



HALTON REGION'S

# Comprehensive Housing Strategy

2025-2035



# MESSAGE FROM HALTON REGIONAL CHAIR GARY CARR



Safe and affordable housing is a fundamental building block of strong and inclusive communities. As the population in Halton Region continues to grow, so does the demand for supportive and assisted housing.

Despite significant nation-wide pressures—including rapid population growth, the deepening mental health and addictions crisis, and stagnant income levels—Halton Region has made meaningful progress in expanding assisted housing and delivering critical services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

But we know there is more work to do.

With the support of our Federal and Provincial partners, Halton Region is well-positioned to increase the supply of deeply affordable housing, strengthen homelessness prevention, and help more residents transition into permanent, supportive homes.

On behalf of Regional Council, I am proud to present the 2025–2035 Comprehensive Housing Strategy—our roadmap to address the complex housing challenges facing our community and deliver sustainable, people-centred solutions.

We look forward to continuing our strong partnerships with all levels of government, service providers, and community leaders over the next decade to turn this vision into reality.

To learn more about our housing and homelessness supports—as well as a growing portfolio of in-progress and investment-ready assisted housing projects—please visit [halton.ca/housing](https://halton.ca/housing).

Gary Carr  
Regional Chair

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# **SECTION 1:**

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# **SETTING THE CONTEXT**

The background of the slide is a solid dark green color. Overlaid on this are several layers of lighter green, semi-transparent shapes that create a sense of rolling hills or a landscape. These shapes are curved and layered, with some appearing in the foreground and others receding into the background, giving a three-dimensional effect.

# INTRODUCTION

## How We Got Here: The Housing and Homelessness Crisis

Access to safe and stable housing is the foundation of a healthy, thriving community. As Halton Region continues to grow, so does the need for more affordable housing options with the right supports in place, for residents most in need.

Halton Region is not immune to the housing and homelessness crisis. This is not just a local issue, it's a reality unfolding across the country, province and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

While we are taking action today, it is equally important to understand how we got here.



**68%**

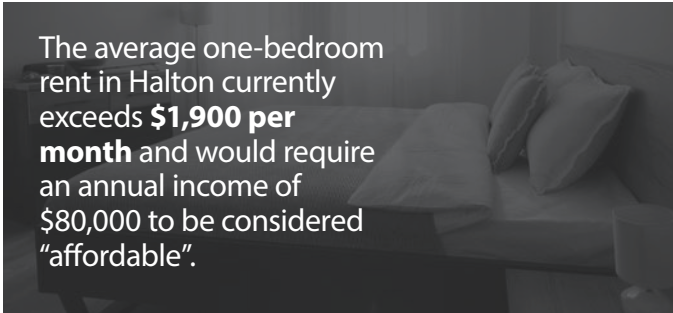
Since 2013, the national average home price in Canada has increased about **68%**.

Over the past decade, income growth has failed to keep up with rising housing prices, leaving many new home buyers and renters behind.

This growing affordability gap has driven up demand for rental housing, which in turn has pushed rental prices even higher.

Halton's average monthly rent is one of the highest in the GTA, making the private rental market unaffordable for many. While rent controls remain in place for sitting tenants in units built before 2018, landlords are permitted to increase rents upon unit turnover to a level of what the market will bear. The Region's State of Housing Report highlights that in 2023, there were a total of 16,299 private townhouse and apartment rental units, which represents an approximate **500 unit decline since 2022**.

As a result, between 2014 and 2023, average rents went up by 54.5%.<sup>1</sup>



The average one-bedroom rent in Halton currently exceeds **\$1,900 per month** and would require an annual income of \$80,000 to be considered "affordable".

While home ownership and rental cost rose dramatically, median household incomes grew over the same period by only 11%.<sup>2</sup> Recent data from October 2023, specific to Halton, states that households with an income range of between \$94,000 to \$108,000 are unable to attain even the most affordable type of home ownership, namely a condominium.<sup>2</sup> This growing gap underscores the challenges many Canadians face in achieving homeownership, as housing costs have outpaced income growth over the past decade.

Another key contributing factor is **unprecedented population growth**. Since 2020, Canada's permanent population has increased by over 2 million people. As of July 1, 2024, the number of non-permanent residents has also tripled, with an estimated 3 million households now residing in the country. A November 2023 report from the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate estimated that Canada is short approximately 4.4 million affordable homes.

The loss of affordable rental units combined with significant population growth means that many households, particularly those of low income, are being pushed out of the private market and are **increasingly seeking out government assisted housing for support**. As affordable rental stock becomes less available, more households are joining Community Housing waitlists or relying on emergency shelters in search of stable assisted housing options.

1. Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives, April 11, 2024. [Rent control in Ontario is full of loopholes.](#)

2. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240426/dq240426a-eng.htm>



# INTRODUCTION

Between 2021 and 2024 the Halton Access to Community Housing (HATCH) waitlist grew by **72%**, reaching **8,048 total applicants**, of which 3,497 are Halton residents. While it is acknowledged that the use of waitlist data is an incomplete picture of need, given that individuals across the province can apply to multiple waitlists across all jurisdictions, it does highlight the growing demand for assisted housing in Halton.

This growing waitlist has contributed to the **rise of homelessness and the presence of encampments in Halton**. In 2024, the Region experienced a 16% increase in shelter intakes compared to the previous year. The Region's emergency shelter operating capacity increased from 90% in 2014, to 140% in 2024. During the last two years, considerable progress has been made by Halton's Outreach Program, in assisting individuals in exiting encampments, however visible homelessness remains a reality in the community and must form a critical component of the new strategy.

## Housing Crisis Impact



Market ownership costs outpacing income across Canada.



Market rental costs outpacing income and social assistance (Ontario Works).  
Increased demand for rental subsidies.

### Impact



Demand for assisted rental housing outpacing unit availability.



Demand for emergency shelter outpacing nightly supply.



Increased homelessness, encampments, mental health & addictions.

## Highlights

- Housing affordability remains at crisis levels. Across Ontario, home prices have doubled relative to median family incomes since 2005.
- In 2005, 21 of 26 Southern Ontario single-family home markets were either *affordable* or *deeply affordable* for middle-class families, and none were unattainable. Today, there are no affordable or deeply affordable markets in Southern Ontario, and 11 of 26 are *completely unattainable* for middle-class families.

