



THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
PUBLIC HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
FINAL AGENDA

PHSSC 10-2023

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

1:00 p.m.

Council Chamber

Niagara Region Headquarters, Campbell West

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold, ON

To view live stream meeting proceedings visit: niagararegion.ca/government/council

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Violence to NEMS First Responders

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- 5.4 PHD-C 5-2023 55 - 56
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Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act (Vaping is not for Kids), 2023

7. OTHER BUSINESS

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The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 7, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. in
the Council Chamber, Regional Headquarters.

9. ADJOURNMENT

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend or participate in meetings or
events, please contact the Accessibility Advisor at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 (office), 289-929-8376
(cellphone) or accessibility@niagararegion.ca (email).

Food Affordability in Niagara

Public Health and Social Services Committee

October 10, 2023

David Lorenzo, Associate Director, Chronic Disease and Injury
Prevention

FOOD AFFORDABILITY IN NIAGARA

RESULTS OF THE 2023 NUTRITIOUS FOOD BASKET SURVEY

Recommendations

- That Regional Council, as the Board of Health, **ACKNOWLEDGE** food insecurity as an income problem requiring income solutions.
- That Regional Council, as the Board of Health, **BE DIRECTED** to send a letter to the federal and provincial governments, advocating for the implementation of evidence-based policy solutions to reduce food insecurity including: increasing social assistance rates, increasing minimum wage to a living wage, and implementing a study of a basic income guarantee project in Niagara to reduce poverty in a sustainable way.

2023 Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) Survey

- Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) is a survey tool used to monitor the cost and affordability of nutritious eating at the local level.
- 61 food items are included in the NFB that align with Canada's Food Guide, The survey is conducted in a selection of grocery stores that carry a full range of grocery items.
- In May 2023, the NFB survey was conducted in a sample of nine grocery stores across Niagara.
- The NFB provides an average cost of each food item across the grocery stores selected.

Is income adequate for covering the cost of living?

- The NFB along with the average price of rent in Niagara is used to shed light on the cost of living compared to income that individuals receive from social assistance and/or job wages
- Total income, average monthly rent, cost of nutritious eating, and remaining funds after food and rent are calculated for a range of income scenarios.

Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner (full-time)

- Total income from wages and eligible government benefits (i.e., Canada Child Benefit, HST/GST credit) is \$4218
- Cost of food is \$1212 (29% of income)
- Cost of rent (three bedroom) is \$1366 (32% of income)
- \$1640 is left after rent and food for other necessities

Family of Four, Ontario Works

- Total income from social assistance and eligible government benefits (i.e., Canada Child Benefit, HST/GST credit) is \$2873
- Cost of food is \$1212 (42% of income)
- Cost of rent (three bedroom) is \$1366 (48% of income)
- \$295 is left after rent and food for other necessities

Single Parent (2 children), Ontario Works

- Total income from social assistance and eligible government benefits (i.e., Canada Child Benefit, HST/GST credit) is \$2636
- Cost of food is \$848 (32% of income)
- Cost of rent (two bedroom) is \$1258 (48% of income)
- \$530 is left after rent and food for other necessities

One-person Household, Ontario Works

- Total income from social assistance and eligible government benefits (i.e., HST/GST credit) is \$851
- Cost of food is \$414 (49% of income)
- Cost of rent (bachelor) is \$833 (98% of income)
- \$-396 is left after rent and food for other necessities

One-person Household, Ontario Disability Support Program

- Total income from social assistance and eligible government benefits (i.e., HST/GST credit) is \$1387
- Cost of food is \$414 (30% of income)
- Cost of rent (one bedroom) is \$1070 (77% of income)
- \$-97 is left after rent and food for other necessities

One-person Household, Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income

- Total income and eligible government benefits (i.e., HST/GST credit) is \$2035
- Cost of food is \$299 (15% of income)
- Cost of rent (one bedroom) is \$1070 (53% of income)
- \$666 is left after rent and food for other necessities

Household Food Insecurity (HFI) in Niagara

- HFI is “the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints”(PROOF).
- In 2022, approximately **one in five households** in Niagara are food insecure (20.7% of households).
- In 2019, 18.3% of children and youth one to 17 years of age live in food insecure households.

Resident voices

According to residents, the primary problem with food security is income and affordability.

“Notice less food in the house. Spend the same.”

- Anonymous

“A person I feed gave me a gift card for Foodland. We had a baby shower on Sunday and I had leftover fruit. I have been craving fruit salad. But it costs a lot to make. So today I used the \$25 coupon and went to Foodland. Bought a seedless watermelon (\$8), 3 kiwi (\$3), a pineapple (\$8), a bag of oranges (\$6), pineapple juice, bananas (not sure how much). Cost me \$40. That’s a basic fruit salad.”

- Anonymous

“Everything costs more. I used to be able to save a little from month to month, not anymore. People on a fixed income haven’t seen a decent increase ever, surely not a “living wage”. It’s hard to make ends meet. Now I can’t save for my final expenses. That worries me.”

