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# **The Regional Municipality of Halton**

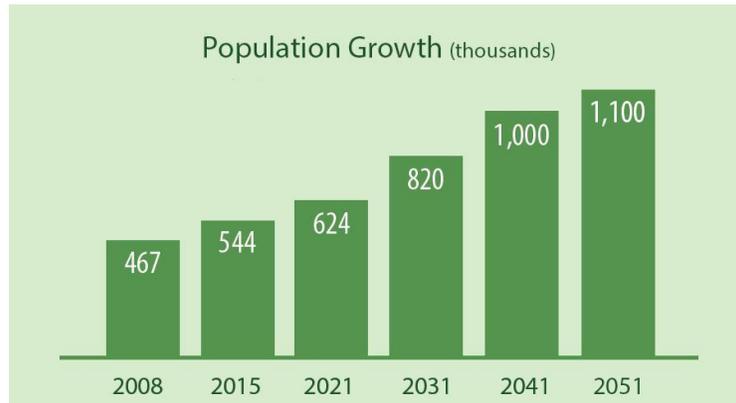
## **2022 Provincial Pre-Budget Consultation Submission to the Minister of Finance**

**February 11, 2022**



## Introduction

Halton Region remains one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. The region is home to more than 610,000 people and 13,580 businesses and is expected to grow to a population of 1.1 million by 2051 as determined by the Provincial Growth Plan.



Halton Region continues to benefit from a strong partnership with the Provincial Government to ensure the ongoing delivery of essential services and a safe and strong recovery, while providing a continued response to COVID-19.

## Growth-Related Infrastructure

Halton has long-term infrastructure plans to ensure that municipal infrastructure is available to support planned growth and grow the economy in a responsible way. 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.

### 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.
- Provide appropriate funding tools and mechanisms for delivering timely funding to pay for municipal infrastructure required to support growth.

## 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, including:

- An average of 3,600 new housing units delivered annually for the last 10 years;
- 30,000 units available for development in the Region in the near term;
- Achieving 30% housing affordability in 6 of the last 10 years; and,
- 1,005 new assisted housing opportunities created since 2014, achieving and exceeding the target 3 years ahead of schedule.

Halton Region's portfolio of housing opportunities can create up to 600 new units over time with estimated costs of \$451 million. Inclusive of the 2021 contribution of \$7 million (for supportive housing units in Burlington), the Region's Comprehensive Housing Strategy financing plan provides for \$174 million to 2031. Federal and provincial commitments are required to make up for the \$270 million funding shortfall. In addition, current funding allocations through the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative 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. Pandemic homelessness modifications have resulted in Halton Region's permanent annual costs being \$1.6 million higher than our current Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) base allocation. Halton Region requires increased CHPI funding to support ongoing operational expenses associated with housing and supporting homeless populations.

Halton has long supported planning for housing supply to accommodate the Region's vision for growth is based on the Provincial Growth Plan. Halton Region requires a coordinated, strategic approach and meaningful partnership with the Provincial Government to advance housing supply and address affordability.

### **Halton Requests:**

- ❑ The Provincial Government provide funding commitments for the \$270 million shortfall required to develop Halton's rental and assisted housing capital portfolio.
- ❑ 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 address the current \$1.6 million funding shortfall required to meet operational requirements beyond the pandemic for at-risk and homeless populations and to fund increased homelessness prevention capacity.

### **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. The Region operates three long-term care homes and requires long-term funding to support the required service levels that respond to the Commission's recommendations.

Halton requests the Provincial Government continue to 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). Immediate investments and the implementation of a human resources strategy are also needed to make long-term care a career of choice.

#### **Halton Requests:**

- Additional long-term care beds in Halton to meet the growing needs of our aging residents and underserved communities.
- A new assessment by the Provincial Government to ensure that Halton receives support in the long-term care sector which reflects its position as one of the fastest growing municipalities in Ontario.
- 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.
- Funding that reflects and keeps pace with the increasing complexity and care requirements of residents as per the increasing Case Mix Index (CMI).

#### **Stabilization of the Child Care System**

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, reductions to administrative funding and have not updated well established funding mechanisms. These actions will create future funding shortfalls for Halton Region.

