



THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AGENDA

COTW 1-2024

Thursday, March 7, 2024

6:30 p.m.

Council Chamber - In Person and Electronic Meeting

Niagara Region Headquarters, Campbell West

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold, ON

To view live stream meeting proceedings, please visit: niagararegion.ca/government/council

	Pages
1. <u>CALL TO ORDER</u>	
2. <u>LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</u>	
3. <u>DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTEREST</u>	
4. <u>PRESENTATIONS</u>	
4.1 <u>Niagara Health - Our Future</u> Lynn Guerriero, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Angela Zangari, Executive Vice-President, Finance, Redevelopment & Facilities, Chief Financial Officer, Niagara Health	3 - 27
4.2 <u>Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy</u> Lori Watson, Director, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities, Community Services, and Mary Ellen Simon, Director of Housing, Niagara Regional Native Centre	28 - 42
5. <u>DELEGATIONS</u>	
6. <u>ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION</u> None.	

7. CONSENT ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7.1 COTW-C 1-2024
Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

43 - 81

8. OTHER BUSINESS

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 4, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Regional Headquarters.

10. ADJOURNMENT

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend or participate in meetings or events, please contact the Accessibility Advisor at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 (office), 289-929-8376 (cellphone) or accessibility@niagararegion.ca (email).



Our Future

March 7, 2024



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Our Discussion

1

Context Setting

2

Our Future Vision

3

Community Engagement

4

How You Can Help



Putting People First



Delivering Safe and Quality Care



Transforming How we Work

- **One of Ontario's largest community hospital systems**
- **7,300+** staff, physicians, students and volunteers
- **\$693-million** annual operating budget
- **Busiest Emergency Department** in the Hamilton-Niagara-Haldimand-Brant (HNHB) region
- **Fifth-most beds in operation** of large community hospitals in Ontario
- **Highest number of day surgeries** and inpatient surgical cases in the HNHB region
- Niagara has **the third-highest older adult population** in Canada
- Niagara residents have **higher rates of chronic conditions** than the provincial average



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Transforming How we Work

Patient Care By the Numbers 2022/2023

Inpatient



Surgical Cases



Care Provided



Visits



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Transforming How we Work



Primary Care (Family Doctor, Nurse Practitioner, Walk in Clinic)

- First point of non-emergent care

Home and Community Care

- Support for those who require care in their home, at school or in the community

Long Term Care

- 24/7 nursing care and supervision, primary medical care, and help with daily activities

Community Health Centres

- Primary care services and health promotion programs

Niagara Region Public Health

- Health promotion and disease prevention programs

Niagara Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- 24/7 pre-hospital care and transportation for individuals experiencing emergency injury or illness

Hospital (Niagara Health)

- Emergent, specialized, critical and surgical care (acute care services)



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Transforming How we Work

Community pressures in Niagara impacting hospital operations:

1. Shortage of primary care providers

- *Niagara is short 81 family physicians resulting in 140,000+ unattached patients*

2. More than 100 (Alternate Level of Care) patients due to:

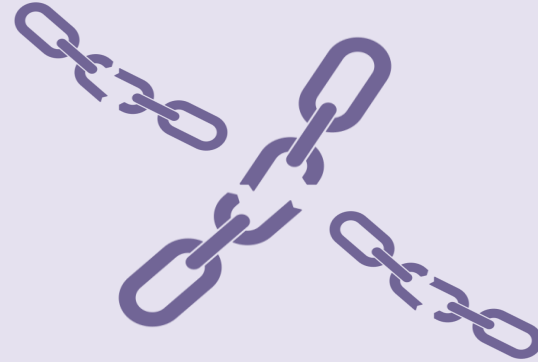
- **Lack of Long-Term Care capacity** within the region to transfer patients out of hospital.
Niagara is short 400 long-term care beds
- **Lack of Home and Community Care capacity**

3. Increase in patients seeking mental health care

- *In the past decade, NH has seen a 33% increase in patients seeking mental health care in our emergency departments with mental health care accounting for 9% of all emergency department visits*



Team Shortages



Disconnected Care



Outdated Infrastructure



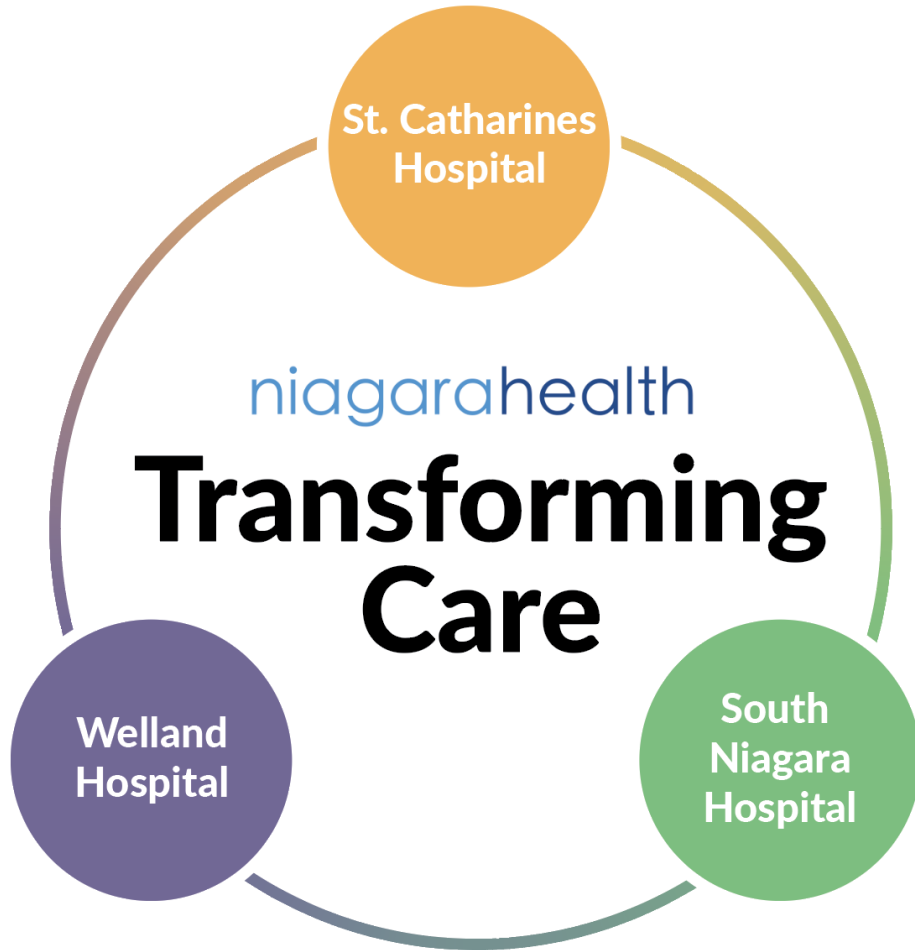
Limited Physical Capacity

- Over 400 staff vacancies (*as of January 2024*)
- Challenges in recruiting RNs, RPNs, PSWs, Medical Imaging Technologist
- Physician shortages including (Emergency Department, Anesthesiologist, GIMs)

- Paper records and outdated electronic systems
- Lack of specialty care across sites
- Limited opportunity to grow research and academic partnerships
- Confusion on where to go for care in Niagara

- Welland Site opened in 1960
- Niagara Falls Site opened in 1958
- Port Colborne Site opened in 1952
- Fort Erie Site opened in 1931

- South Niagara Hospital will create:
- 74% more capacity for MRI tests
 - Accommodate 7,400 more senior wellness visits
 - Add 156 more beds for the region
 - 12 additional hemodialysis stations



Transforming our hospitals and how we deliver care means patients will receive **specialized care** from the best clinical experts, including:

- Women & Babies
- Cancer
- Cardiac
- Kidney
- Mental Health & Addictions
- Complex Care
- Stroke
- Wellness in Aging
- Eye Care



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Transforming How we Work



What this means for
patients and families...