- Anonymous

Food insecurity is a public health issue

- Individuals living in food insecure households are more at risk for chronic disease (diabetes, heart disease), infectious disease, poor oral health, and injury.
- Strong relationship between food insecurity and mental health for both adults and children exists.
- Negative impacts are greatest for those who are severely food insecure.
- Adults living in severely food insecure households are more likely to die prematurely from all causes except cancer

HFI Solutions

- Charitable food programs are a temporary solution and do not address the root cause of food insecurity, income.
- HFI is an income-based problem requiring income-based solutions.
- PROOF (Food Insecurity Policy Research) are leaders in HFI research and suggest the following policy solutions:
 - Increase social assistance rates
 - Lowering/eliminating taxes for the lowest income bracket
 - Increase minimum wage
 - Provide a basic income guarantee

Recommendations

- That Regional Council, as the Board of Health, **ACKNOWLEDGE** food insecurity as an income problem requiring income solutions.
- That Regional Council, as the Board of Health, **BE DIRECTED** to send a letter to the federal and provincial governments, advocating for the implementation of evidence-based policy solutions to reduce food insecurity including: increasing social assistance rates, increasing minimum wage to a living wage, and implementing a study of a basic income guarantee project in Niagara to reduce poverty in a sustainable way.

Community Services Social Assistance Discretionary Client Benefits

Public Health and Social Services Committee

October 10, 2023

Lori Watson, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities



Community Services Social Assistance Discretionary Client Benefits

Public Health and Social Services Committee

October 10, 2023

Lori Watson

Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities

Agenda

- Basic Necessities
- Discretionary Client Benefits
- Local Priorities and Policy
- Response to Client Needs
- Mechanism for Change

Basic Needs

- **Health:** dental, glasses, counselling
- **Personal:** sanitary supplies, clothing, haircut, funeral
- **Family:** car seat, stroller, formula, school supplies
- **Home:** furniture, cleaning supplies, last month's rent
- **Communication:** internet, cell phone, laptop
- **Transportation:** gas, bus pass, parking, insurance

Discretionary Client Benefits

- Provided to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients where failure to provide would result in a detriment to the health of the person or family or supports employability

Budget \$11.7M

30,740 OW and ODSP adults

\$32/month per adult

Current Priorities

- Beds
- Glasses
- Funerals
- Transportation
- Medical Devices
- Emergency Dental
- Fridges and Stoves
- Cell phone and Internet
- Housing Related Benefits



Local Policy

- Legislative guidelines to support local policy development
- Local policy establishes clear eligibility criteria, frequency and monetary maximums for essential items to stay within available funding



People Served

- 30% - Transportation at \$44/month avg.
- 26% - Phones/internet at \$41/month avg.
- 10% - Glasses/year
- 9% - Housing related benefits /year
- 8% - Dental/dentures /year
- 4% - Beds /year



Items Not Covered

- Counselling service
- Furniture and linen
- Bed bug extermination
- Clothing and grooming
- Cell phone and laptop
- Diapers, formula, stroller
- Sanitary items and toiletries
- Cleaning and laundry supplies



Mechanism for Change

Niagara Poverty Reduction community consultation pointed to income as the primary determinant of poverty and the need for greater advocacy for increased social assistance rates and consideration of a basic income.



Questions ?

Subject: Food Affordability in Niagara: Results of the 2023 Nutritious Food Basket Survey

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Recommendations

1. That Regional Council, as the Board of Health, **ACKNOWLEDGE** food insecurity as an income problem requiring income solutions; and
2. That Regional Council, as the Board of Health, **BE DIRECTED** to send a letter to the federal and provincial governments, advocating for the implementation of evidence-based policy solutions to reduce food insecurity including: increasing social assistance rates, increasing minimum wage to a living wage, and implementing a study of a basic income guarantee project in Niagara to reduce poverty in a sustainable way.

Key Facts

- The Nutritious Food Basket Survey was conducted in May of 2023 and demonstrates that income from employment and social assistance do not always cover the cost of food and shelter in Niagara.
- A significant proportion of income is required to pay for rent and food for individuals and families.
- In 2022, 20.7% or one in five households in Niagara were food insecure.
- Food insecurity is associated with numerous negative health impacts including chronic disease, infectious disease, poor oral health, and mental health issues.
- Improving the financial circumstances of individuals and families is associated with a decline in food insecurity and positive health outcomes.

Financial Considerations

There are no immediate financial considerations for Council to consider for this report.

Analysis

Nutritious Food Basket Survey

The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) is a survey tool used to monitor the cost and affordability of nutritious eating according to Canada's Food Guide ⁱ. Included in the survey are a select number of large chain grocery stores that consistently carry a full range of food items. The NFB includes 61 food items that fall into four categories: vegetables and fruit; protein foods; whole grains; and fats and oils. The NFB provides an average cost of each food item for various age and sex groups and the monthly cost of nutritious eating for different family/household unit types are calculated.

The NFB does not include personal care items, processed or convenience foods, religious or cultural foods, infant food, special diet foods, personal hygiene products, toilet paper, or laundry detergent.

The NFB was conducted in May of 2023, in nine grocery stores across Niagara region. Eight stores were in small, medium, and large population centres and one store was in a rural community. Four stores were surveyed in-person and five were surveyed online.

Adequacy of income and social assistance in covering the cost of living

The NFB helps to determine if residents' income from employment or social assistance is enough to buy nutritious food and other necessities. Results often show that those living in poverty also experience food insecurity. Total monthly income, average monthly rent, monthly cost of nutritious eating, and funds remaining after rent and food are calculated for six income scenarios. Income from other applicable federal/provincial income supports available to those eligible upon filing taxes (i.e., Canada Child Benefit, Ontario Child Benefit, GST/HST Credit) is included in the total income.

