



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

PHSSC 10-2024

Tuesday, November 5, 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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5. <u>DELEGATIONS</u>	
6. <u>ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION</u>	
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7. <u>CONSENT ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</u>	

8. **OTHER BUSINESS**

9. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 3, 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).

Board of Health Evaluation

Public Health and Social Services Committee
November 5, 2025

Diane Vanecko, Director Organizational and Foundational Standards

Dr. Azim Kasmani, Medical Officer of Health

Board of Health Evaluation

Public Health and Social Services Committee

Diane Vanecko

Azim Kasmani

November 5, 2024

Background

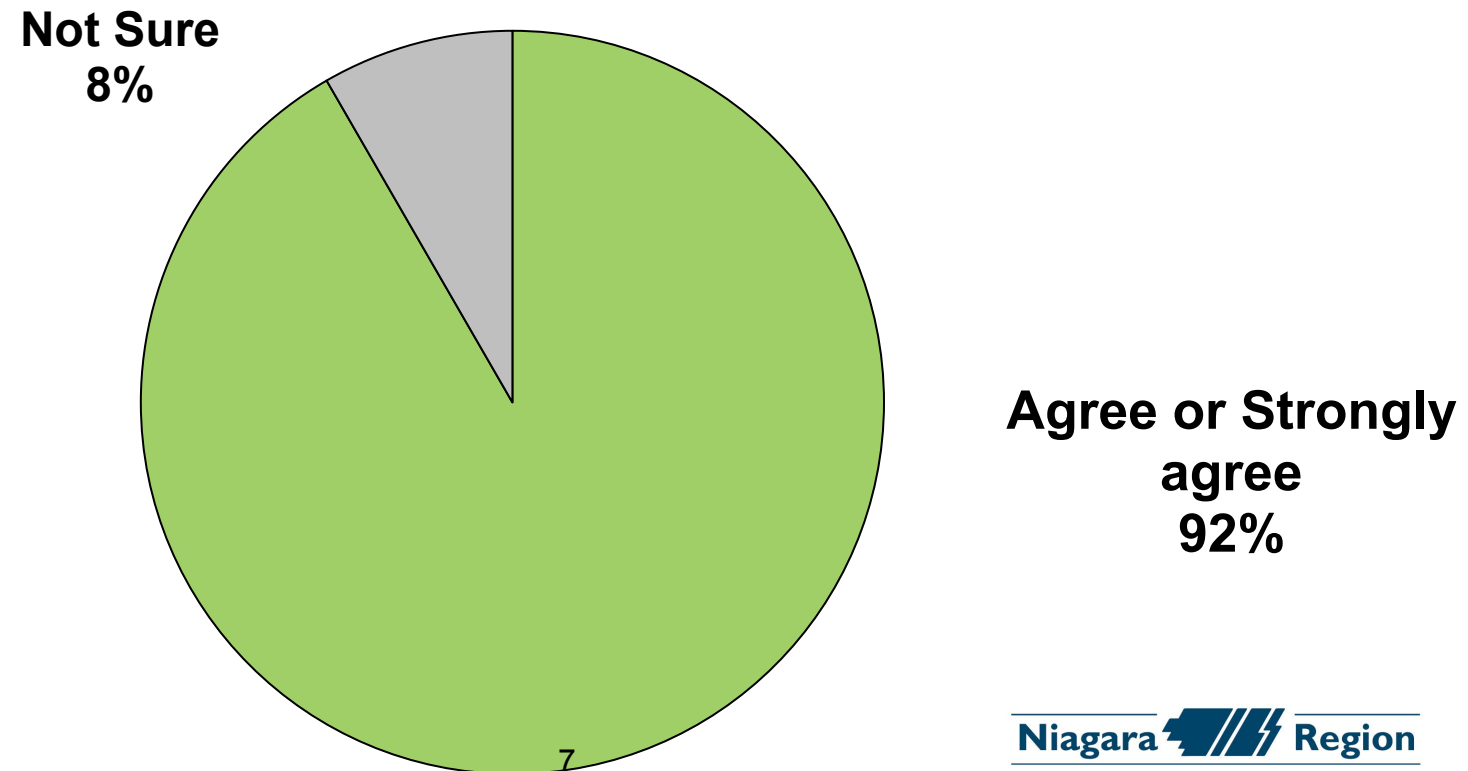
- Confidential 22-question survey completed by Board of Health May 2024
- Public Health Accountability Framework requires Board of Health complete a self-evaluation process at least once every other year
- 24 responses
- Results shared with Board of Health and used to drive continuous improvement

Top Strengths

- Adequately prepared for public health emergencies
- Has a process to handle urgent matters
- Responsive to community needs
- Kept abreast of trends, events and emerging issues
- Adequate opportunities for questions during meetings

Top Strengths Results

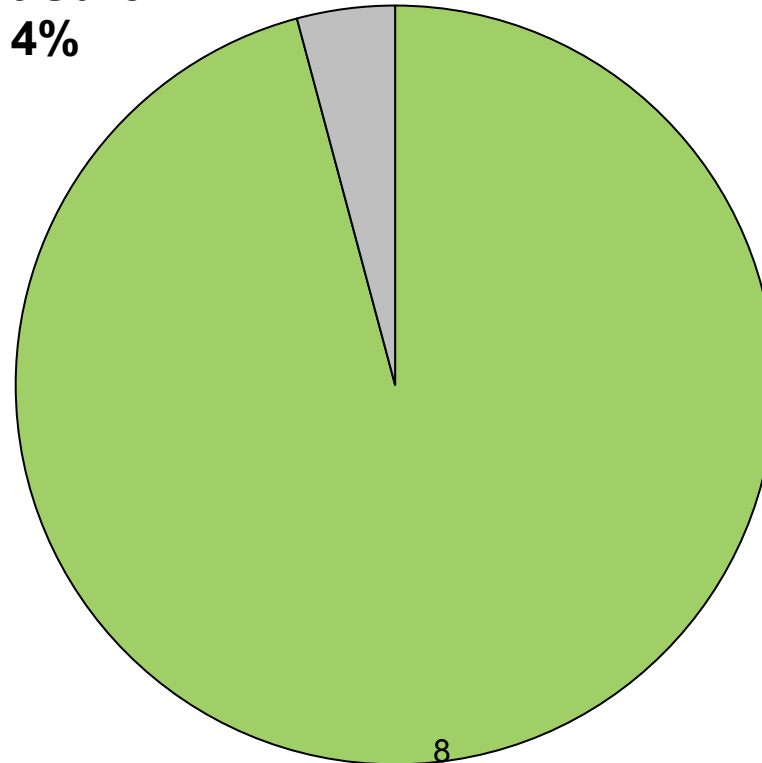
BOARD OF HEALTH IS ADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES



Top Strengths Continuation 2

BOARD OF HEALTH HAS A PROCESS TO HANDLE URGENT MATTERS

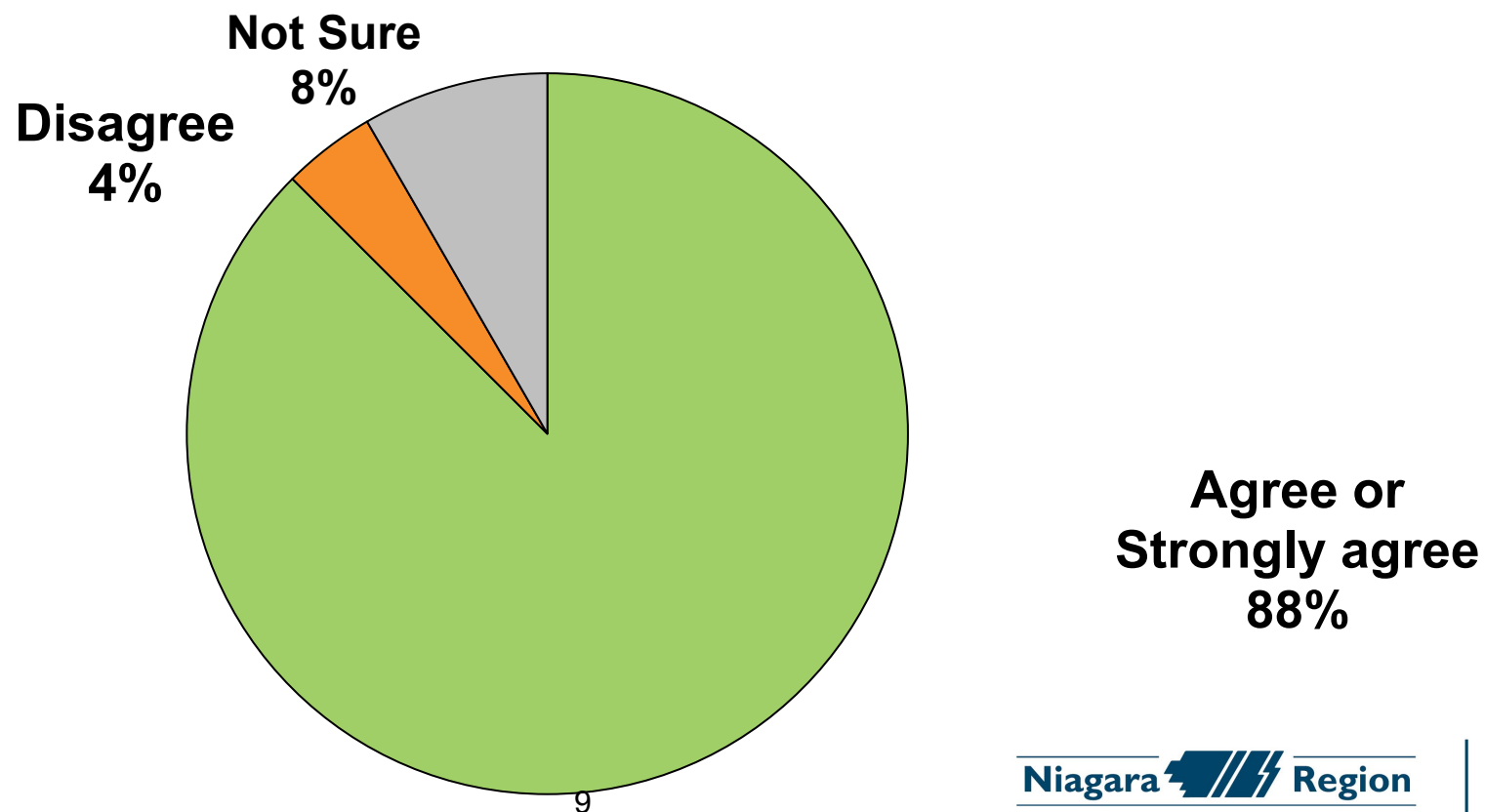
Not Sure
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Agree or
Strongly agree
96%