State-of-the-Art Hospitals
Specialized and Seamless Care

Best Clinical Experts

More staff & physicians due to improved
recruitment and retention



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Transforming How we Work



**What this means for
physicians and
staff...**

State-of-the-Art Hospitals
Centres of Excellence
Improved Communication and
Support
Consolidated Resources
Improved Recruitment and Retention
Working toward WELL[®] Certification



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Transforming How we Work



State-of-the-Art Hospitals

Specialized and Seamless Care

Local and Onsite Care

Collaborative and Supportive Environment

The Road Ahead



The Marotta Family Hospital
(St. Catharines Hospital)
Completed in 2013



South Niagara Hospital
Construction started
in 2023



Welland Hospital
Target completion is TBD
**In planning grant phase*



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Transforming How we Work

Transforming Care

South Niagara Hospital

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- Adding an additional 156 beds to the region.
- We will be better able to retain and recruit staff and physicians as well as keep pace with advancements in care and technology.
- **Regional centres of excellence** in Stroke Care, Wellness in Aging, and Complex Care.
- **Full scope of acute care services** – Emergency Department, Intensive Care Unit, mental health and addiction services, surgery, kidney care, diagnostics and much more.
- Use of building materials that **limit the spread of infection.**
- **100% private accommodation.**
- **Aiming to be first WELL-certified hospital in Canada.**



The Road Ahead: 2028



Niagara Falls Hospital

- Programs and services transitioned to South Niagara Hospital
- Site gifted to the City of Niagara Falls



Fort Erie Site

- Programs and services transitioned to South Niagara and Welland Hospitals
- Transition to primary care
- Future of site to be determined by municipality



Port Colborne Site

- Programs and services transitioned to South Niagara and Welland Hospitals
- Transition to primary care
- Future of site to be determined by municipality

**We understand this plan includes transitioning and reorganizing services.
We are committed to ensuring all residents of Niagara have access to high-quality care.**

Providing more care closer to home

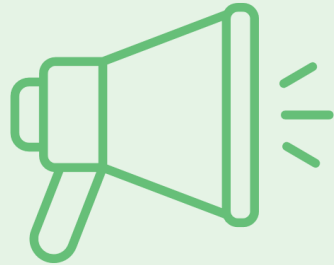
- Emergency care integrated with other acute services – fewer transfers
- New South Niagara Hospital brings emergency care 6 minutes closer to Fort Erie

Engaging with the communities on the future of the sites

- Working with the community to determine how we can best utilize the Fort Erie and Port Colborne sites to close gaps in care

Advocating in partnership for more health care services

- Fort Erie and Port Colborne are underserved when it comes to primary care – primary care that could fill the gap of transitioning urgent care
- Working with OHT and Mayors to expand access to primary care, mental health care, diagnostic imaging and other services
- Recent investment in primary care teams in Niagara through the Niagara Ontario Health Team - Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara



STEP 1

Educate and Inform

September 2023 to
February 2024



STEP 2

Engage

(Feedback and input on planning)

February 2024 to
May 2024



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Transforming How we Work

As we continue on our journey to transform health care in Niagara, we will be starting public community engagement to provide information and updates on our future plans for a three-site hospital system.



Online: March 12 @ 9 a.m. Community Virtual Webinar *(recorded for future viewing)*

Do you have a question you would like answered at an upcoming community engagement event?

Let us know! engage@niagarahealth.on.ca



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Transforming How we Work



In-Person Community Engagement

March 19 @ 6:30 p.m.	Fort Erie Leisureplex Banquet Hall 3 Municipal Centre Dr, Fort Erie	April 15 @6:30 p.m.	Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre 14 Anderson Ln, Niagara-on-the-Lake
March 21 @ 6:30 p.m.	Port Colborne Vale Health and Wellness Centre Golden Puck Room 550 Elizabeth St, Port Colborne	April 16 @6:30 p.m.	Welland International Flatwater Centre Celebration Hall 16 Townline Tunnel Rd, Welland
April 4 @6:30 p.m.	Meridian Community Centre Dr. Gary & Mall Accursi Room A 100 Meridian Way, Fonthill	April 23 @6:30 p.m.	Gale Centre Arena - Memorial Room 5152 Thorold Stone Rd, Niagara Falls
April 9 @6:30 p.m.	St. Catharines Merritton Community Centre 7 Park Ave, St. Catharines	May 27 @6:30 p.m.	Fleming Memorial Arena - Rooms B, C and D 5020 Serena Dr, Beamsville





How You Can Help: Dangers of Misinformation

The spread of inaccurate information is **potentially dangerous** and can result in a **public safety issue**. To characterize Urgent Care Centres as Emergency Departments is **unsafe**. Urgent Care Centres are not equipped to provide emergency care and anyone in those communities experiencing an emergency will have their lives put at greater risk if they go to an Urgent Care Centre rather than an Emergency Department. **Everyone must be accountable to ensure Niagara residents have accurate information when it comes to health care.**

***We implore you to correct misinformation heard in your communities.
You could save lives.***

“Can you imagine going to an emergency room after you had a heart attack and you get there and it’s closed and you have to go on to the next place and the next place?” he said Saturday.

Happy Family Day Fort Erie: Family is one of the reasons it's so important to have Douglas Memorial Urgent Care open 24/7 so we can take care of any emergencies that arise through the middle of the night. Come out to the Leisureplex today between 12 and 1:30 or Crystal Ridge Arena between 2 and 3:30 to to sign the petition or letters to Save our Urgent Care!!



Like



Comment



Share



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Transforming How we Work

We are looking forward to **partnering** with Regional Council.

Being a partner means:

- **Understanding the vision** for the future hospital system
- **Sharing information** with your communities on engagement opportunities
- **Participating** in future engagement events
- **Advocating** to address gaps in primary care, mental health, home care, long-term care, etc.





Learn more about
our future plans



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Community Toolkit



Thank you for your time



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Transforming How we Work

Appendix



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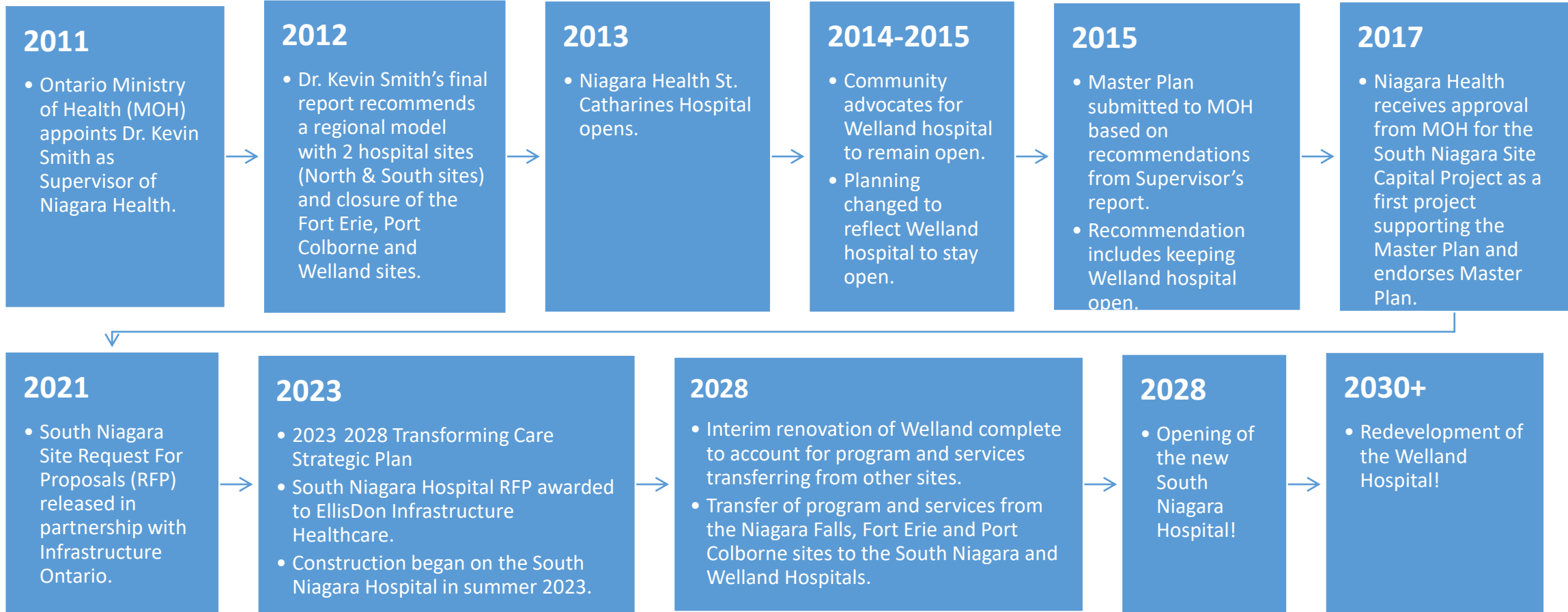
Delivering Safe and Quality Care

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Transforming How we Work

Niagara Health's Master Plan Journey



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Transforming How we Work

Regional Three-Site Hospital System

ST. CATHARINES HOSPITAL SITE



Emergency Medicine
Critical Care
General Surgery
Outpatient Clinics & Surgical Services
Diagnostic Imaging & Laboratory
Children's Health
Kidney Care
Administration

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

Women & Babies
Cancer
Cardiac
Mental Health

1 Million square feet
428 Beds

SOUTH NIAGARA HOSPITAL SITE



Emergency Medicine
Critical Care
General Surgery
Outpatient Clinics & Surgical Services
Mental Health & Addictions
Diagnostic Imaging & Laboratory
Kidney Care
Joint Care
Indigenous Healing
Administration

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

Complex Care
Stroke
Wellness & Aging

1.3 Million square feet
469 Beds

WELLAND HOSPITAL SITE



24/7 Emergency Services
8-10 Observation Beds
Complex Care Beds
Outpatient Clinics & Surgical Services
Mental Health & Addictions
Diagnostic Imaging & Laboratory
Kidney Care
Administrative Hub

Residential Addictions
Treatment Centre
Long Term Care
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
Eye Care

Proposed programs and services for Welland are based off approved plans for the South Niagara Hospital.

