed planning in Niagara.

The Living in Niagara-2014 report reflects further refinement of the research process and presentation of report information. The print summary version points people to more detail online at www.livinginnigarareport.com. A Modified-Delphi method was utilized to integrate: selection and engagement of CEOLs; data collection; review and refinement of report indicators; and Sector ratings.

Production of the report was guided by Niagara Connects staff and volunteers, and supported by a team of Brock researchers through the SIRAP (Social Innovation Research Associate Program). Report Indicators were reviewed and refined with input from the CEOLs through an online survey and in-person discussion groups. CEOLs contributed to content review and refinement, as well as Sector Ratings.

Sector	Community Expert Opinion Ratings			Rating Change From 2011 to 2014
	2008	2011	2014	
Arts Culture and Heritage in Niagara	3	4	3b	Slight Negative Change
Belonging, Volunteering, Giving and Leadership in Niagara	3	3b	3b	No Change
Crime, Safety and Security in Niagara	3	4	3a	Slight Negative Change
Economic Development, Poverty and Prosperity in Niagara	1	Between 1 and 2	3a	Positive Change
(The) Environment in Niagara	2	Between 3a and 3b	1	Negative Change
Health and Wellness in Niagara	2	3a	3b	Slight Positive Change
Housing and Shelter in Niagara	3	3b	2	Negative Change
Learning and Education in Niagara	2	3b	3b	No Change
People Getting Started in Niagara	2	3b	3a	Slight Negative Change
Recreation and Sports in Niagara	n/a	Between 3a and 3b	3a	Slight Negative Change
Transportation and Mobility in Niagara	2	3b	3a	Slight Negative Change
Work and Employment in Niagara	2	2	2	No Change

Visit www.livinginniagarareport.com to find measures related to the Indicators in each of the 12 Living in Niagara Sectors.

Rating levels of how Niagara is doing, in 2014

Level 1 - In dire need of corrective action

Level 2 - Of concern, needs attention

Level 3a - A little progress is being made

Level 3b - A lot of progress is being made

Level 4 - We're doing well and headed in the right direction

Level 5 - We're doing great - Niagara is a leader

Overall Opportunities Suggested for Action

The following are themes emerging from this report for Niagara-wide action to build a stronger future.

- 1. Leverage data and knowledge as resources for predictive intelligence** - Advance the framework being developed by the Data and Knowledge Niagara working group, to describe the Niagara-wide landscape for collecting, accessing and sharing data and knowledge. Collectively maximize these tools to support focused decision-making for a stronger future.
- 2. Build on Shared Value and inter-Sectoral linkages to gain an understanding of what Measuring Impact means in the Niagara context** - Advance a proactive, upstream systems approach to investing in the people of Niagara so that all people have equal opportunities to achieve wellbeing.
- 3. Increase inclusive cross-Sectoral pathways of communication and data-sharing** - Weaving of connections among diverse players, and related information-sharing across the 12 Living in Niagara Sectors is essential to building actionable strategies for measurable impact.
- 4. Describe and acknowledge the for-social-profit sector's role in Niagara's economy** - This sector contributes significantly to Niagara's economy and quality of life. Thus, describing and quantifying its impact is an essential element in planning for economic development.
- 5. Strengthen our ability to identify socio-economic indicators that are precursors to emerging data** - Further develop mechanisms for real-time identification of socio-economic trends in Niagara, to help us focus our planning.
- 6. View poverty as a complex entity requiring complex solutions** - Building solutions begins with trusted partnerships that lead to data-sharing. When valuable data in one Sector is coupled with data from another, it creates a deeper understanding of complexity, and provides opportunities for analysis of the actual root causes contributing to the situation.
- 7. Gather information to understand Quality of Jobs in Niagara** - Aligning, sharing and meshing cross-Sectoral data will strengthen our ability to analyze and address effects of underemployment on the people and economy in Niagara.
- 8. Expand the capacity and scope of Knowledge Exchange for Niagara** - Create education tools to enable people in Niagara to understand and develop skills in the use of Knowledge Exchange for the purpose of shared inter-Sectoral learning, development of new partnerships, and focused planning based on relevant, reliable information.
- 9. Leverage the provincial focus on health system integration and individual and family/support centered care** - This will lead to enhanced quality of service across the health and social service continuum. Putting the client and his or her family/supports first is an economic driver that leads to innovation, and focused research.
- 10. Support Implementation of the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter** - Increase public knowledge about the handling of persons in mental health crisis. Pay attention to opportunities for shared learning across the health and human services continuum in Niagara.



Arts, Culture and Heritage in Niagara

The vibrancy of Arts, Culture and Heritage is increasingly seen as an essential component in Niagara's sustainability and prosperity. In recent years, we have begun to recognize and describe this Sector's complexity. At this time in our community, we are experiencing the emergence of local municipal and regional culture plans. This is accompanied by a common desire to consider social, environmental and economic impacts in cultural planning.

Arts Culture and Heritage as a whole is poised on a tipping point for being recognized as an integral leader in the building of Niagara's Creative Economy. Players within this Sector are beginning to discuss the possibility of sharing ideas, knowledge, reliable sector-wide data, and innovations. The anticipated benefit is better-informed decision-making that enables

people and organizations working in the overall

area of Arts, Culture and Heritage to

mutually describe and articulate the

collective scale and socio-

economic influence of their

work in our Niagara.



Rating

3b

a lot of
progress
is being
made

Things
we are
doing
well!

A Niagara Culture Plan assessment of the economic impact of the Niagara Culture sector identified a contribution of: the equivalent of 13,088 full-time jobs; \$396.3 million in labour income; and \$595.2 million to the regional economy.

cNiagara.ca launched in 2012 as Niagara's online resource for arts, heritage, festivals and events. It helps people search for events via calendars, event types, interactive map, or search keywords. A blog offers cultural insights from across Niagara. This website was developed by a partnership between Carousel Players; the Centre for the Arts at Brock University; and the City of St. Catharines. These groups also developed the Niagara Arts Inspire Niagara Schools project, providing opportunities for elementary and secondary students to participate in and access arts activities in Niagara.

IlluminAqua is a concert series that uniquely blends fire, music and water set on the Old Welland Canal, drawing people from Ontario, Western New York and beyond. It is part of the Waterway's Arts and Culture Series and takes place at the Merritt Park Amphitheatre in Welland.

Heritage sites in Niagara that played a role in the War of 1812, and several museums with related collections and website information partnered with the Niagara 1812 Legacy Council to commemorate the 1812 Bicentennial. This aligned with Niagara Region being declared a Cultural Capital of Canada for 2012, and 22 related projects in a range of expressions including art, photography, heritage, dance, choral, digital, multi-media, theater, after-school arts and local cultural festivals.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

The St Catharines Performing Arts Centre and the Marilyn I Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts will be a specialized, purpose-built and professionally managed facility that presents, promotes and develops the arts in Niagara. This will add an important new cultural attraction to the region, serving artists, students and arts patrons across the peninsula.

2

The Niagara Investment in Culture (NIC) program is offering project-based funding to both community cultural organizations and local municipalities.

3

The emergence of municipal cultural plans and investment strategies indicates growing recognition of the role this Sector plays in strengthening our community's economic prosperity.

4

In late 2013, Niagara Region Council approved an application to have lands through which the first 3 Welland Canals ran designated historic, with a vision of creating a Canadian heritage tourism draw and spurring redevelopment of original canal communities.

5

South Niagara Artists are a diverse group of painters, potters and printmakers located in the southern part of the Niagara region. In August, 2012, they staged their first annual tour, in Wainfleet and Port Colborne. In 2014, the group has doubled in size, includes artists in Sherkston, Crystal Beach and Ridgeway, and is staging their first annual Fall Studio Tour in early November.



