



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

PHSSC 5-2024

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

1:00 p.m.

Council Chamber - In Person and Electronic Meeting

Niagara Region Headquarters, Campbell West

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold, ON

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

	Pages
1. <u>CALL TO ORDER</u>	
2. <u>LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT</u>	
3. <u>DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTEREST</u>	
4. <u>PRESENTATIONS</u>	
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8. OTHER BUSINESS

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Regional Headquarters.

10. 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).

Public Health Strategic Review

Public Health and Social Services Committee
May 7, 2024

Layla Mofid, Strategic Initiatives Manager

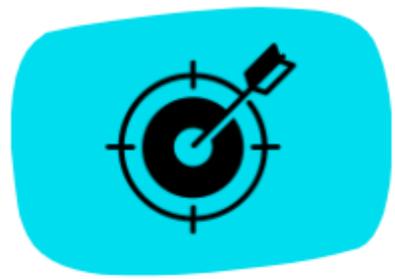
Public Health and Social Services Committee: *Public Health Strategic Review*

May 7, 2024

Today's Focus

- Drivers and goals of the Strategic Review
- Alignment with Council's Strategic Priorities
- Overview of Project Roadmap
- Work assessments

Strategic Review **DRIVERS**



Council
Strategic
Priorities



Budget



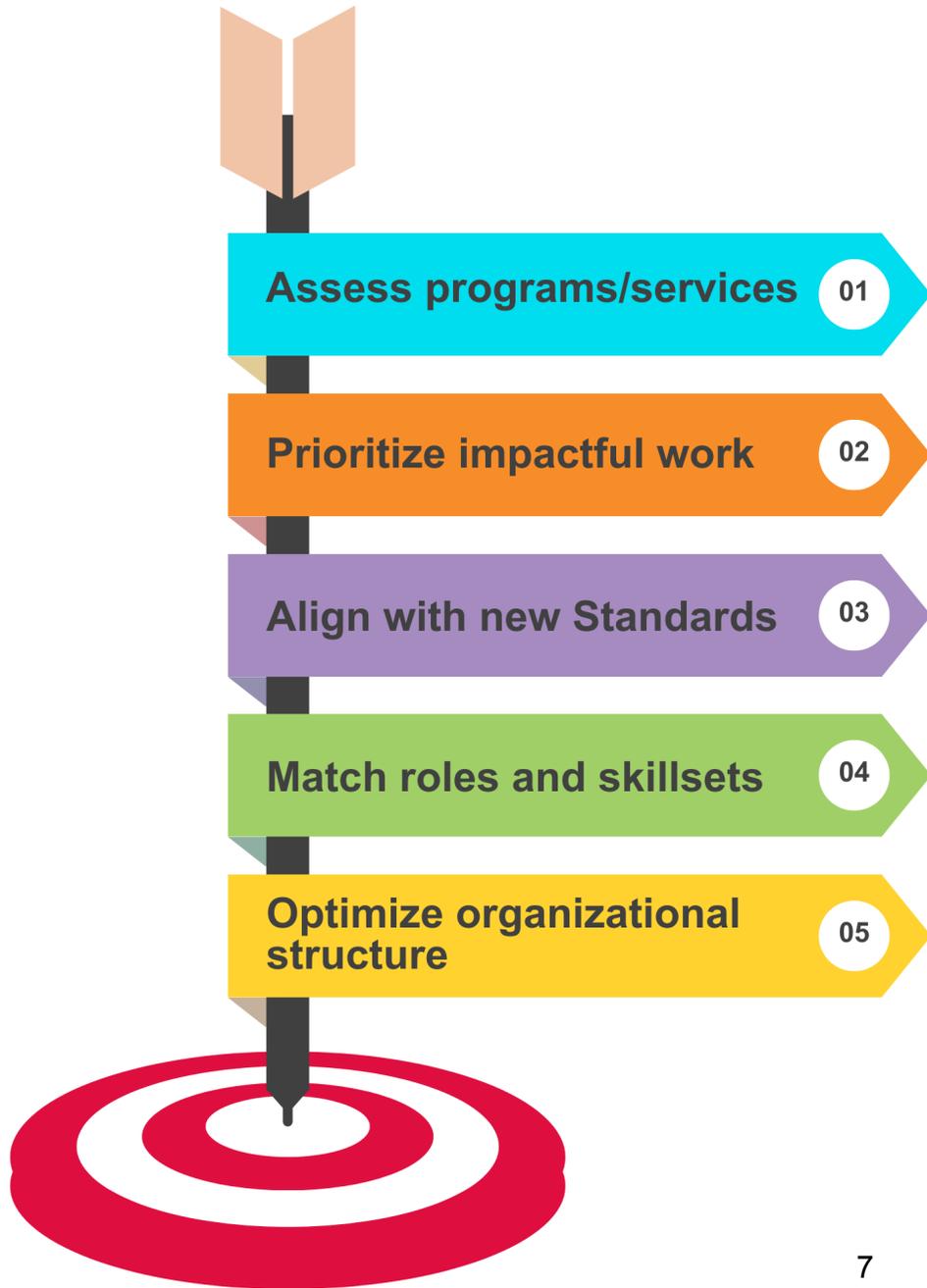
New
Standards



Community
Impact



Quality
Improvement



Goals of Strategic Review

Where this Review fits

Strategic Review



Council Strategic Priorities

Objectives
Guiding Principles

NRPH Vision/Mission

NRPH Business Strategy

Council's Strategic Priorities 2023-2026



Strategic Lenses

**DEI and
Indigenous
Reconciliation**



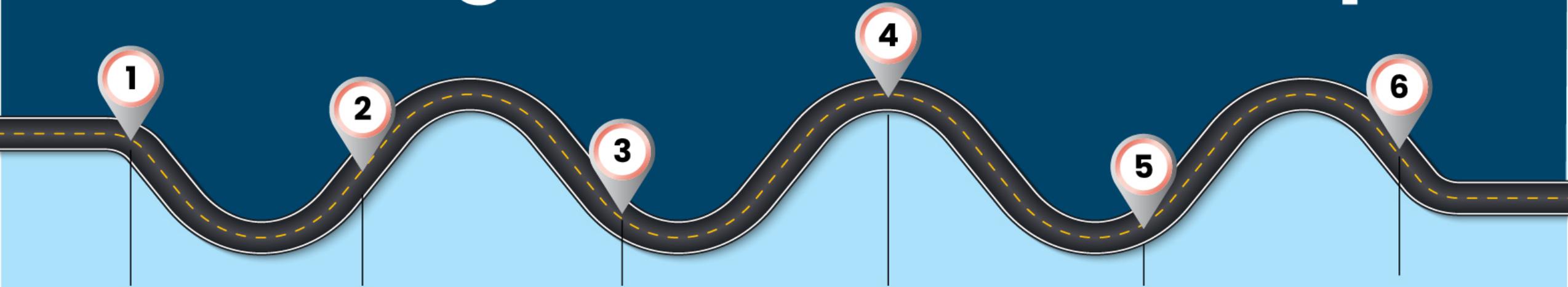
**Fiscal
Responsibility**

Innovation



**Sustainability
and Climate
Change**

Strategic Review Roadmap



DEFINE Q1 2024

- Examine current structural and financial situation
- Determine guiding principles and values
- Establish a framework for completing the Review

ASSESS Q2 2024

- Use data, research and experience to identify highest impact programs and services
- Determine what programs we will increase or decrease
- Examine the health and health equity impact

FORECAST Q2 2024

- Forecast the staffing, financial and structural needs of the future
- Explore new technologies and practices

DESIGN Q2 – Q3 2024

- Select a revised organizational structure and implementation plan
- Ensure structure meets our values as well as our staffing and financial needs
- Determine key performance indicators to evaluate success of new work priorities and structure

IMPLEMENT Q3 – Q4 2024

- Make the staffing and structural changes to create new organizational structure
- Leverage the unique strengths of our team members, and support each other through change

EVALUATE Q4 2024 – ongoing

- Track our progress and lessons learned
- Make adjustments to achieve our goals

Project approach

1. Transparent communication
2. Use a change management approach to support managers and staff through changes
3. Being accountable to our Board of Health, our community and ourselves

