


The Niagara Ontario Health Team-Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara (NOHT-ÉSON) is a steadily growing network of more than 45 health care providers, social service agencies, educational institutions and patient/client and family/caregiver representatives. We are committed to working as one coordinated team to provide exceptional service, support and care to you, no matter when or where you need it, now and for our future generations.



BUILDING A HEALTHIER NIAGARA, A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As we look to the future of health care in Niagara, the Niagara Ontario Health Team-Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara (NOHT-ÉSON) envisions a system in the region that is accessible, collaborative, and focused on the needs of every individual in our community. A collective of over 45 health care providers, social service agencies, community partners, and persons with lived experience in accessing health and social services in the region, the NOHT-ÉSON is striving to create a unified and responsive health and social care system.

Our strategic plan for 2024-2027, released on November 1, is our roadmap toward this future—one that prioritizes collaboration, equity, and patient-centred care.

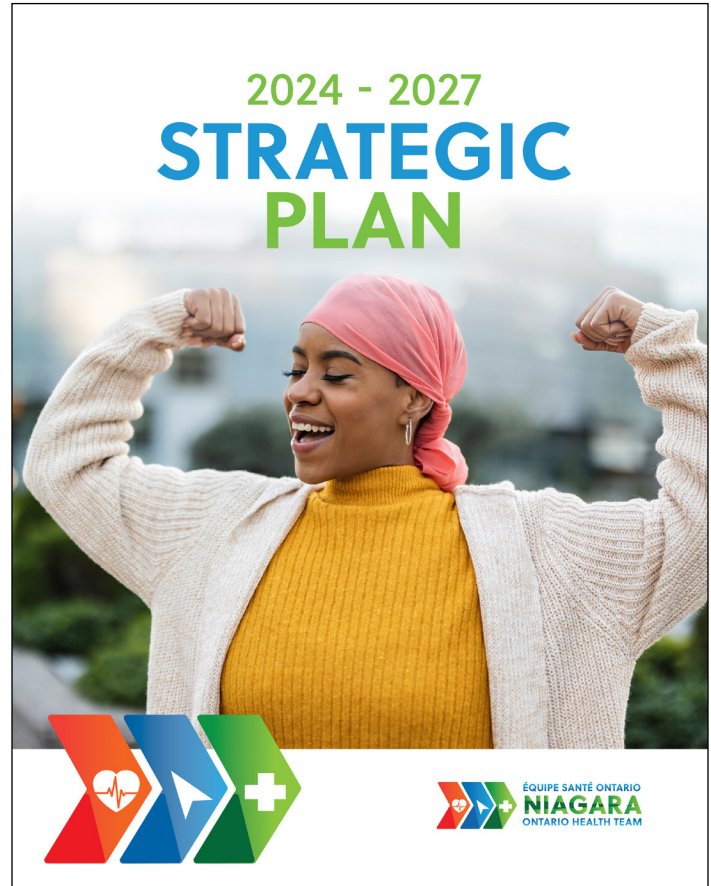
Six Pillars of Progress: Building Stronger Communities

Our strategic plan is built upon six pillars representing the core focus areas for the NOHT-ÉSON over the next three years: **Indigenous Health, System Integration, Safety and Inclusivity, Primary Care, Workforce, and Trust and Accountability.** These pillars will guide our efforts to address our community's most pressing health and social challenges and ensure that Niagara residents receive the care they deserve.

However, this plan is not just a set of goals—it is already driving tangible progress in our region.

System Integration: Supporting Seniors through Let's Go Home (LEGHO)

With **Happy in My Home, Community Support Services of Niagara** as the lead and in partnership with several community organizations, the NOHT-ÉSON launched the Let's Go Home (LEGHO) program to support seniors with non-urgent health issues. LEGHO is designed to help seniors who are living with dementia or who have a non-acute issue transition from the emergency



department to their homes, offering services like meal delivery, transportation, homemaking, and respite care.

This initiative has already made a significant impact, serving 661 individuals and providing over 1,850 hours of homemaking, 36,000 meals, 115 rides to medical appointments, and 1,250 wellness checks. Since its official launch in January 2023, LEGHO has received 975 referrals, alleviating pressure on emergency departments and ensuring older adults receive the support they need at home.