Indicators

Involvement in and time spent on arts, culture and heritage activities in Niagara

- Library use
- Arts, Culture and Heritage activities and groups in Niagara

Mapping of arts, culture and heritage assets in Niagara

Contribution of the cultural sector to the economy in Niagara

- Contribution of cultural tourism to the economy
- Consideration of Arts, Culture and Heritage in economic strategies and local development plans

Public Library Uses In Niagara (2012)

10,606,744

Includes electronic uses (workstation, electronic database use, electronic reference transactions and visits to the library website) and non-electronic uses (circulation, program attendance, in-library use of materials, standard reference transactions, and in-person visits).	76,739	Wainfleet
	112,478	West Lincoln
	212,879	Fort Erie
	461,729	Grimsby
	292,193	Lincoln
	129,508	NOTL
	168,579	Pelham
	242,574	Port Colborne
	237,948	Thorold
	6,581,181	Niagara Falls
	461,621	Welland
	1,629,315	St. Catharines

Suggested Action Steps

Continue to support and encourage the arts as an essential part of the education process for learners of all ages in Niagara.

Broaden and deepen our collective understanding of the socio-economic contribution of the overall Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector in Niagara, and continue to strengthen opportunities for players within this Sector to collectively describe, articulate and reflect the impact of their work and presence on the vibrancy of Niagara.

Preserve, maintain and promote access to and interpretation of the remnants of the first three versions of the Welland Canal. Create opportunities to tell our collective stories of the Welland Canal in our community.

Increase the flow of mutually beneficial information across the Niagara-wide Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector and beyond, to enable: on-going, timely and easy access to data and reports to inform collective branding; complementary product development and cross-promotion that achieves impact; and intentional gathering and sharing of knowledge and data to support integrated planning.





Belonging, Volunteering, Giving and Leadership in Niagara

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

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



Rating

3b a lot of progress is being made

Things we are doing well!

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

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

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

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

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

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

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

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

2

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

3

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

4

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

Suggested Action Steps

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indicators

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

Voter Turnout for Municipal Elections 2000 - 2014

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

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

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

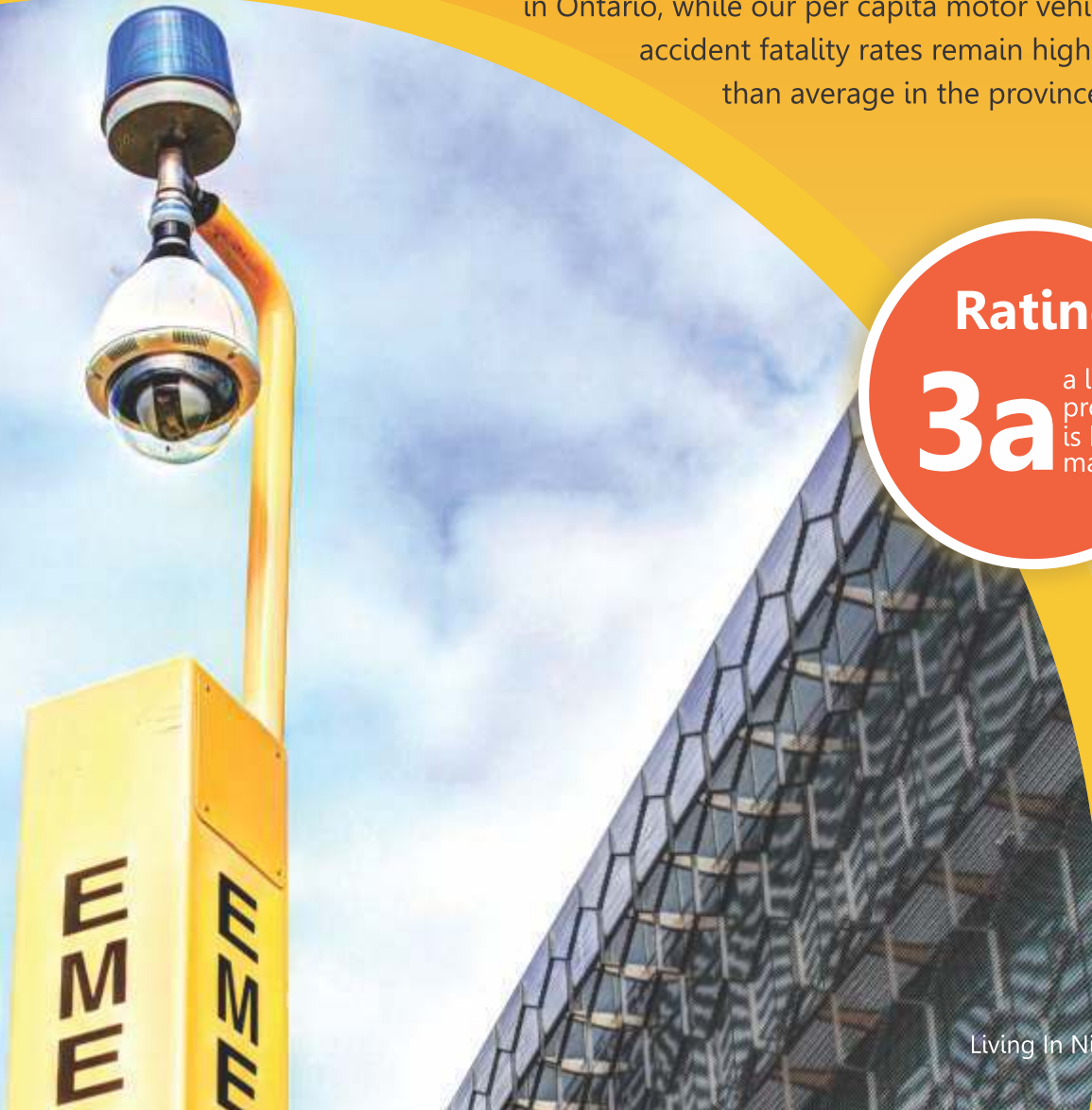


Crime, Safety and Security in Niagara

Feeling safe and secure in our homes, communities, vehicles and surroundings helps us to enjoy living in Niagara. Knowing that emergency workers are available to assist citizens in crisis affects our perceptions of safety. Generally speaking, Niagara has low violent and property crime rates, compared to similar communities in Ontario, while our per capita motor vehicle accident fatality rates remain higher than average in the province.

Rating

3a a little progress is being made



Things we are doing well!

Incidents of reported crime continue to decline in many categories across the Region.

Victim assistance in Niagara is being strengthened. The Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS) centralized its Domestic Violence team into one unit in January of 2013. These 12 detectives and 1 supervisor are specially-trained, and they work with a number of community agencies.

COAST (Community Outreach and Support Team) is a partnership between the NRPS, the Canadian Mental Health Association Niagara Branch, Niagara Health System and the Distress Centre. Mobile crisis services are provided for people 16 years of age and older with serious mental illness, substance abuse problems or dealing with social issues such as homelessness; linkages to appropriate community services are provided.

In 2013, the Coalition to End Violence Against Women (CEVAW) issued its second Domestic Violence Report Card. As living in poverty reduces options for victims of domestic violence, CEVAW members are actively involved in supporting the Niagara Prosperity Initiative, which focuses on alleviating the root causes of poverty, through a collaborative, neighbourhood-based approach informed by research. They are also active in the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network.

Connections between NRPS School Resource Officers and schools in Niagara are increasing and a Niagara Chapter of ProAction Cops & Kids is now formed.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

- 1 New initiatives related to youth justice, mental health and addictions, and collateral partnerships are being established; data is being gathered to understand the incidence of youth coming in contact with the legal system in Niagara.
- 2 FACS Niagara is working with CEVAW to better understand the complex nature of child welfare with a focus on safety and well-being of children while considering how to improve family functioning and reduce risk.
- 3 High unemployment and poverty rates in Niagara mean that as more people struggle to provide for their family, there is a domino effect on social service agencies providing supports for food security, homelessness or emergency shelter for women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. Vulnerable people who cannot find affordable and suitable housing end up being underhoused and may be open to abuse.
- 4 The BeFAIR project is gathering information about the incidence of Elder Financial Abuse in Niagara.
- 5 The work of Niagara-wide partners in implementing the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter is illuminating opportunities to integrate findings of recent Canadian reports regarding Police interactions with people struggling with mental health problems.