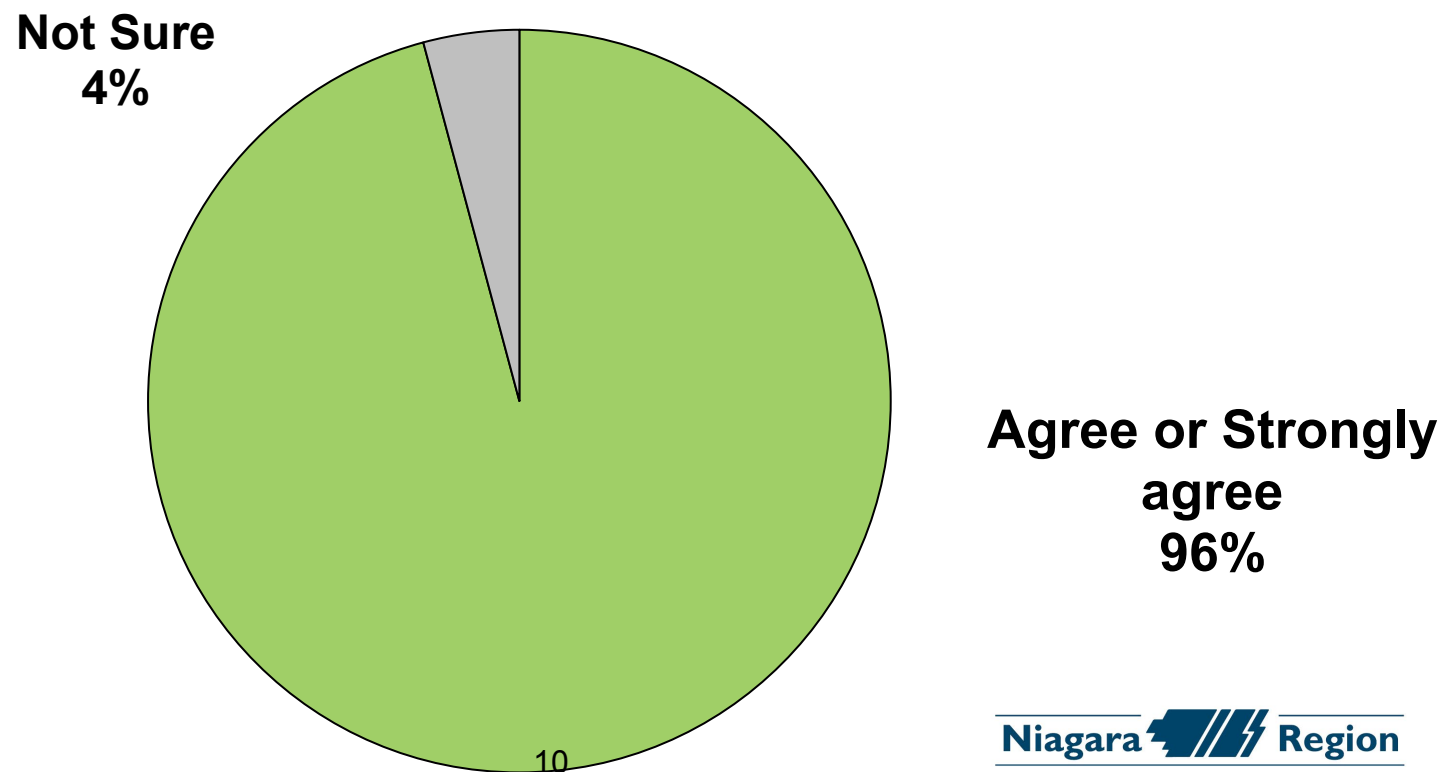
Top Strengths Continuation 3

BOARD OF HEALTH IS RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS



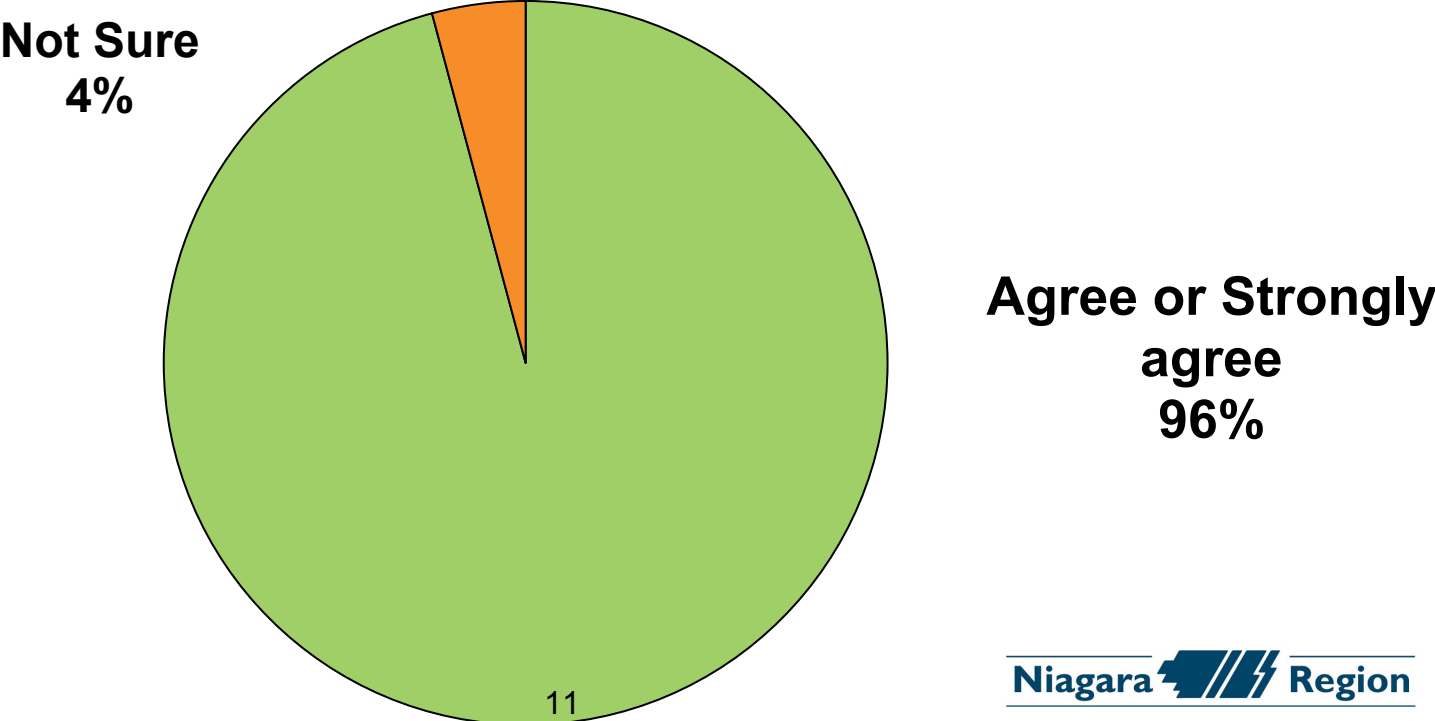
Top Strengths Continuation 4

BOARD OF HEALTH IS KEPT ABREAST OF TRENDS, EVENTS AND ISSUES



Top Strengths Continuation 5

BOARD OF HEALTH HAS ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITIES TO ASK QUESTIONS

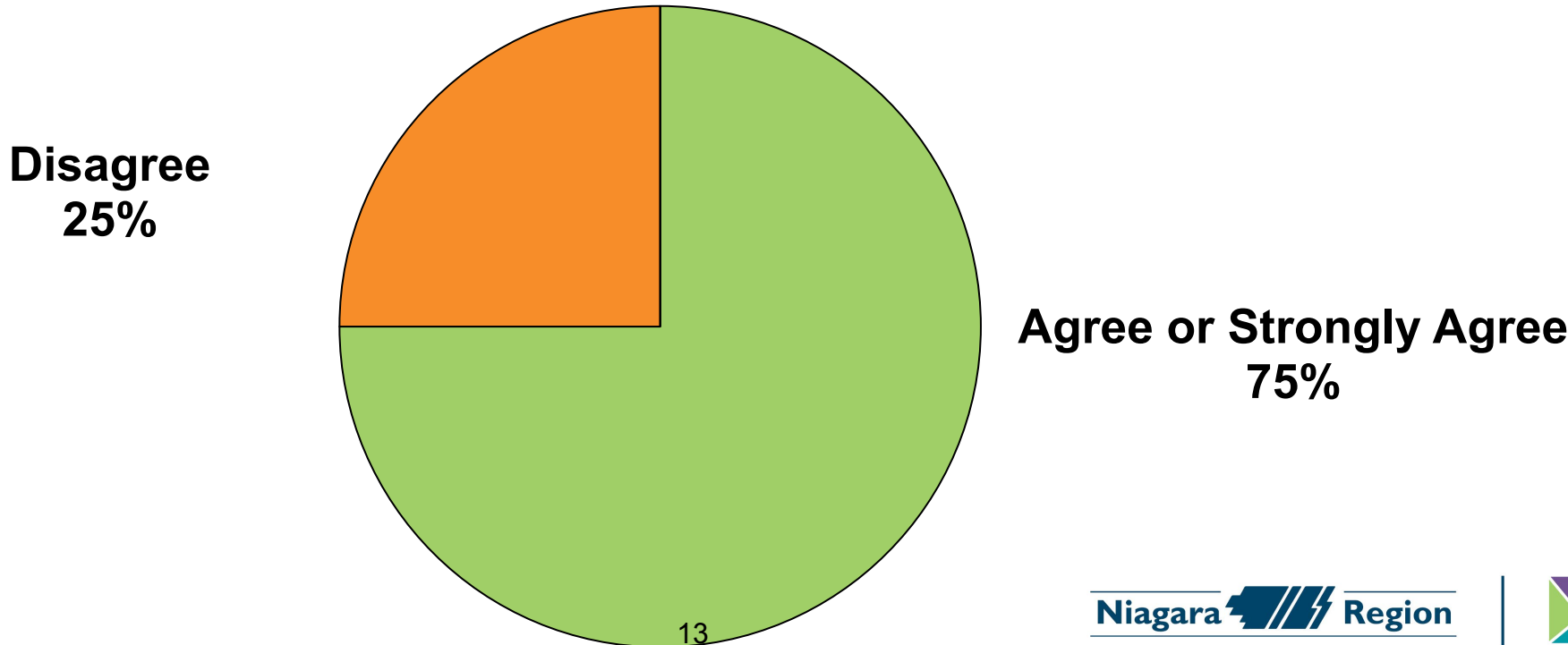


Top Areas for Improvement

- Access to effective orientation to responsibilities
- Understanding roles and responsibilities
- Adequate information to monitor public health performance

