

Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

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

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Our journey

- Our starting point
- Creating the strategy
- Strategy in motion
- Measuring what matters
- Where it has brought us

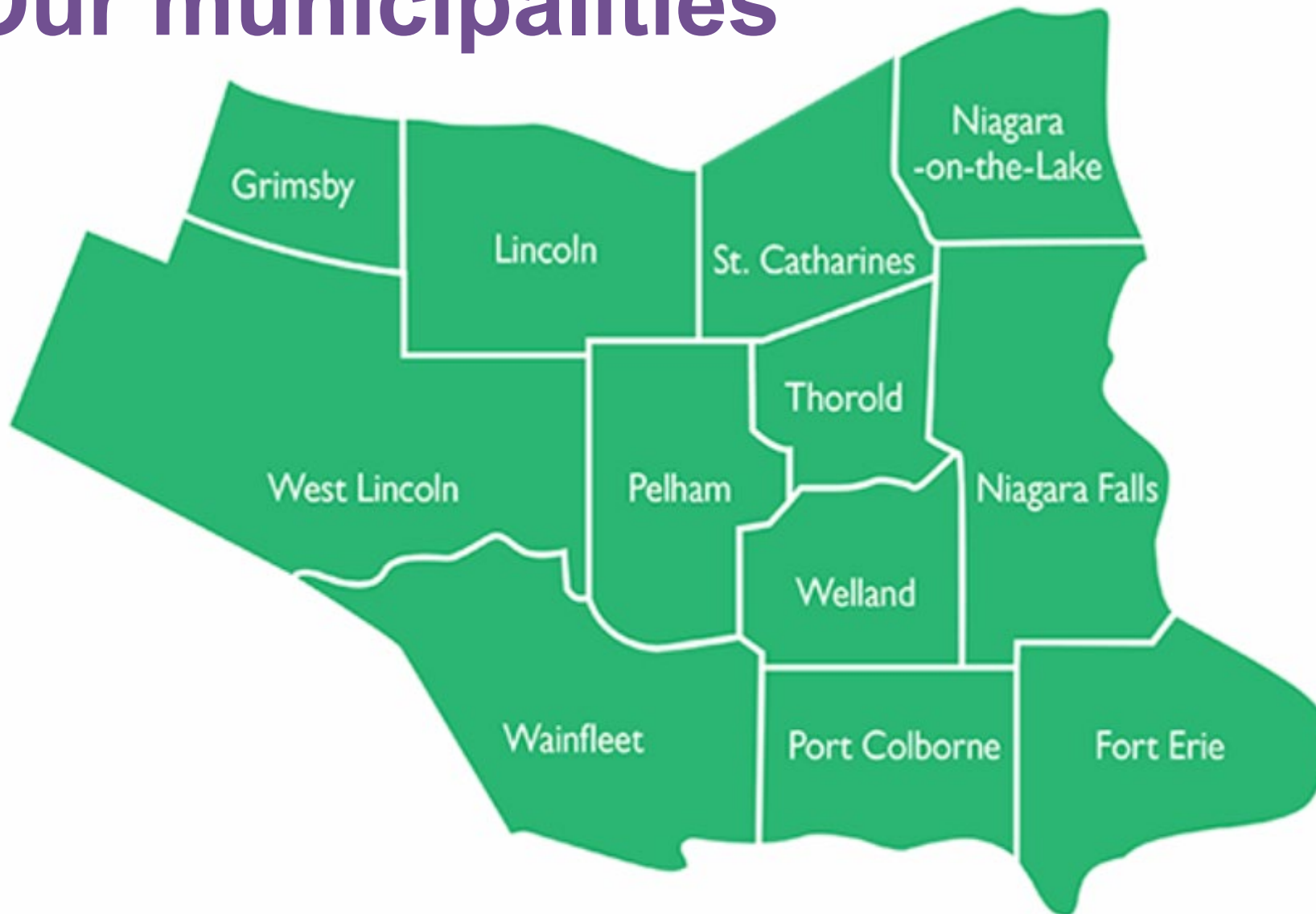


Our starting point

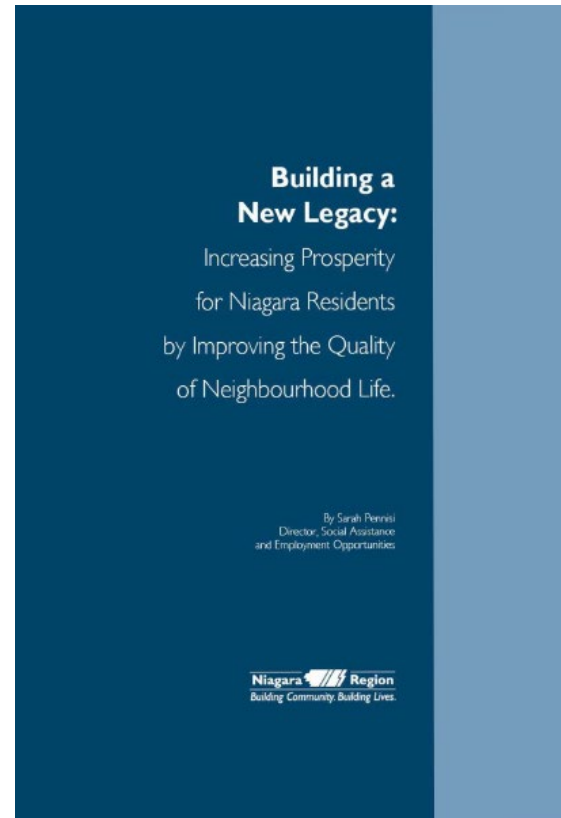
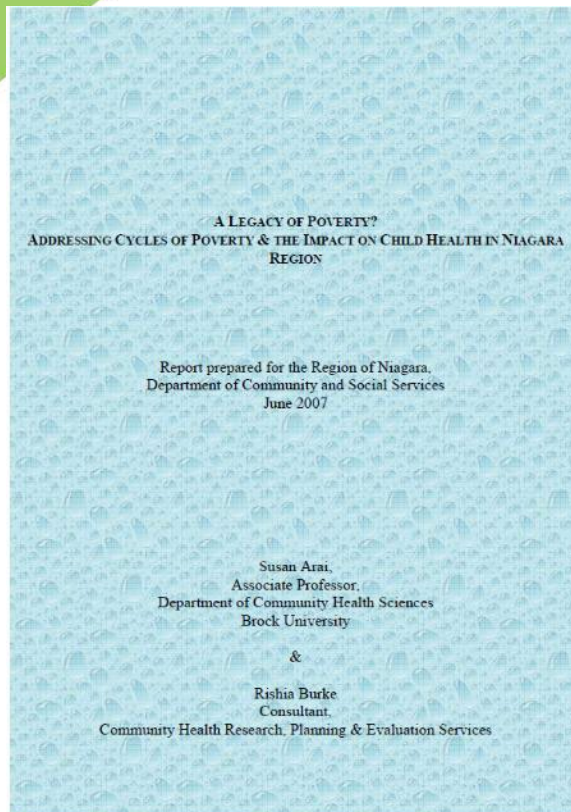