Indicators

Crime in Niagara

- Overall Crime Rates and violent crime rates
- The nature of crime and crime investigations
- Hate Crimes in Niagara
- Youth Crime
- Criminal Code violations and incidents

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

- Calls to Police for Domestic Violence
- Child Abuse
- Coalition to End Violence Against Women
- Domestic Violence Report Card

Emergency Services

- Calls to Police Ambulance and Fire
- Police officers per 100,000 population in Niagara
- EMS Response Times

Feeling Safe and Secure in Niagara

- Elder Financial Abuse
- Information and safety programs in schools and the community
- Homelessness
- Mental Health and Addictions

Motor Vehicle Accidents and Fatalities

- Motor vehicle accidents
- Impaired Driving
- Distracted Driving

crime
rates
IN NIAGARA



Source: 2013 Municipal Performance Measurement Program (MPMP) Results for the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

Suggested Action Steps

Provide focused specialized training for first-line workers in areas such as mental health, domestic violence, and financial abuse of the elderly.

Strengthen our understanding of how crimes, crime rates, and incidence of child abuse and domestic violence in Niagara relate to poverty and its root causes, homelessness, and overall economic conditions.

Leverage the work of the community in implementing the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter to gather best practice resources to inform Police interactions with people struggling with mental health problems, in the Niagara context.

Continue to gather information about emerging issues, including elder abuse, youth justice and youth coming in contact with the legal system.

Police Services	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Violent crime rate per 1,000 persons	7.27	8.12	8.83	9.80	9.37
Property crime rate per 1,000 persons	28.12	32.22	33.04	36.89	38.56
Total crime rate per 1,000 persons (Criminal Code offenses excluding traffic)	39.80	44.74	49.05	54.42	52.71
Youth crime rate per 1,000 youths	11.80	15.21	19.14	51.28	55.22



Economic Development, Poverty and Prosperity in Niagara

Achieving Socio-Economic stability is an essential ingredient in quality of life for Niagara. Our economy is in a period of shifting priorities, and is comprised of many diverse parts. We are building on a strong base of small to medium-size enterprises with manufacturing, agri-food, and tourism roots. We now have solid evidence that having thousands of people living in poverty in Niagara is costing the region's overall economy \$1.38 Billion annually in both direct and indirect costs. Gathering this proof has helped us to begin mapping a plan to address root causes. Leaders in both the for-profit and for-social-profit areas of

Niagara's socio-economic continuum are recognizing that setting aside individual agendas and working toward a common goal of community vibrancy is the contemporary way to build a prosperous Niagara.



Rating

3a a little progress is being made

*Things
we are
doing
well!*

Niagara Region Economic Development released a 2013 Economic Growth Strategy targeting manufacturing, agribusiness, tourism, transportation and logistics. The strategy projects that in the short term, 80% of economic growth in Niagara will come from existing businesses. Small and medium-sized businesses, many of them multi-generational, form the base of Niagara's economy.

Innovate Niagara, the Generator at one, BioLinc at Brock University, the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and the Advanced Manufacturing research and development facility at Niagara College are examples of significant investment by governments in boosting economic development for Niagara.

Beginning in 2008, the Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) provides an annual investment by Niagara Region of \$1.5 million to support poverty reduction and prevention activities. NPI uses a research-based approach to address root causes of poverty, allocating resources where they will have the greatest effect.

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network includes over 30 agencies working together to: Dispel myths about living in poverty; Improve collaboration and actions in poverty reduction; and Engage and include all individuals in the community.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

2013 Ipsos Reid research showed that the majority of manufacturers in Niagara anticipate an increase in business and job creation in the next three years. A 2014 KPMG Competitive Alternatives report ranked the Niagara region ninth among 107 cities from 10 countries, for cost effectiveness to locate a business here.

2

A 2013 Economic Impact Assessment for Niagara Region's Culture Plan highlights the culture sector as 'a productive asset on which Niagara could further capitalize to expand and sustain our transitioning economy', citing its contribution to Niagara's economy as: 13,088 jobs (FTEs); \$396.3 million in labour income; and \$595.2 million in Gross Regional Product.

3

In 2013, the '1 Less Trip' initiative highlighted the value of residents shopping in Niagara instead of across the Canada-US border, citing that for every \$100 spent at a locally-owned business, \$70 goes back into the community and our tax base.

4

Diverse partners are building the Data and Knowledge Niagara framework to expand our collective capacity for leveraging data resources.

5

Evidence gathered by the Niagara-wide community in the 2012 policy brief "Are the Consequences of Poverty Holding Niagara Back?" is the basis for a framework being developed to systematically and proactively address root causes of poverty in Niagara through a preventive, upstream investment approach.



Suggested Action Steps

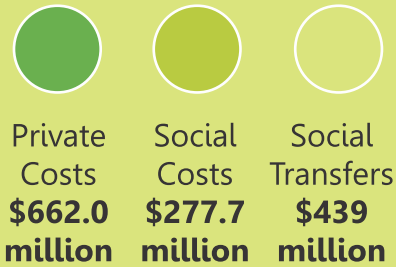
Continue to strengthen sharing of knowledge about best business practice, along with focused supports for Niagara's core of small to medium-size enterprises.

Deepen our understanding of shared value between business, economic development and for-social-profit players in Niagara, to inform a collective approach to socio-economic planning.

Pay attention to the root causes of underemployment in Niagara, and its impact on our people and economy.

Advance the Data and Knowledge Niagara framework, to expand Niagara's capacity to leverage data resources for predictive intelligence.

Support work being done to advance a systems approach to investing in the people of Niagara, to proactively address root causes of poverty through a preventive, upstream investment approach.



Indicators

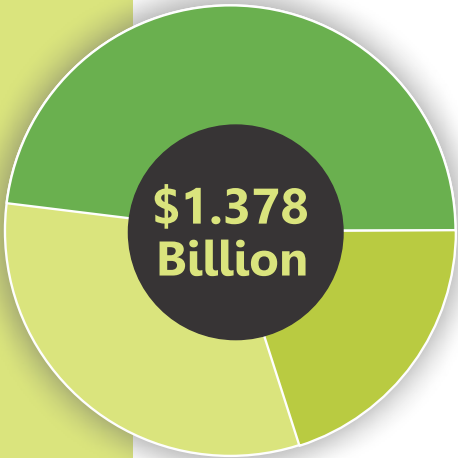
Economic Development in Niagara

- Economic Performance and Growth
- Number of Businesses In Niagara
- Organizations Contributing to Economic Development in Niagara
- Co-operatives in Niagara

Income and Earnings in Niagara

- Low Income Measure in Niagara
- Income Levels in Niagara
- Market Basket Measure (MBM)
- Food Security, Food Bank Use, Hunger Count in Niagara
- Social Assistance in Niagara
- Economic Deprivation Index
- The Number of personal and business bankruptcies in Niagara
- Niagara poverty reduction and prosperity initiatives
- The cost of the consequences of poverty to Niagara's economy
- Impact of Niagara Prosperity Initiative

Summary of Cost of Consequences of Poverty in Niagara



- Lost Productivity (Private) \$662 million
- Health Care \$94 million
- Crime \$51 million
- Lost Productivity (Social) \$132.7 million
- Employment Insurance \$322 million
- Ontario Works \$115 million
- Housing, Hostels and Homelessness \$2 million

Source: Niagara Community Observatory Policy Brief, "Are the Consequences of Poverty Holding Niagara Back?", 2012



(The) Environment in Niagara

Niagara is known globally for its natural assets. People who live and visit here enjoy our environment and have a responsibility to protect it. The Niagara Escarpment; Great Lakes Erie and Ontario; the Niagara River and Niagara Falls; and the unique microclimate in the northern part of the region that enables our farmers to grow grapes and tender fruits are all irreplaceable. This Sector looks at: air, land, water, waste and climate change in the Niagara context. Balancing the way we utilize these assets, and engaging people in taking steps to strengthen our environment is vital to our future.

Rating

1 in dire
need of
corrective
action



Things we are doing well!

The, "Adapting to climate change: Challenges for Niagara" report was released in 2012 by the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock University. It describes how climate is changing in the region; impacts that can be expected in the near future; protective activities underway; gaps to be addressed in order to develop and implement adaptation strategies; and relevant adaptation case studies in other parts of Ontario.