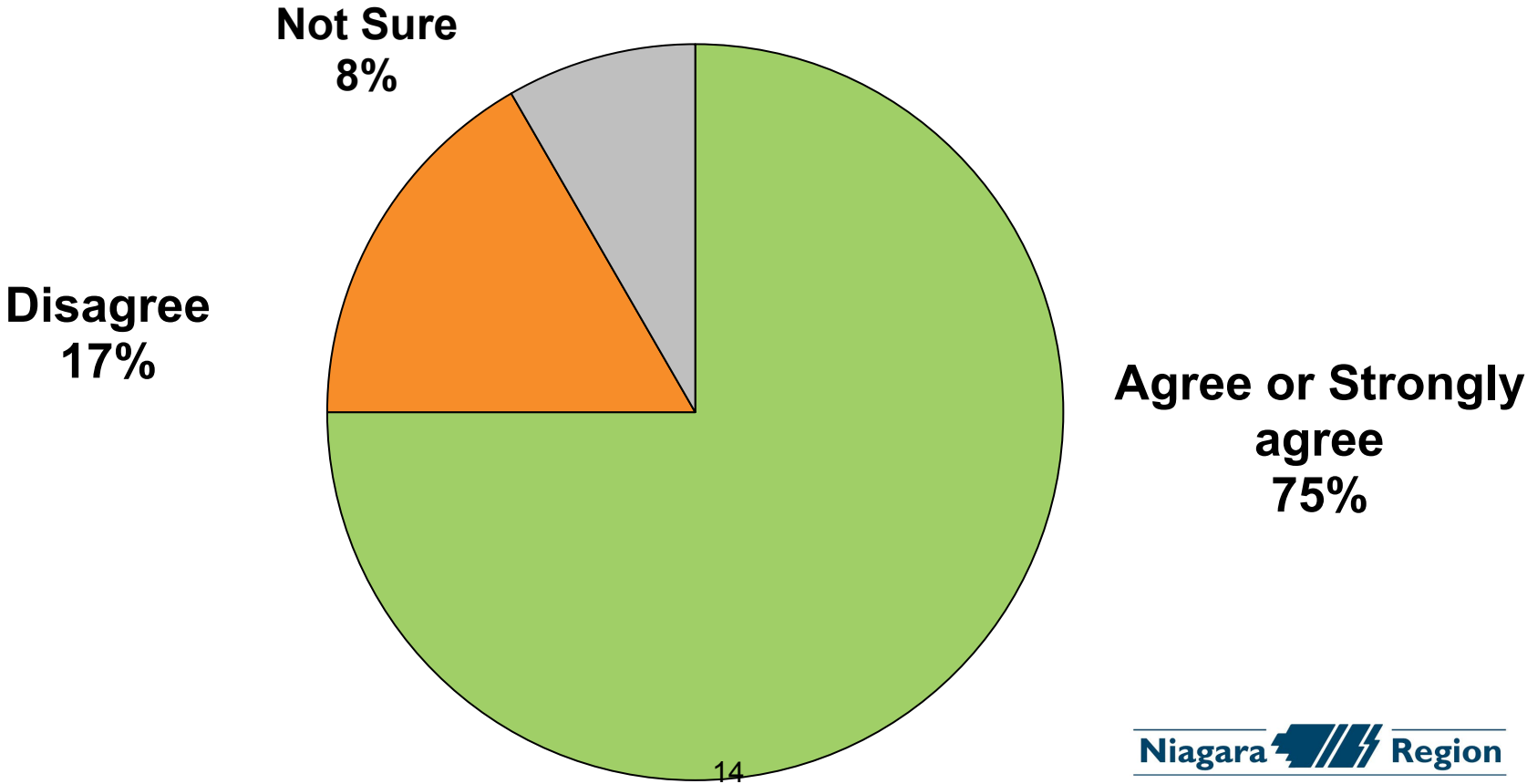
Top Areas for Improvement Continuation

BOARD OF HEALTH HAS ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE ORIENTATION TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES



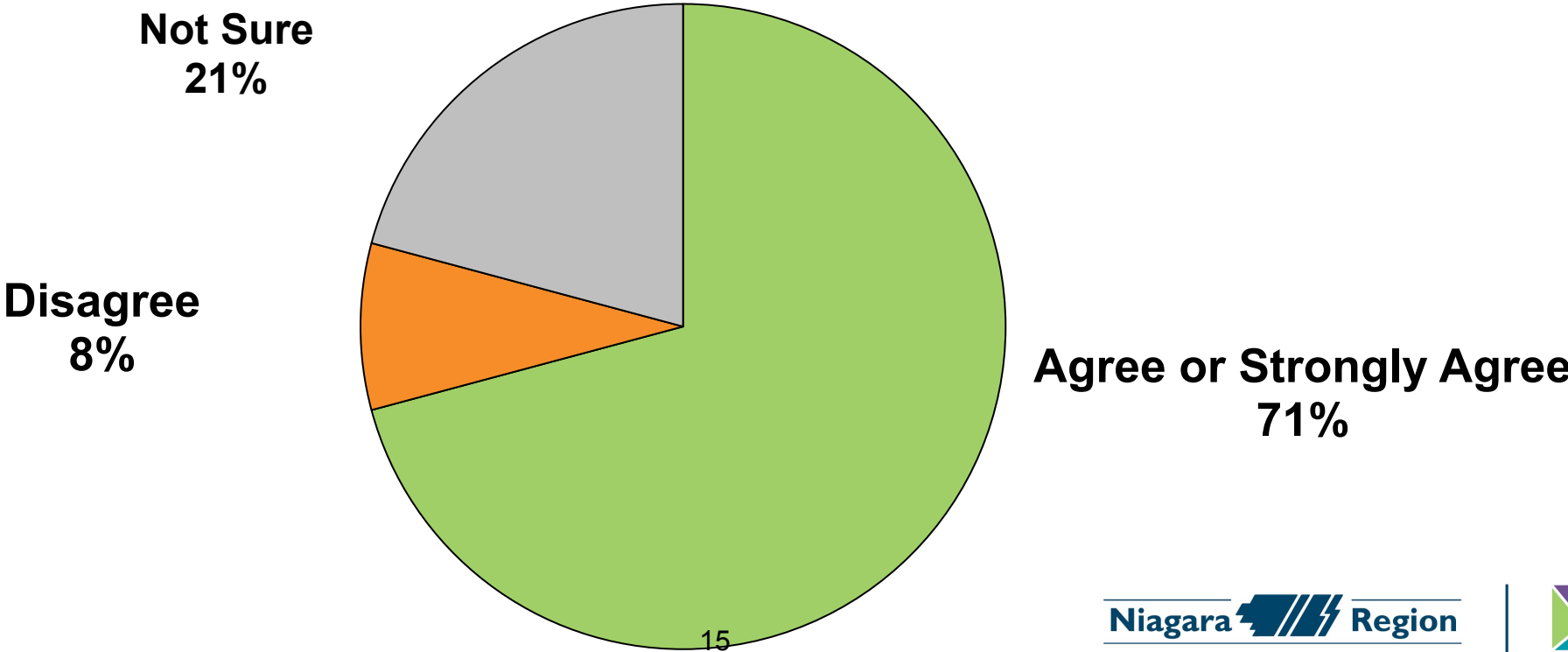
Top Areas for Improvement Continuation 2

