Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Accomplishments 2025
The vision of Niagara's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) is that everyone in Niagara has a home. To achieve this vision, Niagara has four overarching goals:

- Goal 1: House people who do not have a home
- Goal 2: Help people to retain a home
- Goal 3: Increase housing options and opportunities for low- and medium-income households
- Goal 4: Build capacity and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the housing and homelessness system

Key accomplishments for each of the four goals in 2025 are summarized below.

Goal 1 – House People Who do not Have a Home
Niagara Region advanced this goal through new supportive housing units, rent benefits, and enhanced homelessness response services. This included the launch of the Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub Niagara, portable housing benefits, progress on new transitional and supportive housing units, Council endorsement of the Supportive Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan and expanded outreach and winter response supports.

Progress and accomplishments in 2025 include:

- **HART Hub** – HART Hub Niagara was notified of its successful proposal in early 2025, with a phased launch beginning in fall 2025. HART Hub Niagara provides addiction and mental health treatment for people experiencing chronic homelessness, while increasing access to supportive housing. As of June 2026, HART Hub has onboarded 79 clients, with 22 individuals connected to housing.
- **Rent Benefits** - Through the September 2025 allotment of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB), a collaborative approach involving Homelessness Services, Housing Services, Seniors Services, SAEO, and community partners was used to provide 64 portable rent benefits directly to individuals at risk of homelessness. These benefits supported transitions from shelters and other transitional housing programs to provide ongoing housing stability with the potential for ongoing case management.
- **Transitional Housing (Crescent Place)** - Second Story operates this new build, which provides 18 transitional housing units to Indigenous women and women with children fleeing violence. This is in collaboration with Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre, Niagara Chapter Native Women, and Niagara Regional Native Centre.

- **Supportive Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan** -The Region endorsed a Supportive Housing Strategy and launched its first Expression of Interest for supportive housing. Council also approved a supplemental Supportive Housing Implementation Plan, supported through an annual incremental levy contribution in the budget process.
- **Geneva Street Supportive Housing** - The 49-unit supportive and bridge housing building is currently under construction and is expected to be completed and occupied in late 2026. In 2025, in alignment with the Supportive Housing Strategy, the service model was developed, and a Request for Proposals was issued to identify an appropriate housing service provider. Once complete, the project will add 49 net-new supportive housing units for individuals exiting homelessness who have moderate support needs.
- **Niagara Assertive Street Outreach (NASO)** – NASO undertook a pilot project on Assertive Encampment Engagement. Based on the pilot findings, NASO revised its service approach and staffing model. The shift to dedicated Housing-Focused Outreach workers supporting individuals from encampments directly into housing led to a 200 per cent increase in housing outcomes.
- **Enhanced Winter Response-** Enhanced shelter capacity by adding bed spaces within the system and expanding NASO hours for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
- **Aging with Dignity Pilot** – This is a partnership with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) with Niagara Region Homelessness Services, Social Assistance and Seniors Community Programs. The goal of the program is to enhance connection to permanent housing for older adults experiencing homelessness. By June 2026, the pilot had surpassed its target of housing 27 newly unhoused older adults, successfully housing 30 individuals. Over its 12-month term, the project aims to connect seniors experiencing homelessness to safe, permanent housing more quickly and contribute to a four per cent reduction in chronic homelessness across the region.

Goal 2 – Help People to Retain a Home

Niagara Region advanced this goal by strengthening supports that help people remain housed. This included launching a Shelter Aftercare Pilot to stabilize individuals exiting shelter and reduce returns to homelessness, as well as improving landlord engagement through new system guidelines and finalized service standards across prevention organizations.

Progress and accomplishments in 2025 include:

- **Shelter Aftercare Pilot -** Homelessness Services developed a strategy and supporting tools to assist individuals exiting from shelter to housing who do not have access to a supportive housing program**.** This aftercare model was

awarded funding through CAEH's Homelessness Reduction Innovation Fund at the end of 2025. The pilot program is delivered through a prevention organization and is designed to help stabilize individuals, connect them to their new community, and reduce returns to shelter. The pilot began on April 1, 2026, and as of June 30, 2026, it has received approximately 25 referrals per month from shelters.

- **Landlord Engagement** - In collaboration with organizations funded to provide landlord engagement services, we established system guidelines for this work. The draft has been circulated to all funded organizations that include landlord engagement as part of their services and will be finalized in 2026. We are now using Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), the homelessness database, to track active landlords in the system. We have also begun engaging funded organizations to establish a Community of Practice for landlord engagement. Through this forum, we will work to increase consistency in approach and methodology, support problem-solving, and examine specific challenging cases.
- **Prevention** - Prevention organizations collectively established a shared triage system for all eviction prevention referrals. This increases service consistency and helps ensure support is directed to those most at risk of homelessness. In addition, the funded group of prevention organizations finalized eviction prevention standards which outline expectations with respect to practice.