Source: Ontario Home Builders Association



# HALTON HOUSING NEED AT A GLANCE

**5,684**

existing assisted housing  
units are fully occupied

**8,048**

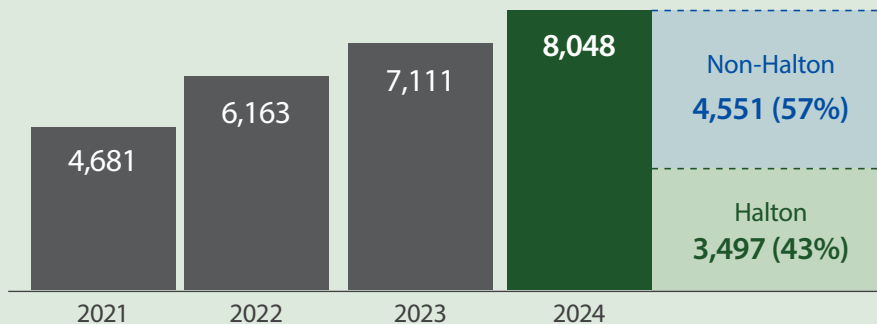
Households on wait list

\*includes individuals applying from other  
municipalities in Ontario



Unsheltered  
homelessness  
increased **185%**  
since 2018

Waitlist has  
increased  
by **72%**  
since 2021



**75%** of HATCH  
Applicants  
earn **less than**  
**\$30,000** per year



**343**

minimum number  
of individuals  
homeless on any  
one night



**76%**

of individuals  
identified as having  
mental health or  
addiction issues



**47%**

of individuals  
identified as  
having substance  
use disorders



## Emergency Shelter

**521 individuals and households**  
accessed shelter in 2024

Demand increased by **16%** since  
2023



## Homelessness Prevention

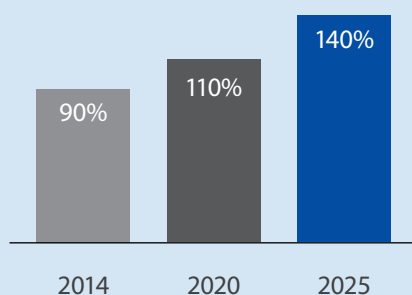
**2,234 households** supported in  
2024

Housing Stability Fund budget  
has increased by **71%** since 2021



**138 individuals** were supported  
out of encampment through  
Halton's Street Outreach Team  
(2024)

## Demand for emergency shelter



Halton's  
emergency  
shelter system  
is currently  
operating at  
**40% above**  
**capacity**



At least **165 units** of dedicated  
supportive housing is required  
to meet current demand and  
prevent higher emergency shelter  
use, street homelessness and  
encampments



An overflow shelter bed costs  
over **\$3,500 per month**

# THE LAST 10 YEARS:

## The Role of Municipalities and Halton Region

Under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, municipalities such as Halton are designated the role of “Service Manager”. The Service Manager is responsible for the funding and administration of all social housing in their geographic area, including the requirement to develop and implement a 10-year housing and homelessness plan known in Halton as the “Comprehensive Housing Strategy”.

While municipalities work to fill the gap in affordable housing, they continue to face funding pressures. These include legislative changes related to development charges, inadequate and inconsistent funding provided through the Federal and Provincial governments, and the rising costs of housing development.

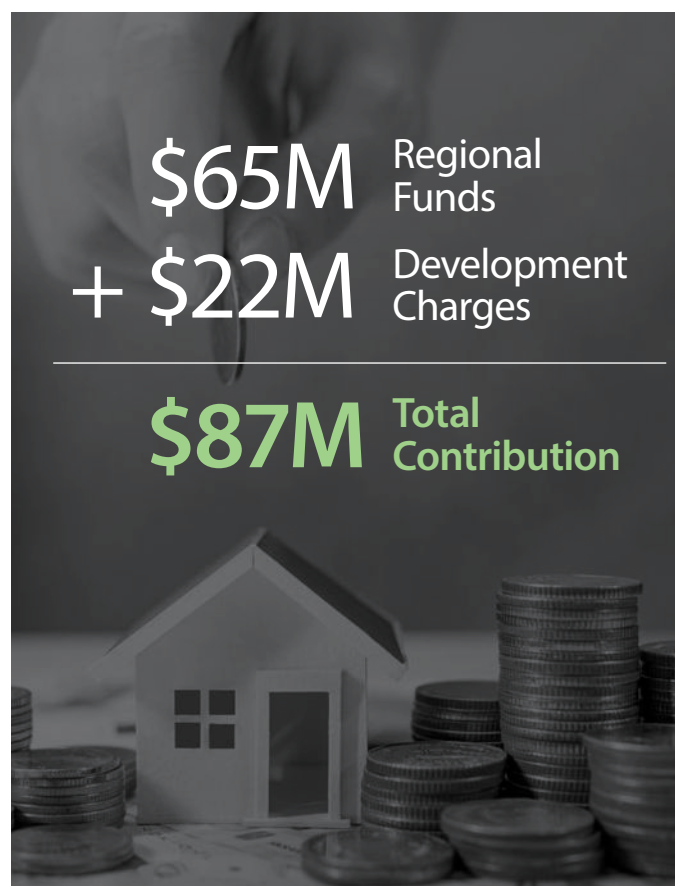
The Region’s Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2014-2024 successfully implemented a range of actions that provided housing solutions across the entire housing continuum, from homelessness prevention through to the private market. This strategy was created under significantly different external conditions, and since then, changes to the housing environment have resulted in the deepening of an existing housing crisis.

### The Region’s Role and Progress Made

As the Service Manager, the Region receives Federal and Provincial Funds to administer housing and homelessness programs that respond to local needs.

This role includes but is not limited to creating policies that promote assisted housing development, contributing to and coordinating housing funding, managing the social housing portfolio and waitlist, addressing homelessness in the community and reporting on the progress made in supporting vulnerable populations. These outcomes are achieved through the development and implementation of a 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, known in Halton as the Comprehensive Housing Strategy (CHS). It is legislatively mandated that the CHS be updated every five years.

In terms of the responsibility to contribute to housing funding, over the last 10 years, Halton has provided \$65 million in Regional funds to create new assisted and supportive housing opportunities. This was further augmented by \$22 million in development charge revenue for a total Regional contribution of \$87 million. As the need for affordable housing continues to grow in the community, the pressure is heightened on the Region to enhance this level of funding.



The new CHS contemplates **tripling** Regional investment over the next ten year period to more effectively respond to the housing crisis in the community. Senior government investment will remain critical to achieving the full potential of the new CHS.



# THE LAST 10 YEARS:

## Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2014-2024: Progress and Achievements

The Region created its first 10-year plan in 2006, long before it was a provincial requirement. It has been updated twice, in 2014 and then again in 2019.

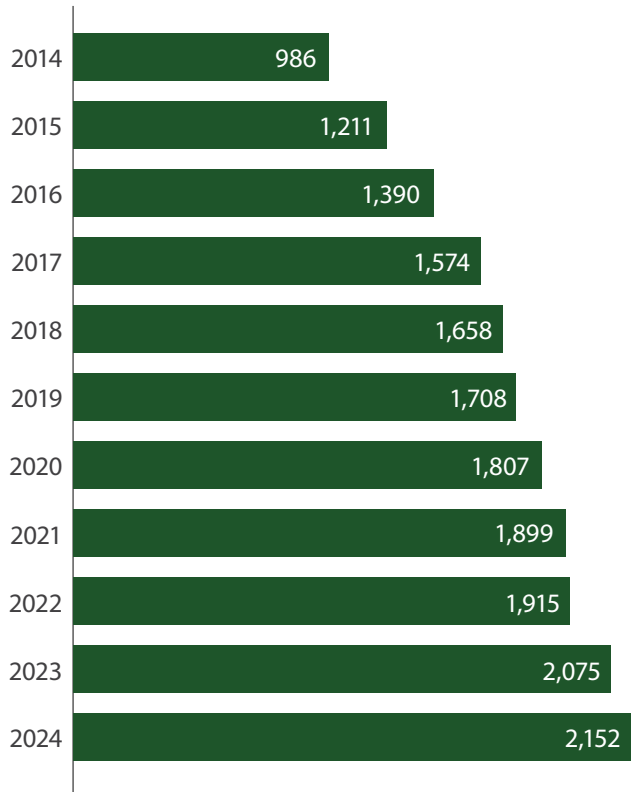
Created in 2014, the previous Comprehensive Housing Strategy guided Halton Region’s efforts over the past decade. It set five strategic priorities that shaped coordinated action to improve housing access and affordability. While the strategy was developed in a different housing context, the Region made meaningful progress in advancing each of the strategic directions:



### Creating Assisted and Supportive Housing Opportunities

From 2014 to the end of 2024, Halton created 1,258 new assisted housing opportunities.