BOARD OF HEALTH UNDERSTANDS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

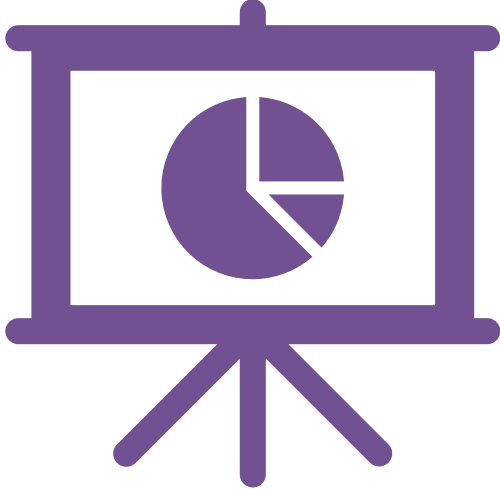


Top Areas for Improvement Continuation 3

BOARD OF HEALTH HAS ADEQUATE INFORMATION TO MONITOR PUBLIC HEALTH PERFORMANCE

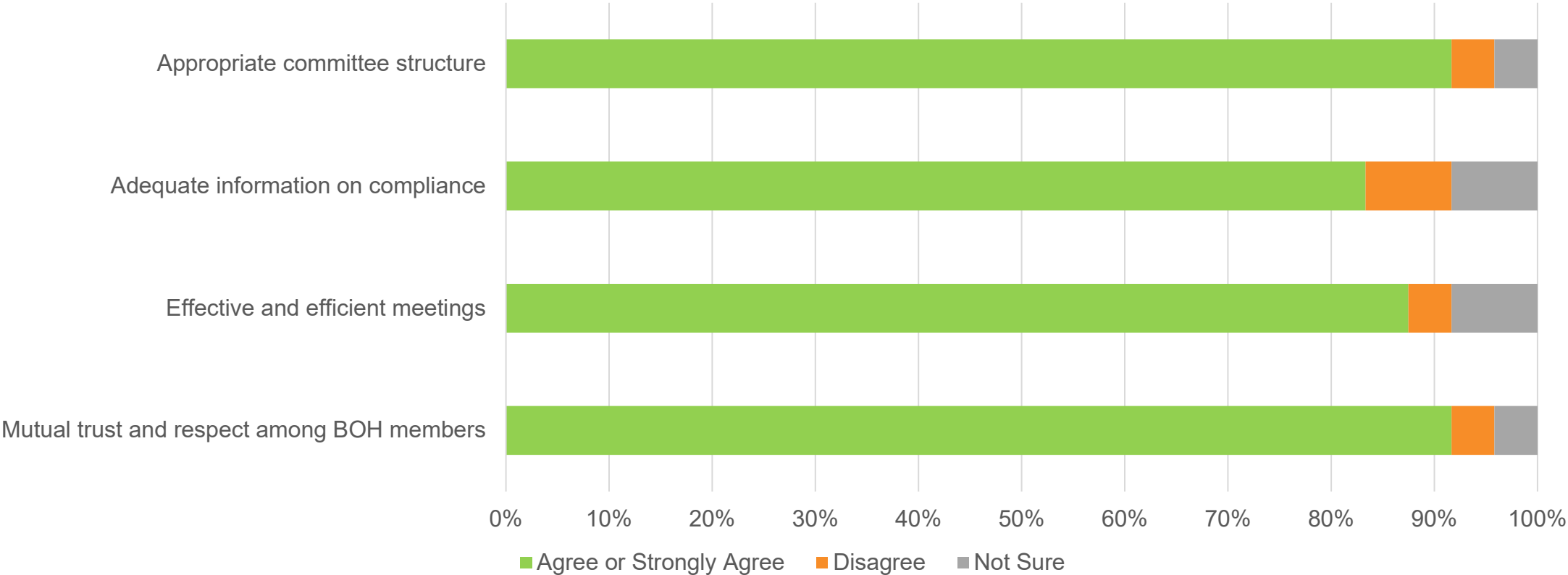


Next steps

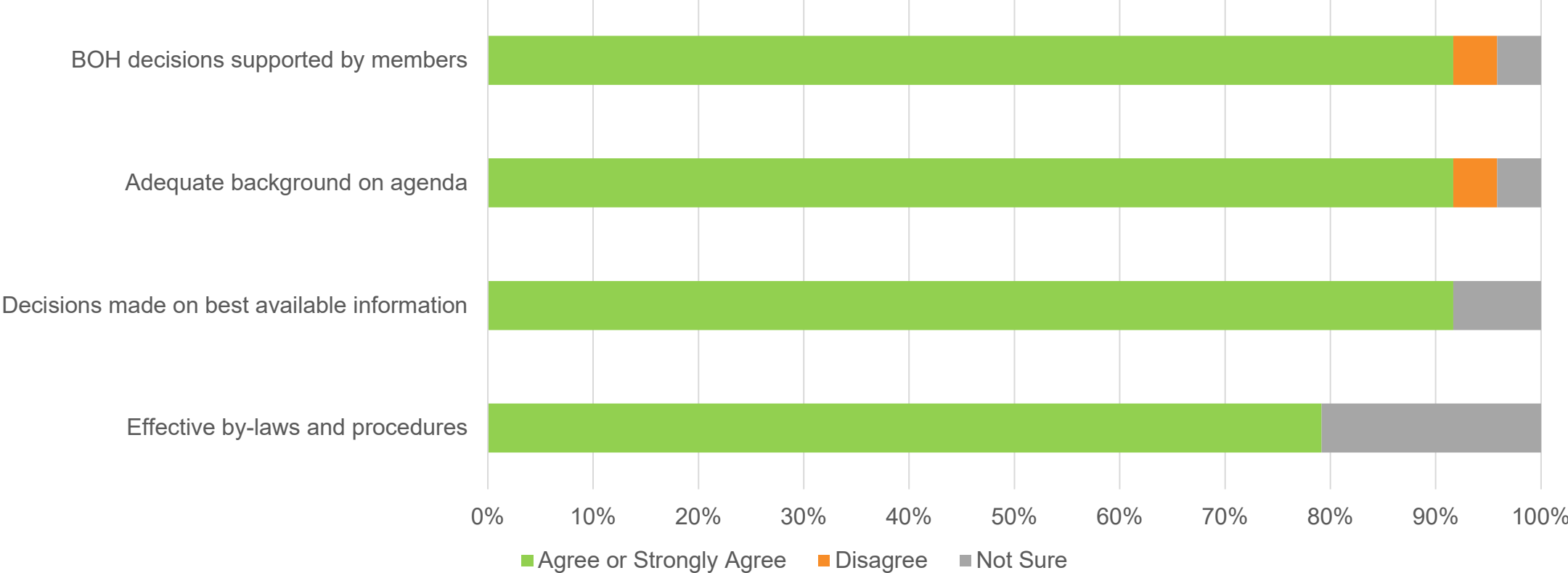


Appendix

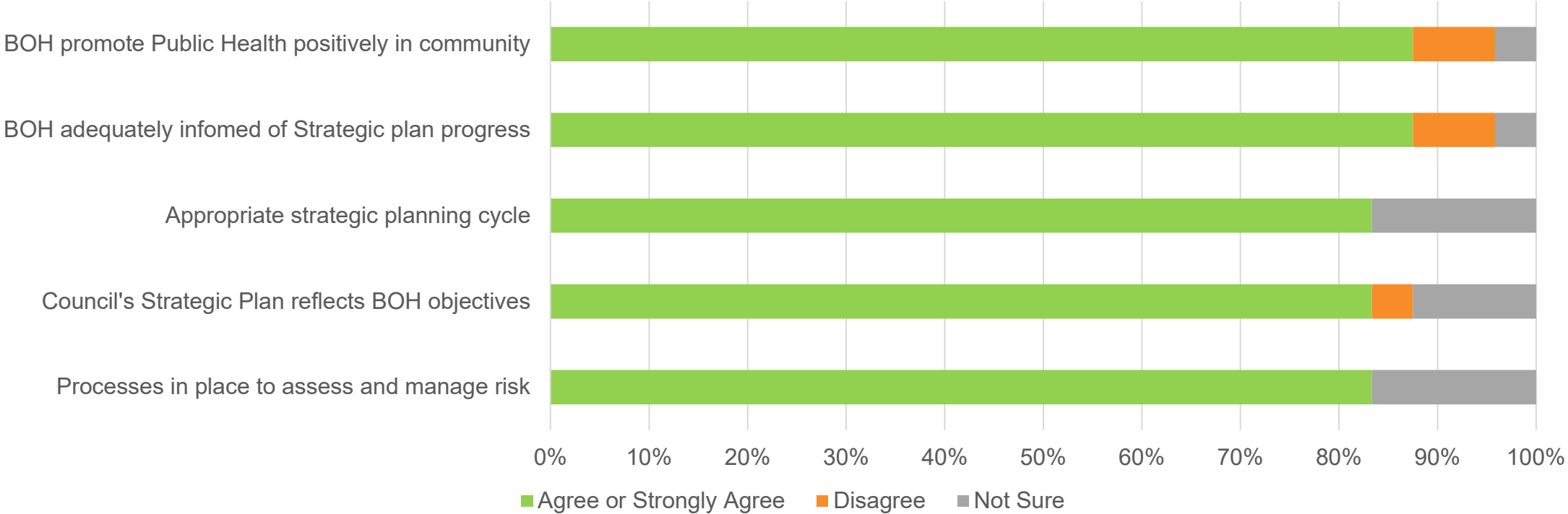
Survey Results



Survey Results Continuation



Survey Results Continuation 2



Subject: Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Funding Announcement

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, November 5, 2024

Recommendations

1. That the report COM 31- 2024 **BE RECEIVED** for information regarding the Provincial announcement that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) has reinstated the previous program delivery funding (PDF) model for 2025, ending the funding freeze since 2018, to address the steady rise in Ontario Works (OW) caseloads;
2. That Regional Council **ENDORSE** leveraging existing levy contribution to attract provincial funding (50/50) in order to deliver the mandated social assistance program; and
3. That Regional Council **APPROVE** the conversion of 21 temporary full-time equivalents (FTE's) to 21 permanent FTE's effective January 1, 2025. This is supported by the new provincial funding with no levy increase.

Key Facts

- In 2018, MCCSS froze the Ontario Works Program Delivery (cost shared) Funding at 2018 expenditure actuals. Service demands have steadily increased, resulting in the program being historically underfunded. The Region has contributed proportionally more levy funding into the program to maintain existing staffing levels and direct client benefits.
- The purpose of this report is to inform Council that on September 6, 2024, the Province announced that given the rapidly growing OW caseload, MCCSS would reinstate the previous PDF model in 2025 as part of their efforts to address significant underfunding in Ontario's social assistance system.
- The updated 2025 notional PDF allocations are aligned with projected caseloads with the provincial expectation, in the Region's mandated role, that staffing and direct client benefits would increase accordingly.
- The funding announcement creates an opportunity to:

- rebalance the social assistance budget so that it is appropriately cost shared with the province as set out in legislation,
 - stabilize required staffing through the conversion of 21 temporary staff to 21 permanent staff and
 - increase direct client benefits, utilizing the existing levy contribution previously approved, without incurring an additional increase to the levy for program delivery costs.