Strategic Review Roadmap



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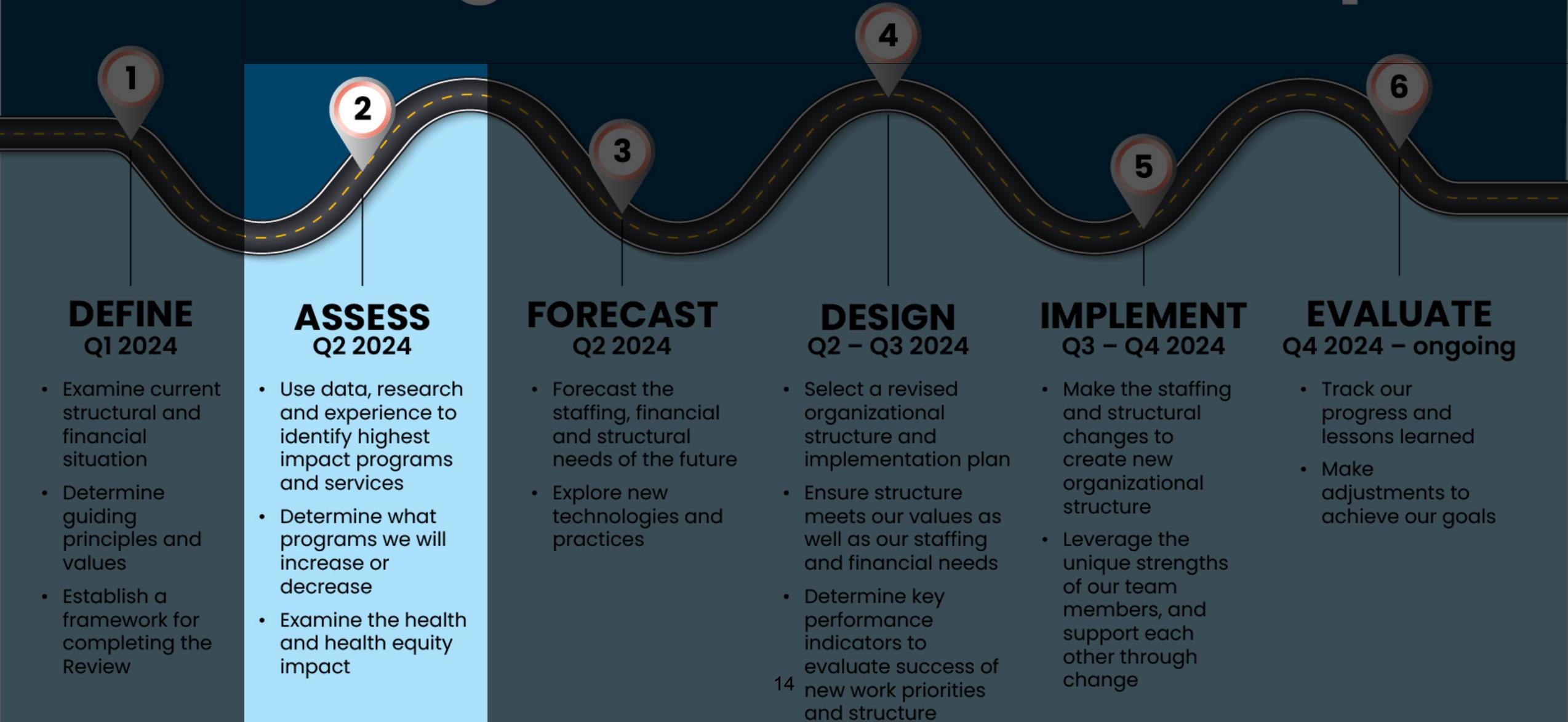
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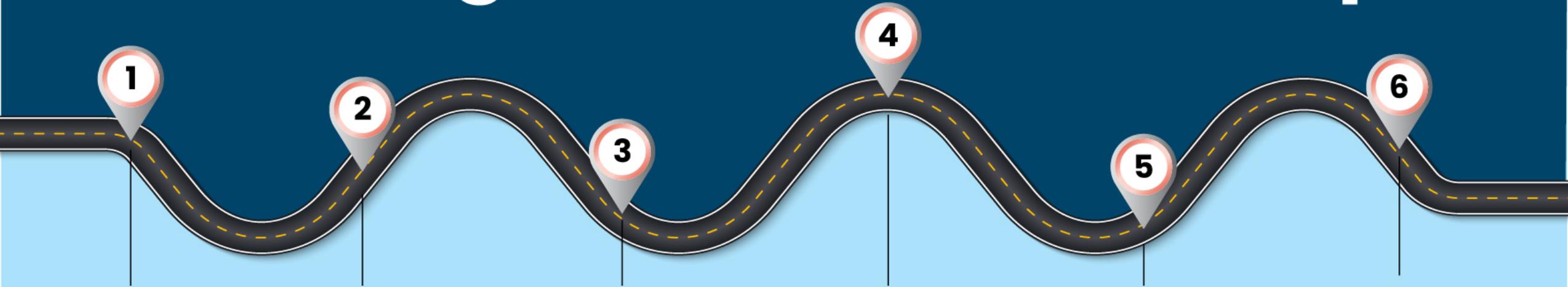
Strategic Review Roadmap



Objectives of work assessments

- Systematically assess all work
- Identify and prioritize high and low impact interventions
- Determine political, organizational and health equity impacts of adjusting our work priorities

Strategic Review Roadmap



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Subject: Child Care and Early Years 2024 Operating Budget Adjustment

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Recommendations

1. That a gross operating budget adjustment in the amount of \$6,274,822 gross and \$0 net, to be fully funded through the Ministry of Education (MEDU), **BE APPROVED** to support Niagara's early years and child care system.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the 2024 funding announcement received from the MEDU for Niagara Region's Children's Services and obtain approval of the related budget adjustment. An in-year receipt of funding must comply with By-law 2017-63, Budget Control, items 6.6(a), requiring Council's approval for any amounts received in excess of \$1.0M for operating programs.
- The MEDU confirmed additional funding of \$6.3M to Niagara's early years and child care funding allocation resulting in a total funding allocation for 2024 of \$114.3M.
- This increase is attributed to the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program (\$6.3M) and will be provided to the sector to support program priorities in accordance with provincial direction.

Financial Considerations

Niagara Region received additional funding of \$6.3M from the MEDU resulting in a total funding allocation for 2024 from the MEDU of \$114.3M. These are 100% MEDU funding dollars with no additional investments required from the regional tax levy. The revised 2024 Children's Services budget is summarized in the following table:

	2024 Regional Budget	2024 MEDU Budget Adjustment	Revised 2024 Regional Budget
2024 MEDU Funding	\$108.0M	\$6.3M	\$114.3M
2024 Gross Expenses	\$117.5M	\$6.3M	\$123.8M
2024 Niagara Region Levy*	\$9.5M	\$0	\$9.5M

*Includes indirect allocations

Children’s Services will invest the funding into the delivery of early years and child care services as per MEDU direction.

Analysis

On March 2024, the MEDU provided notification of additional funding of \$6.3 million for Niagara Region’s Children Services. This includes an investment of \$1.4M in funding to increase workforce compensation for the eligible Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) Program staff.

In 2024, the wage floor for eligible RECE Program staff was increased to \$23.86 per hour, and for eligible RECE Child Care supervisors and RECE Home Child Care Visitors¹ to \$24.86 per hour.

Further, CWELCC-enrolled child care licensees are required to bring up the wage floor of all eligible RECE staff for the given year, as provided in the following table:

¹ An employee of the home child care agency who will provide support at and monitor each premises and will be responsible to the licensee. This is a required role under the review the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11) (CCEYA) <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11> and [Ontario Regulation 137/15 General](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/150137) <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/150137>

Hourly Wage Floor 2022 to 2026	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
RECE Program Staff	\$18.00	\$19.00	\$23.86	\$24.86	\$25.86
RECE Child Care Supervisors or RECE Home Child Care Visitors	\$20.00	\$21.00	\$24.86	\$25.86	\$26.86

In addition, RECE program staff, supervisors, and home child care visitors are eligible of a \$1 increase up to the wage cap as per the following table.

Wage Eligibility Ceiling 2022 to 2026	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
RECE Program Staff	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$26.00	\$27.00	\$28.00
RECE Child Care Supervisors or RECE Home Child Care Visitors	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$29.00	\$30.00	\$31.00

The workforce compensation will be flowed in accordance with provincial guidelines and is retroactive to January 1, 2024.

An investment of \$0.4M, of the new allocation, in professional learning is provided by the MEDU to improve recruitment and retention of RECEs and other program staff working in licensed centre- and home child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres and to support the implementation of the CWELCC agreement.