### New Assisted Housing Opportunities in Halton (Total Cumulative)



In November of 2021, Regional Council approved a portfolio approach which committed to delivering new assisted and supportive housing opportunities through capital and subsidy programs. This long-term strategic approach enabled considerable progress to be achieved using a combination of strategies, including developing housing on vacant or underused regional lands, acquiring properties to address waitlist demands, and partnering with private, municipal, and non-profit organizations. Notable accomplishments include new supportive housing for seniors at 265 Kerr Street and 1258 Rebecca Street, innovative partnerships in Halton Hills with Home Suite Hope and Support House, and key acquisitions like Bethany Residence and 30 Normandy Place. These approaches will continue to inform and support the goals of the new strategy.



# THE LAST 10 YEARS:

## Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2014-2024: Progress and Achievements

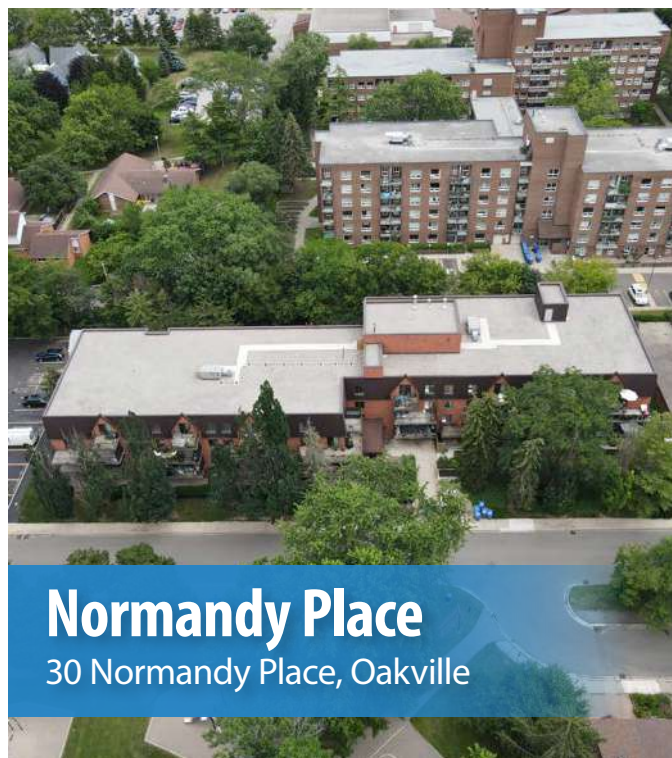
Over the last ten years, 520 housing opportunities (41%) were created through construction of new units/strategic acquisitions and 738 housing opportunities (59%) were created through subsidy programs.

Subsidy programs consist of rent supplements with private landlords as well as portable housing benefits for eligible waitlist applicants. The portable housing benefit has been made available to Halton residents to enable them to remain in their homes when their income has changed, or to exit the shelter system rapidly.

**59% (738)**  
through subsidy programs



**41% (520)**  
through capital and housing  
opportunities



**Normandy Place**  
30 Normandy Place, Oakville

### Acquisition of Normandy Place

#### Building Summary:

- 70 units
  - 36 one bedroom units
  - 19 two bedroom units
  - 15 three bedroom units

Owned by Halton Region with management by Halton Community Housing Corporation.

The number of subsidized units will increase to 75% (from 30%) as units become vacant to house more Halton residents from the HATCH wait list who require a deeper subsidy.

# COMMUNITY HOUSING AT A GLANCE

Community Housing is the largest and most complex component of the assisted housing system. These providers are publicly funded and owned by non-profits, co-operatives and/or municipal governments. Community Housing providers offer both subsidized and market rent housing to low-to moderate income households.

Halton Region funds and oversees 23 Community Housing providers, including Halton Community Housing Corporation, who collectively provide assisted housing across 58 communities in Halton Region.

**4,041** units

**3,021** Rent-geared-to income units

**1,020** affordable market rent units

#### Operated by:

- 7 co-operative housing providers
- 15 non-profit housing providers
- Halton Community Housing Corporation – the largest with 2,280 units



Halton's key responsibilities, as Service Manager and stewards of the local housing and homelessness systems, is to:

- Fund Community Housing providers including HCHC in accordance with provincial legislation;
- Ensure that buildings/units are maintained and in a good state of repair.

Over the next 10 years, Community Housing provider mortgages will mature, referred to as End of Mortgage (EOM). In response, the *Housing Services Act, 2011* was amended to provide for a new regulatory framework which allows Halton Region to determine the appropriate level of subsidy to support the financial viability of Community Housing providers and their assets.

Without proactive engagement and renewed agreements, there is a risk of losing long-standing relationships with providers, including housing co-operatives—along with the affordable units they operate. Preserving these partnerships is essential to maintaining and growing Halton's community housing stock.

## Community Housing Provider Mortgage Maturity Dates (2024-2033)

Municipality	No. Buildings	No. Units
Burlington	15	989
Halton Hills	2	116
Milton	1	25
Oakville	12	899
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2,029</b>

Outside of the Community Housing system, Halton Region also funds **953 Rent Supplement units**. While the Region does not have an obligation toward these providers in perpetuity, Halton can provide capital funding to these providers in exchange for remaining in the system long term.



**SECTION 2:**

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# **THE NEXT 10 YEARS**

# PLAN DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT


## Plan Development

The Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2025- 2035 (CHS or “plan”) was created through extensive community consultation involving individuals with lived experience, Halton's local municipalities, local developers, and community agencies, and is informed by the extensive analysis of housing need in the Region.

Recognizing shifts in the housing landscape and evolving planning responsibilities at the local level, the updated CHS narrows its focus from the entire housing continuum to four strategic priorities centred on assisted and supportive housing and homelessness.

This refined scope enables the Region to more effectively align with funding opportunities across all levels of government, while concentrating efforts on supporting the most marginalized residents.

Collaboration with the Local Municipalities will continue to identify opportunities to help meet their housing targets while creating additional assisted and supportive housing opportunities.



Assisted and supportive housing is a shared responsibility with the Federal and Provincial Governments and the Region is reliant on their funding contributions to assist in the creation of new housing opportunities.

Going forward, Halton will continue to advocate to senior levels of government for permanent, ongoing, and sustainable funding with local flexibility.

## Community Engagement

The housing and homelessness crisis is a critical social issue that can only be addressed through collective action from all levels of government, nonprofit and charitable organizations, Indigenous peoples, housing developers, and community members. As part of Halton Region's approach to designing and refining its new 10-year Comprehensive Housing Strategy, a community engagement approach emphasizing inclusivity and sustainable solutions was utilized to solicit feedback from stakeholders.

### What We Heard

Across all the sessions held, consistent feedback was received around the importance of continuous community engagement, rather than a point-in-time approach commonly used in the past. As such, while this section will summarize the efforts of socializing and receiving feedback on Halton's draft themes of the new Comprehensive Housing Strategy, the key recommendation from the community is to allow for ongoing engagement to ensure adaptation and creative readiness remain at the forefront of our approach.

### Recommendations for Ongoing Community Engagement



Increase public awareness and understanding of housing insecurity and homelessness in Halton.