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Our municipalities

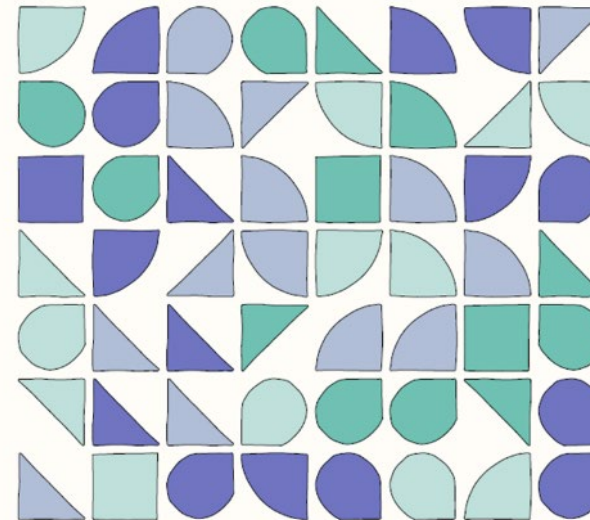


Strategic roadmaps

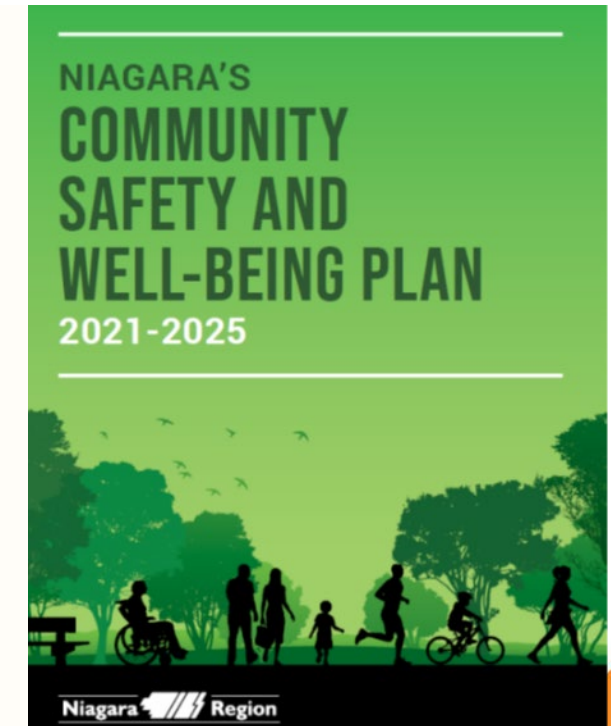


Connecting the Pieces

An Evaluation of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative and
Call for a Broader Poverty Reduction Strategy for Niagara



Report prepared for Niagara Region July 2021
By MB Raddon, Dennis Soron, Susan Petrina



