

REPORT

Oakville Public Library Board

Meeting Date: March 20, 2025

FROM: Oakville Public Library

DATE: March 11, 2025

SUBJECT: Halton Information Providers Update – March 20, 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Halton Information Providers (HIP) Update report be received for information

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Oakville Public Library (OPL) leads the Halton Information Providers (HIP) joint venture, overseeing the Halton Community Services Directory (hipinfo.ca) working with Burlington Public Library, Halton Hills Public Library, Milton Public Library, and The Halton Resource Connection.
- The Halton Community Services Directory is a vital resource used by local agencies, municipalities, and nonprofits to provide information and referrals, supporting services like healthcare, housing, mental health, and emergency assistance across the region.
- The IRCC grant supporting the Halton Newcomer InfoPods will conclude on March 31, 2025, with OPL working to fulfill contract requirements and submit a final report to the Ministry by June 2025.

BACKGROUND:

The Halton Information Providers (HIP), under the leadership of the Oakville Public Library and in partnership with public libraries in Burlington, Milton, and Halton Hills, along with the Halton Resource Connection, manage the Halton Community Services Directory (hipinfo.ca). This platform offers extensive access to community and social service information across the Halton Region, encompassing healthcare, emergency services, food assistance, housing, employment, and more. Local certified Information & Referral (I&R) Specialists and Database Curators ensure that data on community services is accurate and up to date for various agencies, including those serving youth and seniors. They support other I&R staff by providing

the latest accurate information and culturally sensitive referrals to Halton residents when they need it most.

Halton-based agencies have long relied on the Halton Community Services Directory to provide information and referrals to their clients. Organizations such as Service Oakville, 311 Halton (Access Halton), HMC, Achev, CMHA, ROCK, Halton Region Public Health, and Halton Regional Police Service use the database to connect individuals with essential services. The Halton Community Service Directory is widely integrated across the community, appearing on municipal, regional, nonprofit, and business websites, with many agencies embedding a customized search widget for direct access to services.

All listings for services located in Halton Region are sent to Ontario 211, supporting its telephone, chat, and email services across the province, as well as its online platform 211ontario.ca. Ontario 211 also shares HIP data with various regional 211 service portals, such as [211 North](#), [211 Central](#), and [Niagara 211](#), ensuring broader access to essential community resources across Ontario. Additionally, a monthly export of all listings in the Halton Community Services Directory serving Oakville is provided to the Town of Oakville for inclusion in its Open Data Portal, enhancing public access to local service information

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Halton Community Services Directory 2024

Following up on a board member question about the increase in sessions from 2023 from the February board meeting, HIP data is regularly searched by bots and crawlers resulting in inflated session counts and misrepresenting real user engagement. Before 2024, a filtering mechanism excluded bot traffic, but the transition from Universal Analytics (UA) to Google Analytics 4 (GA4) disabled this function. As a result, 2024 reporting includes bot activity listed under "Undisclosed/Other Locations".

Starting with January 2025, the HIP Database administrator has implemented a new performance metrics framework, based on Google Analytics Data. Data for 2024 has been recalculated using the new framework, for year over year comparison purposes.

Chart from Q4 2024 Performance Measures

HIP Usage by Municipality	2019 Q4 YTD	2023 Q4 YTD	2024 Q4 YTD	% Change 2019/2024	% Change 2023/2024
Oakville	103,636	79,432	75,174	-27%	-5%
Burlington	82,469	57,017	55,376	-33%	-3%

Halton Hills	25956	23271	24468	-6%	5%
Milton	49004	35311	36987	-25%	5%
Undisclosed/Other Locations	716635	678189	1809011	152%	167%
Total Halton Sessions	261,065	195,031	192,005	-26%	-2%
Unique Visitors	39774	48525	49180	24%	1%
All Database Sessions	977,700	873,220	2,001,016	105%	129%
Sessions Per Unique Visitor	24.6	18.0	40.7	66%	126%

Updated graph with performance metrics framework

Sessions	Jan-Feb 2024	Jan-Feb 2025	2024-2025 Comparison
HIP Oakville Sessions	13,665	10,212	-25.27%
HIP Burlington Sessions	9,579	8,666	-9.53%
HIP Halton Hills Sessions	3,692	3,637	-1.49%
HIP Milton Sessions	5,907	5,146	-12.88%
Total Halton Sessions	32,843	27,661	-15.78%
Undisclosed/Other locations	71,157	54,339	-23.64%
All Database Sessions	104,000	82,000	-21.15%
Unique Visitors	79,000	61,000	-22.78%

The session statistics for January - February 2024 compared to January - February 2025 reveal a notable decline in engagement across all categories. Total sessions for Halton dropped by 15.78%, with Oakville showing the largest decrease at 25.27%. This warrants further investigation to identify and address the factors driving this significant drop, especially in engagement from Oakville residents.

In terms of pageviews and search focus, the Halton Community Services Directory recorded 833,270 total pageviews in 2024.