Income scenarios do not include other living necessities (e.g., utilities, transportation, child-care, cell phone, clothing etc.). Further, rental costs are likely an underestimation of true costs due to a gap between the asking price and average rent paid for occupied units.ⁱⁱ

Income Scenario 1: Family of four, Ontario Works

- Total income is \$2873
- Cost of food is \$1212 (42% of income)

- Cost of rent (three bedroom) is \$1366 (48% of income)
- \$295 is left after rent and food for other necessities

Income Scenario 2: Family of four, Minimum Wage full-time earner

- Total income is \$4218
- Cost of food is \$1212 (29% of income)
- Cost of rent (three bedroom) is \$1366 (32% of income)
- \$1640 is left after rent and food for other necessities

Income Scenario 3: Single parent household (2 children), Ontario Works

- Total income is \$2636
- Cost of food is \$848 (32% of income)
- Cost of rent (two bedroom) is \$1258 (48% of income)
- \$530 is left after rent and food for necessities

Income Scenario 4: One-person household, Ontario Works

- Total income is \$851
- Cost of food is \$414 (49% of income)
- Cost of rent (bachelor) is \$833 (98% of income)
- \$-396 is left after rent and food for necessities

Income Scenario 5: One-person household, Ontario Disability Support Program

- Total income is \$1387
- Cost of food is \$414 (30% of income)
- Cost of rent (one bedroom) is \$1070 (77% of income)
- \$-97 is left after rent and food for other necessities

Income Scenario 6: One-person household, Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income

- Total income is \$2035
- Cost of food is \$299 (15% of income)
- Cost of rent (one bedroom) is \$1070 (53% of income)
- \$666 is left after rent and food for other necessities

Household food insecurity in Niagara

Household food insecurity (HFI) is defined as, “inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints” ⁱⁱⁱ. Food insecure households may be forced to choose between purchasing food or paying other bills, often leading to sacrifice in the quality and quantity food ⁱⁱⁱ. In 2022, 20.7% or approximately one in five households in Niagara were food insecure ^{iv} and in 2019, 18.3% of Niagara children and youth one to 17 years of age lived in food insecure households ^v.

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy Interim report identified food security as one of the seven pillars of poverty. Residents have noted that their greatest challenge is that their low income means they cannot afford the high cost of nutritious food.

Household food insecurity is a public health issue

HFI can lead to less nutritious diets and is associated with chronic diseases including diabetes, heart disease and hypertension ^{vi}. Adults experiencing HFI are at increased risk for infectious disease, poor oral health, and injury and there is a strong relationship between HFI and mental health issues for both adults and children ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. As the severity of HFI increases, the risk of depression, anxiety, mood disorders, and suicidal thoughts also increases ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. Adults experiencing severe HFI are more likely to die prematurely of all causes except cancer ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}.

Household food insecurity is an income problem requiring income solutions

Charitable food programs, including food banks, are a valued and socially accepted response to food insecurity; however, they are only a temporary solution and do not address the root cause of food insecurity. Research shows that food insecurity is best improved by income ^{vii}.

Federal and provincial policies that improve the financial circumstances of low-income and low/mid-income households are associated with a decline in HFI rates ^{vii}. Households receiving SA experience an elevated risk of food insecurity, with over 60% of recipients in Canada reporting some level of HFI ^{vi}. Policies associated with reduced HFI include increasing SA rates, lowering/eliminating provincial taxes for the lowest income tax bracket, introducing/improving child benefits and increasing exemptions are associated with reduced HFI ^{vii,viii}.

Most households experiencing HFI in Canada are in the workforce and rely on wages, salaries or self employment as their main source of income ^{vi}. Often those reporting HFI have lower wages and engage in precarious work ^{vii}. Increasing provincial minimum wage to a living wage can reduce HFI among this group^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. In addition, preliminary results of a study of the 2017 Ontario Basic Income Pilot showed that many participants were able to purchase food that they could not previously afford and were able to make healthier food choices ^{ix}. Individuals saw a positive impact on their health, and some were able to manage other health related conditions ^{ix}.

Alternatives Reviewed

Council could choose not to write an advocacy letter; however, there would be a missed opportunity to advocate for individuals and families in Niagara who live in poverty and experience food insecurity.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report supports the Council Strategic Priority of an Equitable Region. Equity, inclusion, and advocacy for a social determinant of health demonstrates listening and responding to priority populations within our community, in need of income and food security.

Other Pertinent Reports

- PHD 6-2020 Basic Income for Income Security
- PHD 1-2021 Collaborative Action to Prevent COVID-19 Transmission and Improve Healthy Equity by Increasing Access to Paid Sick Days
- PHD 14-2021 Collaborative Action to Support the Need for Permanent Paid Sick Days
- PHD 11-2022 A Renewed Call for Paid Sick Leave in Ontario

Prepared by:

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Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

Recommended by:

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Medical Office of Health
Public Health and Emergency Services

Prepared by:

Kavalpreet Grewal, Health Promoter
Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Erin Mozina, Manager, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities, and reviewed by Lori Watson, Director, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities, Diana Teng, Manager Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, and David Lorenzo, Associated Director, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention.

