

In this Together: A Strong Recovery for Halton and Ontario

Introduction

Halton: A Snapshot



Halton Region is home to more than 595,000 residents in four communities. Along with its Local Municipalities (City of Burlington, the 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 quickest growing communities in Canada, with an expected population of 1 million by 2041.

Partners for a Strong Recovery

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:

- Municipal relief funding for Public Health programs and services to enable a strong COVID-19 response, Safe Restart funding, and recovery as well as providing a critical supply of COVID-19 vaccines and funding to cover costs associated with vaccine administration for the Halton community;
- Facilitating strategic growth in the City of Burlington through the adjustment to the Burlington Urban Growth Centre and other growth management priorities proposed through Regional Official Plan Amendment 48;
- Support for municipally defined growth plans and in particular the Province’s role that led to the withdrawal of the Glen Abbey Golf Course redevelopment proposal allowing for the protection of the Region’s natural heritage;
- Support for additional tools to assess significant impacts from major aggregate extraction proposals including the initiation of an Environmental Assessment for the Reid Road Quarry in Milton; and

- Support for the innovative Milton Education Village to establish a post-secondary education campus, long-term care facility and a village core with a mix of residential and commercial uses.

COVID-19 Recovery and Moving Forward to Address Shared Priorities

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Halton Region has remained committed to keeping our community safe and healthy through the continued delivery of essential services and by adapting service delivery models. Communities across Ontario have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the Federal and Provincial Governments have taken unprecedented actions to respond to the crisis.

Halton Region shares the Provincial Government’s priority of protecting the health and safety of Ontarians while working toward a safe and responsible re-opening of the economy, and adapting to a new normal. While Halton is appreciative of the recent collaborative efforts with the Province to support a number of priority issues within the Region, in order to support long-term recovery and a strong future for the Province and Halton, the Region is requesting the Provincial Government ensure:

Public Health Resources to Support Recovery	Growth-Related Infrastructure
Public Health and Emergency Health Services Modernization	Immediate Access to Reliable Rural Broadband Internet
Investments in Long-Term Care	Support for Small Business Recovery
Investments in Assisted Housing and Homelessness	Protecting the Health and Safety of Residents
Stabilization of the Child Care System	

Public Health Resources to Support Recovery:

Ensuring the health and safety of Halton residents has been a priority for the Region during the pandemic and will continue to be during the recovery period. As we continue to respond to impacts of COVID-19, case management, contact tracing, outbreak management, increased surveillance, producing local information for public consumption on COVID and assisting community organizations, businesses and schools with infection prevention control advice remain critical. At the same time, Halton will need to continue to meet essential requirements under Ontario’s Public Health Standards as we move forward into recovery and post pandemic efforts. Under funding for Public Health in Halton Region is a long standing concern that has been further heightened by the pandemic.

In addition, supports are also required from the Provincial Government to continue the response to the pandemic. Access to COVax data at the local level remains restricted, and local Public Health Units are unable to fully meet their mandate of surveillance under the Ontario Public Health Standards due to this lack of access. Having community primary care offices under the public health authorizing agreement for COVax has resulted in a lack of supports for primary care offices to operate independently and placed a larger burden on public health to provide supports and manage inventory. Primary care remuneration makes it less favorable for them to offer vaccines in their offices.

Halton requests:

- Increased base funding for Halton Public Health to allow strengthened infectious disease control and vaccine management, and the provision of all services required under the Ontario Public Health Standards.
- Continuous engagement with Public Health Units, to support COVID recovery efforts that meet the needs of local realities, including long-term immunization needs.
- Access to COVax data for local Public Health Units, for the purposes of local surveillance.
- A long-term strategy to ensure that Primary Care is able and motivated to continue vaccinating the population in the future and can operate independently, as is the case for many other vaccines.



Public Health and Emergency Health Services Modernization:

Since 2014, the Provincial Government has only provided a base increase in Public Health funding once, in 2018. This has resulted in a significant program funding gap. Additional costs have been incurred for Paramedic Services due to similar pressures.