- Niagara’s OW caseload has experienced a 25% increase since December 2022 due in part to the extraordinary volume of asylum seekers who arrived in our community (COM 9–2023).
 - To mitigate pressure on the levy over the last number of years, staffing levels were kept critically low and direct benefits for clients have been restricted (October 2023 PHSSC Presentation – Community Services Social Assistance Discretionary Benefits Items).
 - In response, the province provided one-time funding in 2023 and 2024 to add 21 temporary staff and direct client benefits required to respond to the rapidly increasing caseload (COM 24 – 2023 and COM 7-2024). Niagara was able to accept the one-time cost shared provincial funding from MCCSS because of the existing “over contribution” from the levy.

Financial Considerations

The 2024 SAEO budget includes OW Program Delivery Funding (PDF) from MCCSS of \$15.49 million of which \$3.66 million is 100% provincially funded and is conditional upon achieving performance targets and \$11.83 million is funded by the province (with a 50/50 cost share requirement with the Region). The province has frozen funding (which includes direct benefits to clients) to the social assistance sector and, as a result, this PDF funding has not increased since 2018. As a result, and as described in CSD 30-2024 Levy Impact of Mandated Services Provided Under Provincial and Federal Agreements, an incremental levy contribution (above the original 50/50 cost share) has accumulated to sustain the program. Program staff have worked diligently to mitigate budget increases and further impact to the levy that would have otherwise qualified for 50% ministry cost matching if not for the cap. This has led to lower than optimal staffing levels and additional client benefits being underfunded.

Niagara’s 2025 PDF allocation from MCCSS is \$4.91 million which is 100% provincially funded and conditional to achieving specific performance targets, and up to \$18.49 million in funding by the province (with a 50/50 cost share requirement with the Region).

This presents an opportunity to fund the transition of one-time temporary FTEs to permanent status, and to rebalance the budget for client benefits where the need has increased significantly due to rising caseloads since 2018 without increasing the levy. In addition, with the aim of being an effective and fiscally responsible partner, SAEO sought the opportunity to attract provincial funding on Housing Stability Benefits previously funded by levy. Prior to this funding announcement, SAEO was estimating needing an 8.7% increase to its 2025 budget (i.e. 0.3% contribution from on the property tax levy to sustain service levels). Table 1 below shows how staff have incorporated the new funding into the proposed 2025 budget to increase service without additional levy.