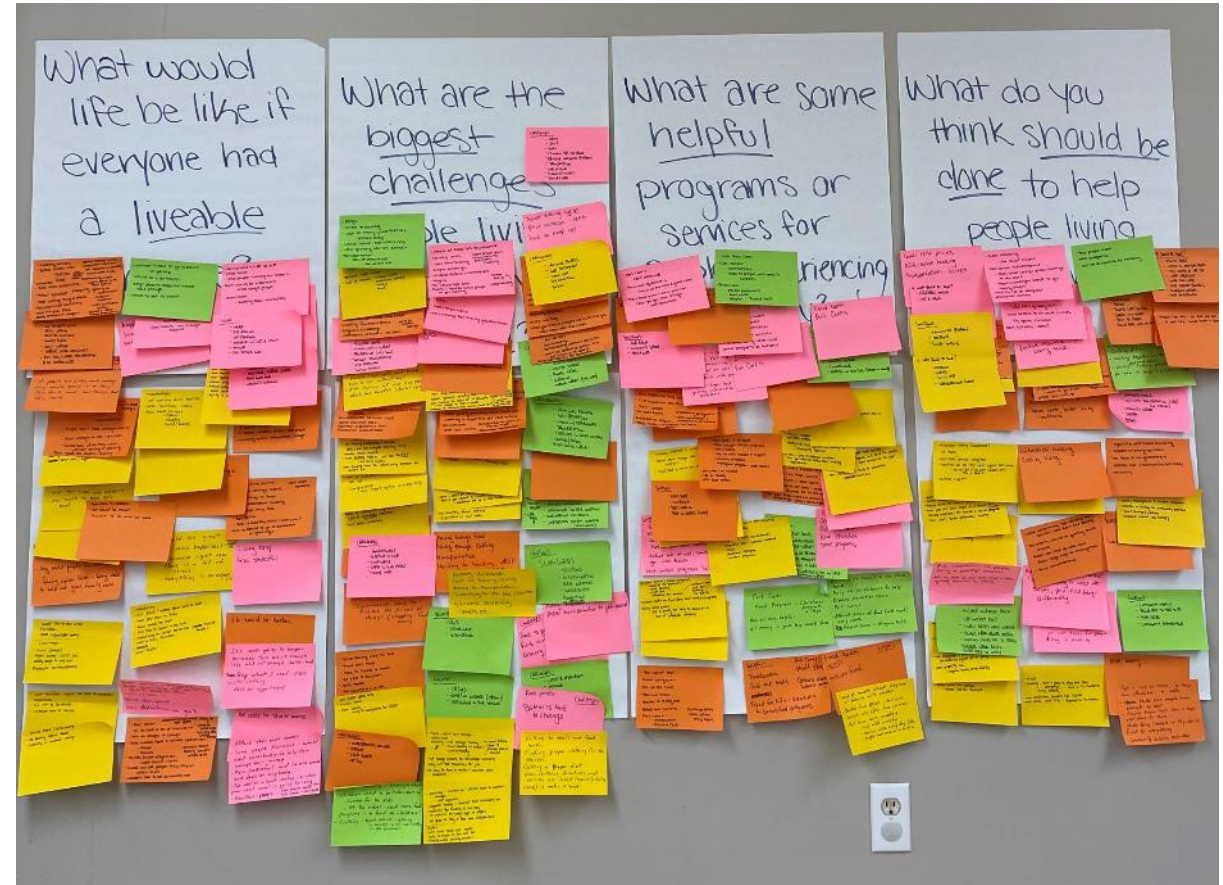
Creating the Strategy



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Rooted in voice, backed by research

- Community voice -- 1000+ residents engaged
- Best Practice
- Validation by 100+ content experts
- Hear benefits of the strategy from a lived expert -- <https://youtu.be/fkKknT0FNvs>



Collective impact

- Common agenda
- Continuous communication
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Backbone support
- Shared measurement



Levels of engagement

- Inform – what's happening
- Consult – what do you think
- Involve – what ideas do you have
- Collaborate – how can we solve this together
- Empower – how can we support you

31 engagement host sites

- Niagara Region Housing sites
- Advisory committees
- Networks e.g., Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