Month (2024 - Pageviews)	Default Search View	Childcare View	Seniors View	Newcomers View	Youth View	Parenting View
January	74,725	3,080	2,845	2,468	925	3,141
February	83,214	3,358	2,775	2,276	966	580
March	98,541	2,714	2,785	2,350	1,039	564
April	85,825	4,167	2,903	2,065	1,126	518
May	82,239	2,961	2,961	1,651	1,099	521
June	71,452	2,872	2,423	1,953	832	673

July	61,383	2,403	2,307	2,685	1,318	751
August	54,861	2,507	2,579	2,667	1,037	553
September	55,683	2,262	2,689	2,605	1,442	731
October	57,451	2,846	2,609	2,341	1,150	610
November	59,944	2,883	2,582	2,365	1,069	778
December	47,952	1,174	1,870	2,110	855	521
Total	833,270	33,227	31,328	27,536	12,858	9,941

View Descriptions

Default Public	Default search on main HIP page through all community services, programs, and organizations available to residents of Halton Region
Seniors View	Services of interest for Older adults and their caregivers
Newcomers View	Services of interest to Newcomers to assist with their transition into Halton community
Youth View	Services tailored to the needs of young people in Halton region
Parenting View	Services for parents, caregivers, and families to find information on services and programs related to parenting, children, and family life
Childcare View	Services for parents to locate licensed child care centres in Halton

The majority of searches (74% of total pageviews) occurred through the Default Search View, which provides comprehensive access to all community services and programs.

Among specialized views, the Childcare View saw the highest engagement, followed by significant activity in the Seniors View and Newcomers View, reflecting strong demand for childcare resources and tailored services for older adults and newcomers. These insights demonstrate the directory's critical impact in addressing diverse community needs and guiding resource prioritization.

Oakville's top searches focused on practical services like the DriveTest Centre and local donation options, while senior searches emphasized transportation and accessibility, and newcomer searches centered on general information and driver licensing.

TOP 5 General Oakville Searches	Pageviews
DriveTest Centre, Oakville, Driver Examination Centre	5,009
Used Appliances, Clothing, Furniture, and Household Goods - Where to Donate, Oakville	2,604
Halton Healthcare, Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, Volunteer Services	2,409

Oakville. Recreation and Culture, Oakville Trafalgar Community Centre, Recreation Facilities & Programs	2,405
Oakville. Recreation and Culture, Seniors Programs	2,368

TOP 5 Senior Searches	Pageviews
HSR Public Transit, HSR Customer Centre Services	798
Ontario. Ministry of Transportation, Senior Driver Renewal Program	719
Used Wheelchairs and Assistive Equipment - Where to Donate, Burlington	705
Burlington. Recreation, Community and Culture, Burlington Seniors' Centre	529
Halton Hills. Recreation & Parks, Georgetown Hillview Active Living Centre, 50 Plus Services	514

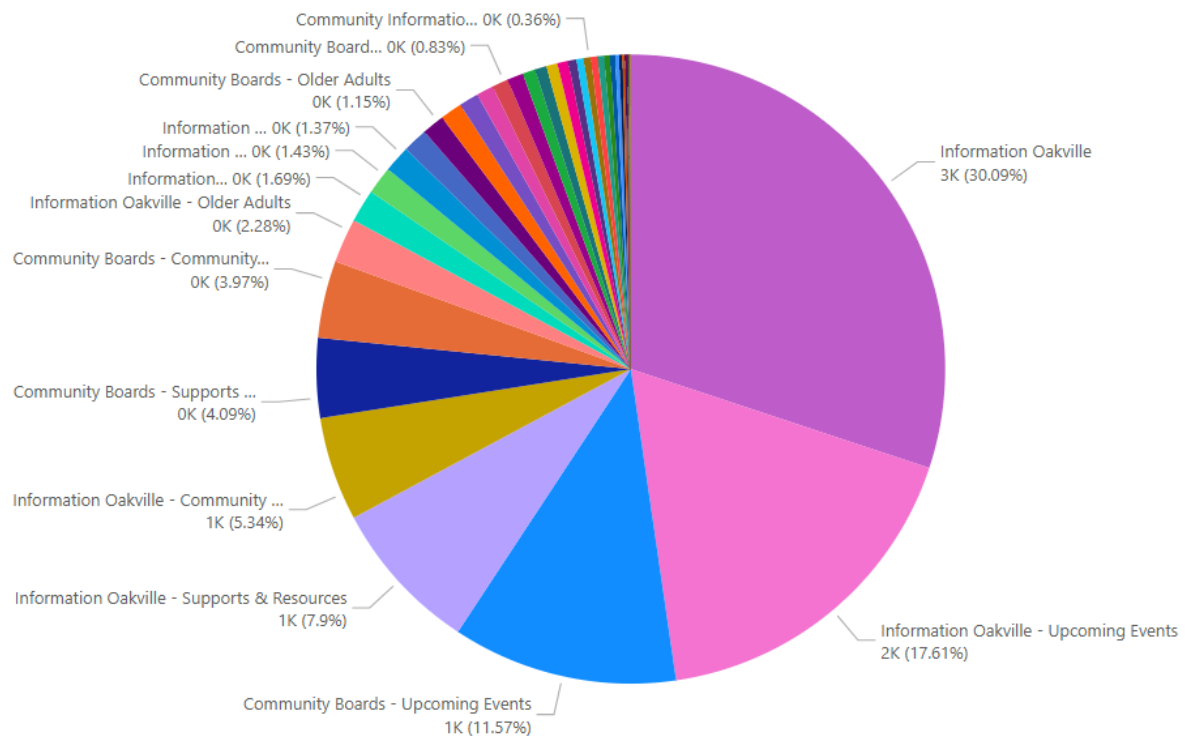
TOP 5 Newcomer Searches	Pageviews
Information Oakville	147
DriveTest Centre, Oakville, Driver Examination Centre	138
Information Burlington	129
Ontario. Ministry of the Solicitor General, Maplehurst Correctional Complex	119
Information Milton	116