An additional \$0.6M to support CWELCC enrolled child care operators with non-discretionary costs is also being provided. Lastly, an additional \$3.9M to support with the start-up costs of the ongoing CWELCC expansion is included in this new funding.

Alternatives Reviewed

Should the budget adjustment not be approved, the unspent funds would have to be returned to the provincial government, resulting in less funding to the local licensed child care system and threaten the on-going implementation of CWELCC.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Council Strategic Priority: Effective Region

Objective 1.3 – Deliver fiscally-responsible and sustainable core services

Other Pertinent Reports

- [COM10-2024 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Program Update](#)
- [COM 3-2024, Child Care and Early Years 2023 Operating Budget Adjustment](#)
- [COM 19- 2023 Canada-Wide Early Learning Child Care Expansion Plan](#)

Prepared by:

Satinder Klair
Director, Children's 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 prepared in consultation with Donovan D'Amboise, (Acting) Associate Director Reporting & Analysis, and John Pickles, Program Financial Specialist,

Subject: Seniors Services Quality Improvement Report: October – December 2023

Report To: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Recommendations

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

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council with highlights of quality initiatives for Seniors Services.
- Areas of focus in this report are:
 - Review and Update of the division's Pandemic Plan
 - Resident and Family Satisfaction Survey
 - Seniors Services Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Financial Considerations

The Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) and Ontario Health West are the primary sources of funding for the Seniors Services division. Other funding sources include user fees and levy.

Analysis

Review and Update of Pandemic Plan

Seniors Services completed a fulsome review of the Long-Term Care Homes' Pandemic Plan. An interdisciplinary group of staff, including representation from Seniors Services and Public Health, participated in the exercise on October 11, 2023. The updated plan incorporates the latest scientific knowledge, and best practice recommendations from Public Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care. Updating and reviewing the pandemic plan annually enables Seniors Services to identify and address any shortcomings or gaps in preparedness efforts. Through a thorough assessment of the existing plan, Seniors Services identified areas for improvement in infection control protocols, staff training and capacity building, and resource allocation. Each of these opportunities for improvement have been actioned. By addressing these issues

proactively, Niagara Region Long-Term Care Homes enhance the readiness to respond to pandemics and optimize risk mitigation for residents and staff.

Resident and Family Satisfaction Survey

The annual Resident and Family Satisfaction Survey was conducted in Niagara Region Long-Term Care Homes on October 17 through November 17, 2023. The survey results provide valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of residents and their families. The survey offers a direct means of gathering feedback on various aspects of care and service delivery, enabling Seniors Services to identify strengths, address areas for improvement, and enhance the overall quality of care provided.

In 2023, Seniors Services attained an overall resident satisfaction rating of 90% and a family satisfaction rating of 93%. Satisfaction levels were very high in areas including nursing services, resident and family support services, and feeling safe in the long-term care homes.

Residents and families expressed lower satisfaction ratings with quality of food and snacks, and with services provided by the physician. Steps are being taken to address areas with lower response rates. Nutrition services continues efforts to optimize the food quality available to residents within the \$12.07 / resident / day food budget afforded by the province to cover the daily cost of three meals and snacks. Each home is working closely with residents to make changes in the menu, where possible, to align with resident preferences. Homes have also taken steps to improve satisfaction with physician services. With the introduction of nurse practitioners across the homes, and the close collaboration between nurse practitioners and physicians in the homes, we anticipate this access to on-site primary care will improve the overall satisfaction rates with physicians moving forward.

Seniors Services Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Niagara Region Seniors Services rolled out the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan on October 27, 2023. This strategic plan was informed by a comprehensive, staff-led engagement process that elicited feedback from residents in long-term care homes, clients in the community, families, caregivers, staff, and community partners using surveys and focus group discussions and is clearly aligned with Niagara Region Council Strategic Priorities.

The Seniors Services strategic plan is focusing on five major priorities: Person Centred Care and Engagement, Thriving Workforce, Safety Focused, Innovative Service

Delivery and Strong Partnerships. The strategic plan serves as a roadmap to navigate the complex landscape of healthcare and community supports to seniors, focusing efforts and resources on initiatives that enhance quality of care, improve resident and client outcomes, and ensure the sustainability of services over time. It also serves as a tool for accountability and performance measurement, enabling ongoing assessment of progress. The work on strategic plan development positions Seniors Services to thrive in an ever-evolving healthcare landscape while delivering exemplary care as a community leader and compassionate team.

Alternatives Reviewed

Quarterly quality improvement reports provide committee and council with important information, supporting accountability, transparency and a culture of best practice and continuous quality improvement. As the governing body for the Region's LTC Homes, it is important that Council receives these reports to ensure high quality of care, understand the successes, challenges and opportunities experienced in these facilities and meet legislative accountability requirements of LTC.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Effective Region – Implement continuous improvement and modernized processes to ensure value-for-money in regional services and programs.

Other Pertinent Reports

- COM 4-2024 Seniors Quality Improvement Report, July - September 2023

Prepared by:

Paolo Varias, RN, GNC, MSc
Associate Director, Clinical Support
Seniors 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 Jordan Gamble Program Financial Analyst, Alex Lamsen and Laura Matthews, Managers of Clinical Practice and reviewed by Henri Koning, Director, Seniors Services.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Seniors Services Report Card 2023

Appendix 1 Seniors Services Report Card Q4 2023

Seniors Long Term Care Home Metrics

Measures	Definition	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4
Resident Satisfaction Survey	This metric provides a measure of resident perception of services and overall rating of a great place to live. The survey is issued annually. In 2022 the average for the eight Niagara Region LTC homes was 93%. The 2022 MBN median for upper-tier municipalities was 93%.	93%	93%	93%	90%
Pressure Ulcers	This is a measure of the percentage of residents with worsened stage 2-4 pressure ulcers. (Provincial average: 2.4%, provincial target is 1%.)	2.11	2.26	2.45	2.45
Outbreaks	The resident home area may be declared in outbreak by Public Health if two or more residents residing in the same resident home area have two or more consistent infectious symptoms (in 2022 the total number of outbreaks was 37).	14	7	13	16
% of Residents who have fallen in the last 30 days	This is a measure of the percent of residents who sustained a fall in the last 30 days. (Provincial average: 16.4% / provincial target: 9%)	15.41	15.40	16.10	16.88
% of Residents with New Fractures	This is a measure of the percent of residents who sustained a fracture during this quarter. (Provincial average: 1.2%)	0.59	0.85	1.09	0.66

Seniors Community Programs

Measures	Definition	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4
The number of unique individuals served each quarter.	Each individual client is counted once in a calendar year, regardless of the number of services one may access.	1509	1873	2277	1630
% satisfied with overall services	Average across all Seniors Community Programs.	95%	95%	94%	89.6%
# of complex case consultations	Multi-agency collaboration is required to support the diverse needs of the individual in developing a community plan of support/care.	3	1	1	1

Subject: Medical Directors Annual Report 2023 – Long-Term Care Homes

Report To: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Recommendations

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

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the 2023 Annual Reports submitted by the Medical Directors (MD's) of Niagara Region's eight long-term care (LTC) homes.
- Under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 each home is required to have a Medical Director. The Medical Director fulfills functions including:
 - the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of medical services,
 - advising on and approving clinical policies and procedures, and
 - communication of expectations to Attending Physicians and registered nurses in the extended class, including communicating relevant medical policies and procedures.
- Medical Directors also ensure 24/7 medical coverage for the home and residents and oversee the Attending Physicians in their home.

Financial Considerations

As per the Fixing Long-Term Care Act (FLTCA) and the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) Level-of Care Per Diem funding policy. Medical Directors are issued a payment through the Nursing and Personal Care funding envelope.

Analysis

Annually, the Medical Directors of each LTC home provide an analysis of the medical program in the home and identify key emerging themes. This year the Medical Directors' feedback was related to the changing profile of long-term care residents, hospital system pressures, challenges with hospital transfers and opportunities identified to decrease unnecessary transfers to hospital.

The steady trend of increasing care complexity continued throughout 2023. Care needs are escalating and medical acuity is rising. The medical profile of residents in long-term care homes today is consistent with patients who would have been cared for in hospital 10 years ago and the typical long-term care residents from 2014 now lives in a retirement home or in their own home in the community.

Many residents admitted into the homes are medically complex, with co-morbidities, complex medication needs, and responsive behaviours as well as mental health concerns. The long-term care home teams are very diligent about reviewing applicant clinical documentation and asking questions prior to admission to ensure the care needs of the applicant are clear and that the team can safely care for new admissions.

