

Executive Summary

This document includes a review of the first five years of Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, "A Home for All", and provides updated actions, outcomes and targets for years 6-10 of the action plan. Key terms are defined in Appendix B.

This review is intended to meet the requirements for municipal service managers as stated in the Housing Services Act, 2011 and responds to the policy direction provided to service managers by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the completion of five year reviews in the Policy Statement: Service Managers Housing and Homelessness Plans, 2016 and the guidance provided in Five Year Review of Housing and Homelessness Plans: A Guide for Ontario Service Managers, 2018.

Planning is a complex and intricate process that is undertaken at a given time, in an environment of change and uncertainty. Nevertheless, the five year review provides an opportunity for the service manager, its partners and other participating parties to reflect on the local plan and the actions taken in the first five years, and plan to improve the local system of housing and homelessness in a way that will lead to better outcomes for people in Niagara.

The formal review process considered data and information provided by the A Home for All Task force and working groups including the lived experience advisory, homeless services providers, non-profit housing providers and co-operative providers, Indigenous community (Niagara Indigenous Community Advisory Board on Homelessness (NICAB)), other community groups (Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, Age Friendly Niagara Network), independent consultants, local area municipal planners and affordable housing action plan working groups, and regional staff from Planning and Development Services, Community Services, Corporate Services, and Niagara Regional Housing.

The review examined key trends in the external environment, including the housing market, demand for emergency shelter and community housing, funding and policy changes, changing client needs, and a focus on best practices. It also describes key undertakings in the first five years, including the development of community-led working groups, creation of an affordable housing strategy steering committee, identification of current and future affordable housing need, a review of Niagara's homeless serving system, and development of outcomes and targets for the action plan.

In the first five years of the action plan the 24 initial and 28 short-term actions were completed, while the 24 mid-term actions are on track for completion by the end of 2019. Four long term actions from the original action plan remain to be completed. The review also identified a need for the service manager to further shift focus from managing homelessness to ending homelessness and chronic homelessness, maintain ongoing and adequate reserves to support community housing development, increase engagement and collaboration with Indigenous partners, and address the housing and homeless services needs of other equity-seeking groups including those with complex needs, persons with a disability, persons with a developmental disability, older adults, youth, women, newcomers and refugees, and Franco-Canadians.

The action plan has four 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

The review identified 75 action items to be completed in years 6-10 of the action plan to support the following twelve outcomes related to the four goals:

1. Improve access to shelter and housing for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
2. Reduce the time spent in emergency shelter before successful exit.
3. Improve the housing situation for those exiting emergency shelter.
4. Reduce the time it takes for those who are at risk of homelessness to access prevention services.
5. Improve long-term housing stability for households at risk of homelessness.
6. Improve long-term housing stability for households that have graduated from housing with support programs.
7. Increase the supply of higher-density housing forms, including townhouse and apartments.

8. Increase the number of new community housing units developed, and the proportion of new community housing units that are bachelor / 1-bedroom units or four or more bedroom units.
9. Prevent the loss of current community housing stock.
10. Increase the use of best practices in all funded homeless services programs.
11. Increase the number of new initiatives created in partnership with Indigenous, health, corrections, or child welfare systems.
12. Increase the number of policies, practices and services revised to better serve Indigenous people, older adults, youth, women, persons with a disability, Franco-Canadians, and newcomers and refugees.