- Food banks
- Libraries
- Non-profit agencies

Engagement survey

- 600 residents completed an online survey
 - 36% reported a total family income before tax of \$40,000 or less
 - 11% reported their primary source of income as Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program

What we heard

“When a crisis hits, everything is gone in a minute. And it’s devastating to lose everything”

“I’m a senior in a modest home alone and have to choose between food and utilities... I’m just trying to keep my head above inflation”

“I used to live a good life, and now I don’t feel like a human...When you’re down, everyone wants to kick you. I now know what that saying means, it’s a never-ending cycle.”

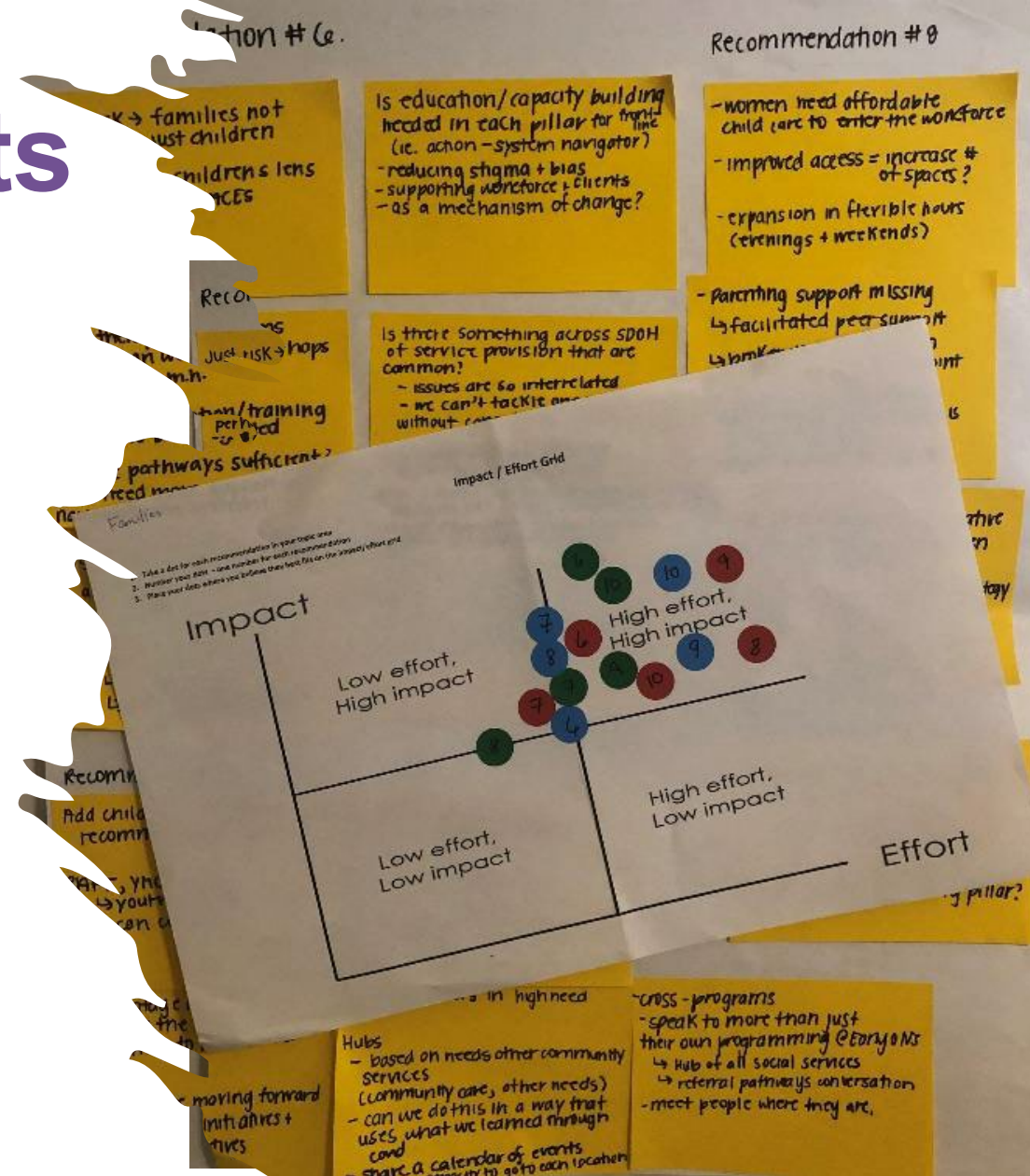
“People look at you like you are worthless”