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) is one of 36 similar organizations under the umbrella of Conservation Ontario. NPCA manages 7200 acres on 37 properties, for their natural heritage and recreational value. A regular Watershed Report Card measures surface and groundwater quality and forest conditions, to provide residents with information to protect, enhance and improve surrounding resources.

The Carbon Project led by the Niagara Sustainability Initiative is engaging businesses in proactively managing and reducing their organization's carbon emissions. Primary benefits cited by participants include: enhanced brand; employee attraction/retention; identification of energy costs; and mitigation of risks.

The Niagara Region Agricultural Policy and Action Committee has developed a value-added agriculture policy, and is a leader in the Golden Horseshoe (GH) Food and Farming Alliance. This Alliance demonstrates the socio-economic value of the \$35 billion agri-food cluster based within the GH. The densely-populated GH area, stretching from Niagara to Hamilton, the GTA and the Holland Marsh includes over 1 million acres of farmland.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

Notable extreme weather events associated with global warming and climate change are occurring in Niagara, resulting in effects such as flooding, drought conditions, and cold weather damage to grape and tender fruit crops.

2

The growing number of community gardens in Niagara and related opportunities for people to become more food secure by gaining food literacy skills are being promoted by diverse groups such as Greening Niagara and the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network.

3

The Crowdsourcing Sustainability website was launched in 2013 by the Niagara Sustainability Initiative, to map and promote sustainability actions throughout Niagara.

4

Niagara Region is one of 223 Canadian municipalities belonging to the Partners for Climate Protection Program of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. In fulfillment of program milestones, a Niagara Region Corporate Climate Change Action Plan was completed in early 2013, with a long-term carbon emissions reduction goal of 10-15% by 2020. A companion Community Climate Change Action Plan was also launched, with a number of goals to be achieved by 2017. Goals include reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building the community's resiliency to mitigate, adapt to and prepare for climate change.

Indicators

Air

- Quality

Climate Change

- Climate Change Planning
- Climate Change Community Action

Land

- Agriculture
- Greenbelt Plan
- Green Space
- Land Use Planning

Waste

- Costs of garbage disposal
- Quantity of residential waste

Water

- Quality
- Quantity

Water Quality Report

see full report at: <http://www.npca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014-Water-Quality-Report-web.pdf>

In 2013 the NPCA monitored surface water quality at

73 and **41**
stations **watersheds**

For surface water, the biological and chemical monitoring results indicate that most of Niagara's watersheds have poor or impaired water quality. Total phosphorus, E. coli, suspended solids, and chlorides from non-point sources (agricultural/livestock runoff, faulty septic systems) and point sources (combined sewer overflow, urban stormwater) continue to be the major causes of impairment in the NPCA watershed. Water quality ratings improved in several watersheds when 2002-2008 water quality data was compared to 2009-2013 data. Twelve Mile Creek continues to have the best water quality rating in the NPCA watershed.

Suggested Action Steps

Engage diverse players in Niagara to collaboratively explore practical action steps related to the Environment Sector of this report.

Leverage knowledge we have gathered about effects of climate change in the Niagara context, to drive community action toward a more resilient Niagara.

Increase interconnectivity between knowledge transfer systems such as the Niagara Knowledge Exchange and the Crowdsourcing Sustainability tool.

Enhance communication pathways to identify and tell stories of environmental action in Niagara, such as the Water Keepers and urban forest initiatives. This will help to raise awareness among citizens about practical ways they can take action, such as conserving water and energy, protecting water quality and contributing to biodiversity.

Identify, describe and strengthen intersects between the Environment Sector and other Sectors, to increase our quality of life. For example, increased understanding of the relationship between Environment and Health and Wellness could inform the Implementation Phase of the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter and the Healthy Kids Challenge initiative.



Health and Wellness in Niagara

Health can be defined as the physical, social, psychological and spiritual well-being of individuals. Overall health of the population is determined by people's income, education, employment and housing, as well as a combination of preventive and rehabilitative approaches and services. Making a positive impact on the health of individuals is the common goal among partners in the continuum of wellness promotion, illness prevention and health care.

Rating

3b a lot of
progress
is being
made

Things we are doing well!

The Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter is the collective expression of 65 organizations across Niagara. It aims to improve planning through an inclusive, holistic, preventive, individual and family-centred approach across the lifespan, so that each community member can achieve their optimal level of wellbeing.

The Prescription Drug Drop-Off Day, a collaborative program of Niagara Region Public Health and the Niagara Regional Police Service, is now a national initiative.

The Brock-Niagara Centre for Health and Well-being focuses on cardiac rehabilitation, physical activity with seniors and spinal cord rehabilitation through physical activity.

The South Niagara Health and Wellness Centre at Niagara College is a teaching facility and one-stop clinic in collaboration with Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre, Niagara Region, March of Dimes Canada, Niagara Health System and the HNHB Community Care Access Centre. Services support adults at risk for hospitalization by providing rehabilitation, wellness programs and community resource connections.

The Caring for my COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) initiative is supported through the HNHB LHIN, to: provide self-management training for individuals with COPD to improve their ability to remain healthy at home and in the community; and strengthen coordination of care between hospitals, primary care providers and respiratory specialists.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1 Preventing and combating obesity by supporting children and youth to be more active and healthy is the focus of the 3-year Healthy Kids Community Challenge. In 2014, Niagara was selected by the province to participate in this initiative.

2 The Niagara Health System now offers cardiac and cancer care in Niagara. The Niagara South hospital site is in the planning stages, with a site determined and capital planning underway.

3 A number of organizations, including Community Health Centres, are exploring how they may help to positively impact the health of seasonal immigrant workers in Niagara.

4 C'est Mon Choix!, a program delivered by the Centre de Sante Communautaire in Welland, increases knowledge in school-aged children and teens about drug use, to help reduce risky behaviors associated with abuse of illicit and prescription drugs.

5 The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care has initiated the Health Links program to create effective health services for individuals defined as high users of the health system. The goal is to impact these people's care and improve quality of life through system level collaboration across health care services.

6 'Getting There' is an initiative of over 30 Niagara agencies working together to explore a model for centrally-dispatched access to health and human services for Niagara's most vulnerable people.

Suggested Action Steps

Support implementation of the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter.

Utilize the Niagara Knowledge Exchange tool to engage partners in upstream health planning, support shared learning about best practice, and gather relevant, reliable Niagara-focused evidence, information and knowledge.

Leverage the Health Quality Ontario focus on the importance of health system integration, to enhance quality of services across the continuum.

Focus on addressing root causes of poverty and health-related issues of marginalized and vulnerable populations, by supporting a systems approach to investing in the people of Niagara.



Indicators

Chronic Disease and Injury

- Perceived ratings of mental well-being and stress
- Obesity rates in Niagara and adolescent cardiovascular risk factors in Niagara
- Prevalence rates of chronic conditions in Niagara
- Injury rates
- Cancer rates in Niagara

Health services in Niagara

- Number of specific health facilities in Niagara
- Hospital Standardized Mortality Ratio and Hospital Readmissions
- Number of physicians and specialists
- Wait times for emergency room visits, diagnostic imaging and surgeries in Niagara
- Emergency response times in Niagara

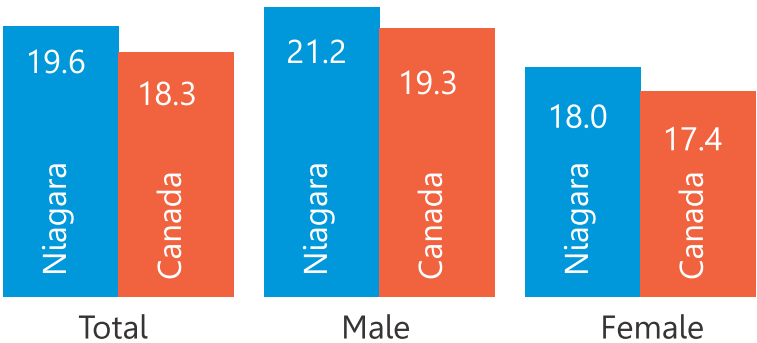
Lifestyle Indicators in Niagara

- Substance Use rates
- Physical activity rates
- Nutrition rates
- Dental health rates

Population Level Outcomes

- Life expectancy in Niagara
- Low birth weight and mortality of babies in Niagara
- Teen pregnancies

Obese (%) in Canada and Niagara - 18years and older



Source: Statistics Canada Health Profile December 2013



Housing and Shelter in Niagara

People having a safe, acceptable, affordable place to live is fundamental to the well-being of individuals, families and our community. Being part of a secure home contributes to people's wellness and allows them to pursue what's important to their future, whether they are growing, learning, belonging to a family, connecting to employment, participating in the community, or simply 'being'.