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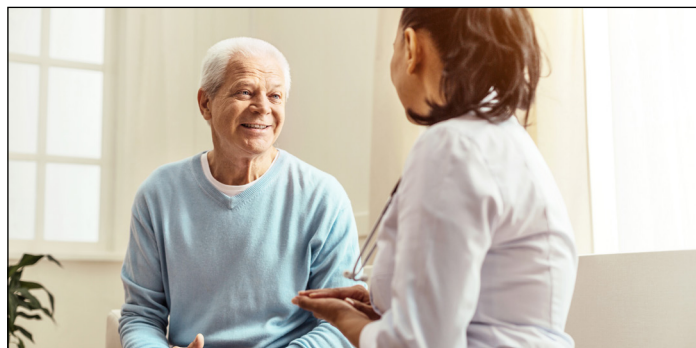
NIAGARA RESIDENTS ACCESS MORE TIMELY COGNITIVE ASSESSMENTS

Residents of Niagara are experiencing faster and more efficient access to cognitive assessments thanks to ongoing collaboration and innovative partnerships led by the NOHT-ÉSON. These strides in dementia care stem from a strong focus on system integration, ensuring that individuals and their care partners can access assessments and resources sooner.

“Our focus has been on integrating services and partnerships across the region,” said **Sabrina Piluso**, Executive Director of the NOHT-ÉSON. “By removing barriers and connecting people with the right care, we’re ensuring that Niagara residents have quicker access to the cognitive assessments they need, which is critical for early diagnosis and improved outcomes for people living with dementia.”

The NOHT-ÉSON’s efforts began in 2022 when dementia care was identified as a priority clinical area, leading to the establishment of the Dementia Care Working Group.

“Timely assessments significantly enhance the quality of life for those living with dementia and their families,” said **Teena Kindt**, CEO of the **Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region** and Co-Lead of the **Dementia Care Working Group**. “Early diagnosis opens the door to critical support, education, and resources, and we’re



thrilled to see how collaboration is improving outcomes in our community.”

Key initiatives have driven improvements for patients and clients. The reopening of a community memory clinic in South Niagara and the decision by **Niagara Medical Group** and **Portage Medical Family Health Teams** to open their memory clinic doors to all community members have streamlined referrals and improved access to care. The Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region also launched a mobile geriatric cognitive assessment program, bringing assessments directly to eligible patients’ homes—an especially vital service for housebound individuals.

Additionally, the **Niagara Family Physician Dementia Community of Practice** was established to enhance dementia diagnosis and post-diagnostic support. Funded by a \$41,000 grant from the **Niagara Community Foundation**, this initiative involves ten doctors specializing in dementia care, a geriatrician, and various community partners, all working to implement system changes that benefit patients and caregivers alike.

“The success of the Dementia Care Working Group is a testament to the power of collaboration,” added Piluso. “From mobile assessments to better physician training, these initiatives are transforming dementia care in Niagara.”

Through these efforts, the NOHT-ÉSON is not only reducing wait times but also improving the quality of care and support for those living with dementia. While challenges remain, the progress achieved underscores the potential for collaboration to revolutionize health care delivery in the region.

For more information about cognitive assessments and available community resources, visit www.noht-eson.ca/dementia.



ÉQUIPE SANTÉ ONTARIO
NIAGARA
ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM

CONNECTED CARE

WINTER 2025



STAY HEALTHY THIS SEASON: TIPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

As the colder weather sets in, it is crucial to take proactive steps to protect yourself and those around you from seasonal illnesses. With respiratory illnesses becoming more prevalent during this time of year, small actions can make a big difference in staying healthy and reducing the spread of illness.

Stay Informed and Practice Good Hygiene

Understanding the symptoms of common respiratory illnesses and knowing when to seek care is the first step in protecting yourself. Simple hygiene practices such as staying home when you are feeling unwell, washing your hands frequently, and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing can significantly reduce the transmission of viruses.

Get Vaccinated

Vaccinations are one of the most effective ways to protect yourself and ease the burden on the health care system. A flu shot is especially important for seniors, those who are immunocompromised, and other vulnerable populations. By being vaccinated, you not only protect yourself but also contribute to the overall health of your community.

Know When to Seek Care

Emergency departments across Ontario are experiencing high volumes, and wait times for less serious concerns may be longer than usual. For non-emergencies, consider alternatives such as your family doctor, walk-in clinics, or virtual appointments through Urgent Care Ontario. Pharmacists can also provide assistance with many common ailments.

Explore Local Resources

The NOHT-ÉSON's **Resource Navigator** is a helpful tool to connect you with community services and health

care resources. Whether you need information about vaccines, access to virtual care, or other supports, the Resource Navigator can guide you in finding the right care at the right time.

By staying informed, practicing good hygiene, and making use of available resources, you can help ensure a healthier season for yourself and your community.



ACCESS VIRTUAL URGENT CARE FOR NON-LIFE-THREATENING MEDICAL NEEDS

Residents of Southwestern Ontario now have access to convenient, virtual urgent care appointments, and available seven days a week for children and adults with urgent, non-life-threatening medical issues. Offered through **Urgent Care Ontario**, this service covers a large portion of Southern Ontario, including all of Niagara.