Continue to foster collaboration among stakeholders to implement effective interventions.



Empower individuals with lived experience to contribute to policy and program development.



Mobilize 'all of community approaches' to support long-term housing solutions.



Strengthen advocacy for policy changes that address the root causes of homelessness, such as static social assistance rates.



# PLAN DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Key Stakeholders Consulted

- Local Municipalities
- Nonprofit organizations
- Housing providers and developers
- Community members
- Faith-based groups
- Indigenous communities
- Business community
- Individuals with lived experience
- Academic and research institutions

## Summary of Consultations

Throughout 2024 and early 2025, Halton Region convened or participated in a number of community engagement sessions specifically on the draft themes presented to Regional Council in the fall of 2024. Community engagement will continue to be a continuous and ongoing component of the Comprehensive Housing Strategy.

## Community Safety and Well-Being Action Table

As part of Halton's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, a Homelessness Action Table was established to improve coordination and streamline service delivery across Halton's homelessness response system, which also acts as the Region's Community Advisory Board. The table brings together a broad range of partners, including homelessness and community service agencies, Indigenous organizations, supportive housing providers, mental health and addiction organizations, and both Halton Ontario Health Teams.

Meeting regularly, the Action Table has taken on a renewed focus: supporting individuals out of encampments through a coordinated, housing-focused approach. In collaboration with municipal partners, the table developed Halton's Encampment Response Process, which outlines roles and responsibilities, supports consistency across jurisdictions, and helps the Region respond to evolving legal and operational considerations.

## Community Housing Providers

To support Halton Region's ongoing efforts to protect and retain the existing Community Housing stock, regular and proactive discussions have been held with Community Housing Providers across the region. These collaborative conversations are vital in ensuring that both the Region and the providers are aligned in achieving shared objectives, particularly as many of these providers approach the end of their mortgage terms over the next ten years.

Through these consultations, Community Housing Providers and Regional staff have agreed on three core objectives to achieve over the course of the updated CHS.

- 1 Operating Funding:** Ensure that there is adequate funding to maintain the operational costs of Community Housing.
- 2 Capital Improvements:** Strengthen long-term planning that supports Community Housing buildings to remain in a state-of-good-repair.
- 3 Community Development:** Beyond the physical upkeep of the housing stock, enhance community development activities that foster individual and family well-being, enhance social cohesion, and promote inclusive environments are required.



# PLAN DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## Individuals with Lived Experience

Through a partnership with Community Development Halton, individuals with firsthand experience of housing instability participated in peer-led research to share their stories, perspectives, and solutions. Over eight months, Peer Researchers conducted interviews and focus groups across the Region—listening to people who have experienced homelessness in all its forms, from couch-surfing to vehicle living, shelter stays to sleeping outside.

Their insights highlighted the real barriers people face when trying to access housing, income supports, and services. They shared how stigma, mental health, fixed incomes, and system complexity all contribute to the housing crisis—and they emphasized the importance of community, safety, and dignity in any solution. They also called for diverse shelter options, more portable housing benefits, and simpler navigation supports.

These findings are not just stories—they are evidence. Halton is using this lived expertise to ground its strategy in what matters most to the people it serves: housing that is safe, affordable, and accessible, and a system that listens, adapts, and includes everyone.

## National Housing Day

Each November, Regional staff take part in National Housing Day events to engage the community on the Comprehensive Housing Strategy and local housing issues. On November 22, 2024, Community Development Halton hosted an event to test draft themes of Halton's new strategy and promote discussion on the housing crisis. Attendees included residents, faith groups, housing providers, academics, social services, municipal staff, and elected officials. Workshops identified three key issues to advance Halton's Comprehensive Housing Strategy.



Incomes are not keeping up with escalating costs.



Affordable rental housing is eroding faster than new affordable housing is built.



Current senior government housing strategies do not address the fundamental issue of affordability.

A fulsome report is [available here](#) which includes recommendations on rent control, supportive housing, data, collaborations and housing evaluation strategies. National Housing Day and the two-way feedback mechanism it provides for the community will continue to be a key principle of Halton's continued Comprehensive Housing Strategy.



# PLAN DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Local Municipalities

The 2025-2035 Comprehensive Housing Strategy will be tailored to the Region's evolving role and responsibilities in addressing housing needs, focusing specifically on the supportive and assisted segments of the housing continuum.

A key component of the strategy will be the continuation of the Region's assisted and supportive Housing Concierge approach. This approach will see the Region working closely with Local Municipalities to identify shared policy interests and areas for potential collaboration on assisted housing and supportive housing initiatives. By fostering these partnerships, Halton Region aims to ensure that there is a coordinated and effective response to the housing needs of residents.

Additionally, Halton Region will remain focused on continuing its collaborative efforts with Local Municipalities to create sustainable, long-term housing opportunities. These efforts will not only help meet local housing targets but also contribute to addressing broader regional housing goals. Through these partnerships, the Region will work to enhance the availability of assisted and supportive housing, ensuring that residents have access to safe, stable, and supportive living environments.

## Indigenous Peoples

All elements of the renewed Comprehensive Housing Strategy will continue to be examined from the perspective of the needs and stated expectations of Indigenous peoples living in Halton Region. This work is informed by Halton Region's ongoing efforts to address the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final report and the articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

