



Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

A group of over 45 social and health agencies, educators, businesses, government representatives, faith communities and community members who advocate for and work to address the issues of those living in poverty. We want to create a more equitable community where all Niagara residents can meet their basic needs and live above the poverty line.



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

“ The current social assistance rates both for Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program have not kept up with the cost of living and now are so inadequate that it is impossible for people, particularly single people to provide for there basic needs. Just the cost of rent is not covered by the full amount an individual receives. We at the YWCA Niagara Region see the consequences of this everyday as we see individuals and families on social assistance loose their housing because the rates are so low”

YWCA Niagara Region – Elisabeth Zimmerman



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

“ Many individuals in Niagara Falls receiving Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rely on Project SHARE to meet their food needs as the income assistance provided falls far below what is needed to afford all basic necessities.

In addition, the shelter portion of these programs is well below market housing rates

and only received by those who currently have a fixed address, making it nearly impossible for those who are unhoused to secure housing without funding. Project SHARE endorses Feed Ontario’s policy recommendations to improve Ontario’s social assistance programs which can be found here [Policy Recommendations for Hunger](#)

Relief | Feed Ontario”

Project Share – Pam Sharp



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

At Birchway Niagara, a gender-based and domestic violence shelter and service provider here in Niagara, I see the impacts of these rates every day. Families in our shelter are unable to secure a safe place to live, afford childcare, and the basic necessities that would allow them to live a life free from abuse. I've spoken to women who have looked at their future on OW and have chosen to return to their abusive partner, because that life seems easier, exposing them and their children to continued mental and physical trauma. With the trends of increased femicide in Ontario this is a potentially lethal situation. Niagara declared intimate partner violence an epidemic, providing adequate income for survivors of abuse will help save lives and work to prevent the cycle of violence from continuing

Birchway Niagara - Jennifer Gauthier



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

“As an organization that supports food and housing insecurity in Welland, The Hope Centre is well positioned to observe the linkages between low social assistance rates and the impact it has on our community.

Welland has the highest percentage of people living in poverty (2021 Stats Can Low Income Measure – Welland at 14.7% of population living below Low Income Measure), and this has severely impacted the volume of citizens who turn to organizations like The Hope Centre for support. While highly publicized, it is important that people are aware of the level of support food banks in our community are providing while receiving no provincial or federal financial support. The Hope Centre has reported record month after record month over the past 3 years in terms of numbers of visits to our food bank or our daily lunch program.”

The Hope Centre - Jon Braithwaite



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

“The Hope Centre also provides homelessness prevention and housing focused shelter programs, supporting those who are either unsheltered or at risk of losing their housing in ensuring any experiences into homelessness are brief and non recurring. However in looking at the available affordable housing options for people in our community who are either in receipt of Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program shows the following units:

Room for Rent in North Welland - \$630/month – 2 rooms available.

That’s it. The lowest 1 bedroom apartment that can be currently found in Welland costs \$1100/month plus hydro – well out of reach for anyone in receipt of OW or ODSP.

Without a significant boost to the rates of assistance, we can expect the number of people in our community without the resources to put food on the table or keep a roof over their head to continually increase.”

The Hope Centre - Jon Braithwaite



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

“Poverty reduction is about income – everything else is the consequence of poverty, not the cause of poverty. Equal access to income is required.”

Niagara Resident

“We’re setting people up to fail because their wages are way too low to support them and their families.”

Niagara Resident



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

“We still live in deplorable poverty. Even with the ODSP increase I’m living on under \$1000 a month. I’m seriously considering Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). I’m worth nothing to society. I might as well die.”

Niagara ODSP Recipient



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

“Need to have programs like OW and ODSP increase their rates. People can’t survive on these amounts. People lose ambition to do anything when they are living in poverty.”

Niagara Resident



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

A Niagara without poverty is one where people “wouldn’t have to choose between paying rent, paying bills, or buying groceries” and “begging for a chance to survive.” Everyone would have their basic needs met. It would be “a place of wellbeing and abundance.”

Niagara Resident



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

A Niagara without poverty would mean that children and families would thrive. “Children would have better environments to grow up in”, “children would have better health”, and “children could worry about homework instead of hunger.”

Niagara Resident



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

A Niagara without poverty would mean that “Everyone would have the opportunity to pursue the life they wish for themselves, their family, and their children.” It would be one where “people could focus on their life goals, rather than worrying about their next meal, or having a roof over their head.” We would see fewer child development inequities based on income, and “all children born to poverty would have equal opportunity for education.”

Niagara Resident



Messages from our Membership and The Community We Serve

A Niagara without poverty would have adequate income and income supports. “People would have access to programs to assist them with income security and other social supports.” Individuals on Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) would have more than enough to survive. “No families on social assistance would be unable to have secure living conditions and proper nutrition.” People would also be able to “make more money while on assistance to rise up out of poverty.”

Niagara Resident