

Advocating for a Strong Halton

Working Together for a Strong Halton and Ontario

Introduction

Halton: A Snapshot



Halton Region is home to more than 624,000 residents in four communities. Along with its Local Municipalities (City of Burlington, Town of Halton Hills, Town of Milton, and Town of Oakville) Halton Region is an effective two-tier government recognized for its strong financial position, safe communities, natural environment, progressive approach to urban development and citizen-focused reliable services. Halton Region is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, with an expected population of 1.1 million by 2051.

Working Together for Residents and Communities

Working together, Halton Region and the Provincial Government have taken some key steps forward on priority issues within communities throughout the region. Halton acknowledges and appreciates the Province's ongoing support, particularly in the following areas:

- Leadership and funding to enable a strong COVID-19 response into 2022
- Finalization of the Child Care Agreement
- Support for ROPA 49
- Audit and Accountability Funding for strategic IT projects
- Streamline Development Approval Funding to accelerate approvals

Focused on Priorities

Halton Region has focused on the following key priority areas where partnership with the Provincial Government is critical for success:

-  Addressing Rural, Urban Broadband Service Gaps
-  Addressing the Housing Affordability and Supply Crisis
-  Investment in Assisted Housing and Homelessness
-  Health System Transformation (see separate document)

Addressing Rural, Urban Broadband Service Gaps

The experience through the COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated that broadband is an essential service. There is a need to increase and accelerate broadband connectivity, quality and affordability in Halton's communities. Halton has completed comprehensive broadband rural and urban service availability studies identifying significant service gaps including approximately 4700 households in west Burlington, north-west Milton and south Halton Hills. The Region estimates that an additional 2300 households in older urban municipal areas are also underserved. Halton Region has supported telecommunications providers in over 15 rural Halton applications for Provincial and Federal broadband funding. Confirmed projects to-date will serve approximately 1100 households and we look forward to further announcements related to the Improving Connectivity for Ontario (ICON) program.

The current CRTC 50Mbps/10Mbps target is not sufficient to support future technology and applications. Many of the internet services available in Halton do not provide fibre technologies to homes and are therefore not scalable to 1 Gbps services required to support 5G technology. It is estimated that there are currently significant gaps in the fibre network in Halton, which will need to be addressed to achieve the benefits of 5G technology.

Working with all Halton's Local Municipalities, Halton Region has developed the Halton Digital Access Strategy which sets a goal for a unified network of 5G mobile and 1 Gbps broadband across all of Halton Region by 2026.

Halton requests:

- Confirmation and approval of ICON and joint UBF/ICON funding announcements for rural Halton Region including coverage and timing details.
- That fibre investments awarded through the UBF/ICON programs support 5G requirements and are scalable to the 1 Gbps target.
- That the Province, working with the Federal and Provincial governments deliver investments to support 1 Gbps across Halton by 2026.
- That the Province work with the Federal Government to ensure affordability of fibre and 5G services.
- That the Province work with the Federal Government to publish useful broadband service data and establish a framework for sharing this data with municipalities.



Addressing the Housing Affordability and Supply Crisis

Halton Region supports the provincial priority of addressing housing affordability and is committed to working with the Province to implement impactful solutions. Housing supply is a complex issue driven by economic and market forces and addressing housing supply challenges requires a coordinated and strategic approach across all levels of government.

Halton Region has on the ground experience in delivering new housing units while maintaining the character and quality of the community. According to the 2021 Census, between 2016 and 2021, Halton Region had the highest growth rate in the GTHA. From 2019 to 2022, Halton Region delivered 15,000 housing units despite slowdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Halton Region has also financed, in partnership with the development community, \$1.5 billion of water, wastewater and transportation infrastructure through the 2020 Allocation Program to support growth including more than 26,000 new units of housing supply in approved greenfield areas. This development is important to meeting the growth targets the Province has mandated.

Halton Region strongly recommends a careful review of the Affordable Housing Task Force recommendations, as we strongly believe some of the recommendations are counterproductive to our shared objectives of addressing housing affordability and accelerating housing supply. Halton Region is prepared to assist the Province with the review of the Affordable Housing Task Force recommendations and ultimately the implementation of measures that will be effective in achieving our shared objectives.

Based on Halton Region's experience key factors in achieving ongoing success in delivering new housing units while maintaining the character and quality of our community include:

- Stable and adequate funding of Municipal infrastructure through development charges.
- Financing plans for timely municipal delivery of infrastructure supported by the Region's Allocation Program.
- Stability of planning legislation in Ontario and timely planning approvals including for Official Plan updates.
- Timely delivery of provincial Infrastructure including schools, hospitals, inter-regional transit, highways.