Goal 3 - Increase Housing Options and Opportunities for Low- and Medium-Income Households

The Region continues to advance a coordinated approach to expanding affordable housing supply and strengthening housing system supports across Niagara. This includes long-term planning for redevelopment and new construction, the use of financial assistance programs to help households access and maintain housing in the community, and specialized project management capacity to support the delivery of affordable, supportive, and mixed-use housing initiatives. Together, these efforts are intended to increase housing options, improve system responsiveness, and support the Region's broader housing and homelessness objectives.

Progress and Accomplishments Include:

- **Consolidated Housing Master Plan** - In May 2025, Regional Council approved the Consolidated Housing Master Plan: Implementation Plan ("CHMP Implementation Plan"). Its purpose is to guide the development and redevelopment of Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) community housing units in an economically responsible and feasible manner that respects the displacement and relocation of existing tenants. Projects that were identified and prioritized for (re)development were based on variety of factors including their potential for

overall unit yield, bedroom type need and planned building composition, construction timing estimates, and capital and operating funding needs.

The CHMP Implementation Plan forecasts the construction of 4,243 units over 25-years that would result in a total increase to NRH's community housing supply from 3,051 units in 2025 to 6,037 units by 2050. NRH's short-term project portfolio consists of the four projects listed below. These same projects were submitted under Build Canada Homes for funding support.

- 320 Geneva Street (Phase 2), St. Catharines. A 5-storey, 106 unit purpose-built affordable rental apartment building.
- Haney Street and 709-725 King Street, Port Colborne. A 5- or 6-storey, 40 to 50 unit mixed use purpose-built affordable rental apartment building. The building is envisioned to have leasable floor space on the ground floor for a third-party licensed childcare provider.
- 184 Denistoun Street, Welland. A 6-storey, 78 unit purpose-built affordable rental apartment building.
- 5925 Summer Street, Niagara Falls. A 6-storey, 43 unit purpose-built affordable rental apartment building.

- **COHB policy** - The COHB portable rent benefit helps applicants on the centralized waiting list pay rent to their current private-market landlord instead of moving into a community housing unit. A policy framework has been established to support the ongoing delivery, administration, and oversight of this benefit. In 2025, 161 new households in Niagara received a COHB supplement.

- **Project Management Supports** – NRH's Development Project Manager Team supports NRH's ability to construct more affordable housing, and the scope of work within the team's portfolio has expanded. Expanded supports go beyond just affordable housing to include supportive housing projects, temporary homeless shelter projects, and mixed use non-profit affordable housing development projects that feature co-location with other municipal and/or community services, including day care facilities

Goal 4 – Build Capacity and Improve the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Housing and Homelessness System

The Region is advancing a comprehensive approach to homelessness services that focuses on prevention, coordinated access, service integration, and long-term system sustainability. Current efforts include strengthening diversion and outreach supports, improving responses to unsheltered homelessness, planning for more permanent shelter solutions, and ensuring that people experiencing homelessness can access services through a more streamlined and responsive system. This work is further

supported by ongoing engagement with people who have lived and living experience, as well as targeted initiatives to address the needs of priority populations, including Veterans.

- **Diversion Expansion** - Shelter diversion is a proven approach to identifying the safest and most appropriate option to meet the immediate housing needs of each individual seeking shelter, which may include staying with a family member or friend. Niagara Region allocated dedicated, trained Diversion staff to be available in all funded shelters. These staff were supported in ongoing training through a Diversion Community of Practice.
- **Encampment strategy** - The encampment strategy is intended to reduce the number of people residing in places not fit for human habitation while working collectively to address the impact of visible homelessness on local communities. Homelessness Services, NASO and Community Safety and Wellbeing teams collaborate with local municipalities and community providers to align and coordinate the efforts of service provision to encourage people who are unsheltered to access shelter or housing.
- **Alternate Shelter Sites** - Alternate sites are being sought in both St. Catharines and Niagara Falls to relocate the current temporary shelter operations at 29 Riordon Street in St. Catharines and 5925 Summer Street in Niagara Falls. By the end of 2026, an expanded capacity, temporary shelter site will replace the current 29 Riordon Street shelter operation in St Catharines until a new permanent site is secured.
- **Centralized Homelessness Access and Diversion (CHAD)** - CHAD provides streamlined, inclusive, and effective access to diversion, street outreach, and emergency shelter supports for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Niagara. CHAD is accessed by a transfer from 211 to the following services: NASO voicemail box and dispatchers, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO) Interim Family Shelter Program (IFSP), After-Hours Line.
- **Lived Expert Advisory**- Ongoing engagement with community members with lived and living experience of homelessness. The Lived Expert Advisory has 23 regular members, two of whom have been sponsored to receive peer support training and are now employed to work as professional peers.
- **Addressing Veterans Homelessness** – Following the success of a pilot through the CAEH Accelerator Fund, Niagara Region secured Federal Veteran Homelessness Program funding to expand and better assist Veterans experiencing homelessness to be rehoused. In 2025, 8 Veterans were moved into new housing with rent subsidies and ongoing case management to remain stably housed.

Niagara Region will continue to work collaboratively with community partners to support ongoing initiatives that address housing and homelessness and work together to explore ways to identify and address gaps. This work will be highlighted in the updated Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2026-2036.