A transfer to hospital is a difficult experience for residents given current hospital pressures and long wait times in the emergency department. Seniors Services has had a strong focus on decreasing unnecessary transfers to hospital. Investment in nurse practitioners, diagnostic equipment, enhanced staffing, and staff capacity building, all help to decrease the need for transfer to hospital to address medical needs.

When a transfer to hospital is necessary, there are continued challenges with resident transfers between hospital and long-term care homes. There are many instances when residents are returned from hospital without any communication or information provided on their return, to explain what the diagnostics / interventions / medications were administered or what future follow-up looks like. Residents are sometimes discharged back to long-term care with medical orders that a long-term care home is unable to provide; for example an order that requires monitoring with daily bloodwork, a level of service to which the long-term care sector does not have access. Physicians commented that when a resident passes away in hospital, the hospital often does not provide notification and rarely shares the cause of death.

Several successful improvement initiatives, focused on decreasing unnecessary resident transfers to hospital, have been implemented. For example, Medical Directors are proactively having conversations with families to educate them to critically consider if a transfer to hospital is necessary. The Medical Director conversations with families are helping residents and families to make informed decisions to support the overall wellbeing of residents.

Another example of an improvement initiative is the introduction of Nurse Practitioners into the homes. Having a full-time Nurse Practitioner on staff enhances the care of residents and increases the nursing standards in the homes. Nurse Practitioners are

beneficial in ensuring timely access to primary care and care-continuity for complex residents. Nurse Practitioners manage the day-to-day concerns, daily medical management, facilitate health teaching conversations with residents and families and assess acute illnesses. The NP also provides staff education for the nursing team including 'goals of care' conversations, hypodermoclysis teaching to mitigate the risk of dehydration, laceration glue training to treat skin tears and more.

Several quality improvement initiatives have been implemented to support medical directors and physicians to be able to complete their work as efficiently as possible. For example, nurses support the physicians in the review of laboratory results by triaging laboratory report results. Another example is Secure Messaging, an application introduced in 2023 that enables medical directors and physicians to leverage technology to provide remote orders for medical guidance, treatments, and medications. This supports timely response to resident care needs.

Some additional opportunities the Medical Directors have identified to further enhance medical care and to decrease the need for resident transfers to the emergency department include:

- Permitting long-term care homes to book appointments directly with the outpatient fracture clinic rather than accessing the clinic through the emergency department
- Enhanced access to lab services
- Enhanced access to diagnostic imaging services

The team in Seniors Services is working in collaboration with the Medical Directors and community partners to explore how to action the opportunities outlined above.

Alternatives Reviewed

There are no alternatives to this report, which as been provided for information. These activities, and associated reporting, must be undertaken by Niagara Region as part of its governance responsibilities under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Effective Region – Remaining an employer of choice by transforming service delivery in a way that is innovative, collaborative and fiscally responsible.

Other Pertinent Reports

COM 4, 2024, Seniors Services Quality Improvement Report: January – March 2023, February 6, 2024.

COM 27, 2022, Seniors Services Quality Improvement Report: January – March 2023, December 7, 2023.

Prepared by:

Paolo Varias, RN, GNC, MSc
Associate Director, Clinical Support
Seniors 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 Dr. Jerome, Dr. M. Ali, Dr. T. Bastedo, Dr. A. Daniel, Dr. D. Henry, Dr. C. Hu, Dr. S. Khandelwal and Dr. Wilson and reviewed by Alex Lamson, Manager, Clinical Practice, Henri Koning, Director, Seniors Services.

Subject: An Evaluation of the use of Granting for the Building Safer Communities Grant Program Pilot

Report To: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Recommendations

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

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update committee on the use of granting for the distribution of funds for the Building Safer Communities Program.
- Through the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF), Public Safety Canada selected the Niagara Region to receive \$3.4 million over four years to address and/or prevent gun and gang violence locally.
- In August 2023, Niagara Region staff leveraged best practices in youth crime prevention, local data on youth crime in Niagara and community engagement to create the multi-year Gun and Gang Prevention Strategy 2023-2026.
- To mobilize the strategy, the Building Safer Communities Grant program was approved by Council (pursuant to Confidential COM 30-2023) as a pilot to use granting to redistribute funds to community-led programs as opposed to traditional methods of procurement.
- To build on the insights gained through the Building Safer Communities Grant program pilot project, and better understand the potential for a broader corporate grants policy for allocating funding to advance a variety of Community Services' program and initiatives, staff will propose conducting a second pilot for the grant program, for Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI).

Financial Considerations

As indicated in COM 30-2023, the objective of the federal Building Safer Communities Fund is to provide designated funds to municipalities and Indigenous communities to develop and deliver community-based gun and gang prevention and intervention programming. Niagara Region's allocation from Public Safety Canada for eligible activities under BSCF is \$3.4M, effective from March 23, 2023, up to March 31, 2026. Niagara Region Community Services has redistributed these federal funds locally to community partners through the Building Safer Communities Grant Program as a pilot

project. Grant recipients will receive funding for up to two years, ending in 2025. All funds related to this grant have been provided by Public Safety Canada pursuant to a Contribution Agreement with Niagara Region.

Analysis

Process:

In September, applications opened for the Building Safer Communities (BSC) Grant Program. Using a grant management electronic platform, 15 agencies applied for funding for various programs that aligned with the Gun and Gang Prevention Strategy. The call for applications remained open for four weeks, and closed Sunday, October 29, 2023.

Grant Selection:

As a first step in the grant selection process, Niagara Region Community Services staff completed an initial review for program eligibility to ensure that organizations met the minimum criteria as outlined in the grant guidelines to apply. A community-based Grant Selection Panel was assembled to complete the second stage of reviewing. Using a standardized evaluation matrix, Panel members were tasked with scoring individual applications. Taking into consideration the priority populations identified by the Federal government for the Building Safer Communities Fund, Niagara Region staff developed an equity-based funding framework as a tool to ensure equitable funding across target populations. This framework is data-driven and considers Niagara Region's diverse community along with available crime, gang involvement, victimization, and incarceration rates of federally identified priority populations. Recommendations were then presented to the Commissioner of Community Services for final approval.

Outcome:

As indicated in CWCD 2024-30, there are nine successful applicants for the BSC Grant Program.

Agency	Project Name
Community Addiction Services of Niagara (CASON)	Youth Empowerment Program (YEP!)
Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services	Stop Now And Plan® (SNAP) for Niagara
Crimestoppers of Niagara	Human Trafficking Prevention Campaign
Family and Children's Services Niagara (FACS)	Navigating Adulthood 101: Transitional Youth Program (TYP)
Future Black Female	Empower Youth Program
John Howard Society of Niagara	Strengthening Families for the Future
NPAAMB – Niagara Peninsula Aboriginal Area Management Board	Indigenous Youth Employment Training Program
Quest Community Health Centre	Youth Outreach and Mental Health Services
Niagara Resource Service for Youth (RAFT)	Family and Natural Supports Program (FNS)

Evaluation of the Granting approach:

Prior to BSC Program implementation, and throughout the process, staff engaged with multiple municipalities to compare experiences, establish best practices, and share lessons learned. These conversations helped to shape the BSC grant program, allowing for Niagara to build on the experience of other municipal partners. To further gain

insight, staff also conducted multiple evaluations with applicants, individuals who registered in the granting platform but did not apply, and Grant Evaluation Panel members to measure the success of the pilot. A mixed-method approach to evaluation included online surveys and in-person discussions and showed that the majority of respondents had a positive experience with the granting process. Respondents reported that information sessions, grant guidelines and other information sharing documents were easily accessible, clear, and concise. Additionally, Grant Selection Panel members reported feeling well equipped to score applications and supported by Niagara Region staff (See Appendix A: BSC Grant Process Evaluation Key Findings).

Post Award Agency Debrief:

All applicants were given the opportunity to request a follow-up meeting with staff regarding the outcome of their grant application. Debriefs include application feedback and details regarding the decision-making rationale.

Overall Benefits of Granting:

Over the years, granting has become a common practice among other municipalities including Ottawa, Durham, Peel, Hamilton and Halton for the allocation of funding related to community services programs. Using a granting model as an alternative to traditional methods of procurement to fund agencies provided multiple benefits for both applicants and Niagara Region Community Services. These benefits provide opportunities to reduce barriers and include the following:

- A simplified application process
- No cost associated with application submission
- Decreased administrative inefficiencies
- Partnerships with community

(See Appendix 2: Benefits of Granting).