Rating

2 of concern,
needs
attention



Things we are doing well!

In 2013, Niagara Region approved a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP), focusing on eliminating homelessness; maintaining existing housing stock; increasing the supply of affordable housing; and improving coordination and decision-making among funders, agencies and housing providers.

In 2012, the Raft's Youth Reconnect (YR) program was cited nationally as an innovative approach to solving youth homeless in rural areas. YR's Niagara-wide response helps youth remain connected to social supports and stay in school, thus reducing their vulnerability and preventing a first episode of homelessness that could lead to a life of social exclusion.

People working with low-income clients experiencing housing issues are sharing information to strengthen the impact of their work. The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network Housing Working Table and a collaborative of Community Health Centres and Niagara Region Community Services are examples.

The Wellness Supportive Living Program provides support services to seniors in four Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) communities, helping them to age at home longer and more successfully. This is a partnership between NRH, March of Dimes, Niagara Region Community Services and Community Support Services Niagara.

Options exist for some low income households to achieve home ownership. Examples include Habitat for Humanity Niagara volunteers building 42 affordable homes in the past 21 years, and the Niagara Regional Housing Welcome Home Niagara 5% forgivable loan program which has assisted 249 low to mid-income households to purchase their own homes.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

Youth homelessness in Niagara is on the decline; a contributing factor is the provincial government's realization that supporting youth to re-link with their family helps to reduce homelessness now and for the future.

2

Niagara is increasingly able to describe and understand intertwined factors influencing the root causes of poverty. Collaborative work of community partners, such as the building of the HHAP, the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter and the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, is illuminating clear action steps to address poverty, with 'suitable housing for all' being pivotal

3

There is renewed focus on planning for action to address the lack of new affordable housing, and make updates to existing affordable housing in Niagara.

4

The NRH Rent Supplement Program has expanded to include the Niagara version of "Housing First", to move people more quickly from homelessness to their own home. A collaboration of NRH, Niagara Region Community Services, community agencies and private landlords, 122 Housing First units are funded through to March 2017.

5

NRH opened its first new owned community in more than 30 years on Fitch Street in Welland. With 67 units, the design of this senior community emphasizes accessibility, support services and environmental sustainability.

Indicators

Housing Availability

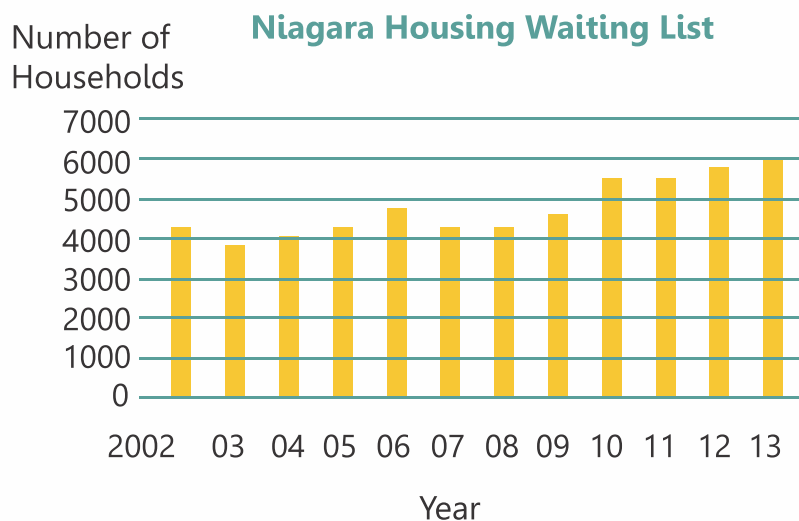
- Housing Demand Trends
- New Housing Starts
- Vacancy Rates

Housing Affordability

- Spending 30% of Income on Housing and Shelter
- Average Market Rent
- Average Monthly Rent Trends
- Purchase Price of a Home in Niagara
- Market Absorption Rate
- New Housing Price Index

Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention

- Wait Times and Availability of Affordable and Subsidized Housing in Niagara
- Core Housing Needs
- Homelessness and Use of Shelters
- Housing Initiatives



Source: Niagara Regional Housing 2013

Suggested Action Steps

Support implementation of the Niagara Region HHAP through inter-agency collaboration and development of a common monitoring report to measure a key cross section of housing-related indicators over time.

Pay attention to key contributing factors affecting homelessness in Niagara, as outlined in the Niagara Region HHAP, including supported and supportive housing for people requiring assistance to live independently.

Explore potential for implementing the federal concept of 'Housing First' in Niagara by surveying culture orientation/philosophy of local organizations, analyzing availability of suitable housing, and reviewing models such as the Mental Health Commission of Canada At Home/Chez Soi research.

Utilize our common understanding of what affordable housing means as a benchmark to monitor progress of the number of affordable housing new starts in Niagara.

Work with local municipalities to track average cost of utilities in Niagara, an underlying measure of rent costs, and an indicator of cost of living.



Learning and Education in Niagara

An optimal environment for learning for all Niagara residents is essential to the success of our community. Opportunities, programs and services designed for people to be lifelong learners contribute to Niagara's continued growth and prosperity.

Rating

3b a lot of progress is being made



Things we are doing well!

Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres are provincially-funded programs, designed to help stimulate children's brain development and give them a head start in building learning and literacy skills. These programs are available in priority neighbourhoods in Niagara.

Full day kindergarten is available in all schools in Ontario. A full day of learning early in life can help improve a child's reading, writing and math skills and provide a strong foundation for future learning.

Secondary school graduation rates in Niagara continue to rise. Schools are identifying, meeting and supporting the needs of learners, including putting alternative learning opportunities in place to support at-risk youth in completing their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Co-op and experiential learning opportunities as well as an array of specialist high skills major programs are in place.

We are gaining broader insight into ways poverty affects learning and education attainment in Niagara for learners of all ages. The extent to which students have access to personal resources affects their ability to gain essential workplace skills such as technological literacy, interpersonal communications, and self-directed learning.

Learning and education options available to adults are closely tied to the needs of the labour market, and priorities for facilitating individuals' ease of transition from learning to employment.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

Rising numbers of international students are paying to attend schools in Niagara. School boards are entering into global partnerships for exchanging learning. Niagara College and Brock University are welcoming thousands of regular course and ESL (English as a Second Language) students from around the world.

2

The effects of poverty on children in Niagara are increasingly evident, with schools throughout the region feeding and clothing students every day. A total of 13,000 Niagara children and youth are served food each day through Niagara Nutrition Partners' 208 coordinated nutrition programs in elementary and secondary schools and community-based programs.

3

Student mental wellness, from early years to post-secondary is a planning priority for educators in Niagara. This is a specific focus of the Implementation Phase of the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter.

4

With the rising overall emphasis on learning about technology, schools, public libraries and charities such as Renewed Computer Technology offer important resources for low-income individuals and families to help meet education and career goals.

5

E-learning and blended learning courses offer flexible ways to meet students' learning needs, capture their interest, and support them in directing where they want to go with their education.

6

Embracing diversity among Niagara students is an area of increasing emphasis.

7

There is an increase in grassroots learning opportunities for adults, which are responsive to their needs, including short term courses, on-line learning options, alternative hours and hands on learning.

Suggested Action Steps

While progress is being made, Niagara would be strengthened by increased levels of completion of post-secondary education.

Continue to support targeted initiatives to strengthen learning opportunities in identified neighbourhoods in Niagara.

Leverage Niagara-wide partners' work in the implementation phase of the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter, to help strengthen the landscape for student mental wellness in Niagara.

Strengthen cross-Sectoral communication and knowledge-sharing pathways, to help focus our planning together for a stronger work and employment landscape in Niagara.