Public Health and Paramedic Services provide service at a local level effectively, within the boundaries of the Region. They also participate in a number of collaborative community partnerships. The ability to continue to do this will be critical to recovery and to ensure the health of the people of Halton. Paramedic Services is a key contributor through community paramedic programs to reduce hallway medicine. Public Health and Paramedic Services have worked collaboratively with all parts of the local and provincial health care system throughout the pandemic, and actively contribute to Halton's Ontario Health Teams.

The Modernization reviews began pre-pandemic. Public Health and Paramedic Services have played a key role in the pandemic response and demonstrate the value of these local services. Historic under-funding of these services have created challenges in the pandemic response and must be addressed.

Halton requests:

- Re-focus the Public Health & EMS Modernization on determining the investments required in Public Health and Paramedic Services post-pandemic to improve the health of Ontarians.



Investments in Long-Term Care:

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need for long-term care reform as evidenced by the Final Report by the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission. Halton Region is supportive of the Provincial Government's decision to overhaul the "one-size-fits-all" funding model for long-term care homes. Halton Region operates three long-term care homes throughout the region and requires long-term funding to support required service levels that respond to the Commission's recommendations.

Halton requests that the Provincial Government accelerate the development of new and redeveloped long-term care beds within the region. There is currently an insufficient number of long-term care beds available to meet the needs of the current population and to implement the recommendations from the Commission. Care requirements at long-term care homes in Ontario are increasing as per the increasing Case Mix Index (CMI).

Halton requests:

- Additional long-term care beds in Halton to meet the growing needs of our aging residents and underserved communities.
- Immediate delivery and implementation of the recommendations from the Long-Term Care Commission, in partnership with long-term care operators.
- Increased assistance and support with ongoing long-term care resourcing including human resources and staffing, personal protective equipment and financial supports, in addition to those announced in Budget 2021.
- Funding to support the implementation of the increase in hours of direct care for long-term care residents as announced on November 2, 2020.



Investments in Assisted Housing and Homelessness:

Through Halton's Comprehensive Housing Strategy, Halton Region has made tremendous progress in preserving existing housing stock and creating new housing opportunities for residents. Halton Region appreciates the investments made through the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative, however, current funding allocations for the two programs is significantly lower than the federal/provincial funding previously received.

Halton Region has seen an unprecedented increase in the number of individuals and families at-risk of and experiencing homelessness. The pandemic environment has required new approaches to emergency shelter and supportive housing programs to enable physical distancing and appropriate infection prevention and control. Halton Region, like many other municipalities, has increased its footprint of physical infrastructure for homeless populations by capitalizing on one-time provincial capital funding to better meet the needs of this highly vulnerable population. Halton Region requires increased Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding to support ongoing operational expenses associated with housing and supporting homeless populations going forward. The post pandemic environment cannot be funded in the same pre-pandemic manner – costs have increased significantly and provincial funding must keep pace.

Halton requests:

- Provide adequate capital and operational allocation based funding and flexibility to allow Halton to increase the supply of assisted housing for families.
- Review Halton's base CHPI allocation and provide increased funding to allow us to meet operational requirements beyond the pandemic for at-risk and homeless populations and to fund increased homelessness prevention capacity.
- Communicate clear and timely information on funding and program changes.



Stabilization of the Child Care System:

Child care will play a key role in Ontario's economic and social recovery from COVID-19 by allowing parents to return to work and supporting early childhood development and improved educational outcomes.

Child care operators are experiencing significant financial challenges due to COVID-19. This includes new costs associated with provincial infection control guidance, as well as revenue loss from decreased enrollment and program closures due to outbreaks.

As well, the Provincial Government is implementing new municipal cost-sharing arrangements and have not updated well established funding mechanisms. These actions will create a funding shortfall of \$3.8M for Halton Region in 2022.

Halton requests:

- Adequate funding to stabilize the child care sector, maintain the current number of licenced spaces, and allow planning for needed growth.
- Reversal of the subsidy funding decisions that will have financial implications for Halton Region in 2022.



Growth-Related Infrastructure:

Halton Region and its Local Municipalities have long-term infrastructure plans to ensure that municipal infrastructure is available to support planned growth and grow the economy in a responsible way. In November 2019, Regional Council approved the 2020 Allocation Program that represents a financing plan to provide roughly \$1 Billion worth of water, wastewater and transportation infrastructure to support growth, development and new housing supply across the Region for the next 6-10 years.