Sources

- ⁱ Government of Canada. (2020). National Nutritious Food Basket. Retrieved from: (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/>)
- ⁱⁱ Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2023). Rental Market Report January 2023 Edition.
- ⁱⁱⁱ PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research. (nd). Understanding household food insecurity. Retrieved from: (<https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/>)
- ^{iv} Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Snapshots: household food insecurity snapshot, 2021-2022. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario. Available from: (<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/healthy-equity/household-food-insecurity>)
- ^v Canadian Health Survey of Children and Youth, 2019.
- ^{vi} Tarasuk, V., & Fafard St- Germain, A.A. (2002). Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from (<https://proof.utoronto.ca/>)
- ^{vii} PROOF (Food Insecurity Policy Research). (nd). What can be done to reduce food insecurity in Canada? Accessed August 17, 2023. Retrieved from: (<https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-can-be-done-to-reduce-food-insecurity-in-canada/#4>)
- ^{viii} Men, F., Uriquia, M.L., Tarasuk, V. (2021). The role of provincial social policies and economic environments in shaping food insecurity among Canadian families with children. Preventative Medicine, 148.
- ^{ix} Ontario Basic Income Network. (2019). Signposts to Success: Report of a BCIN Survey of Ontario Basic Income Recipients.

Workplace Violence Strategy – Mitigating the Impact of Increased Violence to NEMS First Responders

Public Health & Social Services Committee

PHD 7-2023
October 10, 2023

Karen Lutz, Deputy Chief, Operations
Niagara Emergency Medical Services

Workplace Violence Strategy – Mitigating the Impact of Violence to First Responders

Karen Lutz, Deputy Chief

Campaign to Raise Awareness

- Workplace violence toward EMS front line staff is escalating
- Niagara EMS launching campaign to raise awareness that “violence toward first responders will not be tolerated”
- Implementation of a system level strategy to support staff
- Support from Regional Council to address changes to the Criminal Code

Internal Survey of Workplace Violence Results- Underreporting is Common

- 134 Front line staff members surveyed
- 83 witnessed violence themselves to staff members in the previous 12 months but only 60 staff members reported the incidents
- Underreporting is common – 27 staff reported that they felt violence is part of the job and 26 staff felt it was useless to report it

Total Incidents for 2023 so far greater than year totals for 2018 and 2020

TYPE OF INCIDENT	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Verbal Assault/Harassment	3	24	10	19	14	14
Sexual Assault/Harassment	0	0	1	1	2	1
Physical Assault	26	38	34	42	28	27
Weapons on scene	1	2	1	1	6	6
Threatening Behaviour	4	0	1	4	2	1
Patient medical condition	5	2	0	4	5	7
Total	39	66	47	71	57	56

Mitigation Strategies

- Collaboration with Niagara Regional Police
- Enhanced Training
- Encourage Reporting and Improved Reporting
- Enhanced Policies and Procedures
- Media Campaign to Raise Awareness
- Wellness and Resilience Programs
- Letters to those that harass, intimidate or threaten staff

Request to Support Bills C-321 and C-345 and amend the Criminal Code of Canada

- Bill C-321 an Act to require courts to consider at sentencing the fact that the victim of violence is a first responder performing an essential public service job.
- Bill C-345, an Act to protect firefighters, paramedics and first responders and increases the penalties and maximum terms of imprisonment for the aggravated assault of first responders to the same level as peace officers including the murder of a first responder to be automatic first-degree murder charge

Questions?

Subject: Workplace Violence Strategy – Mitigating the Impact of Increased Violence to NEMS First Responders

Report to: Public Health & Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Recommendations

1. That this report regarding the increased incidents of workplace violence toward front line staff and the strategies that will be used to combat these increases **BE RECEIVED**; and
2. That the Regional Chair, on behalf of Regional Council, **BE DIRECTED** to send follow-up correspondence to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and communicate Council's request that the Criminal Code of Canada be amended to provide protection for first responders and to make violence against first responders an indictable criminal offence.

Key Facts

- Exposure to incidents of violence to first responders at Niagara Emergency Medical Services (Niagara EMS) are increasing.
- Underreporting of incidents of violence is common due to the belief that violence is part of the job and that reporting isn't impactful. Niagara EMS is taking a multi-pronged approach to address violence toward front line staff which will include policy and procedure changes, enhanced training and responses to incidences of violence in addition to a media campaign.
- Regional Council support is needed to build public awareness of the violence faced by first responders during the course of their duties, in order to advance efforts to address system level changes and advocate for legislative changes to strengthen protections for first responders.

Financial Considerations

There is no financial impact associated with this report. Niagara EMS will use annual budgeted dollars to implement the proposed system level improvements as laid out within this report.

Analysis

Exposures to incidents of violence (verbal, physical and sexual) by first responders at Niagara EMS are increasing and often underreported, presenting a significant but common challenge to the profession. In Niagara, reported incidents of violence toward front line staff has increased by 53% since 2018. As of July 31, 2023, there have been more reported incidents of violence (52) in this calendar year than all of 2018 (39) and 2020 (47). A 2019 study completed by Peel Region Paramedic Services found that lack of reporting is linked to the belief that recourse is not available to responders, limited consequences for the perpetrator, and that front line staff may accept violence as an unavoidable work hazard or make light of the situation due to the common occurrence. These findings align a Niagara EMS 2022 workplace violence survey of first responders with regard to underreporting. Of the 134 staff responses, 83 staff witnessed violence to front line staff in the previous 12 months; some reported underreporting violence occurred more than once by staff. However, Niagara EMS health and safety data from 2021 shows that only 60 staff members reported incidents of violence. Within the Niagara EMS workplace violence survey, when asked the reason they did not report incidents of violence, 27 staff members felt as though violence was an inherent job risk and 26 staff members felt that it would not be impactful to report.

Further information gleaned from the Niagara EMS workplace violence survey revealed that of 134 Niagara EMS front line staff, 72% experienced verbal abuse, 52% experienced physical violence, 15% experienced sexual harassment or assault and 12% experienced harassment or assault based on race, culture, or religious/spiritual beliefs while in the workplace.