Continue to identify resources to support children and families who do not have access to the internet and related technology in the home.

Invest effort into increasing awareness of all learning and educational options for adults in Niagara, especially those that are not traditional, institutional options.

Indicators

Composite Learning Index and EQAO Scores

Early Years Learning

Levels of education attainment

Literacy levels, and literacy training

School enrolment trends and presence of International Students

Technology use and its influence on education and learning

Student Mental Wellness

Labour Force Educational Attainment in Ontario CMA's, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada

Census Metropolitan Area	Less than Grade 12	Completion of Grade 12	Completion of post-secondary training
Kingston	8.4	27.3	64.3
Peterborough	10.5	28.3	61.2
Oshawa	9.8	29.9	60.2
Toronto	8.8	23.7	67.5
Hamilton	10.4	26.9	62.7
St. Catharines - Niagara	11.5	31.8	56.6
Kitchener- Waterloo- Cambridge	12.3	28.5	59.2
Brantford	14.6	30.2	55.2
Guelph	10.9	27.4	61.7
London	10.0	28.3	61.7
Windsor	8.1	31.1	60.8
Barrie	12.0	30.9	57.1
Greater Sudbury	11.0	25.0	64.0
Thunder Bay	11.9	26.2	61.9

Source: Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Benchmarking Education Attainment in the Workforce, April 2014



People Getting Started in Niagara

Each new child, graduate, and immigrant in Niagara is an important part of our community. Our ability to help with support and resources for these individuals to get started on a stable course will have a significant impact on the future vitality of our region.

The presence of child care and supports for new parents; the availability of jobs for new graduates; and programming to welcome and help new immigrants and international students to settle in Canada are all ways our community supports these people who are 'getting started'.

Rating

3a a little progress is being made



Things we are doing well!

Ontario Early Years Centres, Family Resource Centres, Family Resource Programs and Parent and Family Literacy Centres provide free programs and services where families can drop in for children to play and learn with their parents / caregivers; to interact with other children; and experience activities to stimulate children's brain development.

Niagara Region Children's Services manages Niagara's child care system for children from birth to 12 years of age, and is responsible for child care supports and services for 160 licensed child care centres. Niagara currently has no waitlist for subsidized child care.

www.parentdirectniagara.ca is an online directory for information and links to programs, services, and resources for children and families in Niagara. It is operated by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre with support from the Niagara Children's Planning Council (NCPC).

The Ontario Youth Employment Fund is being leveraged to assist Niagara youth 15 to 29 years of age who are unemployed and not participating in full time education or training to access assisted services, including supported job search, job matching and placement, and job retention services.

The InCommunities database lists 18 service providers in Niagara working in Settlement Services, including newcomers' centres; immigrant services and citizenship supports; multi-cultural organizations; community legal supports; and healthcare services.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

The 2014 Parent Knowledge Study conducted by the NCPC gauged what Niagara parents of children aged 0-6 years know about child growth and development. Parents seemed to know a lot about very young children (between 0 to 6 months) but as their child aged their knowledge of their child's growth and development diminished.

2

Since 2012, with the provincial shift to a more integrated service system for families and children, the Best Start Child and Family Centre Service System SubCommittee of the NCPC has developed two pilot family centres. These are accessible community-based primary points of service in identified communities.

3

Adolescent's Family Support Services of Niagara and Niagara Region Public Health offer a unique peer-led drop-in program for new fathers to discuss challenges they are facing as a parent while learning ways to support their child's growth and development.

4

In 2013, priorities were established by Niagara community partners, to engage young people in building a strong future by living, working, giving, and staying in Niagara: Provide information for youth; Engage youth on their own terms; and Leverage the role of mentorships. Leadership Niagara, Next Niagara, and Gennext are some relevant initiatives.

5

Increasing numbers of international students go to school in our community; almost 5,000 of them attend college and university here.

6

In 2013, 28 immigrant and francophone women participated in the first year of the eight-week Women's Entrepreneurship Development program offered through the Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre; participants prepared to start their own business.

Indicators

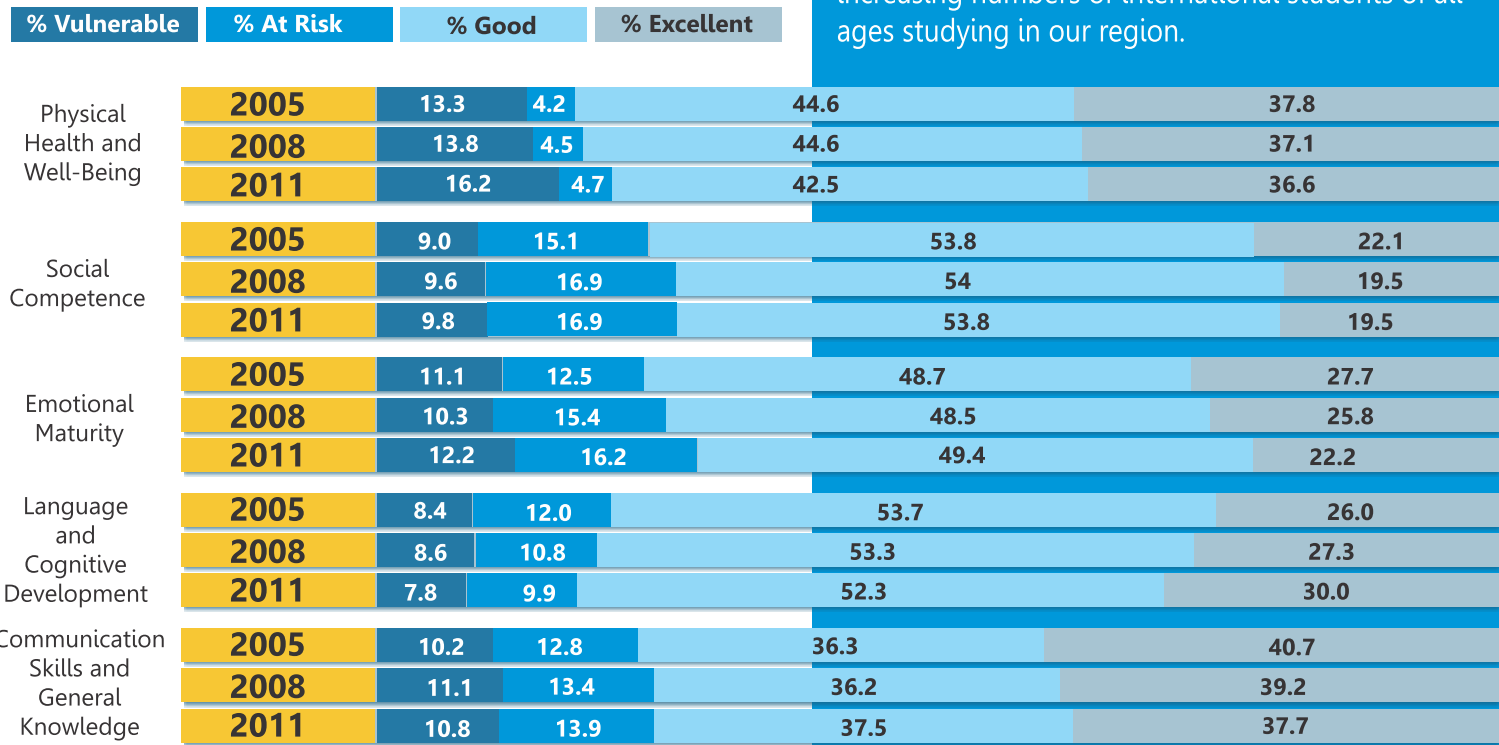
Starting out as a child in Niagara

Starting out as a youth or new graduate in Niagara

Starting out as an immigrant, refugee or international student in Niagara

Niagara Senior Kindergarten Student Development in 5 Key Domains - 2005, 2008, 2011

Source: Niagara Region Public Health



Suggested Action Steps

Advance the focus on parental engagement in the Niagara context, so that parents and families feel respected, connected and supported in a community that honours their diversity.

Continue to advocate for adequate child care funding to ensure the Niagara-wide community is not impacted by a necessity for waitlists for subsidized child care.

