

# **City of St. Catharines**

## **Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (MACOA) MINUTES, Wednesday, October 24, 2012**

**A meeting of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility was held on Wednesday, October 24, 2012 in Committee Room #1 at City Hall at 1:30 p.m.**

Present: Mayor Brian McMullan  
Diane Foster, Co-chairperson  
Shelley Stewart, Co-chairperson  
Bob Asham  
Ian Crawford  
Tony DiPaola  
Julie Morris  
Linda Marie O'Hagan  
David Reed  
Mary Jane Waszynski

Regrets: Chantal Barrette  
Kevin Vallier

Staff: Diana Lecinski, Accessibility Coordinator, CAO's Office  
Chris Leonard, Fire Prevention, Fire & Emergency Management Services

Guest: Steve Murphy, Accessibility Advisory Coordinator, Region of Niagara

### **Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS):**

The FADS guideline was approved by the Region of Niagara in September 2005 and adopted by the City of St. Catharines Council on April 24, 2006 for use in municipal facilities.

**1. Call to order:**

Shelley Stewart, co-chairperson called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**2. Introductions:**

Everyone was welcomed and round table introductions were made.

**3. Approval of Previous Minutes:**

The minutes of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility for September 26, 2012 were approved.

**Moved by:** Julie Morris  
**Seconded by:** Diane Foster

That the minutes of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility for September 26, 2012 be approved.

CARRIED

**4. Presentation/Discussion:**

Shelley Stewart welcomed Steve Murphy, Accessibility Advisory Coordinator from the Region of Niagara. He had asked for an opportunity to canvas the members of MACOA relating to a Housing/Homeless Action Plan. Steve Murphy noted common concerns for various sectors of the population that may include among many, people with a disability. A questionnaire was reviewed and discussed question by question. The discussion was extensive, engaged and detailed. Shelley Stewart thanked Steve Murphy for joining MACOA's meeting to review this questionnaire (attached).

**5. Business Arising from Minutes:**

**a. Accessibility Plan / AODA**

Staff provided a document containing various draft objectives related to each department. This was referred to as micro-type objectives over the next 3 year period, further to macro-objectives that related directly to the AODA and its various Standards. MACOA will review the draft in preparation for the November meeting at which time departmental staff reps will attend and discuss 2012 successes along with 2013-15 objectives.

Staff will bring a final draft 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan to MACOA for review and endorsement at their next meeting in January. Further

presentation to Council will take place in February.

**6. Updates:**

- a. Site Plan Review;  
deferred
- b. DDRC;  
Julie Morris, MACOA's DDRC rep, reported that meetings continue to take place and accessibility is becoming more recognized at the table.

**7. Information Update:**

- a. none

**8. Next Meeting:**

Wednesday, November 28, 2012 at 1p.m. in Committee Room #1.  
Annual holiday meeting starts at noon. Meeting will call to order at 1 p.m.  
Departmental staff reps have been invited to provide updates and input on the long-term accessibility plan.

**9. Adjournment:**

The meeting of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility adjourned.

Moved by: Linda Marie O'Hagan  
Seconded by: Bob Asham

That this meeting do now adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

**CARRIED**

# Consultation Workbook

## Developing a Housing and Homelessness Action Plan for Niagara

Niagara Region has created this workbook to hear your voice. It can also be found online at [www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca)

### Section A: Niagara Housing and Homelessness Action Plan

#### Why does Niagara need a Housing and Homelessness Plan?

Housing is a pillar of healthy, strong communities. People with an adequate, suitable and affordable place to live are far more able to take advantage of the opportunities in their community and contribute to society, both economically and socially.

Like most Ontario communities, Niagara is doing many things right in providing a wide range and mix of housing opportunities. However, also like most Ontario communities, Niagara has a range of housing and homelessness challenges. To address them, Niagara Region is developing a 10-year housing and homelessness action plan in consultation with residents, service providers, community agencies, and other stakeholders.

#### What will the plan do?

Developing the plan in consultation with the community will help us work together to identify how to help everyone in Niagara find and keep a home. The plan will outline the actions needed, and who needs to take those actions, to improve access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing. It will coordinate housing and homelessness services and supports to assist families and individuals. It will address a range of circumstances from homelessness to affordable homeownership. We expect that the plan will also help us to prepare for future government funding and partnership opportunities.

Specifically, the purpose of the housing and homelessness action plan is to:

- Identify current and future housing needs
- Set out objectives and goals relating to housing needs
- Propose actions to meet the goals

- Establish a process to measure and report progress towards meeting the goals

Together, we will create a long-term community vision and a comprehensive action plan for housing and homelessness.

### **What is the purpose of this Consultation Workbook?**

This workbook has been developed to help everyone with an interest in housing and homelessness to have a voice in the development of the housing and homelessness action plan. It will help ensure the plan reflects the needs and perspectives of the community. The workbook explains the role of Niagara Region and poses a series of questions to help facilitate discussion and get feedback.

The workbook can be used by individuals or by groups hosting small discussions. The individual or group lead is asked to submit answers or comments on some or all of the discussion questions within five main topics and return this form to the Region before November 10, 2012.

Additional information and resources to support individuals and groups is available at [www.niagararegion.ca/HHAP](http://www.niagararegion.ca/HHAP)

## **Section B: Niagara Region's Roles and Responsibilities**

### **What is Niagara Region's role in housing and homelessness?**

Niagara Region, through its agency Niagara Regional Housing (NRH), provides and advocates for quality, affordable housing and offers a combination of programs and services. Affordable housing is generally defined as costing 30 per cent or less of a household's gross income. About 15,000 Niagara residents are supported through one or more of NRH's programs.