Halton requests:

- A seat at the table to review the Affordability Task Force recommendations and other strategies to address housing supply and affordability.
- Approval of Halton's Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 49).
- Streamlining of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment processes for critical infrastructure required to service growth, particularly for infrastructure that is identified by an approved Official Plan.
- The timely delivery of a coordinated, provincial infrastructure investment plan and funding connected to the Growth Plan, to advance critical provincial infrastructure including:
 - o capital investments and new schools in high growth communities including North Oakville and the Boyne Survey in Milton
 - o the expansion of hospital services in Georgetown
 - o all-day, two-way GO service to Milton and Halton Hills
 - o new 407 Transit Way Stations in Halton, including a Neyagawa Road Station
 - o the delivery of Kerr St. and Burloak Drive grade separations
 - o investments in Highway 401 and the QEW through Halton



Investments in Assisted Housing and Homelessness

Halton Region has invested significantly, in partnership with the Provincial and Federal governments in delivering assisted housing opportunities. Since 2014, Halton have delivered 1,005 new assisted housing opportunities and has expanded and enhanced shelter and supportive housing programs. The need for assisted housing and homeless supports have however continued to increase, compounded by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the arrival of people escaping war in Ukraine.

While Halton Region has received funding from the Federal Government to assist with the expansion of Halton's shelter system, we have not received a commitment from the Provincial Government for the full operating costs associated with the expanded capacity. Current estimates show the shortfall in annual funding to exceed \$1.6 million.

To respond to the increasing demand for assisted housing, Halton Region has created a portfolio of potential new housing opportunities and undertaken pre-development work for various sites owned by the Region. The portfolio includes approximately 600 potential units at an estimated cost of \$451 million. To successfully deliver these new units, federal and provincial funding is required.

Halton requests:

- Supports for Ukrainian arrivals including:
 - o immediate funding to support the housing related costs;
 - o changes to the Social Housing wait list eligibility to accommodate people arriving from Ukraine; and
 - o programs and supports to move Ukrainian arrivals from the shelter system to transitional housing including rent guarantees and rent subsidies
- Increase in Halton Region's Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) allocation to recognize the expansion of the shelter system and related operating costs.
- Commitment to a funding partnership to deliver 600 new assisted housing units in Halton.



Advocating for a Strong Halton

Working Together for a Strong, Integrated Health System

Halton appreciates the Province's strong leadership throughout the COVID-19 response and the funding support provided to municipalities. Halton Region is very proud of its COVID-19 response and the supports provided locally to the community including having 89 per cent of the population five and over with at least two doses of vaccine.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated many strengths of the current health system while highlighting opportunities for improvement.

The Province initiated the transformation of the health system in 2019, pre-pandemic, with The People's Health Care Act. Halton Region is a key partner in the Province's transformation agenda with goals that include health system integration, population health and health equity. As a key service provider with funding responsibilities for many health and human services, municipalities must have a seat at the table to inform the transformation efforts. A strong, collaborative partnership between the Province and municipalities is critical to achieving common goals of the health system transformation agenda including the following three priorities:

- Health System Recovery - Impacts on Paramedic Services
- Public Health
- Health System Transformation and Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)

Health System Recovery - Impacts on Paramedic Services

As the health system recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been under significant pressure with increasing wait times in emergency departments, lack of available in-patient hospital beds and staffing shortages across the health system.

These pressures are impacting Paramedic Services as they experience ongoing staffing shortages and corresponding reductions in the number of ambulances staffed on a daily basis. Staffing shortages are due to COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 related absences, seasonal absences due to approved leave and a lack of new paramedics available for recruitment provincially. Call volumes in Halton have also increased by 11 per cent compared to 2021.

This situation is compounded by the fact that local hospitals are under extreme pressure due to high patient volumes, sicker patients and staffing challenges. At times, these staffing shortages result in reduced capacity in emergency departments, which means increased offload delays for paramedics.

These system pressures have resulted in an increased number of occurrences where there are inadequate paramedic resources available, including periods where only one or no ambulances are available for the entire region.

Paramedic Services continues to implement measures to try to manage the situation but these issues are system-wide and system-wide solutions will be required for the system to recover.

Halton requests:

- That the Province urgently implement measures to address the health system pressures.

Public Health

Halton Region is accountable for delivering Public Health programs and services to the community. Halton Region Public Health, like Public Health units across the province have been and continue to be on the front lines of Ontario's COVID-19 pandemic response providing essential services, such as vaccine clinics, contact tracing and outbreak management.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Halton Region provided written submissions as part of the Provincial Government's Public Health Modernization consultations. Experience throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response has reaffirmed much of the submission including:

- Public Health unit boundaries should reflect Halton Region's geography, be consistent with any community partners and support strong relationships, collaboration and connectedness.
- Public Health should be given a clear mandate to support the OHTs.
- Public Health should continue to be delivered by Halton Region with Regional Council serving as the Board of Health given proven effectiveness and direct accountability.
- Provincial funding formulas must recognize growth consistent with Provincial growth objectives and projections.
- Increased Provincial centralized support, including through Public Health Ontario, could reduce duplication, improve consistency and service delivery.

As the Province considers reinitiating the review of Public Health, it is important that it be done in the context of the health system transformation work now underway. Public Health is integral to the population health and the health equity focus of the Provincial health system transformation.

