



Niagara Region Community Services

Supporting and advancing the well-being of individuals, families and communities of Niagara

Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO), part of Niagara Region Community Services, provides income support and a range of employment assistance opportunities to low income families and individuals throughout the Niagara region.

SAEO is responsible for administering the Ontario Works Act. This provincial legislation offers temporary financial assistance and employment supports to members of our community most in need.

Eligible applicants receive financial assistance to help them meet such basic needs as food, shelter and clothing. SAEO staff also support clients' independence by helping them secure child care, transportation, and housing.

Housing is critical for those individuals and families needing to stabilize themselves in the community. SAEO staff make referrals to community resources and provide the appropriate supports and resources necessary to assist Ontario Works (OW) clients with finding and securing accommodations. Should a client's current housing be at risk, SAEO staff can act as a client advocate in working closely with landlords to explore ways to meet the needs of both the client and the landlord. This could involve confirmation that financial assistance has been issued, one-time financial support, and in some cases the assessment of a pay direct arrangement.

Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) is one of many options available to those looking for affordable housing. Housing options include co-operative, non-profit and rent geared to income units. SAEO also partners with Housing Help and Hostel providers in providing transitional and permanent housing options to those seeking accommodations.

Housing, Hostels and Homelessness

Community Services is the co-ordinator for the homelessness service system in Niagara. Funded by contributions from the Federal, Provincial and Regional government, the system has four key elements:

- Outreach
- Emergency Hostels
- Supported Transitional Housing
- Prevention

OUTREACH involves assisting people living on the street with transitioning to an emergency hostel and supporting individuals remaining outside to ensure that they are safe during cold and hot weather periods.

The family of **EMERGENCY HOSTELS** consists of nine agencies providing 167 beds across Niagara where individuals can stay for up to 30 days while they pull together their resources in order to become re-housed. Niagara's emergency hostels are:

Providers	City	Clients Served	Beds
Casa El Norte	Fort Erie	Refugees	8
Hannah House	Niagara Falls	Young mothers and children	12
HOPE House	Welland	All	22
Matthew House	Fort Erie	Refugees	8
Nightlight Youth Shelter	Niagara Falls	Youth	10
The RAFT	St. Catharines	Youth	10
Salvation Army	St. Catharines	Men	22
Southridge Church	St. Catharines	Men and Women	35
YWCA	St. Catharines	Women and Children	20
YWCA	Niagara Falls	Women and Children	20
Total			167

SUPPORTED TRANSITIONAL HOUSING assists households exiting the emergency hostel system by providing a temporary home while they transition from homelessness to permanent housing. While living in transitional housing, participants receive life skills counseling and connect, as required, with other agencies for addictions and mental health supports.

PREVENTION services are an important element in the Niagara homelessness services system. Niagara Region Community Services funds a wide range of prevention services in Niagara through service agreements with local agencies. These services include housing help, homelessness loss prevention and community coach programs where agency staff work with households at risk of losing housing due to loss of income, landlord tenant conflict and other issues.

Among the prevention programs is the Niagara Emergency Energy Fund (NEEF), an energy relief program to assist households who have had their utilities turned off or are facing significant energy arrears. NEEF is a grant program with NEEF agencies located across Niagara. The NEEF agencies are:

Agency	Service Area
Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold	St. Catharines/Thorold
Community Care of West Niagara	West Niagara
Grimsby Benevolent Fund	Grimsby
HOPE Centre	Welland
Port Cares	Port Colborne
Project Share	Niagara Falls
Salvation Army	Fort Erie
West Lincoln Community Care	West Lincoln

Employment Opportunities

SAEO provides a range of services to support clients in progressing toward employment. Staff work with each client to develop an action plan which outlines the requirements for participation in employment preparation activities and programs. Employment preparation activities include, but are not limited to:

- Employment information sessions
- Made-in- Niagara training programs
- Résumé, job search workshops
- Completion of secondary school
- English as a Second Language programs
- Assessment of literacy and basic numeracy skills and access to relevant skill-development programs
- Support of newcomers/refugees in their pursuit of employment appropriate to their out- of-Canada qualifications and experience
- Community and employment placements
- Referrals to community partners

SAEO offers skill development, training and community or job placement opportunities to assist OW clients with obtaining employment in growth sectors of the economy. Anticipated labour shortages in Niagara have been identified in the following areas:

- Retail/Hospitality/Tourism
- Service/Telecommunications
- Social/Health Services
- Manufacturing
- Construction/Trades

Additional details or information on SAEO supports and services can be obtained from the Niagara Region Community Services website at:

<http://www.niagararegion.ca/government/community-services/default.aspx> or for OW clients, directly from their Casemanager.