Further staff and community engagement is required to submit a proposal to the Ministry of Health for the Welland hospital site.



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Transforming How we Work

Community Services Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

Committee of the Whole
March 7, 2024

Lori Watson

Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities

Mary Ellen Simon

Director of Housing, Niagara Regional Native Centre

Agenda

- Poverty in Niagara
- Indigenous prosperity
- How we created this strategy
- Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

Poverty in Niagara

In Niagara

- 10.4% of people live in poverty (49,030 people)
- 12.5% of children 0-17 live in poverty (10,710 children)

Annual	Poverty Line
Single	\$22,170
Single 1 child	\$31,353
Couple 2 children	\$44,340

National Lived Realities of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children

Three Tiers of Poverty

Tier 1: In the highest tier of poverty, 47% of status First Nations children live in poverty (53% for those living on reserve and 41% for those living off reserve).

Tier 2: In the second tier, 25% of Inuit children live in poverty, 22% of Métis children live in poverty, and 32% of non-status First Nations children live in poverty. The second tier also encompasses racialized and recent immigrant children, whose average poverty rates are 22% and 35%, respectively.¹

Tier 3: The third tier of poverty captures poverty rates among non-racialized, non-recent immigrant, non-Indigenous children, who register the lowest rate of child poverty: 12%, which is one quarter the rate for First Nations' child poverty.

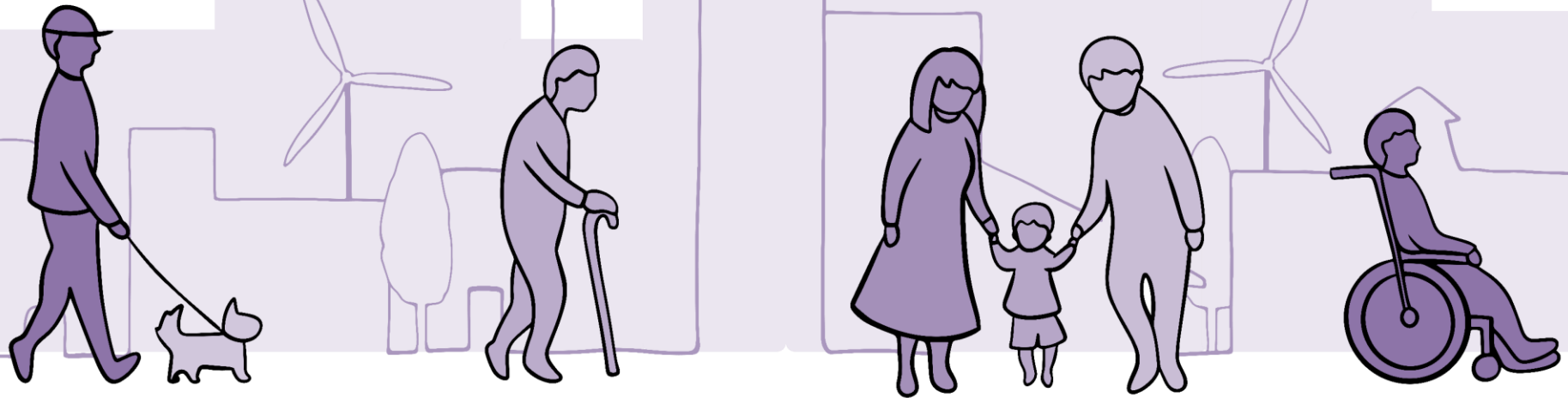
Indigenous engagement

- 200+ responses

"What do you believe is Indigenous Prosperity?"

How we got here

- **Community voice** -- 1000+ residents engaged
- **Best Practices**
- **Validation** -- 100+ content experts



Growing Better Together



Council Strategic Priorities - Equitable Region

Economic Development Strategy	Children's Services Service System Plan	Consolidated Housing Master Plan	Community Safety and Well-Being Plan	Poverty Reduction Strategy
Niagara Prosperity Initiative	Transportation Master Plan	Housing and Homelessness Action Plan	Indigenous Action Plan	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

Regional Investment in Poverty Reduction

- . Transit
- . Housing
- . Economic Development
- . Incentives
- . Child Care
- . Social Assistance
- . Homelessness

Poverty Reduction Strategy - Working together to prevent and end poverty and increase well-being in Niagara



Council Strategic Priorities - Equitable Region

Areas of focus



Indigenous Well-being

Reconciliation

Canadian Governments and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

Areas of focus (continued)

 **Housing**

 **Income**

 **Employment**

Areas of focus (continued)



Food Security



Early Child Development



Transportation

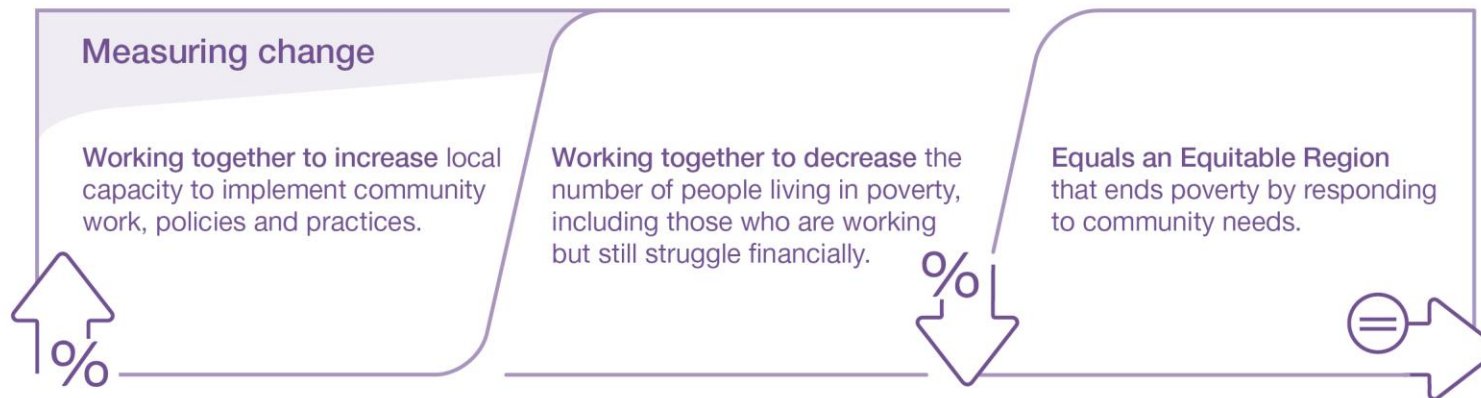


Mental Health and Addiction

How to create change

- Service Access, Coordination and Capacity
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Leveraging Voices of Lived Expertise
- Changing Mindsets
- Advocacy
- Funding

Measuring Change



Strategy in motion



Council Strategic Priorities - Equitable Region

Get involved, email endpoverty@niagararegion.ca

Visit niagararegion.ca/community-safety/poverty-reduction-strategy

MEMORANDUM

COTW-C 1-2024

Subject: Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

Date: March 7, 2024

To: Regional Council

From: Adrienne Jugley, Commissioner

Please find attached the Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) document presented at Committee of the Whole on March 7, 2024.

The goal of Niagara’s five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy is: Working together to prevent and end poverty and increase well-being in Niagara. This strategy reflects concerns, opportunities and actions identified by residents and service partners during a broad engagement process. The community identified eight Areas of Focus for the Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy. Each Area of Focus includes one recommendation and a set of actions that addresses the issue of poverty within that area.