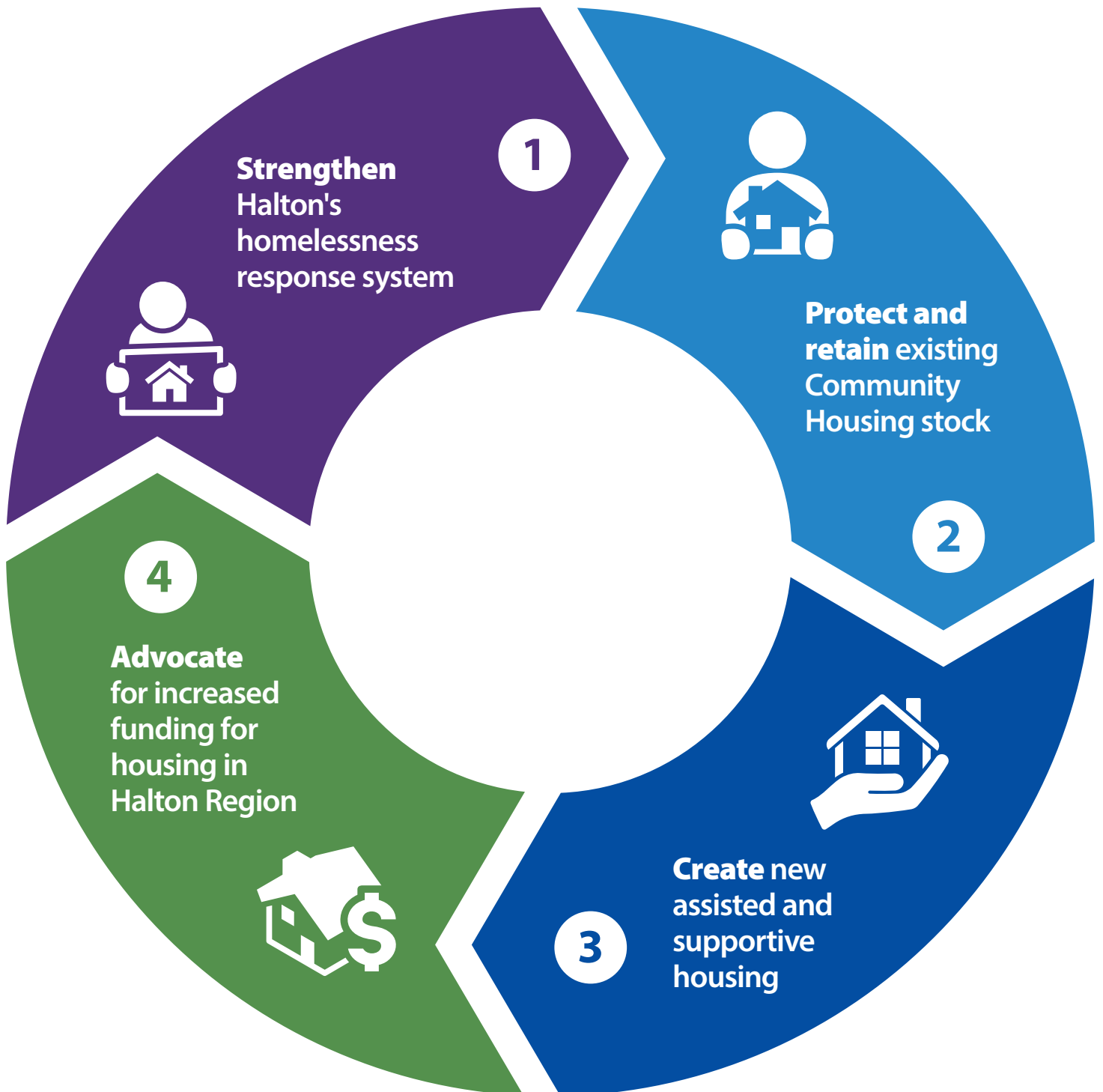
The community engagement principles of the Comprehensive Housing Strategy will continue to leverage the work of Halton Region's Indigenous Relations Team and coordinate work with Indigenous partners and the community to support access to culturally safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services. The Community Safety and Well Being Action Table on Homelessness will continue to explore culturally appropriate training opportunities for staff and community partners. Additionally, The Point in Time Count enumeration activities will continue to be carried out with a focus on culturally appropriate methods of identifying and supporting Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness in Halton Region.





# FOUR PRIORITIES OVERVIEW

## The Next 10 Years: Four Priorities





## Priority One: Strengthen Halton's homelessness response system



### Introduction

Halton Region is facing growing pressure on its homelessness response system due to rising housing costs, population growth, and a surge in mental health and addictions challenges—particularly impacting those on fixed incomes. These complex challenges present an opportunity to build a more connected, responsive, and person-centered system

Over the next 10 years, the Region will advance a comprehensive, continuum-based strategy grounded in **prevention, outreach, emergency shelter, and supportive housing**. This work will be guided by data, shaped by lived experience, and driven by the principle that everyone deserves a safe and stable place to call home.

According to Halton's 2024 Point-in-Time Count:



**76%**

of respondents reported mental health challenges



**47%**

identified issues related to substance use

Without access to supportive services and stable housing, these individuals remain at high risk of recurring or prolonged homelessness.

### Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness prevention focuses on helping individuals and families retain their housing or secure new accommodations before a crisis occurs. This includes financial assistance, housing allowances, case management, and access to supports that address issues such as rent arrears and affordability challenges. Prevention is a proactive and cost-effective approach that reduces reliance on emergency shelters and promotes long-term housing stability.

**71%**

Since 2021, Halton Region has increased its investment in early intervention, with the Housing Stability Fund budget growing by **71%**.

**2,234**

In 2024, the Housing Stability Fund supported **2,234 households**, helping prevent evictions, secure housing, and maintain essential utility services.

# PRIORITY ONE

## Housing Loss Prevention

As part of Halton Region's new CHS, a greater emphasis will be placed on housing loss prevention—an upstream, proactive approach that aims to identify and support households at high risk of housing instability before they reach a crisis point. Unlike traditional homelessness prevention models, which typically target individuals and families at *immediate* risk of eviction or shelter entry, housing loss prevention also includes those in precarious or informal living arrangements, such as couch surfing or living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions. These situations often go unrecognized in conventional models, despite being early indicators of potential homelessness. By intervening earlier and broadening the definition of risk, Halton aims to better stabilize households, reduce future shelter demand, and promote long-term housing stability.



## Aging in Place

Halton's population is aging, with older adults expected to make up 25% of residents by 2051. At the same time, more older adults are experiencing or at risk of homelessness—often due to fixed incomes, health challenges, or limited access to supports.

While physical support services are more readily available, there is a critical gap in services for older adults facing non-physical challenges such as loneliness, mental health issues, addiction, and difficulty navigating the healthcare system. These issues can increase the risk of housing instability, particularly for older adults living alone or without strong support networks.

To meet these evolving needs, Halton Region is strengthening partnerships with service providers, enhancing access to age-in-place supports, and working with ministry partners toward integrated mental health, healthcare navigation, and community-based programming. In addition, there is a growing need to expand supportive housing options tailored to older adults, including community wellness hubs. These models combine affordable housing with wraparound services, allowing older adults with complex needs to remain safely housed in a community setting.

Recognizing that many older adults prefer to remain in their homes, Halton Region also provides housing allowances to help low-income older adults maintain their tenancies and age in place with dignity and stability.

Portable housing allowances play a critical role in Halton Region's homelessness prevention strategy by providing targeted financial support to households at risk of losing their housing. Through early identification and a coordinated system response, individuals and families facing housing instability are connected to housing allowance programs, including the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB).

In 2024, Halton supported **324 households** at-risk of homelessness with a portable housing allowance.



## Encampment Outreach

Halton Region has expanded its outreach capacity to support individuals living in encampments and help them transition into shelter or permanent housing. The Halton Housing Help Street Outreach Team plays a central role—engaging directly with residents, building trust, and connecting individuals to immediate and long-term supports. This work is reinforced through strong partnerships with local municipal staff and the Halton Regional Police Service, enabling timely identification of encampments, coordinated outreach, and a compassionate, housing-focused response. Addressing homelessness in Halton is a shared responsibility, and strengthening these partnerships remains essential to delivering consistent, person-centered support across the Region.

## Addressing Complex Health Needs Through System-Level Advocacy

Responding to encampments effectively also requires broader system-level advocacy and collaboration—particularly in the areas of mental health and addictions. Many individuals residing in encampments face complex health challenges, including untreated mental illness, substance use disorders, and histories of trauma. While these challenges are significant, there have also been important successes. The Mobile Community Health Centre (MCHC) and Public Health's Sexual Health Van are prime examples of what's possible through cross-sectoral collaboration. These mobile programs provide primary care, mental health support, harm reduction services, and sexual health care directly to those in encampments, removing barriers to access. However, to fully meet the needs of unsheltered individuals, stronger and more sustained partnerships with provincial mental health and addictions services are essential. This includes improved access to mobile crisis teams, crisis mental health beds, bed based withdrawal management, addiction treatment beds, and long-term recovery supports that can be integrated with housing solutions. Halton

recognizes improved access to supportive housing for individuals with high support needs and enhanced mental health and addictions support teams will be essential over the next ten years.