Incidents of violence takes a toll on first responders themselves and to the organization. Reported impacts by first responders include long term psychological effects such as changes in mood, fear for personal safety, post-traumatic stress injury and decreases in job satisfaction. Resulting service impacts may include staffing challenges due to protracted absenteeism, illness, or injury and increased costs due to additional workplace safety and insurance board claims. A 2020 study conducted by the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada found that 88% of surveyed frontline paramedics across Canada had experienced workplace violence in the last 12 months.

Niagara EMS is taking steps to create awareness and implement system level changes in the following ways:

- **Collaborating with Niagara Regional Police** to improve communication pathways and improve operational protocols.
- **Enhanced Training** in Crisis Intervention for Fall 2023 aimed to improve safety on scene.
- **Encouraging and improving reporting** procedures to ensure early notification and enhanced surveillance of violence towards responders
- **Media campaign to build public awareness** through a series of videos on Public Health and Niagara Regional Police social media platforms, as well as graphics displayed in ambulances and workplaces stating that “Violence is Never OK” and “Compassion First, Violence Never”
- **Enhanced policies and procedures** to increase clarity for scene security and flag addresses where violence has occurred.
- **Building wellness and resilience resources to support front line staff** such as
 - Peer Support, Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) for counselling services, Enhanced Psychological Wellness resource lists, modified work program, Decompression Time and Mental Stress Leave Days,
 - Amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, regarding post traumatic stress disorders, designed to improve access to workplace safety and insurance board benefits and mental health supports.
- **Sending letters to those who intimidate, threaten or harass front line staff.**
The letter is intended to inform individuals of the identified unacceptable behaviours that have negatively impacted staff and the actions that must be undertaken to prevent future negative behaviours.

Request to Support a Communication to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

Council support is needed to increase awareness and to advocate to the federal government for system level change. Regional advocacy will focus on the following two areas:

Greater public awareness of the impacts of violence on paramedics. There is needed to change public perception that violence is a normal part of a paramedic’s job and to send a clear message that violence towards paramedics is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

The Criminal Code of Canada Section 423.2 includes a subsection that makes it an indictable offence to intimidate or impede health professionals during their duties or to obstruct access to health services, but more is needed. Bill C-321, an Act to amend the Criminal Code (assaults against health care professionals and first responders) recognizes the physical and psychological impact of assaults against paramedics, and that they should be protected from harm on the job. With the support of Regional Council, staff request the Regional Chair submit a letter to the federal Minister of Justice to request amendments to the Criminal Code through Bill C-321 and provide these protections for first responders.

Bill C-345, an Act to protect firefighters, paramedics and other first responders, proposes an amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada that increases the penalties and maximum terms of imprisonment for the aggravated assault of first responders to the same level as peace officers. This includes the murder of a first responder to be automatic first-degree murder charge. With the support of Regional Council, staff request the Regional Chair submit a letter to the federal Minister of Justice to request amendments to the Criminal Code through Bill C-345 and provide protections for first responders.

Alternatives Reviewed

System level improvements and strategies to address workplace violence align with the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada Position Statement recommendations regarding interventions; increased research, evidence informed strategies, increased public awareness and changes to policies and legislations.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

These recommendations align with fiscal responsibility as staff who have been victims of workplace violence can result in reduced staffing due to protracted absenteeism, illness, or injury; increased costs due to additional workplace safety and insurance board claims. They also align with the strategic priorities of diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous reconciliation as any violence toward any members of staff, including violence due to race, gender or creed will not be tolerated and action must be taken. Additionally, these recommendations align to partnerships with government and community in that Council can an effective and unified voice to advocate with senior governments on behalf of Niagara.

Prepared by:

Karen Lutz
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Recommended by:

Azim Kasmani, MD, MSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and
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Public Health & Emergency Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

Subject: Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO) Contract Extension Approval

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Recommendations

1. That the current contract with 2045162 Ontario Limited o/a Clark Marketing Communications (Clark), for a sector specific technology solution, used to support the delivery of Social Assistance and additional benefits for low-income individuals and families in Niagara, **BE EXTENDED** under the same terms and conditions to December 31, 2026, for total estimated cost of \$605,137.80, including 13% HST; and
2. That the Regional Chair and Regional Clerk **BE AUTHORIZED** to execute the contract extension which would increase the awarded value of the contract to be over the \$1,000.000 (\$1,484,169.11) single source threshold and any required documents related hereto in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal and Court Services.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to extend the current contract (which expires December 31, 2023) with 2045162 Ontario Limited o/a Clark Marketing Communications (Clark) for an additional three (3) year term from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2026, in accordance with the current terms and conditions.
- The Ontario Works (OW) program is legislated by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and is administered locally by Niagara Region Community Services, through the division of Social Assistance Employment Opportunities (SAEO).
- The Provincial Social Assistance Management System (SAMS), used to deliver OW across the province, does not have the capacity to customize web applications to respond to local service delivery, system planning, integration and performance metrics needs.
- Clark applications are customized to respond to the local needs of each municipality, while ensuring critical elements are consistent across OW delivery agents and in alignment with provincial legislation.

- Clark applications are used by 10 municipalities, including Niagara, to support the delivery of OW.
- Niagara Region's Procurement Policy By-Law 02-2016 as amended February 28, 2019, specifically Section 18 (a) (iii) – Single Source Purchase, provides for the recommendation of a single source vendor when there is an absence of competition for technical reasons and the Goods and/or Services can only be supplied by a particular Supplier.
- In accordance with Schedule "B" (Purchasing and Execution Authority) of the Region's Procurement By-law 02-2016 as amended on February 28, 2019, Council is required to approve any single source contract award that exceeds \$1,000,000 in total value excluding 13% HST.