Lessons Learned:

As shown through the initial evaluation of the Building Safer Communities Grant Pilot Program, granting has proven to be an effective option when redistributing funds in the community. Most agencies found value in the granting process, noting the simplified application process, expedited timelines and community collaboration. Guiding Principles were used to support decision making at each step of the process, ensuring that each decision was consistent, effective, and supported clearly communicated grant

guidelines. The flexibility afforded in the granting model decreases barriers for agencies, including financial and administrative resources, while still upholding a rigorous, fair, and transparent funding process.

Future Implications:

Piloting the Building Safer Communities Grant Program provided staff with learnings to support the future development of a rigorous granting policy and procedure. To further refine this process, Community Services will likely seek to engage in continued evaluation through a second pilot program using the funds allocated to the Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI). NPI is an annual investment by the Region towards poverty reduction which has historically used traditional Request for Proposal (RFP) methods. A second pilot of the grant tool and approach will provide staff the opportunity to continue to revise the current framework, collect additional data, and ensure that policies and procedures are applicable and transferable across other divisions in Community Services before recommending broader application as part of a corporate grant policy and procedure. Similar to Building Safer Communities, the Niagara Prosperity Initiative is inherently collaborative as it will be used to mobilize the Poverty Reduction Strategy, which represents the voices of Niagara residents and their lived experience with poverty. Using granting to redistribute the funds allocated to NPI is anticipated to further allow for community involvement and enhance the current granting policy and procedures that are well underway. Staff will be bringing a report to committee related to NPI and the proposed use of granting in the summer of this year.

Alternatives Reviewed

Alternative methods of awarding human service funding through traditional procurement methods (e.g., Request for Proposals) can be utilized but may impede the ability to redistribute funds to community organizations within constrained project timelines, it can be administratively burdensome to community organizations, and it can present additional costs to community organizations to access and submit bid documents. Granting allows for flexibility in design and equity-based considerations when awarding funds to successful recipients.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This recommendation is aligned to Council's strategic priority of ensuring an "Equitable Region" by listening and responding to community needs and planning for future growth.

Other Pertinent Reports

COM 30-2023 – Building Safer Communities Fund & Grant Pilot Program

CWCD 2024-30 – Recipients of the Building Safer Communities Grant Program

Committee of the Whole Presentation, Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy, March 7 2024

Prepared by:

Jessica Thompson, MA
Program Specialist
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 Donna Gibbs, Director of Legal and Court Services, Alison Chambers, Program Manager CSWB, and reviewed by Sandy Dupuis, Manager of Compliance and Community Engagement.

Appendices

Appendix 1 BSC Grant Process Evaluation Key Findings

Appendix 2 Benefits of Granting

Appendix 1 Building Safer Communities Grant Process Evaluation Key Findings

Below are the key findings from the BSC Grant Process evaluation with applicants:

- A large majority of respondents participated in the information sessions and strongly agreed that the availability of multiple sessions provided flexibility for attendees. The information conveyed was clear, concise, and useful, covering topics such as eligibility, grant guidelines, and timelines.
- A large majority of applicants strongly agreed that information about the grant was easily accessible online, and that they were clear in outlining the application and review process.
- Grant Guidelines and other information sharing documents were easily understood and communicated using accessible language.
- Most applicants reported having a clear understanding of the grant process, knowing where to go to seek assistance if needed. It was also noted that all inquiries were addressed promptly.
- The call for applications was open for four weeks. Applicants indicated that additional time would be helpful in submitting a quality application.
- Respondents unanimously agreed that no charges or fees to apply for funding reduced barriers to submission.
- The grant management electronic platform was intuitive and easy to use, with word count limits being sufficient to answer application questions fully.
- Looking specifically to the grant management electronic platform, responses deviated with regards to the intuitiveness of the budget section, with several noting difficulties completing the required fields.

Below are the key findings from the BSC Grant Process evaluation with those who registered in the grant management electronic platform but did not apply:

- The majority stated they did not apply because the program areas of focus or target population fell outside their mandate.
- Additionally, it was mentioned that some agencies did not have the time, resources, or staff capacity to complete the application.

Below are the key findings from the BSC Grant Process evaluation with the Grant Selection Panel:

- The background document and associated eligibility forms, orientation, and evaluation matrix were easy to read, informative, and provided the tools needed to complete reviews adequately.
- The use of the grant management electronic platform to complete reviews was reported to be helpful, with panelists noting convenience in being able to view the application and the review criteria in tandem. Some panelists noted viewing information in charts (such as the budget and workplan) was challenging due to the size of the font and size of the allowable textbox.
- Feedback from panellists stated that they wanted more time to complete reviews and additional time to discuss deviation scores. These debrief meetings would be more effective if panelists had access to the application and their corresponding comments.
- Panellists felt well supported by Niagara Region staff and were confident in their abilities to provide objective feedback.

Appendix 2: Benefits of Granting

Benefits for Potential Applicants:

- No cost associated with application submission to reduce barriers for community partners seeking funding through granting.
- Flexibility to design application questions with community partners in mind, using accessible and direct language.
- Equity and Inclusion considerations can be built into granting framework, allowing for priority groups, including those that have been traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized from access to service, to be adequately represented in funding allotment.
- Collaborative program design allows for community to partner with Niagara Region Community Services and determine joint priorities while maintaining transparency, integrity, and adherence to the Regions' legal requirements.
- A simplified application process enables administrative efficiencies for applicants, creating a positive user experience.
- Recruiting community members, subject matter experts, and those with lived experience to comprise the Grant Selection Panel allows for a transparent and collaborative review process while still maintaining consistent guidelines and clear expectations by using a standardized Grant Evaluation Matrix.
- Granting also supports an iterative program development and evaluation process, allowing staff to work with community partners to refine their programs to support program objectives and the rapidly changing needs of the community.

Benefits For Niagara Region Community Services/Niagara Region:

- A supportive approach to working with agencies that focused on collaboration and partnership. This allowed the Niagara Region to execute contracts with agencies that have historically not received municipal funding in the past. This includes agencies serving equity deserving groups, and those with limited resources.
- Granting, and the grant management platform, allows for customisable applications which can reflect the individual areas of focus and target populations of each grant.
- Simplified processes shorten timelines, which can allow funds to be flowed quicker to agencies. This could increase overall time for program implementation.
- Granting relies on support from Community Services staff in collaboration with community, therefore reducing the burden on procurement resources.
- Involving non-region staff in the grant selection panel increases transparency and builds trust within the community.

Subject: Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2023

Report To: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Recommendations

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

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update Council and the Ministry, as legislatively required, on activities and progress completed in 2023 related to Niagara's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP).
- Consolidated Municipal Service Managers are required to report to the public and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by June 30 each year with respect to efforts of the previous year. This report serves to meet the legal requirement for 2023.
- The HHAP provides a complete vision for aligning activities to address current and future need in Niagara related to affordable housing and homelessness.
- By the end of December 2023, 84% progress had been made toward finishing all 75 actions in the updated HHAP.
- Areas of focus for 2024 include completing the review of the original Action Plan, completion of a new draft Action Plan for 2024 to 2033, and supporting Indigenous access to land, Indigenous-led housing development, affordable home ownership and homelessness services by Indigenous organizations for Indigenous people.
- Work on a new Housing and Homelessness Action Plan for the period 2024 to 2033 began in January 2023. The final development of a new action plan will be completed once the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing provides direction.

Financial Considerations

The resources required to facilitate the management of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) are provided within the approved annual budget.

Analysis

The purpose of this report is to update Council and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) on progress achieved in 2023 related to Niagara's updated HHAP. Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) are required by legislation to report

to the public and MMAH by June 30 each year with respect to efforts of the previous year. This report serves to meet the requirement for 2023.

The HHAP was developed in response to the *Housing Services Act 2011, section 6*, which requires municipalities to establish and implement a 10-year plan to address local housing and homelessness needs. The five-year review and updated HHAP was approved by Regional Council in October 2019 and acknowledged by MMAH in March 2020. The updated plan provides guidance for the five-year period of 2019-2023. December 31, 2023 marks the end of the 10th year of the 10-year Action Plan. Although the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) has not yet provided guidance for next steps, staff have been undergoing the process to develop a new Action Plan for the period of 2024-2033. The lack of a completed and endorsed plan does not in any way mean work has stopped or slowed. Staff and community partners continue to work on homeless services system transformation, maintaining and increasing supply of affordable housing, and developing and implementing services for Indigenous people and families experiencing homelessness. Completion of a new HHAP will be a significant action/outcome related to the Strategic Priority Operational Team (SPOT) for an Inclusive community.