Halton Region will continue to advocate for additional federal and provincial investment in health and crisis services, as well as enhanced integration of housing, health, and social supports. These upstream interventions are critical to reducing the number of people entering encampments and supporting lasting housing stability for those already experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Halton's coordinated approach to supporting individuals living in encampments is delivering measurable results. In 2024, **284 individuals** transitioned from encampments into shelter or permanent housing. This model reflects Halton's commitment to a compassionate, housing-focused response that meets people where they are and supports long-term stability.



## Emergency Shelter

Halton Region's emergency shelter system provides critical short-term housing and supports for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. In 2024, the Region's two primary shelter programs—the Wesley Emergency Shelter and Supportive Housing Facility in Burlington, operated by Wesley Urban Ministries, and the Lighthouse Shelter in Oakville, operated by



# PRIORITY ONE

the Salvation Army—served a combined 521 households, representing a 16% increase over the previous year. These programs offer a mix of self-contained rooms and congregate shelter beds, with hotels used to manage overflow demand.

While emergency shelters are intended to provide temporary support during a housing crisis, they are increasingly being used as longer-term accommodations due to the shortage of deeply affordable and supportive housing options. This trend places growing pressure on the shelter system and highlights the urgent need for more assisted and supportive housing to facilitate quicker transitions out of shelter and into stable, permanent homes.

## Optimizing Shelter Capacity

Over the next decade, Halton Region's emergency shelter strategy will emphasize system optimization over wide-spread expansion, focusing on intensifying existing shelter infrastructure to increase capacity, enhance client privacy, and improve service integration. With the new reality of ever-increasing costs of new construction and high operating costs, Halton's approach will ensure that shelters remain responsive, equitable, and housing-focused.

Halton will strengthen emergency shelters by reducing barriers to shelter access and increasing the capacity to meet the diverse needs of families, youth, women, and individuals facing mental health and addiction challenges. To support this, the Region will explore new and existing partnerships with health and social service agencies to integrate primary care, mental health, and substance use supports directly within shelter environments. Hotel overflow will remain a necessary and ongoing component of the emergency shelter system. While it is not a permanent solution, its continued use will be supported by transparent reporting on usage and costs, and closely tied to progress made in prevention, outreach, and supportive housing efforts.

## Strengthening Shelter Diversion to Reduce System Pressures

Diversion and prevention are both critical elements in the homelessness response system, but they serve distinct roles. Prevention focuses on supporting individuals and families before they reach a crisis—helping them remain housed and avoid homelessness altogether. Diversion, by contrast, occurs at the point of crisis, working with people who are seeking shelter to explore safe, immediate alternatives—such as staying with family or friends, short-term financial assistance, or conflict mediation.

In 2024, over **1,400 households** were successfully diverted from shelter in Halton through intensive case management supports.



This includes strategies like family reunification, mediation, and connecting individuals to community-based resources that stabilize their housing situation. Diversion is not just a cost-saving measure; it is a proactive, person-centered intervention that empowers individuals and families to resolve their housing crises without shelter entry.

Despite this progress, Halton Region recognizes that more must be done to strengthen diversion pathways, particularly for populations with complex needs or limited natural supports. Expanding access to early intervention, increasing coordination across service providers, and embedding diversion consistently at all front doors to the shelter system will be critical.

Improving diversion outcomes will not only help reduce reliance on hotel overflow but also contribute to broader systems change across the homelessness continuum—including prevention, outreach, and supportive housing.



# PRIORITY ONE

## Supportive Housing

While prevention, outreach, and emergency shelter play critical roles in addressing immediate needs, supportive housing is the intended foundation of strengthening Halton Region's homelessness response system over the next ten years.

Supportive housing is a long-term solution that pairs deeply affordable housing with individualized supports, helping people live with stability, autonomy, and dignity. It is designed for individuals facing complex barriers—such as mental health challenges, substance use, trauma, or disabilities—who may be unable to maintain housing without ongoing assistance.

By offering a stable foundation, supportive housing enables people to rebuild their lives, improve their health, and reconnect with community. For many, it is the final and most critical step out of homelessness. Evidence shows it significantly reduces shelter use, emergency service calls, and hospital visits, while improving housing stability and overall well-being.<sup>3</sup>

### Meeting the Need: Building 165 New Supportive Housing Units

Supportive housing is not one-size-fits-all. It includes a range of models, from 24/7 staffed settings, to transitional housing, to independent units with mobile supports—all grounded in permanency, affordability, and person-centered care.

A Supportive Housing Needs Analysis conducted by OrgCode Consulting in 2024 identified a need for at least 165 new supportive housing units over the next 10 years, particularly for individuals with complex physical, mental health, and addiction-related needs.

Over the next 10 years, Halton Region will position supportive housing as the primary solution to end chronic and visible homelessness. The strategy will focus on expanding access, improving integration

with health services, and ensuring a range of housing types to meet diverse and complex needs.

To achieve this, Halton will develop at least 165 new supportive housing units, prioritizing high-acuity populations—particularly individuals living in encampments or cycling through the shelter system. The Region will explore a range of delivery models to meet this goal, including new construction and the acquisition and rehabilitation of underutilized buildings. This mixed approach supports both long-term planning and quicker implementation, enabling the Region to create supportive housing that is cost-effective, timely, and tailored to community needs.

New supportive housing is on the way in Halton.

As part of its commitment to ending chronic homelessness, Halton Region is investing in purpose-built supportive housing to meet the needs of residents with complex challenges. Two new developments—265 Kerr Street (second floor) and 1258 Rebecca Street—are currently underway and slated for occupancy in 2025.

These sites will offer deeply affordable housing paired with on-site supports, helping individuals maintain stability, improve their well-being, and move forward with dignity. Each location has been designed with a housing-first philosophy in mind, offering permanent homes—not temporary solutions—for people who need them most.



3. Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2014). *At Home/Chez Soi Project: Final Report*.

# PRIORITY ONE

As part of Halton's commitment to meeting the ongoing objectives of the CHS 2025-2035, the following outcomes measures will be reported back to Council via the budget submission.

MEASURES	
1	# of households on the waitlist (Halton vs out of Region)
2	# of households housed annually through HATCH
3	# of households diverted from emergency shelter
4	# of evictions prevented
5	# of households that secured permanent housing with assistance from HSF
6	% of HSF supported households who retained housing after 6 months
7	# of households at-risk of homelessness receiving a short-term housing allowance
8	# of households accessing emergency shelter annually
9	Average length of stay in shelter (days)
10	# of shelter exits to permanent housing
11	# of chronically homeless exits to permanent housing
12	% Average shelter capacity
13	# of individuals transitioned from encampments to shelter or housing
14	# of outreach visits completed
15	# of individuals connected to services through outreach, including transitional, Housing First, and dedicated supportive housing sites
16	# of individuals housed in all supportive housing programs
17	% of supportive housing tenants stably housed after 12 months
18	# of adults 55+ housed in supportive housing

Halton Region will also continue to report back on qualitative outcomes related to system integration, such as collaboration with lived experience groups and cross-sector engagement to support housing stability.

## Priority Two: Protect and retain existing Community Housing stock



### Introduction

The preservation of existing Community Housing is a cost effective and long-term solution to maintaining affordability for Halton residents and preventing homelessness. Assisted housing units lost to the private market or for redevelopment purposes have outpaced the growth of new affordable units across Canada. In Halton, preservation of existing stock is a core priority that helps ensure that gains in new unit development are not outpaced by losses elsewhere in the system.

Community Housing providers play an important role in helping Halton's low- and moderate-income individuals and families obtain housing that is safe, stable and secure.