(in millions)	Province	Region	Total
2024 gross service contract budget (including Housing Stability Benefit which is eligible)	\$ 15.49	\$ 15.70	\$ 31.20
2025 base budget pressure	0.00	1.36	1.36
Re-investment to provide client benefits	0.95	0.95	1.89
Re-investment to improve case manager to client ratios (21 FTE’s)	0.90	0.90	1.80
Opportunity to attract funding on Housing Stability Benefits previously funded by levy	0.78	-0.78	0.00
Opportunity to correct overfunding from levy and achieve 50/50 funding as intended in agreement	2.46	-2.46	0.00
2025 gross service contract budget (Note 1)	\$ 20.58	\$ 15.67	\$ 36.25

Note 1 - Provincial PDF funding allocation of \$20.58 million is \$4.91 million at 100% plus \$15.67 million at 50% Region levy cost share. To attract maximum total PDF

funding available of \$23.40 million a further levy contribution of \$2.82 million would be required.

Analysis

2023 and 2024 One Time Program Delivery Funding

Due in part to the extraordinary volume of asylum seekers arriving in Niagara beginning in 2022, and to support SAEO in responding to increased service demands, the province provided one-time funding of \$0.86 million in 2023 and \$1.40 million in 2024 to add temporary staff and increase the budget for direct client benefits. SAEO was able to accept this one-time provincial funding because of the existing “over contribution” in the levy (as the Region addressed inflationary costs each year to maintain base staffing levels) due to frozen provincial funding. This allowed SAEO to hire 21 temporary staff to support the effective delivery of OW. These 21 temporary positions were planned to terminate on December 31, 2024.

One time funding was also used to mitigate further changes to local benefits policy that would limit access and decrease issuance of direct benefits for essential items (e.g. last month’s rent deposits, beds, utility arrears, bus passes, cell phones and internet access) due to the significant increase in caseload.

2025 Updated Program Delivery Funding

The updated 2025 notional PDF allocations are aligned with projected caseloads with the provincial expectation of the Region’s mandated role, that staffing and direct client benefits would increase accordingly. The province has projected an additional 8.9% caseload increase in 2025, which would result in Niagara’s caseload reaching 14,000 in 2025. The new funding provides an opportunity, within the existing previously approved levy to maximize these new provincial dollars, to shift away from reliance on one time funding and stabilize staffing levels and direct client benefits. In addition, moving forward using more of the provincial allocation or making one-time requests, will require additional levy contribution.

Appropriate Staffing Levels

The requested permanent positions (19 unionized positions and 2 non union positions) are necessary to stabilize the workforce. Appropriate staff to client ratio is critical to supporting the delivery of OW services. \$4.91 million (100% provincial funding) of

Niagara's PDF is tied to achieving performance targets. The staff are necessary to conduct legislated tasks governed by over 800 rules to achieve performance targets. Industry standard indicates that optimal service delivery is achieved at a staff to client ratio of 1:35, and a ratio of 1:52 and above is considered a 'point of failure'. With the 21 positions, the staff to client ratio will be 1:63; without, it is 1:70. It remains challenging to recruit for and maintain temporary positions. The existing 21 temporary positions resulted in 65 postings due to staff movement and employees leaving Niagara Region to secure other permanent positions. This unprecedented volume of recruitment creates pressure on human resources and staff training.

Direct Client Benefits

Direct client benefits are also part of the OW program delivery funding that has been frozen since 2018. There are currently over 60,000 people on Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program that are eligible to receive direct client benefits administered through the Ontario Works program. Staff adjudicate over 12,000 requests per month for direct client benefits that are governed by local policy that has continued to be adjusted to accommodate for the higher caseload without any increase to the budget. In the face of frozen OW monthly rates for food and shelter (\$733 for a single person), direct client benefits have a capped budget for essential items such as beds, utility arrears, bus passes, cell phones and internet access. Currently less than 60% of the caseload receive a direct client benefit each month and local policy adjustments have been required to lower the monthly maximum to \$75 per month for many items to remain in line with available funds. Housing Stability Benefits, issued to prevent homelessness and/or establish a new principal residence are an eligible direct client benefit. This funding announcement provides the opportunity to adjust local policy and provide much needed supports without an increase in levy.

Alternatives Reviewed

The funding announcement is an opportunity to correct and rebalance program delivery funding from MCCSS to the original 50/50 cost share.

There is the option to ask for less levy than approved in 2024 but this is not recommended. Reduced levy would result in lower use of available Provincial funds, leaving priority money "on the table" and a position previously taken by Niagara prior to 2018 that left it at a considerable disadvantage as compared to peers who maximized their funds, which would mean continued destabilization of the workforce and inability to meet the demands of the provincial projected caseload increase of 8.9% in 2025 which also jeopardizes Niagara's provincial \$4.9M in performance-based funding. As well,

reduced funding for direct client benefits would result in more restrictive policies to serve a growing caseload which puts pressure on Niagara's shelter system and results in unstable housing for clients.

A second alternative is for Council to maximize the total PDF allocation of \$18,490,400 (50/50 cost share), however this is not recommended due to levy pressures across the Corporation. There is the potential to consider additional levy contributions at a 50/50 cost share if the PDF remains the same in 2026.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The 21 permanent staff positions and additional client benefits are directly aligned with the Equitable Region priority. SAEO provides direct essential service to approximately 9% of Niagara's population. Service delivery is designed to ensure access to programs is inclusive, free of discrimination, equitable and decision making is transparent and conforms to legislative requirements. Local policy, programs and issuance of direct client benefits are reflective of community needs and developed in partnership with Homelessness and Housing Services to align with improving access to affordable and attainable housing.

Other Pertinent Reports

[COM 9-2023 Asylum Seekers Transferred to Niagara Falls – Request for Immediate Temporary Funding](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=30317>)

[COM 24-2023 Budget Adjustment - Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32490>)

[Community Services Social Assistance Discretionary Client Benefits Presentation\(1\)\(1\).pdf](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=33578>)

[COM 7-2024 Budget Adjustment - Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=35972>)

Prepared by:

Lori Watson
Director, Community Services

Recommended by:

Henri Koning, MHSc
Acting Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Melissa Austin, Manager, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities and Donovan D'Amboise, Manager, Program Financial Support

Subject: Child Care and Early Years 2024 Budget Adjustment

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, November 5, 2024

Recommendations

1. That a gross operating budget adjustment in the amount of \$3,043,856 gross and \$0 net, to be fully funded through the Ministry of Education (MEDU), **BE APPROVED** to support Niagara Region’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 Children’s Services (in accordance with its municipal service manager responsibilities) 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) and 6.6(b), requiring Council’s approval for any amounts received in excess of \$1.0M for operating programs.
- The MEDU confirmed additional funding of \$3.0M for Niagara Region’s early years and child care system, resulting in a new total funding allocation for 2024 of \$117.7M.
- This increase is attributed to \$2.2M in the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) emerging issues funding, and 0.8M in CWELCC administration funding.