The HHAP provides a complete vision for aligning activities to address current and future need in Niagara related to affordable housing and homelessness. The plan is responsive to ongoing changes in the community, and the housing market, that affect local demand for homelessness services and affordable housing over the long term. The HHAP integrates with other Region strategies and initiatives, including the Niagara Official Plan (NOP), Niagara Housing Database, Consolidated Housing Master Plan (CHMP), Niagara's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWP), Niagara's Poverty Reduction Strategy, Built for Zero Canada (BFZ-C), attainable housing and strategic initiatives, direct investment in housing, and Regional development incentive programs.

The HHAP incorporates recognized Canadian best and emerging practices in housing and homeless services to address the whole continuum of housing and supports from interventions like assertive street outreach and short-term emergency accommodation, to permanent community, affordable and market housing options. Best practices include the use of a Quality By Name List (QBNL) of all people experiencing homelessness in the community, a common assessment of need and coordinated access (CA) to connect people to the housing and supports that best meet their needs. Increasingly, Niagara is being recognized as a leader for its data driven approach, meaningful engagement of lived experts, and service innovations such as Bridge Housing. As a Built for Zero community, Niagara is committed to decreasing the number of people

experiencing chronic homelessness and ensuring the experience of homelessness is brief and non-recurring.

Niagara Region cannot accomplish the goals of the HHAP on its own, and so must partner broadly with housing and homelessness services providers, across the health, corrections and child welfare systems, with municipal, provincial and federal governments, with private developers and with Indigenous organizations and communities. The HHAP working groups support collaboration on service and system improvements in ten focus areas. Working group participants align initiatives, work together on improvement projects, and provide input to the CMSM about service and system planning on an ongoing basis. In 2023 the HHAP working groups included:

- Assertive Street Outreach
- Housing-Focused Shelter
- Supported Transitional Housing
- Housing First and Home for Good (Supportive Housing)
- Coordinated Access and By-Name List
- Lived Expert Advisory
- Homelessness Prevention
- Housing Provider Advisory
- Housing Affordability Innovation
- Exits from Justice

The HHAP continued to guide post-pandemic responses in 2023, that aligned with long-term system goals. By the end of December 2023 84% progress had been made toward finishing all 75 actions in the updated HHAP. At that time, 57 actions were completed, 12 had seen progress toward completion and 6 required significant work to be completed. Actions still requiring significant work include those related to working with Indigenous partners to address the need for housing and supports for Indigenous individuals and families needing affordable housing or homelessness. Areas of focus for 2024 include completing the review of the original Action Plan, completion of a new Action Plan, and supporting Indigenous access to land, Indigenous-led housing development, affordable home ownership and homelessness services by Indigenous organizations for Indigenous people.

Highlights from 2023 related to the four (4) HHAP overarching goals include:

Goal 1 – House People Who do not Have a Home

By the end of December 2023, 95% progress had been made toward finishing the 11 actions related to Goal 1. Ten (10) of these actions were completed and one (1) had seen progress toward completion. Key accomplishments since 2019 include: the alignment of efforts toward achieving functional zero chronic homelessness; a shift to assertive street outreach and low-barrier housing-focused shelters; introduction of a Quality By-Name List (QBNL) and Coordinated Access (CA); and identification of opportunities to better support high acuity clients experiencing chronic homelessness. Progress and accomplishments in 2023 include:

- In July 2023, the Housing First program was allocated seven additional (7) units, including four (4) bachelors, two (2) accessible bachelors, and one (1) 2-bedroom—in a new Niagara Regional Housing building on York Street in Welland. Based on the funding agreement for the building, four (4) indigenous individuals from the homeless By-Name List were housed in the bachelor units. In partnership with the Niagara Regional Native Centre, three (3) other units were occupied by indigenous households as there were no eligible individuals identified on the homeless By-Name List. In total, nine (9) Indigenous individuals were housed in the 7 units: five (5) individuals, one (1) couple and one (1) single parent with child.
- In response to the Shelter Capacity Review recommendations, that the system move away from seasonal shelters, and further to the acquisition of a building in Niagara

Falls, a plan was made to operate a 60-bed shelter at this location. Unable to secure community provider to operate, Niagara Region entered into direct operations and opened the doors of the Summer Street shelter at the beginning of November. The Region is committed to operating this shelter for the short term after which operations will again be put out for proposal to the community. Summer Street shelter operates, as all shelters in the system, in a housing-focused manner, providing the supports and case management to individuals as they move toward the goal of becoming housed. The shelter replaces the seasonal shelter previously opened each winter in Niagara Falls by providing year-round, 24-hour shelter beds and supports.

- Through a successful grant application, Niagara Region piloted a position of a Veteran Outreach Worker to focus on working with Veterans experiencing homelessness starting in Dec 2022. The Veteran Outreach Worker is a Veteran themselves and the impact of shared experience has been monumental. This has allowed the identification of more Veterans experiencing homelessness than was previously known, and provided a connection for those individuals to financial benefits from their military service and advocacy for increased support. Since the pilot launch, six (6) Veterans experiencing homelessness have been housed. The Veteran Outreach Worker is actively working with 15 individuals.
- In June 2023, Niagara Region staff, in partnership with the team leads of the Niagara Assertive Street Outreach (NASO) program, further developed the Hot Spot Encampment Mapping system. Improvements included making the tool more accessible on mobile devices and removing barriers to real-time documentation. This system ensures individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness are included on the By-Name List and maximizes the capacity of Niagara's partner agencies. The priority for the Niagara Assertive Street Outreach team remains supporting individuals, experiencing unsheltered homelessness, to access housing-focused shelters, or to support them directly into appropriate housing. This approach—and the improvements to the technology that supports the work—is in alignment with recent Ontario court rulings and human rights.
- NASO was able to support 264 unique individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness to access emergency shelter and 164 unique individuals to access housing in 2023. This work was aided by the above-noted mapping tool. According to the tool, by November 2023, there were 87 active encampments in the region. This is down from 119 active encampments in December 2022.

- The Housing Priority Waitlist was updated to increase coordination between the Housing Services Waitlist and the homeless By-Name List and improve access to community housing for those experiencing homelessness.

In 2023, an average of 28 chronically homeless people per month were supported to exit to housing. At the end of December, there were 1,231 clients active on Niagara's By-Name List, with 594 (or 48%) experiencing chronic homelessness. This compares to 1,099 clients with 550 (or 50%) experiencing chronic homelessness at the same time in the previous year. The continued increase in those experiencing chronic homelessness (homeless for six (6) months or more in the last year, or 18 months in the past three (3) years) during the past 12 months is attributed in part to the increased cost and limited vacancy rates for affordable rental units and a lack of sufficient permanent supportive housing, making it progressively more difficult for individuals to exit homelessness.

Areas of focus for 2024 include further improving access to emergency shelter based on the recommendations of the shelter capacity review, work on a purpose-built Bridge housing facility at Geneva Street in St. Catharines, expanding program entry through coordinated access and launching Indigenous Assertive Street Outreach and Housing First pilots.

Goal 2 – Help People to Retain a Home

By the end of December 2023, 75% progress had been made toward finishing the 16 actions related to Goal 2. Eleven (11) of these actions were completed, two (2) had seen progress, and four (4) required significant work to be completed. Key accomplishments since 2019 include providing enhanced services for persons with concurrent disorders and working in partnership with the Ontario Health Team (OHT) and Regional Essential Access to Connected Healthcare (REACH) Niagara to provide health, mental health and addictions support for persons experiencing homelessness. Progress and accomplishments in 2023 include:

- Community Programs Coordinators provided eviction prevention, tenant support and community engagement in NRH Public Housing, with 4,445 referrals in 2023
- In addition to tenant support and eviction prevention, funding from the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) enabled Niagara Region Housing Services to assist Non-Profit and Cooperative Housing Providers to address social issues on their properties and through community engagement improve tenant and community relations and well-being.

- In 2023, the Niagara Renovates program funded 31 households with housing repairs, or modifications for persons with disabilities in order to help them maintain their housing.
- In 2023, Homelessness Services funded a third full-time diversion worker position, expanding shelter diversion coverage to include The Salvation Army Booth Centre and The Hope Centre. Diversion rates remained strong at over one fifth of those looking to access shelter, with the highest rate of diversion for those new to shelter, as indicated in the chart below.