During implementation, Niagara Region staff and members of the Poverty Reduction Steering Committee will invite interested and affected parties including United Way, the Niagara Community Foundation and Ontario Trillium Foundation, to identify their role in helping to end poverty.

The NPRS will be used to increase alignment of Regional efforts and investments, improve policies and ensure best practice, enhance programs and services to support effectiveness and accountability, increase poverty reduction efforts across Niagara and determine future Niagara Prosperity Initiative funding.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Adrienne Jugley, MSW, RSW, CHE
Commissioner

Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

2024 - 2028



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Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy 2024-2028

Acknowledgements

Land acknowledgement

Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land is steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Regional Municipality of Niagara stands with all Indigenous peoples, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.

The Regional Municipality of Niagara is committed to equity and respect for all by ensuring Indigenous voices are heard and included in our plans and programs. In addition, we are committed to eradicating anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination within our community.

Authors

- **Lisa Gallant**, Poverty Reduction Strategy Advisor, Community Services, Niagara Region
- **Marc Todd**, Manager, Community Services, Niagara Region

Contributors

Residents and community champions made this strategy possible. Thank you to the hundreds of people in Niagara for sharing their time, wisdom, commitment and stories. Thank you to community groups listed in [Appendix A](#) for hosting sessions to increase the reach of engagement and facilitators for leading meaningful community conversations.

Special thanks to

- **Mary Ellen Simon**, Director of Housing, Niagara Regional Native Centre, for leading engagement with Indigenous community in Niagara
- **Olivia Schmidt**, Student, Brock University, for supporting research referencing
- **Rachel Sam**, Former Poverty Reduction Strategy Advisor, Niagara Region (Phase 1), for community engagement and research review

For more information, contact:

Niagara Region, Community Services

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way

Thorold ON, L2V 4T7

905-980-6000, 1-800-263-7215

endpoverty@niagararegion.ca

Suggested citation: Niagara Region Community Services (2024). Niagara Region Poverty Reduction Strategy 2024–2028. Thorold, Ontario.

Poverty Reduction Steering Committee

The Poverty Reduction Steering Committee, made up of individuals from government, Niagara residents, Indigenous community, education and health, is pleased to present Niagara's Poverty Reduction Strategy. It is the mission of this committee and of this strategy that by **working together to prevent and end poverty and increase well-being in Niagara** we will create positive change for our community.

This strategy has been shaped by diverse voices of residents in Niagara including those who are disproportionately affected by poverty. The actions outlined in the strategy are supported by research and best practices and inspired by work happening in other communities to end poverty.

The Committee played a pivotal role in developing the recommendations, identifying interconnected strategies and providing input into the development of a picture of poverty in Niagara – what poverty is, what poverty means in people's lives and how poverty affects all of us.

Through the community's voice, the Committee selected the Areas of Focus of this strategy and prioritized eight recommendations aligned with best practice and existing strategies. These Areas of Focus are Indigenous well-being, housing, income, employment, food security, early childhood development, transportation, mental health and addiction. Preventing and ending poverty will be achieved by working together as a community to strategically address factors that impact and induce poverty within these Areas of Focus.

During implementation, the Committee will look at ways to increase opportunities for a network of champions to exchange ideas and harness the power of their successes. The Committee will call on a collaborative approach. To achieve success, we need people with lived expertise, Indigenous peoples, and other residents, along with representatives from government, funders, businesses, health and educational institutions, non-profit organizations, service clubs and associations to collaborate, share leadership, exchange ideas, engage community and mobilize action.

We recognize that ending poverty will take more than five years given the complex nature of poverty and the need for a community-wide response. This strategy provides a major step to achieve this goal. We thank everyone who engaged in community conversations and look forward to continuing our collaborative work to end poverty in Niagara.

Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy Steering Committee members

- Lori Watson (Chair) - Director, Community Services
- Haley Bateman – Niagara Regional Councillor
- Laura Ip – Niagara Regional Councillor
- David Oakes – Chief Administrative Officer, City of St. Catharines
- Arceli Olivares – Niagara resident
- Christina Thomas – Niagara resident
- Mary Ellen Simon – Director of Housing, Niagara Regional Native Centre
- Marie Louise Bowering – Indigenous Community Connections Facilitator, Niagara Catholic District School Board
- Jon Braithwaite – Chief Executive Officer, The Hope Centre
- Jennifer Gauthier – Executive Director, Birchway and Chair, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
- Vivian Kinnaird – Chief Executive Officer, Workforce Collective
- Taralea McLean – Executive Director, Bridges Community Health Centre
- Mary-Beth Raddon – Department Chair Sociology, Brock University
- Carla Stout – General Manager, Niagara Transit Commission
- Ruth Unrau – Host, Niagara Made, NewsTalk 610 CKTB
- Nadine Wallace – Executive Director, Contact Niagara

Why Niagara needs a strategy

A strategy lays a foundation to build a community of best practice as it relates to how and when we interact and provide service. Recognizing that Niagara Region and many local providers already deliver services to lift people out of poverty, this strategy provides a way to identify best practice, uncover gaps and leverage local knowledge to inform future action. The strategy can play a significant role to inform where to best invest resources in areas such as housing, economic development, child care, transit and the Niagara Prosperity Initiative, to have the biggest impact on poverty reduction.

Definition and impacts of poverty

The Government of Canada's first Poverty Reduction Strategy, released in 2018, describes poverty as "the condition of a person who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic living standard needed to promote and facilitate integration and participation in society."¹

Poverty is a complex issue with no single solution. We recognize that everyone experiences poverty differently. Each person's story is unique and a result of multiple complex and interrelated causes. As described by Tamarack, a Canadian institute that supports strategies that enable people to learn with and from each other to solve major community challenges, "There are many interconnected reasons why people are poor. For practically every family, every problem magnifies the impact of the others, and all are so tightly interlocked that one reversal can produce a chain reaction with results far distant from the original cause. If problems are interlocking, then so must be solutions. A job alone is not enough. Medical insurance alone is not enough. Good housing alone is not enough. Reliable transportation, careful family budgeting, effective parenting, effective schooling, are not enough when each is achieved in isolation from the rest. There is no single variable that can be altered to help people move away from poverty. **If problems are interlocking, then solutions must also be interlocking.**"²

The complexity and interconnectedness of poverty was evident during engagement. When talking about the experience of living in poverty, Niagara residents used words such as **depression, hopelessness and despair**, and they linked poverty to negative outcomes such as gender-based violence, discrimination, homelessness, victimization and exploitation. Research reinforces the interconnectedness of poverty with many

¹ Employment and Social Development Canada. (2018). Opportunity for All-Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy, 7.

² Loewen, G. (2009). Compendium of Poverty Reduction Strategies and Frameworks. Tamarack An Institute for Community Engagement, 9.

issues. For example, “reducing financial stress may decrease potential for relationship conflict and dissatisfaction, which are strong predictors of gender-based violence.”³

Further, participants spoke to elements of social and spiritual poverty through stigma, social isolation and lack of purpose. Social poverty exists where people are isolated and lack the formal and informal supports necessary to be resilient in times of crisis and change. Spiritual poverty exists where people lack meaning and purpose in their lives.⁴

Poverty is a human rights issue. Human rights are the basic rights every person has, inherently and universally, to live with safety and dignity. Examples include the right to work, the right to adequate food and the right to housing. In October 2023, the Ontario Human Rights Commission released its Human Rights-Based Approach Framework⁵. We will leverage this framework to bring a human rights approach to ensure an equitable, inclusive Niagara that provides enough for all.

Poverty in Niagara

The Low-Income Measure After-Tax is an established measure of poverty in Canada. All persons in a household are considered to be living in poverty if their household income **falls below half of median incomes of the same household size**.

To fully comprehend the state of poverty in Niagara, it is important to understand the **impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic**. In pre-pandemic statistics of 2016, Niagara had **14.5 per cent of people living in poverty (64,944 people)**. Numbers from Statistics Canada in 2021 indicate that Niagara had 10.4 per cent of people living in poverty (49,706 people)⁶.

The National Advisory Council on Poverty in their 2023 report, “Blueprint for Transformation”, indicated that the temporary increase in government transfers available during the pandemic influenced the 2021 poverty statistics. This growth in income protected people from falling into poverty and helped lift many people out of poverty. In Niagara, **15,238 people in Niagara temporarily moved out of poverty**, a

³ Niolon, P. H., Kearns, M., Dills, J., Rambo, K., Irving, S., Armstead, T., & Gilbert, L. (2017). Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

⁴ Poverty Institute (n.d.). Poverty in Canada. <https://www.povertyinstitute.ca/poverty-canada>

⁵ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2023). Human Rights-Based Approach Framework.