Increase efforts to attract immigrants to settle in Niagara, to enrich the cultural mix in our communities, help offset Niagara's low population growth rates and strengthen Niagara's inherent links with international markets. Gain a better understanding of Secondary Immigration trends of newcomers with jobs based in Toronto, who find GTA cost of living prohibitive and may choose to live in Niagara and commute.

Develop a broadened understanding of the effects on, and opportunities for Niagara arising from the increasing numbers of international students of all ages studying in our region.



Recreation and Sports in Niagara

Participation in formal and informal sports and recreation activities promotes health and well-being for people of all ages. The presence of recreation and sports in Niagara enriches our quality of life and helps to boost our economy by attracting local, provincial, national and international visitors to participate and spectate. Taking part in recreation and sport activities helps people to connect with their community and their environment - to build friendships, leadership and teamwork skills, enjoy being outdoors, and to gain a sense of purpose, belonging and community spirit.

Rating

3a a little progress is being made



Things we are doing well!

Niagara is hosting significant international sporting events. The St. Catharines rowing and Welland flatwater sport venues are official sites for the July, 2015 Pan Am Games and the Para Pan Am Games rowing and canoe/kayak sprint events. In August 2015, the World Dragonboat Racing Championships will be held at the Welland International Flatwater Centre, with 4,000 participants from more than 30 countries. The weeklong January 2016 world championships for International Ice Hockey Federation under-18 girls will be held in the new Meridian Centre arena in St. Catharines; it is projected to create a \$4.2 million economic spinoff.

Several programs offer financial assistance to families for children to participate in sports and recreational activities; the Prokids Program offered through the YMCA, the Jump Start Program sponsored by Canadian Tire, Kid Sport Niagara Region and the Investing in St. Catharines Youth Fund are examples.

Cycling for pleasure and fitness is growing in popularity among local citizens and tourists. Niagara Region's bike map shows 282.2 km of official trails in Niagara, mostly off the road, away from street traffic and connecting all the municipalities together. Research done for Niagara Parks shows that 84,000 cycle tourists visited the Niagara region in 2010; that same year cycle tourism contributed \$104 million to the Ontario economy.

The Niagara Sport Commission has been involved in over 40 sporting events over the last 4 years, with an economic impact of over \$75 million in Niagara. Total economic impact of events at the Welland International Flatwater Centre from 2011 to 2014 is over \$80 million, with an annual average of 12,000 international visitors.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

In 2014, Niagara was selected by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care as one of 45 communities to participate in The Healthy Kids Community Challenge. This 3-year initiative will focus on delivering local programs and activities that support children and youth to be more active and healthy to help prevent and combat obesity.

2

The focus on Active Transportation in Niagara is growing among diverse players, including those involved in cycling, tourism, transit, economic development, municipal planning, Age-Friendly and health and wellness.

3

Linkages are strengthening between Niagara assets in the areas of recreation, sport tourism, economic development, the arts, culture, and heritage. Examples include the Illuminaqua concert series featuring Old Welland Canal scenery and the Canoe Art Project; and the 2013 Laura Secord 1812 Bicentennial Event and Commemorative Walk from Queenston to St. Catharines.

4

Demand is growing in Niagara for recreation and sports opportunities for older adults and para athletes; planning to meet this demand will interweave Age-Friendly and accessibility planning principles, along with appreciation for Niagara's natural assets.

Suggested Action Steps

Gather comprehensive evidence on the current and potential economic impact of sport tourism for Niagara. This information would support a sport hosting strategy that achieves impact by leveraging strengthened partnerships within Niagara and globally.

Inventory existing sports facilities in Niagara, as a basis for strategic planning to focus on opportunities for attracting: athletes training at the national level; new settlement; and new investment in our region.

Explore research done at Brock University on Bouldering within the Niagara Glen as a model of integrating and providing access to world-class rock climbing within Niagara.

Deepen our understanding of barriers, including accessibility, financial and transportation concerns that limit people's participation in recreation and sports.

Indicators

Facilities and Participation

Economic Impact

Coordinated Planning

Bike Friendly Municipalities are designated by the **Share the Road Cycling Coalition**.

Of Ontario's 444 municipalities, 24 have received this status. Of those 24, Niagara Region has 5 local municipalities that have designations:

Pelham - Silver
Grimsby - Bronze
Thorold - Bronze
Welland - Bronze
St. Catharines - Bronze

Source:
Venture Niagara,
May 2014



282.2km of multi-use trails in Niagara





Transportation and Mobility in Niagara

Niagara's unique urban-rural geography and the availability and accessibility of modes of transportation for people to get around have a direct bearing on the health and wellbeing of our people, community and economy. While the automobile is our most-reported mode of transportation, attention is shifting to the socio-economic value for Niagara of building a seamless region-wide transit system linking efficiently to provincial GO transit.

Rating

3a

a little
progress
is being
made



Things we are doing well!

Diverse groups in Niagara are working to inform planning for seamless regional transit, linked to GO train and bus service with capacity to connect Niagara to the GTA and New York State.

Significant steps were taken in the fall of 2014 to advance toward a seamless, sustained regional transit system supported by regional government, local municipalities, post-secondary students, and poverty reduction and economic development networks in Niagara.

Awareness is building about the value of planning for Active Transportation by looking through lenses such as economic development, Age-Friendly Community principles, accessibility, health and wellness, recreation, tourism and the environment.

Niagara's iconic waterways draw domestic and international traffic, for both recreation and business. A total of 8 marinas on the Great Lakes in Niagara draw significant boat traffic during spring and summer. The Welland Canal portion of the St. Lawrence Seaway allows large lakers and ocean vessels carrying bulk cargo to navigate to and from the heart of North America.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

Multi-faceted linkages between transit availability and accessibility in Niagara and economic development, poverty reduction, wellness, employment and education are being described and quantified.

2

We are gaining increased awareness about students' and tourists' role in financially supporting and utilizing public transit in Niagara, along with the economic benefits of making transit available and accessible for them.

3

Growth in our cycling infrastructure and Active Transportation (AT) assets are geared toward creating a viable transportation network that keeps people involved in AT and motorists safe. Niagara's cycling assets are increasingly being promoted to and appreciated by tourists.

4

The "Getting There" initiative is exploring centrally-dispatched access to health and human services for Niagara's most vulnerable people.

5

Action to address environmental sustainability and alternative energy through transportation is apparent. Examples include ride and car sharing programs; the existence of 17 Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations around the region; and promotion of the comparative fuel efficiency and low carbon footprint of marine transportation for shipping bulk cargo.

6

Some efforts are underway to reduce border crossing traffic congestion in Niagara by addressing complex issues around completing secure truck pre-inspections at the Peace Bridge crossing, to reduce overall truck and auto congestion, and improve traffic circulation.

Indicators

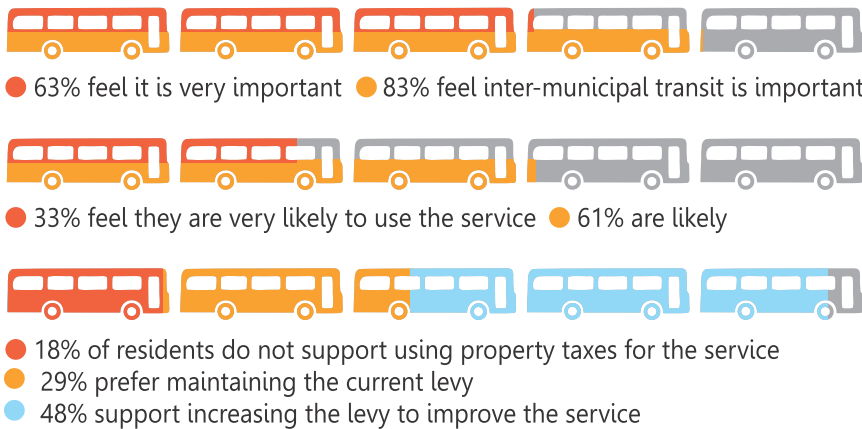
Accident Rates in Niagara Municipalities Affordability and Accessibility of Transportation in Niagara

- Cost of Gasoline
- Impact of Regional Transit on Rider Quality of Life
- Student Investment in and Use of Public Transit in Niagara
- Use of Buses and Public Transportation
- Development of a Model for Centrally-Dispatched Access to Health and Human Services for Niagara's Most Vulnerable People
- Commuting and Distances to Work
- Active Transportation and Cycling in Niagara
- Public Electric Vehicle Charging Stations in Niagara

Transportation Planning in Niagara Traffic Volume and Routes

- Canada-US Border Crossings
- St. Lawrence Seaway in Niagara: the Welland Canal

Survey of Niagara Residents' Level of Support for Niagara-wide Transit



Source: Regional Municipality of Niagara, 2014

Suggested Action Steps

Increase our understanding of how students, tourists and people going to work utilize transit in Niagara, as important context for transit's value to the region.