Successful Diversion	Adult - New to Shelter	Adult - Not New	Adult - All	Youth - New to Shelter	Youth - Not New	Youth - All	Grand Total
No	83.5%	94.0%	92.3%	22.6%	66.9%	50.4%	78.9%
Yes	16.5%	6.0%	7.7%	77.4%	33.1%	49.6%	21.1%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

- Throughout 2023, a consortium of homelessness prevention organizations continued their work in aligning service delivery for eviction and housing loss prevention and trusteeship and ensuring equitable and consistent service across the Niagara region.

Areas for focus for 2024 include improved homelessness prevention for Indigenous persons by supporting exits from provincial systems, addressing discrimination as a barrier to housing, and supporting the right to housing.

Goal 3 – Increase Housing Options and Opportunities for Low- and Moderate-Income Households

By the end of December 2023, 85% progress had been made toward finishing the 24 actions related to Goal 3. Eighteen of these actions were completed, three (3) had seen progress, and two (2) required significant work to be completed. Key accomplishments since 2019 include development of an affordable housing strategy, supporting local municipal affordable housing plans, securing financing for capital repair needs, addressing End of Operating/Mortgage agreements and supporting not for profit

housing provider capacity to develop new units. Progress and accomplishments in 2023 include:

- Niagara Regional Housing (NRH), opened a 43-unit apartment building on York Street in Welland. This community provides homes for a mix of tenants, including the prioritization of: households experiencing homelessness; households with disabilities; black, indigenous and people of colour; and survivors of domestic violence. Housing Services continues to explore possible sites for new development in the anticipation of future funding.
- Housing Services' Community Programs Coordinators continued to provide eviction prevention and tenant support to Non-Profit and Cooperative Housing Providers and tenants living in Rent Supplement units, with 82 Housing Provider referrals and 42 Rent Supplement referrals in 2023.
- In 2023, 310 new Niagara recipients received the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB). COHB is a portable rent benefit that helps applicants on the centralized waiting list pay their rent to their current landlord in the private market. As of December 31, 2023, there were 889 households receiving COHB in Niagara.
- The Welcome Home Niagara home ownership program had three (3) successful closes in 2023. This program makes home ownership a reality for low to moderate income households in Niagara through down payment assistance of a 5% forgivable loan.
- As Housing Providers come to the end of their mortgages and, as a result, the end of their contractual agreements with Housing Services, staff are working to retain these units for Community Housing through a framework that will be taken to Council in 2024
- Niagara's Consolidated Housing Master Plan (CHMP) continues to serve as a guide for the development of new community housing units and provides a long-term roadmap to 2041 to ensure the sustainability of existing community housing stock and outline the future needs for affordable housing stock in Niagara.
- As part of the Rent Supplement Program, the Insitu Rent Supplement strategy offered Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance to applicants on the centralized waitlist where they currently live. Through this strategy, 53 new agreements were initiated with private landlords in 2023, supporting these households to be successfully removed from the waitlist.
- New Housing Development highlights across Niagara, as of the end of December 2023:

- 5925 Summer Street in Niagara Falls – a temporary housing-focused shelter that started operating in November 2023.
- 29 Riordon Street in St. Catharines – a temporary housing-focused shelter, built with portable structures, in place for approximately two years starting February 2024.
- 9 Chestnut Park in Port Colborne – 41 unit affordable housing apartment by Port Cares for low income seniors and single-parent households. This apartment is 30% complete and on track for completion in December of 2024.
- 745 Crescent Road in Fort Erie – 18 unit affordable housing building focused on serving those escaping gender-based violence, with the building to be operated by Niagara Regional Housing and operations to be tendered by Community Services. This building is 20% complete with occupancy date to be determined.
- 255 High Street in Fort Erie – 62 unit affordable housing apartment by Lions Douglas for low income seniors, with project management to support site proposal and application for funding provided by Housing Services. This apartment is 0% complete with occupancy to be determined.
- 171 Mill Street in Smithville – 52 unit build by Legion Villa with project management provided by Housing Services. This project is 0% complete with a target completion date of December 2026.
- 8055 McLeod Road in Niagara Falls – 90 unit build by Niagara Falls Non-profit Housing with project management provided by Housing Services. This building is 0% complete with a target completion date of August 2027.
- 320 Geneva Street in St. Catharines – 48 to 50 units. This property is 1% complete and will be completed in 3 phases (including Phase 1 for Bridge Housing). Completion dates for each phase is yet to be determined.
- In addition, Housing Services is providing project management support to 3 new community-led developments with more than 129 new affordable housing units at various stages of development.
- Work on attainable housing moved forward in 2023 through the creation of the new Strategic Transformation Office, a key focus of which is Attainable Housing. A workplan outlining initiatives in this area was in development at end of 2023.
- In light of anticipated provincial changes to Regional, and by extension local municipal planning, the focus of work to streamline development processes has been on the building permit process. Shared Services under the Strategic Transformation Office is leading this work.

- Staff continue to review and revise the affordable housing incentive programs as part of the ongoing assessment of Bill 23's impact on affordable housing projects, funding and incentives.

In 2023, Niagara's low-to moderate income renters continued to experience a more challenging market as rents continue to increase faster than incomes. In 2023 the average market rent (AMR) for two-bedroom unit was \$1388 (up 8.4% from the previous year).¹ Rising interest rates and high house prices have kept renters, who would have transitioned to home ownership, in their rental units, further increasing demand for rental units. While the overall vacancy rate in Niagara appears to be healthy at 2.8%, this number should be considered with caution as historically lower vacancy rates for more affordable units have been offset by higher vacancy rates for more expensive rental units.² Additionally, the large increase in average rents was due, in part, to the difference between rents paid by new tenants and those paid by long-term tenants. In 2023, the average asking rent for units that turned over to new tenants was 25.7% higher than rents paid by long-term tenants. This makes it particularly challenging for those looking to enter into a new rental tenancy. A challenging rental market, particularly for more affordable rental units increases demand for community housing.

The need for affordable housing continues to grow. In 2023 the centralized housing waitlist grew by 13% from 10,107 to 11,396 households. This represents an additional 1,289 individuals waiting for community housing.

At the end of 2023, there were 8,428 community housing units in Niagara, including more than 3,072 NRH-owned, 3,166 provider owned, 2,190 rent supplement/housing allowance/COHB units and 918 new affordable units.

Areas for focus for 2024 include ensuring adequate resources are available to support local need for affordable housing and supporting Indigenous access to land and incentives for new development.

¹ Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation Rental Market Report 2023 (2024, January)

² Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation Urban Rental Market Survey Data – Vacancy Rates by Rent Quartile 2022.

Goal 4 – Build Capacity and Improve the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Housing and Homelessness System

By the end of December 2023, 83% progress had been made toward finishing the 24 actions related to Goal 4. Seventeen (17) of these actions were completed, six (6) had seen progress, and one (1) required significant work to be completed. Key accomplishments since 2019 include developing a common system vision to end homelessness, improving the accuracy and completeness of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) data, increasing the use of systems standards, engaging lived experts in decision-making and system planning, increasing frequency and quality of communications and participating in the BFZ-C cohorts working to end chronic and veteran homelessness. Progress and accomplishments in 2023 include:

- In January 2023 staff began the process to develop a new Housing and Homelessness Action Plan for the period of 2024 to 2033.
- In 2023, homelessness services staff supported capacity building by increasing the training to service provider staff including:
 - Trauma Informed Care
 - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) training for six (6) local SPDAT trainers who then trained over 60 direct service staff
 - Housing Focused Shelter training
 - Diversion training for Prevention providers
 - Rapid Rehousing Training
 - Eviction & Housing Loss Prevention Training
 - Media training was offered to partner agency leadership.
- To improve morale of direct service staff, over 100 service provider staff from across Niagara Region gathered on July 25 to be recognized for their tireless work toward ending chronic and veteran homelessness.
- Niagara Region engaged service providers on a new Pathway to Functional Zero resource that details the community's shared projects and priorities, key policy changes, and what is to come. A document outlining key activities and successes was made available online and in print form in August 2023.

A key component of BFZ-C, the QBNL supports system planning to meet community need. Of the 2,183 unique individuals who accessed emergency shelter in 2023, the largest proportion were single men (40%), single women (21%), including refugees

(13%), Indigenous individuals (7%). 142 individuals (7% of shelter clients) had 180+ days in shelter.

