

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.