Advocate for increased prioritization and funding of transit initiatives across the Region by local municipalities in partnership with the Regional Municipality of Niagara, to create a seamless and viable regional transit service. Further encourage the provincial government to continue to increase funding outside the GTA for transit capital and operating enhancements to meet emerging AODA legislation and the needs and expectations of riders across Niagara.

Continue to focus on the economic and quality of life benefits for Niagara of being a "cyclist/biking friendly" community.

Apply a healthy community lens in planning to develop walkable, transit supportive and universally accessible communities for all individuals' enjoyment and participation.

Support business model research being completed by the 'Getting There' working group, to build a practical strategy for centrally-dispatched access to health and human services for Niagara's most vulnerable people.



Work and Employment in Niagara

Jobs provide income, opportunities to belong, contribute and learn, and they help to stabilize households - all important for the wellbeing of people, families, and our community. Human capital utilized in meaningful paid and unpaid work contributes to our region's vibrancy. The jobs topic has many touchpoints, including equity, gender, urbanization, economic growth, and demographics. The presence of quality jobs in our community, and people's ability to make a living wage helps to define our collective living standard.

Rating

2 of concern,
needs
attention



Things we are doing well!

Manufacturing comprises 14% of Niagara's gross regional product. A total of 984 companies, primarily small and medium-sized, employ 21,200 individuals. The flexibility of these smaller companies to adapt to new market opportunities has led to diversification from producing commodities to specialized production.

Tourism employs 22,000 individuals in Niagara, providing entry-level employment and seasonal opportunities for students. This sector employs people with skills for which Niagara's capacity is strengthening, such as culinary arts, digital and interactive media, and, increasingly, knowledge workers.

Niagara's agri-food sector has joined with the Golden Horseshoe (GH) Food and Farming Alliance to create a Food and Farming Action Plan for the ongoing vitality of the GH area's \$35 billion agri-food cluster, and the thousands of jobs based upon the one million acres of farmland included in the area spanning the Niagara Region through to the City of Hamilton, the GTA and the Holland Marsh.

Employment service providers and educators are collaborating to better understand local labour market trends, skills gaps, and diversification in Niagara's labour market. Their work together informs regular labour market update reports issued by the Niagara Workforce Planning Board, part of the Workforce Planning Ontario network.

Supports for entrepreneurs and incubation of start-ups are provided through a network of research, innovation and small business enterprise centres in Niagara.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

- 1
- Employment service providers are discerning perceived skills gaps, and looking at the relationship between unemployment rates in Niagara and a lack of essential skills among workers faced with the transition away from traditional manufacturing jobs. Essential skills include digital literacy, managing one's own learning, engaging with others and interpersonal communications.
- 2
- Employment initiatives targeted to specific groups such as adults 55 years of age and older and young people between 15 and 24 years of age continue to receive emphasis.
- 3
- The effects of precarious, minimum wage employment on the working poor, their families, and our community as a whole are becoming more widely recognized as a labour market accessibility issue requiring transformative, structural changes to prevent a rise in poverty, poor health outcomes, and related social challenges.

- 4
- A seamless Niagara-wide regional transit system and full GO Train service are seen as crucial for optimizing access to work, employment, and economic development opportunities for all.
- 5
- The Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter launched in 2014, points to the opportunity for a focus on workplace mental wellness to help boost productivity in Niagara.



Suggested Action Steps

Create opportunities for training of Niagara workers who are seasonally laid off, to build capacity for off-season employment.

Address root causes of: underemployment of many youth and new graduates in Niagara; and employment rates for people between the ages of 15 and 24 in Niagara being 3.5% lower relative to Ontario and Canada.

Continue to strengthen cross-Sectoral communication and knowledge-sharing pathways, to help focus our planning together for a stronger work and employment landscape in Niagara.

Gather information to better understand the quality of jobs available in Niagara and how that relates to underemployment of our people and the strength of our economy.

Explore models that allow workers low cost/ no cost options to upgrade skills related to emerging markets.

Source:
Labour Market
Update Report
(October 2013),
NWPB

Indicators

Employment Services in Niagara

Jobs in Niagara

- Average income
- Employment and Unemployment Rates
- Employment Sectors in Niagara
- For-Social-Profit and Unpaid Work
- Places where people do their work and commute to work
- Youth Employment and Unemployment Rates

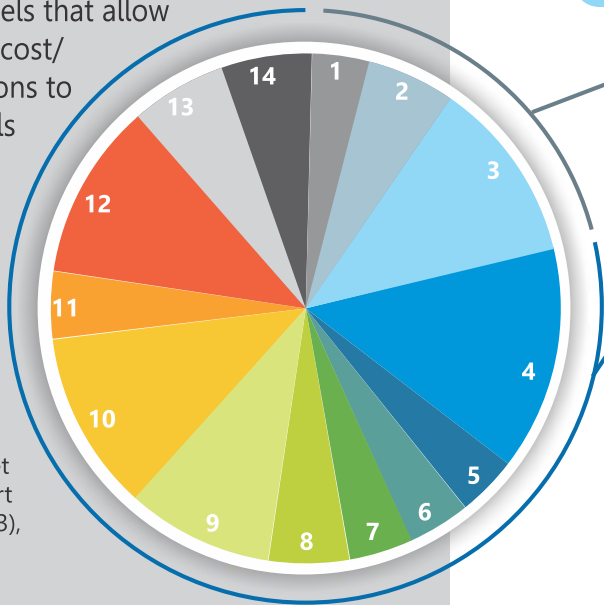
Labour Force in Niagara

- Labour Force Estimates
- Labour Force Participation Rate

Niagara-wide Coordination and Planning

Workplace Injuries

2012/13 Niagara Employment by Sector and Industry (100%)



Goods Producing Sector

1. Agriculture (2.6%)
2. Construction (6.4%)
3. Manufacturing (11.7%)

Services Producing Sector

4. Trade (16.5%)
5. Transportation and Warehousing (3.6%)
6. Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing (4.0%)
7. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (3.9%)
8. Business, Building and Other Support Services (4.8%)
9. Educational Services (8.8%)
10. Health Care and Social Assistance (10.9%)
11. Information, Culture and Recreation (3.9%)
12. Accommodation and Food Services (10.9%)
13. Other Services (5.6%)
14. Public Administration (5.3%)



The work of Niagara Connects, including production of the Living in Niagara 2014 report is supported by the following Niagara Connects Subscribers. They invest in an annual Subscription with the return on investment (ROI) being customized Knowledge Broker support, and opportunities to engage, share and contribute to Niagara Connects network activity. These community partners are leaders in building a Niagara culture of sharing data, information and knowledge that supports evidence-informed planning for a stronger future for the people of Niagara.

Brock University
Canadian Mental Health Association Niagara Branch
Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara
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Credit Counselling of Regional Niagara
District School Board of Niagara
FACS Niagara
Niagara Age-Friendly Community Network
Niagara Catholic District School Board
Niagara College
Niagara Community Foundation

Niagara Falls Community Health Centre
Niagara Health System
Niagara Region
Niagara Regional Police Service
Niagara Suicide Prevention Coalition
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Pathstone Mental Health
Quest Community Health Centre
United Way of Niagara Falls and Greater Fort Erie
United Way of St. Catharines & District
YMCA of Niagara



Find the full version of this report, including the data, resources and community expert opinion that informs Indicators in the 12 Living in Niagara Sectors at

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