Niagara's housing programs are funded by Niagara Region, the government of Canada, the province of Ontario and tenant rents. It is important to know that Niagara has a chronic waiting list for social housing. About 5,500 households (over 10,600 individuals) are currently on the list.

Niagara Region administers homelessness prevention programs, working with local service agencies and NRH. The Region redirects provincial and federal funds to agencies that provide services and programs focused on:

- Outreach to homeless individuals
- Emergency shelter
- Homelessness prevention

- Supported transitional housing

There will always be a role for Niagara Region to advocate to the provincial and federal governments for increased funding, improvements in policies and programs and a greater role in decision-making. The housing and homelessness action plan will focus on the areas Niagara Region controls and can improve.

## **Section C: Discussion Questions**

### **1. Absolute Homelessness in Niagara**

Absolute homelessness refers to people who have no home to call their own. They live outside, in an emergency shelter, in a place like a car or abandoned building not intended for human occupation. They may also stay for short periods with friends, a practice known as “couch surfing.”

- On any given night in Niagara, about 125 people stay in an emergency shelter, more than 60 people sleep outside and an additional 100 people stay in a transitional – or temporary – housing unit
- 573 households on the affordable housing waiting list identify themselves as homeless (as of July 2012)

A) Does this fully describe the picture of Absolute Homelessness in Niagara? What is missing?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

B) What are the most important things that should be done to help people who are Absolutely Homeless?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

### **2. Affordable Housing in Niagara / At Risk of Homelessness:**

Affordability is defined as a household spending 30 per cent or less of its income on housing costs such as rent or mortgage.

Those at risk of homelessness are people who have a home, but are very likely to lose it in the near future because of circumstances (can't afford to pay the rent, must leave as a victim of domestic violence, are at risk of eviction due to conflict caused from mental health or behavioural issues, their physical disabilities make their home unsafe, etc.).

- In Niagara, 20 per cent of renter households and 6.5 per cent of owner households spend more than half of their income on shelter, putting them at imminent risk of becoming homeless

- More than 10,600 individuals are on the affordable housing waitlist (as of September 2012)
- The affordable housing waitlist has grown by 31 per cent over the past three years with the biggest increases among seniors and families
- Wait times for affordable housing range from one year to almost 10 years. Current affordable housing options (more than 7,500 units) are not keeping pace with wait list growth
- In the private market, rental vacancy rates dropped from 4.4 per cent to 3.2 per cent in 2011 yet remain healthy
- Rental rates are out of reach for people earning minimum wages or receiving social assistance

*A) Does this fully describe the situation of affordable housing and those at risk of homelessness in Niagara? What is missing?*

[Click here to enter text.](#)

*B) What are the most important things that should be done to address affordable housing and the needs of those at risk of homelessness?*

[Click here to enter text.](#)

### **3. Housing programs**

Housing programs are initiatives related to:

- New supply (construction of new units, financing and development incentives)
- Affordability and Sustainability (rent allowances, allowances for utilities, homeownership down payments)
- Maintaining the existing units (renovation loans / grants, capital funding)
- Physical condition (renovation assistance)

*A) Which housing programs have the greatest potential to improve housing options in our community?*

[Click here to enter text.](#)

*B) What can we do more, better or differently with housing programs to help people find and keep housing?*

[Click here to enter text.](#)

*C) What are the greatest barriers to housing programs?*

Click here to enter text.

*D) How can we overcome the barriers to housing programs?*

Click here to enter text.

#### **4. Services and Supports**

Services and supports are provided by hundreds of non-profit agencies and other organizations in Niagara to assist individuals and families. They are *not* related to supply of housing units or housing affordability. These services include:

- Basic needs like food and help to find a home
- Counseling to help with personal needs
- Supports to maintain housing
- Assistance with job search and child care

*A) What are the most valuable services and supports to help people find and keep adequate, suitable, and affordable housing?*

Click here to enter text.

*B) What can we do more, better or differently to enable access to available services and supports?*

Click here to enter text.

*C) What are the greatest barriers to accessing services and supports?*

Click here to enter text.

*D) How do we overcome these barriers?*

Click here to enter text.

*E) How can community groups, agencies and organizations work with each other, with Niagara Region and with Niagara Regional Housing to create better housing options in Niagara?*

Click here to enter text.



## 5. Imagine a new Niagara

In order to create a housing and homelessness strategy that will lead to positive change we must decide what it is we want our community to look like in the future.

### **Our working draft vision:**

*An adequate, suitable and affordable home for everyone in Niagara.*

*A) What does an ideal Niagara look like to you? What would it include?*

Click here to enter text.

*B) How would you measure success regarding access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing in Niagara?*

Click here to enter text.

**Please select the group that you represent**

Choose an item.

**Thank you for completing the Niagara Region Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Consultation Workbook. There are a few ways to provide your feedback. By mail, email, or dropping off at Niagara Region Headquarters. Please provide your comments by Nov. 10, 2012 to:**

**Niagara Region, Attention: Judy Sobchak  
P.O. Box 1042, Thorold, ON L2V 4T7**

**Or by email to: [housing@niagararegion.ca](mailto:housing@niagararegion.ca)**

**Or deliver in person at Niagara Region headquarters. There is a drop-box at the Campbell East entrance labeled "Niagara Regional Housing."**

**You can reach us by phone at 905-984-6900.**