The existing Community Housing stock was primarily developed between the 1960s to the 1990s when the Federal and Provincial Governments made large investments in the housing sector. In the mid 90s, the federal government stopped funding the development of housing for the first time in 50 years. Very little new Community Housing was developed during the period leading up to the early 2000's.

In 2001, the Region became responsible for funding and administering Community Housing when the Province transferred its housing obligations to 47 municipal Service Managers. Halton Region, through the tax base, became the primary funder of Community Housing. At the time of the transfer, housing providers did not have adequate financial reserves to address current and future capital needs. As the buildings continue to age, capital repair backlogs continue to grow.

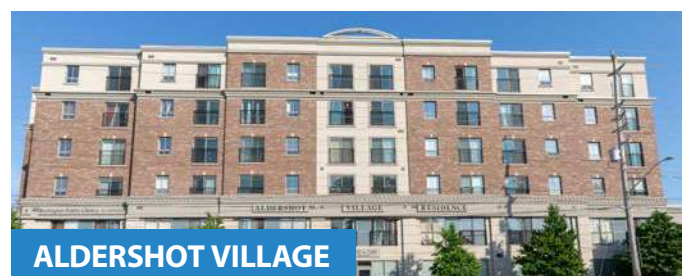
### 92.6%

In 2024, a substantial **92.6%** of the funding for Community Housing was sourced from the municipal tax base. The remaining portion of the funding comes from Federal Government contributions, which, although vital, are expected to decline each year and are scheduled to cease entirely by 2030.

The existing system of funding, prescribed through provincial legislation, does not adequately address Community Housing providers capital repair requirements or provide significant opportunity for intensification and new development. Housing providers currently receive funding for:

- Operating (mortgage payment, maintenance, utilities, administration);
- Property taxes and;
- Housing subsidies to offset the rent paid by assisted housing tenants.

Halton Region appreciates the support received from the Federal and Provincial Governments. However, funding has not kept pace with the demand for affordable housing or the increasing backlog of capital repairs. To adequately address the housing crisis in Halton, it is critical to have a sustainable model that funds both operational and capital repairs needs for providers on an ongoing basis.



ALDRESHOT VILLAGE

# PRIORITY TWO



Over the next 10 years, Community Housing providers will reach the end of their legislated obligations as their mortgages reach maturity. In 2022, the *Housing Services Act, 2011* was amended to provide a new framework for when a housing provider reaches End of Mortgage (EOM). The framework aims to protect and grow affordable housing supply, stabilize the sector and ensure community housing is sustainable in the long-term.

As housing providers reach the end of their mortgage obligations, this creates an opportunity for Halton to negotiate new Community Housing Partnership Agreements to address the need for critical capital repairs and ongoing operating funding. The Community Housing Partnership Agreements offer a flexible framework that allows for a customized approach to modernizing both operating and capital funding models, tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of each housing provider. This means that each provider can receive the necessary support to maintain their properties and ensure the continuity of services to the residents they serve.

As part of the Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2025-2035, Halton Region is committed to a series of strategic objectives aimed at supporting and strengthening the Community Housing system. These commitments are focused on ensuring that the Region's housing providers can continue to provide safe, affordable housing for residents while also fostering a supportive and sustainable housing environment. Specifically, the Region's commitment includes the following:



## Retaining and Maintaining Community Housing Stock

A key priority is the retention of Community Housing stock within the system. The Region will take proactive measures to ensure that the housing stock remains in good condition over the long term.



## Ensuring Sustainable Operating Funding

The Region will ensure that operating funding remains available to partner with Community Housing providers. This partnership is vital in maintaining the long-term viability of housing providers, ensuring that they can continue to support residents in assisted housing communities and adapt to evolving needs.



## Expanding Community Development Initiatives

The Region recognizes the importance of community development in fostering thriving, inclusive communities. As part of this commitment, efforts will be made to expand community development activities that support the well-being of individuals. These activities will focus on homelessness prevention, tenancy preservation, and creating inclusive environments where all residents can thrive.

To support the long-term sustainability of the Community Housing stock, Halton Region will continue to strengthen relationships with Community Housing providers, private landlords and other stakeholders, to maintain vibrant and liveable Community Housing properties.



## What is the difference between non-profit and co-operative housing?

In Ontario, non-profit housing and co-operative housing are both types of affordable housing, however they operate in different ways.

**Non-profit housing units** are owned and managed by a non-profit organization, such as a charity, social housing provider, or a municipal organization. The organization is responsible for the day-to-day operations, including setting rent rates and making decisions related to the housing. Tenants do not have ownership of the housing units and have limited influence over management decisions.

**Co-operative Housing (Co-ops)** are collectively owned and operated by the people who live there. The residents are members of the co-op. Residents elect a board of directors, usually from among themselves, and have a say in how the housing is managed. Co-ops foster a strong sense of community as members actively participate in the co-op's governance.

As part of Halton's commitment to meeting the ongoing objectives of the CHS 2025-2035, the following outcomes measures will be reported back to Council.

MEASURES	
1	Total # of housing providers by individual community that received funding for capital improvements
2	# of Community Housing providers with capital improvement projects that improved energy efficiency
3	# of units retained as Community Housing through new partnership agreements post mortgage expiry
4	Total # of community housing tenants that received eviction prevention supports

Halton Region will also continue to report back on qualitative outcomes related to community housing providers, such as community development initiatives and educational opportunities that support the well-being of tenants.

# PRIORITY THREE

## Priority Three: Create new assisted and supportive housing



### Introduction

The Region has a long and successful track record of responding to community needs and delivering assisted housing opportunities. The creation of new assisted and supportive housing is the single most important strategic priority for reducing homelessness in Halton Region over the long term. In November of 2021, Regional Council endorsed a portfolio approach which committed to three priority streams for delivering new assisted and supportive housing opportunities. This approach will continue to guide the Region's efforts throughout the 2025-2035 Comprehensive Housing Strategy.

#### Regional site development

This approach includes development of vacant land as well as the intensification of existing sites owned by the Region or the Halton Community Housing Corporation (HCHC).

#### Third party initiatives

This approach includes strategic partnerships with private, municipal, non-profit, or cooperative housing providers to add new assisted and supportive housing opportunities. Third party initiatives include opportunities for new unit capital creation as well as long

term rent supplement arrangements with private landlords. These units are not owned by the Region but are used to provide assisted housing opportunities for households on the HATCH waitlist over the long term. Halton Region will also continue to seek out partnerships with Local Municipalities to create new housing opportunities and help meet local housing targets.

#### Regional acquisition

This approach includes Regional purchases of land, buildings or units that are managed by HCHC or, in the case of supportive housing, by third party non-profit experts in the field. Strategic acquisitions can either create new assisted and supportive housing units, or protect units that may be at imminent risk.