#### **Halton Requests:**

- Adequate funding to stabilize the child care sector, maintain the current number of licensed spaces and allow planning for needed growth.
- Reversal of the funding reductions that will have financial implications for Halton Region.
- That the Provincial Government work with their Federal counterparts and Halton Region to confirm details and funding for the \$10-a-day child care program announced in Budget 2021.

#### **Immediate Access to Reliable Rural Broadband Internet**

Broadband continues to be a significant concern for many Halton residents and businesses who continue to remain without access to reliable internet services. 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 only 1,410 or 31% of the approximately 4,631 underserved rural Halton homes and businesses. Despite the provincial commitment to connect all Ontarians by the end of 2025, the reality is this date is too far in the future for residents and businesses to effectively participate in today's digital world.

### 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 at least by the current 2025 deadline, if not sooner.
- ❑ Develop new strategies, funding programs and tools to ensure that the availability of next generation technologies is equitable and affordable across Halton.
- ❑ The Provincial Government ensure fiber investments include all underserved areas within communities.

### 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 Halton continues to respond to the impacts of COVID-19, the Region must also continue to meet the essential requirements under Ontario's Public Health Standards. Under-funding for Public Health in Halton Region is a long-standing concern that has been further heightened by the pandemic.

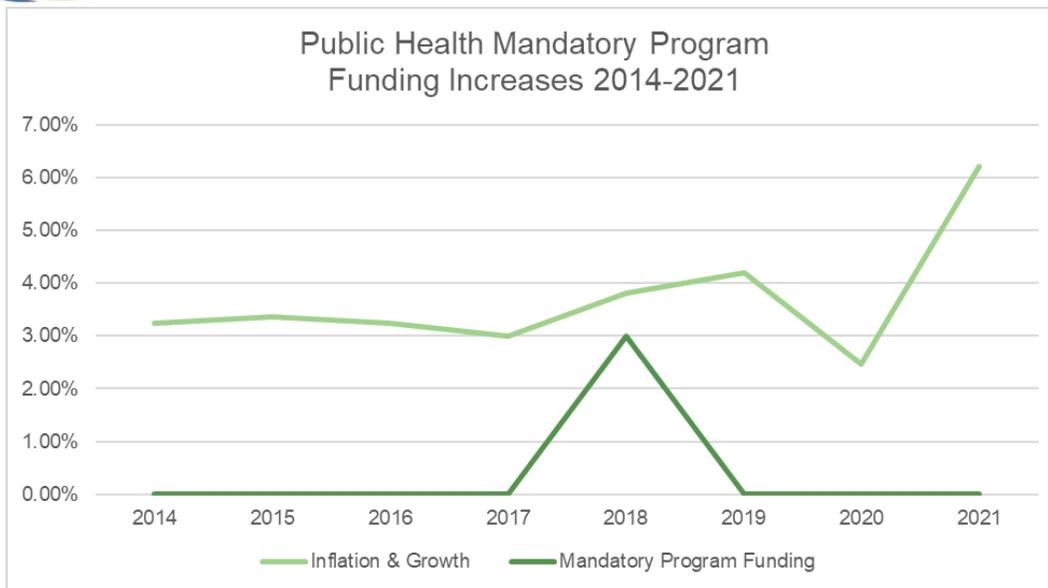
Supports are also required from the Provincial Government to continue the response to the pandemic and as we move into the new normal. Having community primary care offices under the public health authorizing agreement for COVax has resulted in a lack of supports for primary care offices to operate independently 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 that keeps pace with 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.
- ❑ 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, as shown in the graph below. 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 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. 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 provincial investments required in Public Health and Paramedic Services post-pandemic to improve the health of Ontarians.

**Support for Small Business Recovery**

The ongoing recovery of the small business sector is essential to supporting a wider provincial recovery. Online and digital channels have emerged as an important method for main street businesses to interact with customers and generate revenues. The Digital Main Street Program has supported over 1,100 businesses in Halton and more could benefit should the Provincial Government extend the program into 2022-23, something that has not yet been announced.

**Halton Requests:**

- Renew and expand the Digital Main Street program through 2022-23 to continue to help Halton businesses recover.

## Conclusion

A continued strong, collaborative partnership is critical to the successful recovery of our community now, and into the future. We are in this together. A strong Halton ensures a strong Ontario.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to provide input into the 2022 provincial budget. For more information about Halton's advocacy priorities, please visit **Halton.ca**.