

**THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
PUBLIC HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
OPEN SESSION**

**PHSSC 9-2020
Tuesday, October 13, 2020
Council Chamber/Video Conference
Niagara Region Headquarters, Campbell West
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold, ON**

Committee Members Present in the Council Chamber: Chiocchio (Committee Co-Chair), Greenwood (Committee Co-Chair), Rigby

Committee Members Present via Video Conference: Bradley (Regional Chair), Butters, Darte, Foster, Gibson, Insinna, Ip, Jordan, Nicholson, Sendzik, Villella, Whalen, Witteveen

Other Councillors Present via Video Conference: Zalepa

Absent/Regrets: Bellows

Staff Present in the Council Chamber: M. Elia, Technology Support Analyst, Dr. M. M. Hirji, Acting Medical Officer of Health, A. Jugley, Commissioner, Community Services, A.-M. Norio, Regional Clerk

Staff Present via Video Conference: D. Barnhart, Executive Officer to the Regional Chair, B. Brens, Manager, Program Financial Support, H. Chamberlain, Director, Financial Management & Planning/Deputy Treasurer, C. Cousins, Director, Homelessness and Community Engagement, Dr. A. Feller, Associate Medical Officer of Health, H. Koning, Director, Senior Services, K. Lotimer, Legislative Coordinator, K. Lutz, Deputy Chief/Associate Director, Emergency Medical Services, K. Smith, Chief/Director, Emergency Medical Services, M. Trennum, Deputy Regional Clerk, R. Tripp, Acting Chief Administrative Officer, L. Watson, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities, D. Woiceshyn, Chief Executive Officer, Niagara Regional Housing

1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Co-Chair Greenwood called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. **DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest.

3. **PRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Regional Essential Access to Connected Health (REACH), Niagara - Healthcare, Homelessness & COVID in Niagara**

Dr. Karl Stobbe, Medical Director, REACH Niagara, and David vanVelzen, Executive Director, REACH Niagara, provided information respecting Regional Essential Access to Connected Health (REACH), Niagara - Healthcare, Homelessness & COVID in Niagara. Topics of the presentation included:

- Niagara: COVID, homelessness and healthcare
 - The concern
 - The response
- Collaboration and Partners
- COVID Isolation Shelter Support
- Safe Injection Site Support
- Lessons Learned
- Next Steps and Anticipated Program Enhancements

Moved by Councillor Sendzik

Seconded by Councillor Whalen

1. That Regional Council **SUPPORT** the extension of the Alternate Funding Plan (AFP) currently provided to the network of primary care physicians across Hamilton (Shelter Health Network) to REACH Niagara which would allow local physicians and specialists through REACH to provide ongoing, compassionate and accessible care to the marginalized across the Region as well as supporting the necessary infrastructure to continue expansion into all of Niagara;
2. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to send a letter to the Ministry of Health, supporting the request by REACH Niagara for an extension of the Alternate Funding Plan; and
3. That the motion **BE CIRCULATED** to the local area MPPs.

Carried

3.2 Current State in Long-Term Care and Addressing the Pandemic

Henri Koning, Director, Seniors Services, provided information respecting Current State in Long-term Care and Addressing the Pandemic. Topics of the presentation included:

- Changing Profile of Long-term Care Residents
- Resident Care Needs with Activities of Daily Living
- Increasing Medical Complexity of Residents
- Optimizing Care
- Preparing for a Pandemic - Three Key Success Factors
 - Infection Prevention and Control Practices
 - Pandemic Supplies
 - Existing Practices
- A New Normal

4. DELEGATIONS

4.1 Referral of Motion - Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs (PHD-C 9-2020 (Agenda Item 5.2))

4.1.1 Glen Walker, Executive Director, Positive Living Niagara

Glen Walker, Executive Director, Positive Living Niagara, appeared before Committee in support of the motion and to provide information respecting the issue of decriminalization of personal possession of illicit drugs.

4.1.2 Justin Arcaro, Resident, City of Welland

The delegation request made by Justin Arcaro, Resident, City of Welland, was withdrawn.

4.1.3 Additional Delegation Requests

Committee members were advised that the Clerk's Office was in receipt of four additional delegation requests received after the deadline and as per Section 13.5 of the Procedural By-law (By-law No. 120-2010) the requests must be considered.

Moved by Councillor Jordan
Seconded by Councillor Butters

That the following delegations **BE PERMITTED** to appear before the Public Health and Social Services Committee:

Angie Domengato, as an individual delegate, respecting the effects of the lockdown on residents in senior care homes as well as the general public;

Cheryl Frame, as an individual delegate, respecting the impacts on health due to the mask mandate;

Danielle Romanuk, as an individual delegate, respecting Councillor Rigby's motion; and

Steffannie Hancharyk, as an individual delegate, respecting public shaming and public health due to the mask mandate.

Recorded Vote:

Yes (5): Butters, Chiocchio, Jordan, Rigby, Villella.

No: (11): Bradley, Darte, Foster, Gibson, Greenwood, Insinna, Ip, Nicholson, Sendzik, Whalen, Witteveen.

Defeated

5. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 PHD 8-2020

Occupational Therapists Request for Niagara Emergency Medical Services

Moved by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Nicholson

That Report PHD 8-2020, dated October 13, 2020, respecting Occupational Therapists Request for Niagara Emergency Medical Services (NEMS), **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendation **BE APPROVED**:

1. That Regional Council **APPROVE** the addition of two new full time permanent Occupational Therapist positions, using already-approved funding in the Niagara Emergency Medical Services operating budget.