Financial Considerations

Technology, maintenance, hosting and software service agreement fees are purchased within the allocated SAEO operating budget. The cost related to services purchased through Clark from January 10, 2017, to December 31, 2023, was \$889,031.31 from within the allocated operating SAEO budget. The three-year contract extension is \$605,137.80, totalling \$1,484,169.11 (total from 2017-2026) to be fully funded from the annual approved operating budget and not resulting in additional costs to the levy.

Analysis

This report is being brought to committee in accordance with Schedule "B" (Purchasing and Execution Authority) of the Region's Procurement By-law 02-2016 as amended on February 28, 2019, whereby Council is required to approve any single source contract award that exceeds \$1,000,000 in total value excluding 13% HST.

In 2015 Council invested \$50,000 to develop new technology to support the delivery of social assistance linked to their Strategic Priority to Build a Labour Ready Workforce. Niagara Region issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) to seek out this new technology and was unsuccessful in receiving a submission that met all requirements. Through an Ontario Municipal Social Services Association forum, SAEO became aware of a municipality that had contracted with a vendor (Clark) to create a web application uniquely designed to complement the Provincial SAMs system to support the improved delivery of social assistance. The Clark application met the requirements of the EOI. In January 2017, SAEO entered into a single source contract with Clark in accordance with Procurement Policy By-Law, Section 18 (a) (iii) – Single Source Purchase, providing for the recommendation of a single source vendor when there is an absence

of competition for technical reasons and the Goods and/or Services can only be supplied by a particular Supplier.

- Since 2017, Clark has developed three integrated web applications, that are able to have a critical relationship to SAMS, that have become broadly accepted platforms across the province to support the delivery of social assistance:
- - **The Asset Management System** houses a database of local resources and supports that work together to help staff effectively manage their caseloads. The early application of this tool was instrumental in the work to help improve the connection of clients to supports and employment, with the ability to update content easily and track client connection to resources and use of specific supports.
 - **Benefits Application Manager** allows social assistance and low-income clients to register online and monitor their application for essential benefits in a single, secure web portal. This application offers instant reports in a variety of areas, such as client registrations, eligibility decisions and staff workload management.
 - **The Integrated Team Scheduler** provides collaboration across teams, offices and departments for the purpose of encouraging complete wrap-around services for clients. Metrics and report data are displayed and added to different business intelligence software tools.

SAEO utilizes all three applications to support case management, scheduling and the administration of Discretionary Benefits including Funerals, Housing Stability Benefits, Niagara Kids Benefit and Niagara Emergency Energy Fund (Jan. 2024).

One or more Clark applications are utilized by 10 other OW offices in Ontario including; The City of Hamilton, Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board, County of Lambton, District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board, District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board, District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board, District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Administration Board, Prince Edward-Lennox & Addington Social Services, and Region of Waterloo. The OW offices collaborate with Clark to ensure applications are integrated and support system planning and performance metrics at a local and provincial level.

Alternatives Reviewed

Alternatively, Council could direct SAEO staff, with the assistance of Procurement staff, to prepare an RFP to identify other purchasing options.

Financial implications: There is significant financial risk associated with moving the systems and data to a new vendor, should one be found, as SAEO would no longer have access to the original applications and proprietary logic Clark developed since 2017. It should be noted OW program delivery funding continues to be held at 2018 actuals, with no ability to access additional funding from MCCSS to purchase new applications.

Service Delivery Implications: The applications **currently used** have modernized and streamlined the delivery of social assistance in Niagara. Without access to the original applications and proprietary logic Clark developed, clients would not be able to continue to apply online for Discretionary Benefits including Funerals, Housing Stability Benefits and Niagara Kids Benefit.

Staffing Implications: Issuing an RFP for alternate purchasing options would require staff to develop a comprehensive workplan and complete a detailed process without a clear indication that there are alternate preferable options on the market. If a decision were made to move to a new vendor, this change management process would require dedicated staff time and have residual disruption implications. These additional activities would be a significant pressure on existing SAEO staff resources.

The efficiencies gained through the use of the applications have allowed SAEO to realign existing staff resources in order to maintain service levels to a steadily increasing caseload within frozen provincial funding. SAEO would require a significant amount of time to onboard and implement new applications into current business practice and train staff which would impact SAEO's ability to respond and meet the needs of Niagara residents.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Aligns with Council Strategic Priorities 2023 – 2026.

Effective Region: Remain an employer of choice by transforming service delivery in a way that is innovative, collaborative and fiscally responsible. Implement continuous

improvement and modernized processes to ensure value-for-money with Regional services and programs.

Other Pertinent Reports

None noted

Prepared by:

Lori Watson
Director, SAEO
Community Services

Recommended by:

Adrienne Jugley, MSW, RSW, CHE
Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Honey Sarwar, Program Financial Specialist with the guidance of Amanda Fyfe, Manager Program Financial Support and reviewed by Bart Menage, Director Procurement & Strategic Acquisitions.