In 2024, extensive training on the use of HCSD CIOC software was provided to a wide range of community agencies, enhancing their ability to access and utilize critical service information. Organizations such as United Way, the Centre for Skills Development, Halton District School Board, Parents for Children's Mental Health, Stride, Support House, Summit Housing & Outreach Programs, and One-Link benefited from these sessions. Additionally, key partners like Halton Regional Police Services, Oakville Public Library branches, John Howard Society, Vanier/Maplehurst Correctional Facilities, and several health and social service networks, including CCHOHT, Halton Newcomer Strategy, and the Halton Suicide Prevention Coalition, were equipped with the knowledge to better support their clients. This training initiative strengthened community collaboration and improved service accessibility across Halton.

Virtual Community Information Board

Information Oakville continues to provide a virtual community information board, offering an additional platform to promote services and programs. The board displays event and program flyers, along with readable and downloadable brochures. This resource is gaining momentum and receiving positive feedback from our community partners. Visit: oakvilleinfo.ca

Sessions by Page Title



Page Title

- Information Oakville
- Information Oakville - Upcoming Events
- Community Boards - Upcoming Events
- Information Oakville - Supports & Resources
- Information Oakville - Community Information
- Community Boards - Supports & Resources
- Community Boards - Community Information
- Information Oakville - Older Adults
- Information Oakville - Newcomers
- Information Oakville - Mental Health & Addiction
- Information Oakville - Youth
- Community Information

HIP Revenue Forecast

Marcus Logan, Manager, Community Engagement and Development has established communication with Gillian Mosher, the new Director of Communications and Customer Service at the Halton Region, and a meeting is scheduled for late March to present the HIP Joint Venture. This meeting aims to discuss a potential updated service agreement that includes an increase in the Region's contribution to HIP. Initial discussions have been positive, with mutual agreement on continuing the partnership.

Additionally, changes in the provincial funding model for the Information and Retrieval sector for 2026 may provide opportunities for HIP to secure funding from provincial sources.

The Halton Region Police Service Community Fund is also being explored as a potential funding avenue.

Regarding expenses, OPL will be moving the following costs to contributing organizations as appropriate:

- Certification for new staff (\$400)
- Re-certifications for current Database Curators (\$360)
- Conference registrations for I&R staff.

Contributing agencies will continue to provide in-kind staff time to curate local community information, ensuring the ongoing success of the HIP initiative.

Halton Newcomer InfoPods

The Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) grant supporting the Halton Newcomer InfoPods will conclude on March 31, 2025, with the Oakville Public Library working to fulfill contract requirements and submit a final report to the Ministry by June 2025.

Currently, there are ten InfoPods installed, with six located in Oakville:

- Oakville Public Library - Sixteen Mile Branch
- Oakville Public Library - Glen Abbey Branch
- Oakville Public Library - Iroquois Ridge Branch
- Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre
- Achev Newcomer Center (Oakville)
- Burlington Public Library – Central Branch
- Halton Hills Public Library – Acton Branch
- Halton Hills Public Library – Georgetown Branch
- Milton Community Resource Centre - Main office
- Milton Community Resource Centre - Viola Desmond Childcare Centre

From these 10 InfoPods, community members accessed over 33,000 pages of newcomer information in 2024. The newcomer information can also be accessed via the Halton Community Services Directory website directly.

At a previous board meeting, the board asked for information on the future of the InfoPods once the IRCC grant ends. OPL started to review options by compiling a costing document (Appendix A) that provides an overview of what it costs to set up a new InfoPod as well as an estimated annual cost for supporting InfoPods port installation.

OPL is now working on drafting an InfoPod Hosting agreement to use for organizations that may be interested in hosting an InfoPod at their location. OPL will continue to look for granting opportunities to support any InfoPod expansion costs.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Halton Newcomer InfoPod Purchase and Service Costing information

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Submitted by:
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