⁶ Source. Statistics Canada, Census Profiles, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population. Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT).

Working together to prevent and end poverty and increase well-being in Niagara

change of four per cent from 2016 to 2021. This information reconciles with what local services providers saw. For example, food banks reported a drop in visits during that time; however, since 2021, use of food banks has significantly increased from pre-pandemic visits. This suggests that income-based solutions are key to reducing poverty.

As cautioned by the National Advisory Council on Poverty, the phasing out of the COVID-19 income supports alongside higher inflation and increasing cost of living mean that poverty rates have likely increased. It is important to keep this context in mind when comparing the poverty rate to earlier years.

One Niagara Regional grant program that has a direct goal to alleviate and reduce poverty in Niagara, is the Niagara Prosperity Initiative. Since its inception in 2008, Regional Council approved \$1.5 million annually to fund local projects. This funding resulted in work with over 90 organizations and over 400 innovative neighbourhood-based projects, impacting over 100,000 families and individuals living in poverty in Niagara.

Recognizing local evidence that indicated that the pandemic had exacerbated and amplified many issues caused by poverty, the 2022 Niagara Prosperity Initiative targeted funding into six areas:

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

The Niagara Prosperity Initiative is one funding source that we can use to enhance actions identified in this strategy. Evaluation of outcomes of funded projects will inform future investments. Staff will align the Niagara Prosperity Initiative with the Poverty Reduction Strategy to distribute resources where they can have the greatest effect.

Indigenous prosperity

Prosperity for Indigenous peoples in the Niagara region will require a deep understanding of Indigenous history and culture to incorporate the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being of the individual, family and both human and non-human communities simultaneously. Culturally safe environments for Indigenous peoples are needed to engage and build relationships with municipal governments.

It is well established that existing systems perpetuate colonization and racism, and that many of them fail to support Indigenous peoples. It is important to understand the role that colonialism plays in poverty in Indigenous communities and its continued existence today.⁷

Niagara Region acknowledges that colonialism and past actions and inactions across all levels of government have created discriminatory policies and practices against Indigenous peoples. This has had direct, widespread and devastating effects on the health and well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. We need to move beyond acknowledgement and take actions to change this. Municipal governments, as well as other levels of government in Canada, share responsibility and have a significant role to play in eradicating anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination and fostering equity and respect for all.

⁷ Employment and Social Development Canada. (2021). Understanding systems: The 2021 report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty.

How we developed the strategy

In October 2021, Niagara Region staff received Council approval to develop a Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy and a new approach for Niagara Prosperity Initiative investments. The Niagara Prosperity Initiative is an annual investment by the Region towards poverty reduction. Development of a Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy meets recommendations put forth in the [Connecting the Pieces: An Evaluation of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative](#) report by Brock University and the [Niagara Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#).

Stages of strategy development

This strategy is driven by diverse perspectives and experiences. We heard from people who are disproportionately affected by poverty and typically underrepresented in research. Recommendations are supported by research.

The community spoke. We listened. Together, we developed a strategy

- Niagara Region Council approves development of a local poverty reduction strategy
- 1000+ residents give input about an ideal future state, challenges, strengths and actions
- 150+ Indigenous people give input about Indigenous prosperity
- Staff engage with Local Area Municipalities
- Staff review research to identify best practice to address poverty
- Staff draft recommendations based on community input and best practice
- 100+ content experts validate recommendations
- Niagara Region staff indicate alignment with other Niagara Region plans
- Steering Committee prioritize recommendations based on impact, effort and community support

 Council Strategic Priorities - Equitable Region				
Economic Development Strategy	Children's Services Service System Plan	Consolidated Housing Master Plan	Community Safety and Well-Being Plan	Poverty Reduction Strategy
Niagara Prosperity Initiative	Transportation Master Plan	Housing and Homelessness Action Plan	Indigenous Action Plan	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

Engaging community

Residents who participated in Community Conversations envisioned an ideal future state, spoke to challenges, identified community strengths and recommended actions. For details about input provided by residents, read the [Interim Report on Community Engagement](#). When asked about an ideal future state, the community envisioned:

A Niagara that is...

- Equitable and inclusive
- Meeting all resident's basic needs
- Supportive, accessible and allows people to live with dignity
- Community-oriented
- Safe
- Prosperous
- Healthy and well
- A great place to raise a family

The Niagara Regional Native Centre's Director of Housing met with Indigenous community in Niagara to discuss Indigenous Prosperity. Respondents emphasized the importance of:

- Indigenous identity
- Non-Indigenous relationships
- Culture
- Community development
- Education
- Equity

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- Self-determination
- Health/Well-being
- Housing
- Safety
- Spirituality
- Financial Well-being

Introduction to the strategy



The goal of Niagara’s five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy is: **Working together to prevent and end poverty and increase well-being in Niagara.**

This strategy reflects concerns, opportunities and actions identified by residents during a broad engagement process. The community identified eight Areas of Focus for the Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy. Each Area of Focus includes one recommendation and a set of actions that address the issue of poverty within that area.

In total, the community identified over 100 actions to reduce poverty. In the following pages, we list actions that:

- Are supported by research
- Consider impact, effort, and community support to make them happen
- Align with Niagara Region Council priorities

Areas of Focus

- Indigenous Well-being
- Housing
- Income
- Employment
- Food Security
- Early Child Development
- Transportation
- Mental Health and Addiction

Indigenous Well-being

Most Indigenous people who responded to a survey that asked, “what do you believe is Indigenous Prosperity?” identified that community development, Indigenous identity, culture and self-determination were essential components of prosperity. Respondents talked about the need to improve on services that impact the education, health, housing, income and safety of Indigenous peoples. Not only are more services needed, but we also need to address how we deliver these services. Mainstream services need to be respectful of Indigenous cultural practices and social values of the Indigenous community.

The Indigenous community has called upon the Niagara Region to adopt a bottom-up approach to addressing Indigenous well-being. Indigenous peoples have the right to "pursue their economic, social and cultural development", and so must be able to determine their own futures and develop poverty reduction strategies that meet their specific needs and priorities, enabling them to pursue their own economic development opportunities and carve their own path towards greater independence and self-sufficiency.

Recommendation

Indigenous community to develop a strategy for Indigenous specific poverty reduction initiatives.

Action: Work in partnership with Indigenous community leaders to develop a strategy driven by a community process.

Housing

Residents named housing and homelessness as one of the biggest and most visible poverty-related challenges for Niagara. They expressed concern with the lack of available housing, affordability, accessibility and quality of housing in Niagara. This is especially true for those living on a fixed income.

Recommendation

Provide housing stability services for people living in poverty to maintain their current housing, prevent eviction, improve social inclusion and access income through periods of financial instability.

Actions:

- Improve relationships between tenants and property owners to reduce evictions
- Expand the use of quick reconnects of financial and other supports for people who have previously been homeless
- Increase legal supports for people in low-income households
- Increase early identification of housing related risk
- Address needs of those escaping gender-based violence

Implementation of this recommendation will align with Niagara Region's Housing Master Plan and with the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan which uses best practice approaches, including Housing First⁸ and Built for Zero⁹ as a foundation.

⁸ Supportive Housing Programs. (n.d.). Niagara Region.
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/housing-homelessness/supportive-housing-programs.aspx>

⁹ Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. (n.d.). Built for Zero Canada.
<https://bfzcanada.ca/>

Income

Residents pointed to income as the primary determinant of poverty. They identified two points of focus that affect income, availability of a living wage and adequacy of social assistance. A living wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their basic expenses and participate in their community. Employees that earn a living wage can face fewer stressors and employers that pay a living wage can be confident they are not keeping their employees in poverty.

The rising unaffordability of the basics such as housing, food and transportation are additional barriers. Unfortunately, the gap between income and the rising cost of living has continued to grow. Residents noted that the face of poverty has not changed, just expanded to include more people who used to be “middle-income.”

Recommendation

Increase opportunities for living wage employment in Niagara and advocate for adequate, liveable rates from government income assistance programs.