Resolution in Support of Basic Income for the Niagara Region

WHEREAS, Niagara Region recognizes the social and economic challenges faced by its residents that have a detrimental impact on the determinants of health including income inequality, poverty, inadequate housing, and precarious employment;

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of Niagara Region to strive for the well-being and prosperity of all its residents, which includes ensuring access to basic needs and opportunities to improve health;

WHEREAS, through addressing poverty and improving access to healthcare, a Universal Basic Income can potentially reduce healthcare costs, enabling people to afford preventive care and timely treatments while preventing more costly healthcare interventions, leading to better overall population health;

WHEREAS, a Universal Basic Income program was tested in Hamilton during the Ontario Basic Income Pilot project between 2017 and 2019 and more than 1,000 local residents reported positive outcomes including the alleviation of food and housing insecurity, improved physical and mental health, financial stability, social equity and greater connection to the labour market;

WHEREAS, Niagara Regional Council passed a motion on July 14, 2020, calling upon the federal and provincial governments to prioritize measures to reduce poverty and income inequality in our society;

WHEREAS, Niagara Regional Council passed a motion on July 14, 2020, recommending that the federal and provincial governments re-engage in pilot projects to study policy innovations that can address poverty and income inequality, including the study of a basic income guarantee project in Niagara region;

WHEREAS, the Federal Budget Office upon reviewing the concept of a national Universal Basic Income program determined it could, if properly set out, be a major economic driver to the Canadian economy; and

WHEREAS, a Universal Basic Income program can complement and enhance existing social support systems, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing the needs of Niagara Region residents including persons with disabilities and aligns and complements Niagara Region's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That Niagara Regional Council **SUPPORTS** the concept of a Universal Basic Income to combat poverty, income inequality, and economic insecurity within our community; and supports the continued work on developing a Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy and the continuing advocacy of the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network;
2. That Niagara Regional Council **CALLS UPON** the provincial and federal governments to collaborate to implement a national Universal Basic Income program;
3. That Niagara Regional Council **DIRECTS** the Regional Chair to write a letter to the Prime Minister, local Members of Parliament and the Senate, the Premier of Ontario, local Members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, calling on these orders of government to work collaboratively towards implementing a Universal Basic Income to eradicate poverty and homelessness, and ensure everyone has sufficient income to meet their basic needs; and
4. That Niagara Regional Council **ENCOURAGES** other municipalities across the province and the country to join in advocating for a Universal Basic Income as a key policy tool in the fight against poverty and inequality, and to this end, Niagara Regional Council will advocate through its representatives at Ontario Big City Mayors, Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, for Universal Basic Income resolutions at meetings of those organizations.

Subject: St. Catharines Emergency Shelter Operations

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Recommendations

1. That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council with regard to the operations of the new full day temporary emergency shelter in the City of St. Catharines, to be delivered using a portable structure solution, while a permanent site is being sourced and renovated. The temporary site will operate for two to three years, subject to the remediation and construction required once a suitable site is located.
- Given the challenges in sourcing a suitable piece of land for the temporary site, a seasonal shelter will operate for a brief period of time while the temporary portable site is established.
- The Region issued a negotiated request for proposal (NRFP) to operate this site and received only 2 bids after closing on September 11, 2023. Upon initial review of what was submitted by the two proponents, it was determined that neither proponent had the necessary extensive experience and capacity to support operations at this new temporary site, which are necessary to mitigate risk of negative community impacts and resistance (and then the potential pressure to relocate the temporary portable solution.) A decision and notice of cancellation of the Procurement process was made on September 25, 2023.
- Community Services is therefore planning to directly operate the new temporary emergency shelter and will look to find a third-party provider once a permanent site is established.

Financial Considerations

The anticipated annualized operating costs for the new temporary full day 60 bed emergency shelter are estimate at \$1,826,942, inclusive of staffing costs, food, supplies, estimated property taxes and utilities as well as contribution to capital reserve

as per capital management policy for owned capital assets. For the year 2023 these pro-rated costs are available in the enhanced HPP funding allocated to shelter operations in the HPP investment plan (CAO-6, 2023).

The overall funding necessary, and impact to the 2024 operating budget to support the homeless system, will be known once the NRFP process for selecting emergency shelter providers for the remainder of the system is completed, which is currently occurring in alignment with the shelter capacity review. The additional one-time funding requirements will be included in the 2024 budget submission, with the goal of mitigating any incremental pressure on the levy through potential use of the Taxpayer Relief Reserve, budget reductions, or future allocations of provincial funding (including HPP) currently allocated to capital that can be used to accommodate the increase in operating costs.

Analysis

Temporary St. Catharines Shelter

In alignment with the recommendations of the shelter capacity review, Niagara Region is moving forward with work to convert the seasonal shelters in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines into full day, all year shelters. As part of this transition, extensive work has been undertaken by Regional and City staff to source a site suitable for an emergency shelter in St. Catharines. Through this work, it has been determined that site selection opportunities are limited in St. Catharines, and with the timeline to bring a suitable permanent site from purchase to operations estimated at two to three years. The process and length of effort is necessary to allow for time to source a site and close the purchase, submit change of use requests to the City and determine associated necessary work, including record of site condition, procure design and contractors for renovations and complete the necessary work to create suitable long term emergency shelter.

As a result of the concerns around these long-term construction timelines, staff at the Region, in partnership with Niagara Regional Housing, has been conducting a review of temporary options available. A modular solution has been implemented in other communities for the similar purpose of temporary emergency shelter. Staff have been reviewing two solutions and looking to source suitable land on which to locate the temporary site.

The Region is committed to having solutions to support the vulnerable homeless clients of St. Catharines prior to the traditional opening of the seasonal shelter in St.