Halton requests:

- The review of Public Health be undertaken in collaboration with the Municipal sector leveraging the experience gained through the COVID-19 pandemic response and in alignment with the ongoing health system transformation including the work of the OHTs.
- That Halton Region's previous submission to the Public Health Modernization consultation be considered as part of any review of Public Health by the Province.
- A Provincial commitment to providing adequate and predictable funding for Public Health to ensure mandated services and the response to COVID-19 can be delivered to the Halton community.



Health System Transformation and Ontario Health Teams

The *People's Health Care Act, 2019* introduced the framework for the OHTs to organize and deliver local services. Halton Region has key leadership roles with the Burlington OHT and Connected Care Halton OHT. These teams were approved by the Province in the initial cohort of the OHTs.

The Province has indicated that guidance will be provided to the OHTs regarding their future governance models. Halton Region believes that there is a strong value proposition for the Region to remain in a leadership role with the OHTs as there are benefits for Halton Region, the OHTs, the Province and the community.

Value Proposition

Halton Region and the OHTs can provide value to each other and each other's work through:

1. Strong alignment with Halton Region's commitment to Community Well-being.

- The vision of the OHTs to integrate care through population health and equity approaches strongly aligns with Halton Region's objectives related to Community Well-Being.

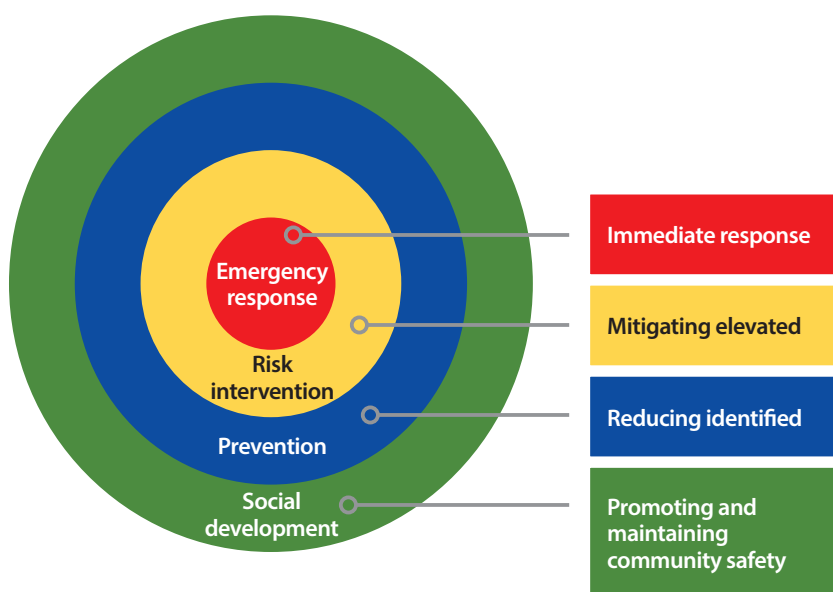
2. Regional services are integral to a population health management approach.

- The OHTs have committed to a population health approach focusing on the well-being of the population and of individuals. This approach requires increased focus on prevention, promotion and consideration of the social determinants of health.
- Some Regional Services have been identified as "in-scope" for the OHTs by the Province.
- Many of Halton Region's services are focused on addressing the social determinants of health through population-based policies and interventions. This brings a unique and important perspective to the work of the OHTs.

3. Halton Region, together with community partners, plays a critical role in addressing the social determinants of health and advancing health equity including through Halton's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

- Halton Region's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan fosters intergrated human services approaches that impact population health.
- Priorities identified by Halton's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan are well-aligned with the priorities being identified by the OHTs including mental health and addictions, and seniors. Working together, Halton Region, the local OHT's and the community partners in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan have the opportunity to better serve vulnerable populations and address health inequities.

Community Safety and Well-Being Plan



Shared Strategic Directions



4. Halton Region makes significant funding investments into the health system.

- Ultimately, the OHTs at maturity will be funded through an integrated funding envelope and would establish priorities for healthcare spending. Given Halton Region is a significant funding partner for many of the services in-scope for the OHTs, it is essential that Halton Region have a voice at the table.
- Over \$350 million or approximately 40 per cent of Halton Region's operating budget is spent on health and social services. This includes \$120.2 million of Regional property taxes, including:
 - o \$42.6 million for the Ministry of Health funded services
 - o \$57.2 million for Social Services funded by various ministries
 - o \$20.5 million for Long-Term Care

Halton requests:

- That the Province and Ontario Health recognize the value proposition for municipal leadership in the OHTs including the significant role of municipalities in funding the health system as it considers the future governance of the OHTs.
- That Provincial investments in key health services delivered by Halton Region including public health, long-term care and paramedic services be dedicated and predictable to meet the needs of the community.
- That the Province and Ontario Health establish standards for the OHTs including those related to technology, data sharing and governance to promote consistency of service delivery for residents and minimize duplication of effort, particularly where there multiple OHTs are within a municipality or region.