Actions:

- Increase awareness, support for and adoption of living wage in Niagara as a poverty reduction effort
- Advocate to federal and provincial governments to:
 - Develop and implement a Universal Basic Income
 - Increase government programs that provide income and benefits (e.g., Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, Canadian Pension Plan, Old Age Security)
 - Improve access and eligibility for people living in poverty to access health benefits such as dental services, drug benefits and eyeglasses

Employment

Residents noted a disconnect between existing skill sets and job requirements in Niagara. Others noted that the quality of employment in Niagara is lacking. For people with disabilities, options are not always accommodating. A larger topic of conversation focused on racism and implicit bias that exists in hiring practices in Niagara.

Recommendation

Promote and develop decent¹⁰ work opportunities that provide fair wages and benefits and foster stable, consistent and safe employment.

Actions:

- Increase vocation training for those living in poverty, so that they qualify for stable employment opportunities relevant to local industries
- Increase internships and apprenticeship opportunities for foreign trained newcomers to be able to work while obtaining Canadian credentials
- Explore a social procurement policy for Niagara Region that increases opportunities for small businesses and equity seeking groups

Implementation of this recommendation will align with Niagara Region's Economic Development Strategy. Regional staff in Economic Development foster regional growth by attracting and facilitating investment. They promote Niagara globally and support new and existing businesses to create and expand decent jobs. This work supports poverty reduction by facilitating an environment conducive to new job creation, investment and economic opportunities. New investments result in incremental improvements to the economy, new jobs for residents and additional tax revenue.

¹⁰ “**Decent work** involves employment that is productive and delivers a fair income. It also should ensure workplace security, social protection, better prospects for personal development and social integration.” Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development Goals.
<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

Food Security

Residents indicated that the primary problem with food security in Niagara is income and affordability. With the cost of living exponentially increasing and incomes largely staying the same, an increasing number of residents are having to choose between paying their bills or purchasing groceries.

Recommendation

Improve access to fresh, culturally appropriate, affordable and nutritious foods through income-based solutions to food insecurity.

Actions:

- Advocate to federal and provincial governments to implement evidence-based policy solutions to reduce food insecurity
- Pilot interventions that reduce barriers to food access in identified priority neighbourhoods
- Continue to monitor and report the prevalence and severity of food insecurity and effective interventions to build awareness and knowledge about the problem and support for actions

To better understand the issues of food security, Niagara Region Public Health is mapping the food environment to determine locations of food deserts.¹¹ This work can inform service, planning and decision making.

¹¹ “**Food deserts** are geographic areas that have limited access to healthy food. In some neighbourhoods, lack of economic resources and transportation can cause geographical barriers to access affordable healthy food. In these cases, residents may be dependent on convenience stores and fast-food restaurants resulting in lower quality of diets. This may be especially true for individuals living in rural areas.” Source: National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. (2017). Food Deserts and Food Swamps: A Primer.

Early Child Development

Residents identified the need to address intergenerational poverty and to focus prevention efforts at childhood. Service providers noted that Niagara’s children are vulnerable in many domains of childhood development, and this is often tied to socioeconomic status. Parents expressed how impossible it feels to keep up with the cost of raising children. Not just parents, but grandparents as well who are in custody of their grandchildren and parenting again. A major issue residents identified was the cost and availability of licensed child care in Niagara.

Recommendation

Improve access to affordable, high-quality child care for families living in poverty or at risk of poverty.

Actions:

- Continue to implement the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care program in Niagara, including a reduction to the cost of child care to an average of \$10/day by 2026
- Continue to develop and implement an Early Childhood Educator workforce strategy in Children’s Services to expand the system and increase child care spaces.

Implementation of this recommendation will align with Children’s Services Service System Plan.

Transportation

Residents indicated that transportation is a significant poverty-related pressure point in the region. They noted that cost, timing and coverage of transit create barriers to use. Residents from rural communities expressed frustration over the difficulty and time commitment to travel to other municipalities and barriers to using On-Demand Transit. These barriers can impact employment; residents indicated that some employers in Niagara will not hire people who take public transit, because it is unreliable. Overall, residents emphasized the importance of equitable transportation to access resources and social connectors.

Recommendation

Continue the work of Niagara Region Transit to achieve affordable and equitable access to services across municipalities.

Actions:

- Provide concession fare products for people who are living in poverty
- Improve access to transit and active transportation
- Increase hours of service, smoothing out evening, weekend and holiday hours across all levels of transportation services

Mental Health and Addiction

Links between mental health concerns and substance use and abuse concerns are generally complex. For example, although people with mental illness have a higher likelihood of also having an addiction¹², not all people with a mental illness have a co-occurring addiction.

Residents frequently discussed the impact of living in poverty while dealing with mental health and addiction challenges. The stress of not having enough money, being in a constant state of survival and hopelessness about living in poverty, can lead to anxiety, depression and thoughts of suicide. Service providers and people with lived expertise indicated that the situation is worse than it has been in a long time, and residents have lost hope that it will improve any time soon.

To address the effects of poverty, residents and service providers emphasized the need for mental health and addiction treatment supports within a better coordinated system of care. These supports need to address social determinants of health that are the root causes and stressors for people living in poverty or at risk of poverty such as housing, transportation and income.

Recommendation

Enhance core service capacity and offer a choice of timely, early recovery interventions and treatments for people who are living in poverty or at risk of poverty.

Actions:

- Address gaps and streamline local mental health and addiction services
- Continue to promote wellness and safety of people experiencing problems with substance use and addiction

¹² CAMH. (2023). Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics.
<https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics>

How to create change

During engagement, residents identified essential conditions needed to end and prevent poverty in Niagara. These conditions for change affect **how** we incorporate actions in the Poverty Reduction Strategy's recommendations throughout the Areas of Focus:

- Service Access, Coordination and Capacity
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Leveraging Voices of Lived Expertise
- Changing Mindsets
- Advocacy
- Funding

Service Access, Coordination and Capacity

A person's ability to access services can impact their experience of poverty. A more coordinated and integrated network of health, justice and government funded social services would make it easier for people to navigate services they need to move out of poverty. In addition, those services need capacity, with funding, staffing and resources, to meet the needs of people seeking support.

Organizations, institutions and governments can improve ease of system navigation and access by increasing opportunities for people to access multiple services at the same time and location e.g., polyclinics or community hubs using mobile services as needed.

Other areas where this condition of change can enhance service is in:

- Strengthening supports for those escaping gender-based violence
- Strengthening transition supports such as discharge planning for people leaving hospitals and the justice system
- Building capacity to identify children at risk of poverty or living in poverty and strengthening referral pathways for families to a network of services such as income, housing, parenting and mental health supports

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Residents noted that attention to diversity, equity and inclusion in Niagara is important and needs to continue. The intersections of identity, such as age, culture, gender, race, ability and other social aspects, shape how people experience poverty. Addressing poverty must consider diverse experiences of poverty.

Public and private sectors can integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into program design and delivery as it relates to ending and preventing poverty. This can include increasing learning opportunities for staff, elected officials, agencies and community members to make services more equitable.

Leveraging Voices of Lived Expertise

Lived expertise refers to “personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations

constructed by other people.”¹³ It includes “the experiences of people on whom a social issue or combination of issues has had a direct impact.”¹⁴

Creating opportunities for people with lived expertise to provide input in policy development, planning and decision-making is crucial to addressing poverty. This can include expanding opportunities to integrate peer support models into existing community work.

Changing Mindsets

Residents identified stigma as one of the most significant poverty-related issues in Niagara. The stigma of poverty can have a profound impact on a person’s sense of self and self-worth. Stigma is not only a result of living in poverty but can also perpetuate poverty by impacting a person’s mental well-being, ability to access services, relate to others, maintain housing or keep employment.

Poverty is a socially isolating experience that can significantly impact a person’s well-being. Not only is social isolation a result of living in poverty, but a lack of social connection can mean that people do not have support in times of crisis. Staff heard that people living in poverty feel alone and lack connection to their community.

The intent of changing mindsets is to bring people together to better understand the experience of poverty and the role they can play to help lift people out of poverty. Poverty is discriminatory in nature. Addressing false belief systems that feed into negative stereotypes is an important predictor of successful poverty reduction efforts. Changing mindsets that feed into the stigmatization of people living in poverty can decrease discrimination and allow for better community connections, thereby reducing isolation and loneliness.