While your family doctor remains your primary point of contact for medical care, virtual urgent care is an excellent option for situations where timely attention is needed for issues that are not emergencies. This service ensures that you or your loved ones can receive quality care without a trip to an in-person clinic or hospital.

For more information or to schedule a virtual appointment, visit **UrgentCareOntario.ca** or call 1-844-227-3844. Take advantage of this service to address your medical concerns quickly and efficiently.

GET URGENT MEDICAL CARE

without having
to go to the
hospital



Schedule a
same-day
virtual visit

UrgentCareOntario.ca

noht-eson.ca  



HOW JIM EMPOWERED HIS HEALTH JOURNEY USING CONNECTMYHEALTH

Jim Prescott's health care story begins in North Bay, where he spent 30 years before moving to Toronto. A diverse career—ranging from working in food service on the Northlander passenger train to roles in marketing with Aircraft Marine Products and later as a cabinetmaker—provided him with a variety of life experiences. However, it was not just his professional life that made an impact; Prescott's personal experiences, particularly those with his family, instilled in him a deep respect for the health care system and its professionals.

Having grown up with his grandmother after his grandfather passed away, Prescott developed an appreciation for older adults and those in need of care. He fondly recalls visiting his grandmother in the hospital and being thanked by the nurses for his frequent visits—something that left a lasting impression on his view of health care.

Now at 70 and living in Niagara Falls, Prescott's life has brought him into contact with the health care system in profound ways, especially after suffering a stroke in 2016. This experience, along with others, has given him firsthand insight into the importance of having access to his medical information and understanding his own health history.

That is where **ConnectMyHealth** comes into play.

Prescott was first introduced to ConnectMyHealth during a patient and family advisor meeting at **Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre (HDS)**, located in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Jim immediately became interested in the patient portal because it provided free, online access to his hospital records from HDS. From viewing magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) results to seeing results of other



Jim Prescott, pictured above, advocates for actively participating in his health care decisions, and ConnectMyHealth enables him to do so.

procedures he underwent in hospital, the platform gave him control and transparency over his health in a way he had not experienced before.

"What I like is seeing what gets added (to ConnectMyHealth). It gives you options," he says. "For example, I had an MRI, and all the information was there. I could see the scans and compare them to the MRI I had back in 2016. That's pretty good."

The ability to compare past and present results, like MRI scans from 2016 and more recent ones, provided peace of mind for Prescott. He could gauge his own health changes and be better informed ahead of appointments with his health care providers.



CONNECTED CARE

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The Power of Information at Your Fingertips

For Prescott, ConnectMyHealth is more than just a platform to view his hospital records—it is a tool for empowerment. The ability to access scans, x-rays, and other types of medical records right at his fingertips means he can walk into appointments more informed and with clearer questions.

“Sometimes you don’t ask everything you want (of the doctor) during an appointment,” he says. “Having the records available to me when I’m at home means I can go back and get the answers later. That’s calming.”

This level of transparency, Prescott believes, should be available to everyone. He has become a strong advocate for the ConnectMyHealth platform, encouraging friends and family to sign up. “It’s right at your fingertips when you want it,” he emphasizes. “Like my MRI results—having them available within days or sooner is very convenient. You don’t have to wait for a doctor to get the general gist of your results.”

Though Prescott is a fan of ConnectMyHealth, he does see areas for improvement. He notes that while most of his hospital records are accessible, some tests, like echocardiograms, have not been added yet.

Despite these minor challenges, Prescott is optimistic about the future of ConnectMyHealth and sees it as an essential part of his health care management. He appreciates the ability to monitor his health, particularly after undergoing multiple strokes and surgeries, and encourages others to take advantage of the platform.