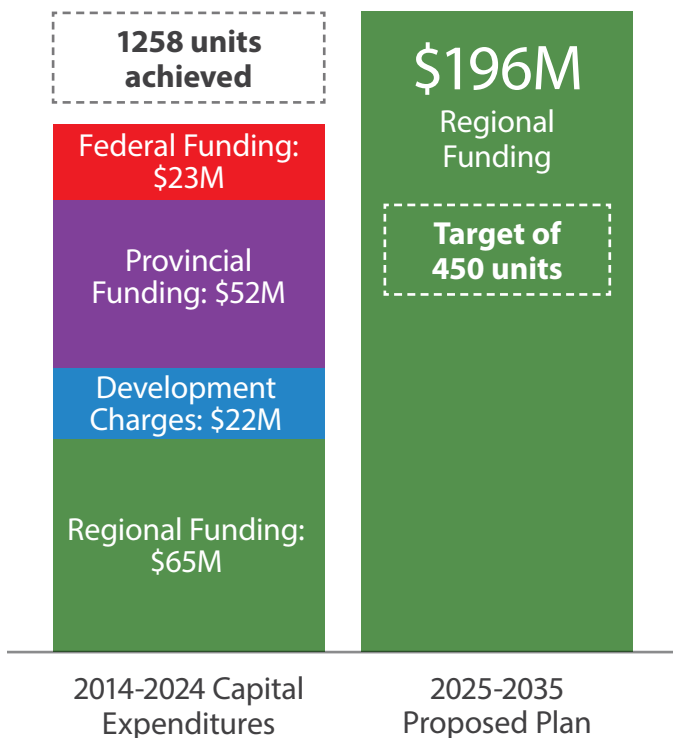
Over the next 10 years, Halton Region is committed to continuing to increase the number of new units created through this portfolio approach. In all three approaches, upfront capital funding in conjunction with long term operating subsidies will allow Halton Region to create assisted units to support those most in need of housing. By enhancing the Halton Rental Assistance Program, approximately twenty new rent supplement operating subsidies will be created every year to provide financial assistance to help low-income individuals and families afford their rent, usually earmarked at 30% of their income.

# PRIORITY THREE

To keep pace with the previous strategy and continue to meet the growing demand, Halton Region aims to create 1,350 new assisted and supportive housing opportunities over the next 10 years. This target assumes a shared funding model, with 1/3 of the required investment coming from each level of government. Recognizing the ongoing uncertainty around long term provincial and federal funding, Halton Region's portfolio approach also includes a standalone commitment to deliver 450 new housing opportunities by 2035 using the Region's own funding.

To effectively address the increasing prevalence of homelessness, at least 165 of these new units will need to be supportive housing environments designed for individuals with complex needs. With additional investment from Federal and Provincial partners, Halton can expand its supportive housing portfolio further—both for people experiencing homelessness and for residents with developmental, intellectual, and physical disabilities who face elevated risks of housing instability.

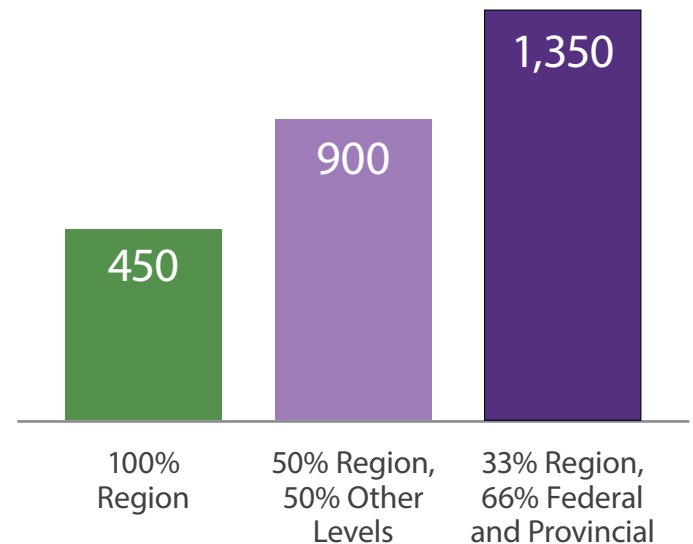
## Proposed Capital Financing Plan: 100% Region Funded



Achieving housing targets will become more difficult due to ongoing fluctuations in economic conditions, which greatly affect the costs of development, labour, and materials. To address these challenges, both traditional and innovative construction methods will continue to be explored to ensure cost-effectiveness and efficient construction.

Meeting the target of approximately 1,350 housing opportunities over the next 10 years will require strong partnerships with various levels of government to support these efforts.

## 10 Year Outlook - New Housing Opportunities Targets



# PRIORITY THREE

Traditional and emerging construction techniques will continue to be explored from the perspective of cost effectiveness and speed of construction. As part of Halton's commitment to meeting the ongoing objectives of the CHS 2025-2035, the following outcomes measures will be reported back to Council.

MEASURES	
1	Total # of new housing opportunities in progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By supportive and assisted housing</li></ul>
2	Total # of new housing opportunities created <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By supportive and assisted housing</li></ul>
3	Total # of new emergency shelter spaces created
4	% of capital funding from Regional, Provincial, Federal sources

Halton Region will also continue to report back on qualitative outcomes related to the creation of strategic partnerships with private, municipal, non-profit, or cooperative housing providers and landlords to add new assisted and supportive housing opportunities.

## Priority Four: Advocate for increased funding for housing in Halton Region



Housing is a shared responsibility among the Federal, Provincial and Municipal levels of government with each playing an important role in policy development, funding, and service delivery. Through the Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2014-2024, Halton Region successfully delivered housing solutions across the entire housing continuum, including new assisted and supportive housing units, alongside support from the Provincial and Federal Governments.

Despite progress made, the housing landscape in Halton and across Ontario has changed significantly. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) more than 80,000 Ontarians experienced homelessness in 2024, a number that has grown by more than 25% since

2022. In Halton, high market rental costs, static social assistance programs and the growing mental health and addictions crisis continue to place significant and increasing pressure on homelessness services and assisted and supportive housing.

Halton Region appreciates the support received from the Federal and Provincial Governments throughout the Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2014-2024 and to address the growing housing and homelessness crisis. However, there is much more to be done. A collaborative partnership across all levels of government is critical to address the current complex and evolving housing needs of the Halton community.



# PRIORITY FOUR

To support the objectives identified in the Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2025-2035, Halton Region will advocate for:

## Key Advocacy Goals:



### Partnerships to Deliver Assisted and Supportive Housing

To address the growing demand in the Halton community, 1,350 new assisted housing opportunities are needed over the next ten years. With Halton Region's investment alone, approximately only 450 new housing opportunities can be created. Ongoing Provincial and Federal partnership, including long-term and stable funding, is essential to support the development of new assisted and supportive housing units across Halton. Once realized, new units will also contribute to achieving Provincial housing targets.



### Increased Funding to Address Homelessness

Increased, long-term and predictable capital and operating funding is critical to support the Region in providing housing and supports for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and to prevent higher emergency shelter use, street homelessness and encampments. Flexibility in funding is essential to ensure that the Region can direct resources where they will have the greatest impact in addressing community need.



### Strengthened Social Assistance to Prevent Homelessness

Halton Region administers financial assistance through the Ontario Works (OW) program to help individuals and families cover the costs of essential living expenses such as food, rent and transportation. While the average monthly rent in Halton has increased by 41% since 2018, Ontario Works benefit amounts for shelter and basic needs have remained unchanged during this time.

The widening gap between social assistance rates and the average monthly rent in Halton continues to lead to rising demand for assisted housing and increasing homelessness across the region. Enhanced funding for social assistance programs such as OW, along with policy changes that allow recipients to retain more of their employment income are critical to improving financial stability and preventing homelessness.



### Coordination and Collaboration

Enhanced coordination and partnership across all three levels of government is essential to address the homelessness, mental health and addictions crisis.

In addition to Regional advocacy to support the advancement of these goals, Halton Region will also continue to support the advocacy efforts of AMO, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO), and Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM) where applicable.