Indigenous engagement

- 200+ Indigenous people provided input via survey and at Indigenous events
- Question asked: "What do you believe is Indigenous Prosperity?"
- Some themes: Self-determination, Indigenous identity, Non-indigenous relationships, Spirituality, Culture

External content experts

- Advisory Committees
- Community Health Centers
- Indigenous leaders
- Municipal staff
- Networks and community groups
- Non-profit agency service providers
- University



Internal content experts



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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

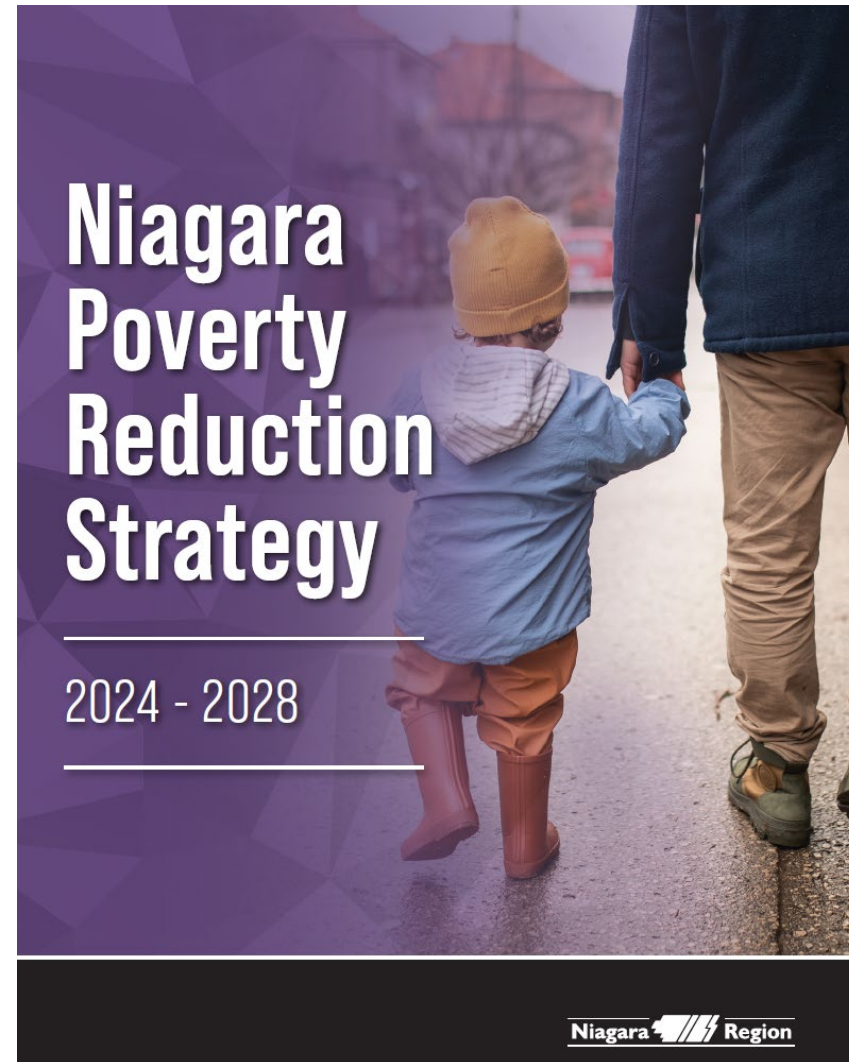
Steering Committee

- Community Services Director
- Regional councillors (2)
- Lived experts (2)
- Indigenous leaders (2)
- Municipal CAO
- Community leaders whose work aligns with poverty reduction (8)



Products

- Interim report
- Final report
- 100 actions work plan
- Strategy at-a-glance
- Video with lived expert



How to create change

Areas of focus

Service Access, Coordination and Capacity

Leveraging Voices of Lived Expertise

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Changing Mindsets

Advocacy

Funding



Indigenous Well-being

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



Food Security

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



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.



Income

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



Early Child Development

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



Employment

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



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.



Transportation

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

Strategy in motion



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Components in Motion

Internal

- Apply the strategy to amplify Regional efforts
- Align with Niagara Prosperity Initiative grant program

External

- Support Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
- Explore how interested and affected parties contribute



Momentum through promotion

- Niagara Region staff made presentations about the strategy reaching over 200 people from 20 community groups or agencies
- 191 Community Champions added to an email distribution list to receive the strategy and updates
- Ongoing meetings of Niagara Region staff across departments held to determine ways to advance the strategy and track aligned actions in Enviso

Measuring what matters



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Evaluation plan

- Tell the story of change in Niagara
- Build confidence of decision makers such as Niagara Region Council in how the strategy is being implemented
- Increase understanding of Indigenous prosperity
- Learn how to improve the strategy and funded projects

Evaluation questions

- How well has the strategy met its goals?
- How well were funded projects put into practice?
- What impact did funded projects have?
- What can improve implementation?
- What hindered success?

Sample indicators

- Number of champions involved in the strategy by sector
- Status of actions named in the strategy
- Number of people who complete ODSP applications leading to increased income
- Amount of money recovered through tax-filing
- Number of domestic violence survivors and children who retain permanent housing away from their abusers
- Number of Indigenous youth who report positive progress with employment and mental health

Where it has brought us



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Transit Benefit Pass

- Approved by Niagara Transit Commission Board in March 2025
- Offers a \$50 monthly pass to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients and low-income individuals



Call to increase social assistance rates

- Report to Niagara Region Council with delegation from Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
- Council sent correspondence to the Province requesting an increase in OW and ODSP rates and indexing OW like ODSP.

Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2025-27

Seven agencies funded to address six areas of investment identified through the strategy.

- Indigenous well-being
- Mental health and addiction (Social Assistance)
- Mental health and addiction (Situation Tables)
- Income and employment
- Housing and early child development
- Food security



Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

Leveraging the strategy to advocate for income solutions and change mindsets:

- Spring forum on Basic Income Guarantee
- Film night about Basic Income Guarantee
- Presentation with calls to action for local groups
- Social media



Questions?



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Thank-you for listening to our Journey

For details

- Visit niagararegion.ca/community-safety/poverty-reduction-strategy
- Email endpoverty@niagararegion.ca
- Read our case study --
www.tamarackcommunity.ca/case-studies/case-study-niagara-region-s-poverty-reduction-strategy