Why You Should Register for ConnectMyHealth

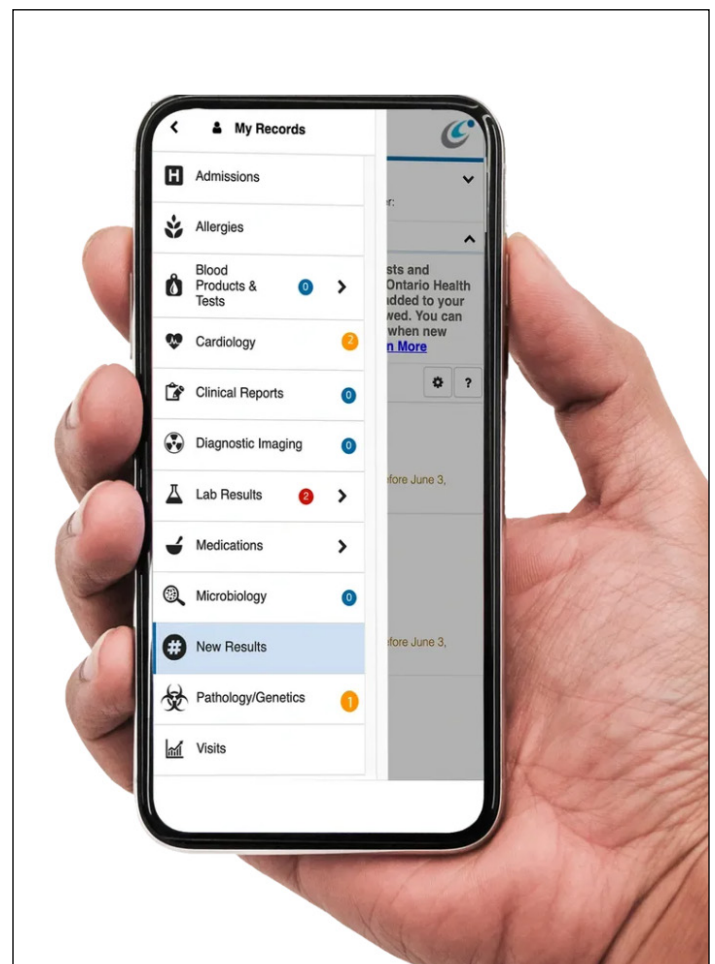
For Jim Prescott, ConnectMyHealth is a gateway to better health care. It gives him control, transparency, and the ability to stay on top of his health in a way that was not possible before.

Whether you are managing a chronic condition like Prescott or simply want to keep track of your hospital

records, ConnectMyHealth offers the convenience and peace of mind that comes from being informed.

As Prescott puts it, “You don’t have to use it if you don’t want to. But when you need it, it’s there—and it’s pretty darn good.”

Do not wait—register for ConnectMyHealth today and experience the benefits of having greater access and control of your health information online, all in one spot! Visit their website - info.connectmyhealth.ca.





CONNECTED CARE

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This program is a prime example of how greater system integration and the power of collaboration can meet the complex needs of our aging population.

Addressing Workforce Challenges: The Health Human Resources Working Group

As health worker shortages continue to challenge health care delivery, the NOHT-ÉSON is taking proactive steps to address the crisis. In 2024, we formed the **Health Human Resources Working Group**, a dedicated team made up of a cross-section of health and human resources professionals from different sectors in the Niagara region, focused on understanding workforce gaps and developing solutions to recruit, retain, and support health care professionals. The group has identified a number of areas on which to focus over the next few years:

- Creating a health and social workforce data strategy;
- Targeted workforce development (training, education, and optimization of resources);
- Ensuring family physicians have what they need to start and maintain their practices;
- Improving flexibility in workplace culture and practice environments;
- Increasing social supports to maximize workforce participation; and
- Expanding and expediting the utilization of internationally-trained clinicians.

Expanding Access to Primary Care: Connecting More People to Care

In 2024, the NOHT-ÉSON received a \$2.1 million funding commitment from the **Ministry of Health** to expand access to primary care services for thousands of Niagara residents. Many in our region do not have a regular family doctor or nurse practitioner, and this initiative is designed to change that.

Thanks to the leadership and collaboration of primary care partners across Niagara, the initiative has already connected over 4,000 people to team-based care, mental health services, and other community supports. The initiative also includes mobile geriatric cognitive assessments, helping individuals with dementia receive earlier diagnoses and quicker access to essential services.

This is a vital step in ensuring that all Niagara residents, regardless of their location or background, have timely access to the primary care they need.

The Path Forward: Join Us in Building a Healthier Niagara

As we move forward with our strategic plan, the NOHT-ÉSON remains committed to improving the health and well-being of all Niagara residents.

We are working tirelessly to create a health and social system that is integrated, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of our community. But, we cannot do it alone.

We invite all Niagara residents to join us in this effort. Whether you are looking to provide feedback or simply learn more about how the NOHT-ÉSON is working to improve health care in the region, we encourage you to get involved. Together, we can ensure that every individual in Niagara has access to high quality, compassionate care—now and for future generations.

Visit our webpage - noht-eson.ca/strategicplan - to learn more about our strategic plan and how you can help us build a healthier, stronger Niagara. Let us work together to create a community where everyone has the opportunity to live their healthiest and best life.

Let us build a healthier Niagara—together.

Sabrina Piluso
Executive Director
NOHT-ÉSON