Advocacy

Residents emphasized the need for income-based solutions to poverty. They highlighted the importance of using a human right’s lens when speaking about and advocating for poverty-related issues. The strategy calls for advocacy to federal and provincial governments for improvements to income, employment and food security such as:

¹³ Chandler, D., & Munday, R. (2016). Oxford: A dictionary of media and communication (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ Sandu, B. (2017). The value of lived experience in social change: The need for leadership and organisational development in the social sector. Retrieved from thelivedexperience.org/report/

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- Implementing a Universal Basic Income
- Increasing social assistance rates and benefits
- Increasing minimum wage to a living wage
- Making accreditation processes easier and more affordable to help newcomers with employment
- Implementing evidence-based policy solutions to reduce food insecurity

Funding

Adequate funding for outcome focused programs based on best practice is a critical component of any poverty reduction strategy. Addressing funding gaps and methods of funding applies to all levels of government and all funding bodies.

Brock University's report "Connecting the Pieces; An Evaluation of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative and Call for a Broader Poverty Reduction Strategy for Niagara" recommended:

- Increased funding investments in poverty reduction
- Longer funding terms for programs help address the "unpredictability and fragmentary nature of services provided through time-limited contracts" ¹⁵

Service providers noted the importance of collaborative funding opportunities and the need to break down competition among agencies.

¹⁵ Raddon. MB, Soron, D & Petrina S. (2021). Connecting the Pieces: An Evaluation of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative and Call for a Broader Poverty Reduction Strategy for Niagara. Report prepared for Niagara Region. Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario. <https://brocku.ca/npi-evaluation>

Moving forward

Strategy in motion

During implementation, Niagara Region staff and members of the Poverty Reduction Steering Committee will invite interested and affected parties, such as United Way, Niagara Community Foundation and Ontario Trillium Foundation, to identify their role in helping to end poverty. Other interested and affected parties who are critical to successful implementation of this strategy include people with lived expertise, Indigenous peoples, and other residents, along with representatives from government, funders, businesses, health and educational institutions, non-profit organizations, service clubs and associations.

It is our hope that readers of this document will find inspiration to further align their work with actions identified in this strategy. Using Collective Impact, an approach used around the world to address complex issues such as poverty,¹⁶ we will explore with community champions ways to best implement actions listed in this report along with other actions that emerged during community engagement.

¹⁶ Tamarack Institute. (2019). Collective Impact in Practice.
<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/tool-collective-impact-in-practice>

Measuring change



How we will measure impact on poverty

Featured below are outcomes we can use to identify long-term success. We selected these indicators based on a scan of what other communities are using, reputability of the sources, availability of data for Niagara and the power of these indicators to tell the story of change.

Decrease the number and percentage of people who:

- Live in poverty
- Work but still live in poverty
- Experience homelessness
- Live in food insecure households
- Experience financial concerns as a primary stressor

How we will measure benefits of working together

In addition to reducing poverty, we expect that by working together in different ways, we can increase:

- Local capacity to implement community work, policies and practices
- Public support to end poverty

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We will bring implementation champions together to determine methods such as facilitated conversation and client feedback to capture these benefits and better understand the impact of our collective work.

How we will create our evaluation plan

We recognize that poverty is a complex experience, making it difficult to determine success. We will capture qualitative and quantitative measures during implementation to help tell the story of change in our community. We will create a Theory of Change to further articulate how and why we expect change will happen to increase well-being in Niagara.

How to get involved

Moving this strategy forward will involve many interested and affected parties. We invite YOU to join us on this journey and share your commitment to change. To learn more about how you can get involved or lend you skills, email endpoverty@niagararegion.ca or visit www.niagararegion.ca/community-safety/poverty-reduction-strategy/default.aspx

Together, we can end poverty in Niagara.

Resources consulted

This is a partial list of resources staff reviewed to inform recommendations. These resources complimented the direction staff received from residents on how to best address poverty in Niagara.

Poverty Reduction

Canadian Poverty Institute (n.d.). Poverty in Canada.

<https://www.povertyinstitute.ca/poverty-canada>

Employment and Social Development Canada. (2018). Opportunity for All-Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy.

National Advisory Council on Poverty. (2023) Blueprint for Transformation. Government of Canada.

Ontario Campaign 2000. (2020). Child Poverty Rates in Ontario.

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Vibrant Communities. (2022). The End of Poverty: Eight Pathways That Are Ending Poverty in Canada. Tamarack Institute. <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/the-end-of-poverty-eight-pathways-that-are-ending-poverty-in-canada>

Service Access, Coordination and Capacity

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Preventing Adverse Childhood

Child and Parent Resource Institute. (n.d.). Trauma-informed care.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/trauma-informed-care-child-and-parent-resource-institute>

Experiences: Leveraging the Best Available Evidence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/82316/cdc_82316_DS1.pdf

Niolon, P. H., Kearns, M., Dills, J., Rambo, K., Irving, S., Armstead, T., & Gilbert, L. (2017). Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

University of Alberta Centre for Healthy Communities, & Alberta Health Services. (2019). Building Financial Well-Being: A Community Planning Toolkit.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

Employment and Social Development Canada. (2021). Understanding Systems: The 2021 report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2021-annual.html>

Lived Expertise

Homer, A. (2019). 10 Engaging People with Lived/Living Expertise: A guide for Including People in Poverty Reduction. Tamarack Institute.

Sandu, B. (2017). The value of lived experience in social change: The need for leadership and organisational development in the social sector. <https://thelivedexperience.org/report/thelivedexperience.org/report/>

Changing Mindsets

Alliance for Healthier Communities. (2020). Rx Community - Social Prescribing in Ontario Final Report. <https://www.allianceon.org/Rx-Community-Social-Prescribing-In-Ontario>

World Health Organization. (2022). A toolkit on how to implement social prescribing.

Indigenous Well-being

Niagara Chapter – Native Women Inc. (2021). Mno Bmaadziwin: Living the Good and Healthy Life. <https://niagararegion.ca/community-safety/pdf/mno-bmaadziwin.pdf>

National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. (2020). Poverty as a Social Determinant of First Nations, Inuit and Metis Health.

Housing

Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. (n.d.). Built for Zero Canada. <https://bfzcanada.ca/>

The Homeless Hub. (n.d.). Housing First. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/housing-accommodation-and-supports/housing-first>

Income

Cross, P. (2021). The Minimum Wage, Lost Jobs, and Poverty in Canada. Fraser Institute.

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Ontario Living Wage Network. (n.d.). What is a living wage?
<https://www.ontariolivingwage.ca/about>

Employment

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Stapleton, J., & Yuan, Y. (2021). Ending Working Poverty: How to get it Done. Tamarack An Institute for Community Engagement.
<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/ending-working-poverty-in-canada-how-to-get-it-done>

The Conference Board of Canada. (2023). Opportunity for All: Improving Workplace Experiences and Career Outcomes for Canadians with Disabilities.
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University of Alberta Centre for Healthy Communities, & Alberta Health Services. (2019). Building Financial Well-Being: A Community Planning Toolkit.

Food Security

Feed Ontario. (2022). Hunger Report 2022: The Deepening Cracks in Ontario's Economic Foundation.

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health. (2020). Position Statement and Recommendations on Responses to Food Insecurity: Executive Summary.

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Early Child Development

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Transportation

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Mental Health and Addiction

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Appendix A Locations of community engagement

Thank you to community organizations for hosting community conversations

- Ailanthus CASTLE Community
- Adverse Childhood Experiences Steering Committee
- Bethesda Clients
- Children's Services Sector Network
- Coalition to End Violence Against Women
- Elmview CASTLE Community
- Employment-Focused Roundtable through Workforce Collective
- Future Back Female
- Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Prevention Group, Lived Experience Advisory and Taskforce
- Human Service & Justice Coordinating Committee
- Lived Experience Advisory Network
- Local Immigrant Partnership
- Mental Health and Addictions Working Group
- Newcomers through Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities
- Niagara Children's Planning Council
- Niagara Emergency Medical Services Huddle
- Niagara Food Security Network
- Niagara Francophone Interagency Table
- Niagara Ontario Health Team
- Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
- Niagara Region Mental Health Client Advisory Committee
- Niagara Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Overdose Prevention and Education Network of Niagara
- Project Share Clients
- Port Cares Clients
- Queenston Neighbourhood Roundtable
- St. Catharines Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Stronger Fort Erie Neighbourhoods: Lived Experience and Service Providers
- Westview Centre 4 Women Clients
- Youth Advisory Committee through Niagara Region Public Health
- Youth Advisory Committee and Lead through the Youth Wellness Hub

Appendix B Alignment to Regional reports

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy aligns with Niagara Region's:

Children's Services Service System Plan

Staff from Children's Services informed the Poverty Reduction Strategy to align with local efforts that address child care service system management.

Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

Action Five of this plan calls for a local Poverty Reduction Strategy which sets local targets and aligns investments to measurably reduce poverty. The Poverty Reduction Strategy aligns with work identified in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan such as Situation Tables, gender-based violence, mental health and addiction, housing and homelessness, income and systemic discrimination in Niagara.

Consolidated Housing Master Plan

The affordable housing strategy brings together the work of many partners to address local need for affordable housing. Affordable housing is housing that fits the budget of low to moderate-income households while leaving enough money for them to meet other basic living costs such as food, clothing, transportation, medical care and education. The plan includes work to increase the number of affordable housing units and provide a mix of housing that is appropriate for the various sizes and incomes of households in Niagara.

Council Strategic Priority: Equitable Region

An action of this priority calls for a Poverty Reduction Strategy that ensures the Region is inclusive, welcoming and free of discrimination.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan

Staff from Niagara Region's, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Relations team informed actions throughout the Areas of Focus in the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Economic Development Strategy

Staff from Niagara's Economic Development team informed the recommendation related to Employment to align with opportunities for future workforce around emerging sectors.

Gun and Gang Prevention Strategy

The Poverty Reduction Strategy aligns with the work of the Gun and Gang Prevention Strategy to support an increase in youth and young adult-focused prevention and early intervention programs and services.

Housing and Homelessness Action Plan

The Poverty Reduction Strategy aligns with the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan's action to increase affordable housing and reduce homelessness. The Poverty Reduction Advisor and Homelessness Action Plan Advisor worked closely together to exchange research and results from community engagement.

How We Go – Transportation Master Plan

The Poverty Reduction strategy aligns with the Transportation Master Plan's action to address demand-responsive transit and pedestrian and cycling facilities.

Indigenous Relations Action Plan

The Poverty Reduction Plan includes a recommendation for Indigenous Well-being. Staff from Niagara's Region's, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Indigenous Relations team and the Director of Housing from the Niagara Regional Native Centre led work to identify actions that address Indigenous Well-being. This action is driven by the voices of Indigenous peoples as led by the Director of Housing, Niagara Regional Native Centre. It is informed by The Joint Roundtable which continues to work on the Indigenous Relations Action Plan based on recommendations from the 2021 report, [Mno Bmaadziwin: Living the Good and Healthy Life.](#)

2024-2028

Poverty Reduction Strategy

How we got here

Niagara Regional Council approves development of a local poverty reduction strategy

1000+ residents give input about an ideal future state, challenges, strengths and actions

150+ Indigenous people give input about Indigenous prosperity

Staff review research to identify best practices to address poverty

Staff draft recommendations based on community input and best practices

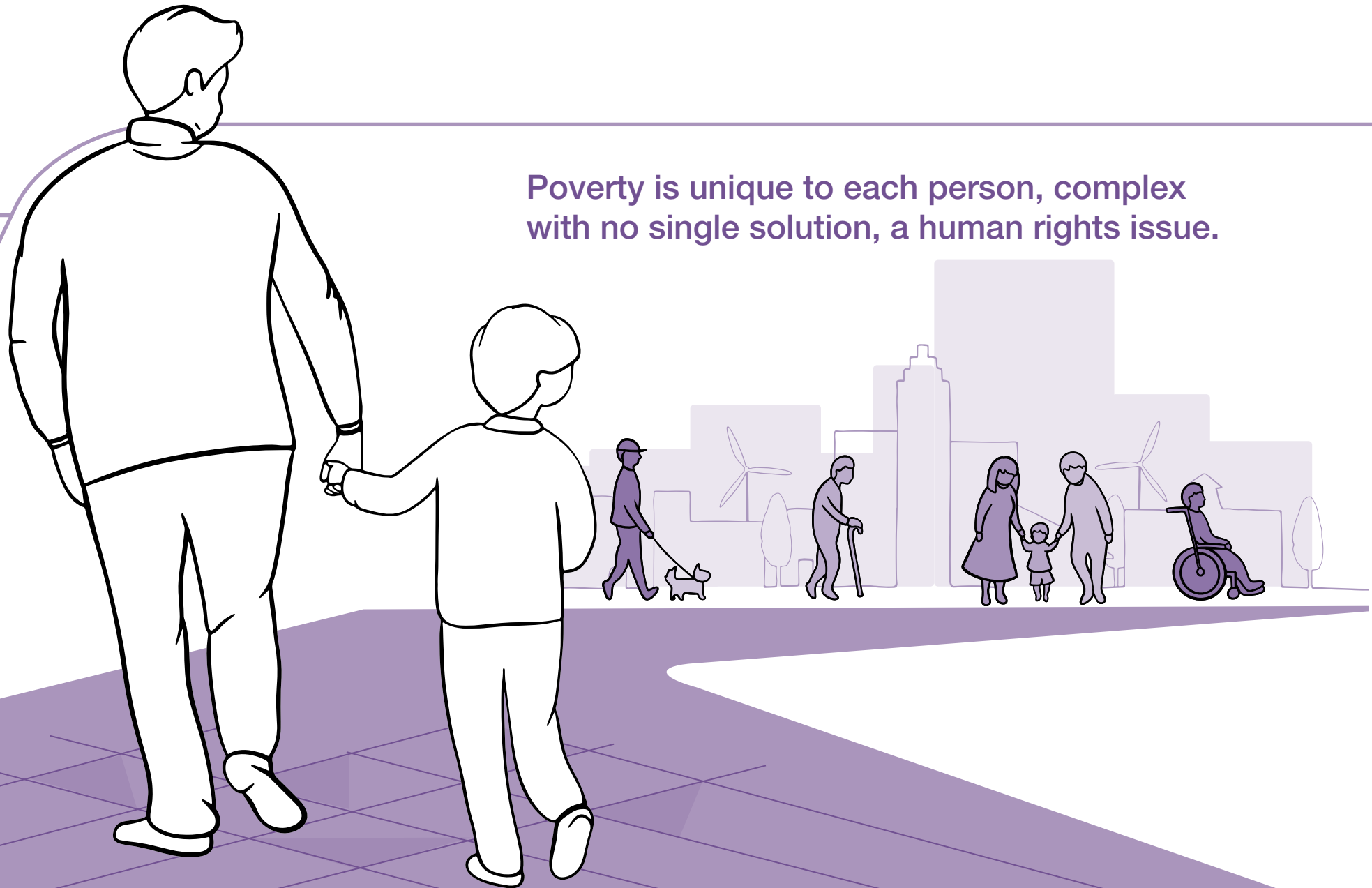
Staff engage with Local Area Municipalities

100+ content experts validate recommendations

Niagara Region staff indicate alignment with other Niagara Region plans

Steering Committee prioritize recommendations based on impact, effort and community support

Poverty is unique to each person, complex with no single solution, a human rights issue.



Council Strategic Priorities - Equitable Region

Economic Development Strategy	Children's Services Service System Plan	Consolidated Housing Master Plan	Community Safety and Well-Being Plan	Poverty Reduction Strategy	Niagara Prosperity Initiative	Transportation Master Plan	Housing and Homelessness Action Plan	Indigenous Action Plan	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan
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2024-2028

Poverty Reduction Strategy

How to create change

Service Access, Coordination and Capacity

Leveraging Voices of Lived Expertise

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Changing Mindsets

Advocacy

Funding

Our goal: Working together to prevent and end poverty and increase well-being in Niagara.

Areas of focus



Indigenous Well-being

Indigenous community to develop a strategy for Indigenous specific poverty reduction initiatives.



Early Child Development

Improve access to affordable, high-quality child care for families living in poverty or at risk of poverty.



Food Security

Improve access to fresh, culturally appropriate, affordable and nutritious foods through income-based solutions to food insecurity.



Employment

Promote and develop decent work opportunities that provide fair wages, and benefits and fosters stable, consistent and safe employment.



Housing

Provide housing stability services for people living in poverty to maintain current housing, prevent eviction, improve social inclusion and access income through periods of financial instability.



Mental Health and Addiction

Enhance core service capacity and offer a choice of timely, early recovery interventions and treatments for people who are living in poverty or at risk of poverty.



Income

Increase opportunities for living wage employment in Niagara and advocate for adequate, livable rates from government income assistance programs.



Transportation

Continue the work of Niagara Region Transit to achieve affordable and equitable access to services across municipalities.

Measuring change



Working together to decrease the number of people living in poverty, including those who are working but still struggle financially.

Working together to increase local capacity to implement community work, policies and practices.



Equals an Equitable Region that ends poverty by responding to community needs.