Areas for focus for 2024 include supporting staff retention throughout the homeless serving system, providing Indigenous Cultural Safety training to homeless services providers and improving service manager engagement with Indigenous organizations, and working with Niagara Indigenous Community Advisory Board (NICAB) to fund Indigenous organizations for Indigenous-led housing and homelessness solutions

Alternatives Reviewed

There are no applicable alternatives as reporting on the HHAP is required under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, per its regulations as noted in the Analysis on page 1.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

- This report supports the council priority of an Equitable Region by providing access to affordable and inclusive housing options.

Other Pertinent Reports

- COM 40-2019 Five-Year Review of Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan
- COM 12-2023 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2022

Prepared by:

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Management Advisor
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 input from Jeffrey Sinclair, Acting Manager Homelessness Services; Wendy Thompson, Community Resource Program Manager Housing Services; Marian Bannerman, Development Industry and Housing Consultant, Growth Strategy and Economic Development; Alexandria Tikky, Senior Project Policy Manager, Growth Strategy and Economic Development; Kristina Nickel and Mark Gutelius, Program Evaluation and Data Advisors, Homelessness Services; and reviewed by Cathy Cousins, Director Homelessness Services & Community Engagement.

Appendices

None

Memorandum

COM-C 6-2024

Subject: School-age Child Care Affordability Pilot Update

Date: May 7, 2024

To: Public Health and Social Services Committee (PHSSC)

From: Adrienne Jugley, Commissioner, Community Services

The Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement has resulted in a 52.75 per cent decrease of child care fees for children aged 0-5 years old. To parallel improved access to affordable child care for families of children 6-12 years-old, similar to some jurisdictions in Ontario, Niagara Region piloted a program to reduce fees for children in before-and-after school child care programs. Further to a request by PHSSC, the following provides information related to the success of this pilot.

In December 2023, families of children in before-and-after school programs received a rebate or credit to refund 52.75 per cent of their before-and-after fees, to a floor of \$12 per day or \$6 per morning for before-school programs and \$6 per afternoon for after-school programs. This was a pilot program that occurred as a one-time payment, for the period of September to December 2023.

Approximately 2,484 children received a credit/refund as part of the pilot. The pilot provided refunds of an average of \$318.53 per child, reducing the average before-and-after child care rate from approximately \$23.93/day to an estimated \$12.04/day.

Approximately 26 service providers participated in the pilot. Feedback from service providers confirmed that the credit/refund was appreciated by families. A service provider wrote, "Feedback has been positive with parents being surprised and thrilled with receiving refunds on their fees paid." Another service provider reported that "They [families] would like to see a permanent reduction in fees for children 6 to 12 years of age, equal to CWELCC", and a parent in receipt of a refund mentioned that "It is a big help for us that have not enough income."

In total, roughly \$1.05M was issued to families. This initiative was supported with the federal and provincial funding within Niagara Region Children's Services' 2023 budget. Financial support for this initiative was possible as a result of savings in fee subsidy expenditures and funding as part of the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) agreement.

Ongoing financial evaluation of the Children's Services budget and the impacts of the provincial funding formula will help determine the sustainability of this initiative in 2024.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Adrienne Jugley
Commissioner, Community Services



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April 22, 2024

Ann-Marie Norio, Regional Clerk
Niagara Region
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way
Thorold, ON L2V 4T7

Dear Ms. Norio,

At their April 19, 2024 meeting, the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors passed the following motion regarding NRH 3-2024:

Recommendations

1. That the Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) Board of Directors does **ENDORSE** the attached letter to the Ombudsman of Ontario regarding delays at the Landlord Tenant Board;
2. That the Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) Board of Directors does direct staff to **FORWARD** the letter to the May 7, 2024 Public Health and Social Services Committee (PHSSC) meeting for information.

Your assistance is requested in moving NRH 3-2024 through proper channels to Public Health and Social Services Committee (PHSSC).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Zalepa', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor Gary Zalepa
Chair



Niagara Regional Housing

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, PO Box 344, Thorold, ON L2V 3Z3
Telephone: 905-682-9201 Toll-free: 1-800-232-3292
Main Fax: 905-687-4844 Contractor Fax: 905-682-8301
nrh.ca

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 19, 2024
To: Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) Board of Directors
From: Cameron Banach, Director Housing Services / CEO of NRH
Re: Letter to the Ombudsman of Ontario

Staff are requesting that the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors endorse the attached letter to the Ombudsman of Ontario regarding delays at the Landlord Tenant Board. Not only are the delays extensive for non-payment of rent, but the impaired safety application for a dangerous situation in a community is also taking extensive times to get resolved; therefore, not addressing the safety concern in a timely manner. This puts staff in a precarious position with members of the community in not being able to address their concerns.

A similar letter was sent in March of 2020 with the same concerns with no apparent action taken to address the situation.

**Please call 905-682-9201 if you need this information in a different format,
or translated into another language.**



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COM-C 7-2024

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario
 483 Bay Street, 10th floor, South Tower
 Toronto, ON M5G 2C9

April 19, 2024

To Whom it May Concern,

It is with utmost respect that the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors must convey our ongoing concerns with delays in matters before the Landlord and Tenant Board.

As you may appreciate, both private landlords and not-for-profit housing associations operate on the income they receive from their rental properties. Prior to the fall of 2019, applications to terminate tenancies for non-payment of rent were processed and hearings were scheduled within four to five weeks of the date of filing. More recently, we are finding that hearings are sometimes scheduled three or four months after filing. The financial impact on social housing landlords, with the burden to carry tenants who are not paying rent, is creating a significant impact on our day-to-day operations. We can only imagine how this is adversely impacting private landlords who have large mortgages as well as operating expenses.

NRH is in the business of providing affordable housing and such delays are affecting our ability to meet our mandate. On a day-to-day basis we are finding that tenants are learning of the delays which are allowing them to remain in rental units without paying for months on end.

We believe that this situation has been caused by the large number of vacancies that appear in the list of adjudicators who are available to hear cases. These adjudicators are appointed by the province. We are advised that the Landlord and Tenant Board, in particular the Hamilton office which governs our territorial jurisdiction, is understaffed as attrition takes place and no new employees are hired. There are times when we file applications and a hearing date isn't scheduled for an extended period of time due to these staff shortages.

We respectfully ask that the government and the ombudsman take immediate action to remedy this situation to make the system effective and efficient again. Failure to do so will result in social housing providers' inability to provide suitable housing to those truly in need.

Sincerely,

 Gary Zalepa
 Board Chair, Niagara Regional Housing

cc: The Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
 Jim Bradley, Regional Chair, Niagara Regional Council
 Jeff Burch, MPP Niagara Centre
 Wayne Gates, MPP Niagara Falls
 Sam Oosterhoff, MPP Niagara West
 Jennie Stevens, MPP St. Catharines

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 or translated into another language.**

Ministry of Health

Office of the Deputy Premier
and Minister of Health

777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 1N3
Telephone: 416 327-4300
www.ontario.ca/health

Ministère de la Santé

Bureau du vice-premier ministre
et du ministre de la Santé

777, rue Bay, 5^e étage
Toronto ON M7A 1N3
Téléphone: 416 327-4300
www.ontario.ca/sante



March 28, 2024

e-Approve-72-2024-632

Jim Bradley
Chair, Board of Health
Niagara Region Public Health Department
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way
Thorold ON L2V 0A2

Dear Jim Bradley:

I am pleased to advise you that the Ministry of Health will provide the Board of Health for the Niagara Region Public Health Department up to \$175,150 in additional base funding for the 2023-24 funding year, up to \$525,450 in additional base funding for the 2024-25 funding year, and up to \$816,700 in additional one-time funding for the 2023-24 funding year to support the provision of public health programs and services in your community.

These approvals support the government's commitment towards Strengthening Public Health, including restoring provincial base funding to the level previously provided under the 2020 cost-share formula, effective January 1, 2024, and providing 1% growth base funding for the 2024 calendar year.

The Executive Lead of the Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Division will write to the Niagara Region Public Health Department shortly concerning the terms and conditions governing the funding.

Thank you for the important service that your public health unit provides to Ontarians, and your ongoing dedication and commitment to addressing the public health needs of Ontarians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvia Jones".

Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

.../2

-2-

Jim Bradley

c: Dr. Azim Kasmani, Medical Officer of Health, Niagara Region Public Health Department
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister
Elizabeth Walker, Executive Lead, Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health