Financial Considerations

Niagara Region received additional funding of \$3.0M from the MEDU resulting in a new total funding allocation for 2024 of \$117.3M. 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	\$114.7M	\$3.0M	\$117.7M
2024 Gross Expenses	\$124.2M	\$3.0M	\$127.2M
2024 Niagara Region Levy*	\$9.5M	\$0	\$9.5M

*Includes indirect allocations

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

Analysis

Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care Emerging Issues funding increase

Emerging issues funding was introduced in 2024 by the MEDU to address non-discretionary cost pressures of child care centres enrolled in CWELCC. Niagara Region’s Children’s Services originally received \$2.5M in emerging issues funding.

Over the summer of 2024, the MEDU requested information on system pressures. Niagara Region’s Children’s Services identified a \$2.2M pressure in the CWELCC system for Niagara Region. On September 13, 2024, the MEDU announced \$2.2M in additional emerging issues funding to Niagara Region to be spent in accordance with the 2024 CWELCC guidelines. This funding will provide stability to the sector for the remainder of 2024 and help offset any non-discretionary costs currently not supported with CWELCC funding.

Incremental 2024 CWELCC Administrative Funding

On August 1, 2024, the MEDU released a new cost-based funding model for child care centres enrolled in the CWELCC program. The new funding formula will result in a significant transformation to how operators are currently funded.

To support these costs, MEDU has provided \$0.8M in CWELCC administration funding to be used in accordance with the MEDU administrative spending guidelines to support the transformation to a cost-based funding model.

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 successful implementation of CWELCC.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Allocating CWELCC emerging issues funding, in accordance with local system pressures, aligns with Council's strategic priority of an **Effective Region** by ensuring child care spaces are delivered in an fiscally responsible and sustainable manner (Objective 1.3) to support Niagara families and child care demand within the region.

Other Pertinent Reports

[COM 10-2024 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Program Update \(escribemeetings.com\)](https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=36981)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=36981>)

Prepared by:

John Pickles
Program Financial Specialist
Corporate Services

Recommended by:

Henri Koning, MHSc
Acting Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Satinder Klair, Director, Children's Services.

Subject: Housing Services Property Management Services Agreements

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, November 5, 2024

Recommendations

1. That the Commissioner of Community Services or designate **BE AUTHORIZED** to enter into agreements, in a form satisfactory to the Director, Legal Services, for the provision of property management services by the Regional Municipality of Niagara to third-party non-profit and co-operative housing providers and community agencies to support new and existing community and supportive housing projects. This is contingent on the approval of the resources noted in the 2025 budget that would be funded through cost recovery for these services.

Key Facts

- Niagara Region Housing Services (NRHS) is proposing to offer property management services to third-party non-profit and co-operative housing providers and community agencies providing community and/or supportive housing.
- The proposed 2025 operating budget includes a request for resources to support the provision of property management services. NRHS will not enter into any property management agreements unless the resource requests and related new fees proposed in the 2025 Fees and Charges By-Law are approved through the budget process.
- Provision of property management services by Niagara Region to third-party non-profit and co-operative housing providers and community agencies aligns with the following Housing Services' Strategic Priorities:
 - Supporting development planning for housing providers and providing ongoing support to the provider advisory committee;
 - Enhance communication and resource sharing with housing providers;
 - Focusing on eviction prevention and tenant supports through a lens of well-being and inclusivity; and
 - Identifying potential partnerships and grant opportunities.
- Benefits for third-party housing providers include opportunities for lowered operating costs and/or service contracts through economies of scale, as the providers'

properties would be included in larger Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) portfolio for typical service contract procurements.

- The expertise of the NRHS Property Management team will provide competent asset management and oversight on third-party housing provider properties, ensuring continued compliance with current legislation and Niagara Region's own standards as a service manager designated under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, including but not limited to adherence to waitlist policies and tenant selection targets to house those in greatest need.

Financial Considerations

The provision of property management services by Niagara Region's Housing Services will be contingent on the resources noted in the 2025 budget that would be funded through cost recovery for these services.

The proposed 2025 Fees and Charges By-Law will include new hourly fees related to the chargeback and recovery of costs for property management services to private or third-party providers, with total estimated revenue of \$132,000 in year one to be charged back to these providers included in the budget to partially offset and recover related staffing costs. These positions also support the portfolio of properties that are owned by Niagara Regional Housing, including those that are operated directly by the Homelessness Division in Community Services. There is an expectation this portfolio will continue to grow and include additional third-party providers, generating added cost recovery for staffing costs.

The housing operations team has experience in managing the residential properties of NRH's owned units, including the oversight of maintenance and capital repairs at these properties. This property management service will reduce third-party providers' dependence on high-cost external contractors, facilitating day-to-day repairs and maintenance of these facilities and ensuring that critical work and inspections are completed in a timely manner, thereby reducing additional costs that may arise with delays in completing this work, resulting in emergency repairs, and ensuring that the properties remain in compliance with fire and life safety codes.

Analysis

This new property management service is a progression of the New Development Project Management team created by NRHS in 2018. This team continues to deliver successful development project management to housing providers who are developing

new affordable housing projects. The Project Management team functions as a provider's owner representative, and is responsible for all project phases: initiation, funding, design, construction and occupancy planning. Services include: feasibility planning, business case, funding applications, procurement, detailed design review, construction inspections and project closeout. Cost recovery is achieved through fees in accordance with Fees and Charges By-Law paid by owner to NRHS during the various phases of a given project, with the majority of fees paid during construction phase.

NRHS has identified a need for wraparound service and continued formal support for these providers after construction completion through occupancy and long-term operating of the providers' housing assets. NRHS has proven experience operating NRH and Regional housing assets at service level standards. Third-party providers can benefit greatly from this expertise, controlling operating costs, maintaining physical assets and improving tenants' quality of living. These services will include: staff training on new building systems & components, tenant onboarding (move-ins, orientation), utilities and service contract accounts, warranty items and ongoing maintenance.

This new service will allow NRHS to administer proper asset management on new housing projects that include Niagara Region investment through equity contribution or funding allocation.

Alternatives Reviewed

If the requested authority to enter into property management agreements in accordance with this report or the related operating budget are not approved for 2025 through the budget process to enable capacity to provide the service, the housing providers would need to complete the necessary full property management and capital repair work on their properties themselves, through the hiring of their own staff or external contractors, or engage an external property management company, all likely at a significantly higher cost.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Council's Strategic Priorities include an Equitable Region through providing opportunities for a safe and inclusive Niagara, which includes improving access to affordable and attainable housing. The provision of property management services supports this priority through the addressing of affordable housing needs, supporting third-party providers and NRH to ensure the long-term sustainability and efficiency of

property management operations and maintaining both the providers' and NRH's owned assets in good repair and in compliance with relevant legislation.

Other Pertinent Reports

None.

Prepared by:

Cameron Banach
Director, Housing Services
Community Services

Recommended by:

Henri Koning, MHSc
Commissioner (Acting)
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Gordon Szaszi, Project Manager Housing Development, Jennifer Bailey, Senior Property Manager, Sara Mota, Senior Program Financial Specialist, and reviewed by Roman Ivanov, Legal Counsel.