Catharines, which would be November 1. To ensure service is available, staff are finalizing a brief arrangement for space with a third party in St. Catharines, and operations will transfer to the temporary portable solution as soon as available, anticipated to be approximately January 2024.

In addition, to support the operations of the temporary sites, a procurement was initiated commencing in August 2023 and closing on September 11th. This process yielded two bidders, however, upon initial review of what was submitted by the two proponents, it was determined that neither proponent had the necessary extensive experience and capacity to support operations at this new temporary site, which are necessary to mitigate risk of negative community impact and resistance (and the potential pressure to then relocate the temporary portable solution, which has been witnessed in other communities). The anticipated clientele at the temporary site, based on the experience and data of the seasonal shelters, is largely chronically homeless men, with a history of living unsheltered, and experiencing significant mental health and substance use challenges. Many clients did not previously demonstrate a strong commitment to working on a housing goal, a key focus and performance target expected of the work to be performed at the new site.

Human Resource Implications:

Staff are working collaboratively with Human Resources to develop a staffing model to support the operations of the new temporary shelter building on the staffing structure put in place for the Niagara Falls shelter presented in Confidential report COM 29-2023. The new positions will align with the both the Bridge Housing and Niagara Falls shelter positions to allow for additional program staffing stability, as employees can, with this approach, be asked to work at any site to ensure adequate coverage. Staffing is unionized with the exception of the shelter supervisor. The Manager of Operations will now be responsible for all sites, ensuring that funding is maximized at the front line to support clients. All staffing at the new shelter site will be temporary.

Alternatives Reviewed

Staff did go out to market for an emergency shelter provider, with bids closing September 11th, 2023. There were two responses to the NRFP, however, upon initial review of what was submitted by the two proponents, it was determined that neither proponent had the necessary extensive experience and capacity to support operations at this new temporary site. A public procurement for shelter services will be considered again, when the permanent location is ready for operations.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The temporary emergency shelter programs are homelessness system services that supports the Council Priority of an Equitable Region, providing for opportunities for a safe and inclusive Niagara, responding to our current community needs.

Other Pertinent Reports

- COM 20-2021
- CAO 6 – 2023
- Confidential COM 29 - 2023

Prepared by:

Cathy Cousins
Director, Homelessness Services
Community Services

Recommended by:

Adrienne Jugley, MSW, RSW, CHE
Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was reviewed by Lisa Castellan, Human Resources Consultant, Honey Sarwar, Program Financial Specialist and Nicole Cortese, Manager, Homelessness Operations.



September 7, 2023

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
College Park 5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 2J3
sylvia.jones@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Jones:

Re: Bill 103, Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act (Vaping is not for Kids), 2023

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are addicting youth to nicotine at an alarming rate. Between 2017-2019, vaping rates doubled among Ontario students in grades 7-12. In Simcoe Muskoka, 32% of students in grades 7-12 and 43% of high school students reported using an e-cigarette in the past year. This is particularly concerning when considering the highly addictive effects of nicotine in e-cigarettes is associated with an increased risk for future tobacco cigarette use among youth who vape (Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, 2018). Further, there are significant health risks associated with youth vaping as a result of the toxic and carcinogenic substances in devices including lung damage, changes to the brain, burns, dependence or addiction, difficulty learning, and increased anxiety and stress.

As chair of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) Board of Health I am writing in support of Public Health Sudbury and Districts letter on June 28, 2023 regarding Bill 103, Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act (Vaping is not for Kids), 2023. Bill 103's focus on preventing youth uptake of vaping is important to decrease morbidity and mortality and keep Ontarians out of the healthcare system now and in the future. This includes prohibiting the promotion of vapour products, raising the minimum age for purchasing vapour products and requiring that specialty vape stores obtain store location approval from the Board of Health.

Such amendments proposed by Bill 103 align with the philosophy of previous positions of the Board of Health, which have been focused on reducing nicotine and tobacco use in our communities. This includes previous Board communications to the Province of Ontario and the Federal Government in support of the previous 2017 Tobacco Endgame for Canada (committing to a target of less than 5% tobacco use in Canada by 2035), supporting previous tobacco tax increases (2018) and a 2014 letter to the Director General, Health Products and Food Branch Inspectorate regarding the increased use and availability of electronic cigarettes.

In 2023, the Board of Health called on the Ontario government to establish a renewed smoking, vaping and nicotine strategy which was supported from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the linked [letter](#) was sent in August 2023 to the Ontario Minister of Health. Such communications to government have been supported by SMDHU's comprehensive approach to smoke-free programming via education, promotion and

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enforcement efforts which are required to manage increasing youth vaping rates through strategies that prevent nicotine addiction such as the [Not An Experiment](#) initiative.

The proposed requirements of Bill 103 to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act would have a positive impact on the health of Ontarians, in particular for the youth. Bill 103, if passed, would result in reducing the availability of vape devices and restrict vaping product advertising that has resulted in an increase in nicotine addiction and increasing present and future stress on the healthcare system. SMDHU would be happy to work with your government in supporting the changes proposed within Bill 103 as a part of our comprehensive strategy to reduce youth vaping and decrease nicotine addiction.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

Ann-Marie Kungl, Board of Health Chair
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

AMK:CG:SR:sh

cc: France G  linas, Member of Provincial Parliament, Nickel Belt
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Honourable Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
All Ontario Boards of Health
Association of Local Public Health Agencies

References

Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Berenbaum E, Keller-Olaman S, Manson H, Moloughney B, Muir S, Simms C, Singh H, Watson K. Current evidence on e-cigarettes: a summary of potential impacts. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2018.