While this investment in infrastructure underscores the Region's commitment to advancing housing supply, the absence of a provincial infrastructure plan focused on growing communities, including the delivery of schools, hospitals and highways, has resulted in barriers to increasing housing supply and economic growth. These Provincial assets are integral to unlocking housing supply opportunities and need to be financed, planned, designed and commissioned seamlessly in time to support the needs of growth in new communities. A strong partnership with the Provincial Government is vital to our community's long-term success.

Halton requests:

- A coordinated, provincial infrastructure investment plan and funding connected to the Growth Plan, to support high-growth communities in advancing critical Provincial infrastructure:
 - New schools to support families in high growth areas like North Oakville and the Boyne Survey in Milton;
 - The expansion of Hospital services in Georgetown;
 - Investments in Provincial Transit infrastructure, including enhanced GO service (as an example: all way, two way service to Milton) and new 407 Transitway Stations in Halton, including a Neyagawa Road Station.
- Appropriate tools and mechanisms for delivering timely funding to pay for municipal infrastructure required to support growth.



Immediate Access to Reliable Rural Broadband Internet:

Halton Region continues to advocate to the Provincial and Federal Governments to increase broadband connectivity in Halton's rural and urban communities. Advocating and encouraging telecommunications providers has resulted in over 15 rural Halton applications for Provincial and Federal broadband funding. To date, eight projects have been awarded, addressing 1,410 or 31% of the approximately 4,631 underserved rural Halton homes and businesses.

In addition, Halton continues to plan for the coordinated implementation of next generation digital access technologies, including 5G, to ensure affordable and equitable access for Halton rural and urban homes and businesses.

Halton requests:

- That the Provincial Government work with Halton Region on the recently announced Infrastructure Ontario – Ontario Connects program to identify, incent and implement all remaining broadband gaps in Halton as soon as possible.
- Develop new strategies, funding programs and tools to ensure that the availability of next generation technologies is equitable and affordable across Halton.



Support for Small Business Recovery:

Survival of the small business sector is essential to pandemic recovery efforts. Online and digital channels are an important method for main street businesses to interact with customers and generate revenues. Halton is appreciative of the additional \$10 million announced in the 2021 Provincial Budget for the Digital Main Street program in 2021–22 to help more small businesses achieve a digital transformation and serve customers effectively online. The Digital Main Street Program has supported over 550 businesses in Halton and a long-term investment into this program would allow more Halton businesses to benefit.

In addition, Halton appreciates the Province's three-year funding of the Region's Small Business Enterprise Centre which allowed the Region to support over 950 entrepreneurs in 2020 to grow and create jobs, and to run the provincial Starter Company Plus and Summer Company programs which provide important grant opportunities to eligible entrepreneurs.

Halton requests:

- Renewed funding of the expanded Digital Main Street program in 2022-23.
- Enhanced multi-year funding of the Region's Small Business Enterprise Centre commencing in 2022-23 for core services and entrepreneurship programming providing grant opportunities for local job-creating entrepreneurs.



Protecting the Health and Safety of Residents:

CN Rail is proposing to build a new truck-rail hub in the Town of Milton which would operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and result in 1,600 truck trips to and from the facility each day. On January 21, 2021, the Federal Government approved the truck-rail hub, putting the health and safety of Halton residents at risk. Halton Region commenced litigation in the Federal Court of Canada to review the decisions by the Federal Minister and Cabinet to approve the CN Project. Halton is taking this step to protect the health and well-being of its residents. In addition, in April, the Halton Municipalities and Conservation Halton resumed their 2018 Ontario court case against the proposed Milton CN truck-rail hub to ensure CN complies with laws that protect the health of residents and the environment.

Halton is seeking to ensure that should the project move forward, that all provincial and municipal bylaws and approvals are applied to the project.

Halton requests:

- The Provincial Government to support Halton's position on the CN Truck Rail Hub in Milton, at Federal-Provincial tables and in ongoing Ontario court proceedings.