Carried

5.2 PHD-C 9-2020

Referral of Motion – Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs

Moved by Councillor Ip

Seconded by Councillor Darte

That Correspondence Item PHD-C 9-2020, being a memorandum from A.-M. Norio, Regional Clerk, dated October 13, 2020, respecting Referral of Motion – Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs, **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Carried

Moved by Councillor Ip
Seconded by Councillor Darte

WHEREAS governments around the world are considering different approaches to drugs, including the decriminalization of drug use and possession and legal regulation;

WHEREAS a growing number of health officials and boards of health throughout Ontario, Canada, and around the world are calling for changes to our approach to drugs, especially in the midst of the opioid crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, in which the contaminated, unregulated supply of illegal drugs is the main contributor to the crisis;

WHEREAS, in July 2020, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police released a report recognizing substance use disorder as a public health issue and agree that evidence, supported by numerous Canadian health leaders, suggests that decriminalization for simple possession is an effective way to reduce the public health and public safety harms associated with substance use;

WHEREAS the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police endorse alternatives to criminal sanctions for simple possession of illicit drugs, and agree that increased community capacity and resources are necessary to support the availability and integration of health, social programs, and enforcement required for effective diversion;

WHEREAS the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police agree that police services remain committed to combatting organized crime and disrupting the supply of harmful substances coming into our communities by targeting drug trafficking and illegal production and importation, and further agree that diversion provides new opportunities to make positive impacts in communities. These impacts may include reducing recidivism, reducing ancillary crimes and improving health and safety outcomes for individuals who use drugs;

WHEREAS laws that criminalize people simply for using and possessing drugs have resulted in serious health and social harms, including forcing people into unsafe spaces and high-risk behaviours leading to HIV and HCV infection, resulting in criminal records that make it difficult to obtain employment and housing, and reinforcing negative stereotypes and judgements about people who use drugs;

WHEREAS some groups are more impacted by our drug laws than others, including people who are homeless and/or living in poverty, people with mental health and substance use issues, people from racialized groups, Indigenous people, women, and youth;

WHEREAS a public health approach to drugs would be based on principles and strategies that have been shown to support healthy individuals, families, and communities;

WHEREAS countries that have decriminalized personal drug use and possession and invested in public health interventions have seen results, including decreases in HIV and overdose, decreases in costs to the criminal justice system, and improved police/community relationships;

WHEREAS the evidence on the health and social harms of our current criminalization approach to illegal drugs as well as that of alternative approaches such as decriminalization and legal regulation strongly support the need to shift to a public health approach to drugs in Canada;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the federal government **BE URGED** to decriminalize the possession of all drugs for personal use, and scale up prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services;
2. That the federal government **CONVENE** a task force, comprised of people who use drugs, family members, and policy, research and program experts in the areas of public health, human rights, substance use, mental health, and criminal justice, to explore options for the legal regulation of all drugs in Canada, based on a public health approach; and
3. That this motion **BE CIRCULATED** to Minister of Health, Patty Hajdu, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, David Lametti, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, Attorney General, Doug Downey, Niagara's MPs and MPPs, Niagara's 12 local area municipalities, Niagara Regional Police Service, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies.

The following friendly amendment was accepted by the Committee Chair, and the mover and seconder of the motion, so that the motion reads as follows:

1. That the federal government **BE URGED** to convene a task force, comprised of people who use drugs, family members, and policy, research and program experts in the areas of public health, human rights, substance use, mental health, and criminal justice, to explore options for the legal regulation of all drugs in Canada, based on a public health approach;
2. That the task force **BE URGED** to scale up prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services and to explore the decriminalization of the possession of all drugs for personal use; and

3. That this motion **BE CIRCULATED** to Minister of Health, Patty Hajdu, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, David Lametti, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, Attorney General, Doug Downey, Niagara's MPs and MPPs, Niagara's 12 local area municipalities, Niagara Regional Police Service, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies.

Committee Co-Chair Greenwood called the vote on the motion, as amended, as follows:

Clause 1 was voted on separately as follows:

1. That the federal government **BE URGED** to convene a task force, comprised of people who use drugs, family members, and policy, research and program experts in the areas of public health, human rights, substance use, mental health, and criminal justice, to explore options for the legal regulation of all drugs in Canada, based on a public health approach.

Carried

Clause 2 was voted on separately as follows:

2. That the task force **BE URGED** to scale up prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services and to explore the decriminalization of the possession of all drugs for personal use.

Recorded Vote:

Yes (9): Bradley, Butters, Chiocchio, Dart, Ip, Jordan, Rigby, Sendzik, Witteveen.

No (7): Foster, Gibson, Greenwood, Insinna, Nicholson, Villella, Whalen.

Carried

Clause 3 was voted on separately as follows:

3. That this motion **BE CIRCULATED** to Minister of Health, Patty Hajdu, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, David Lametti, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, Attorney General, Doug Downey, Niagara's MPs and MPPs, Niagara's 12 local area municipalities, Niagara Regional Police Service, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies.

Carried

5.3 PHD-C 12-2020

Motion from Councillor Rigby respecting Updates on COVID-19 and the Mandatory Face Covering By-law

Moved by Councillor Rigby

Seconded by Councillor Witteveen

WHEREAS it is prudent and necessary for Niagara Regional Council to remain regularly apprised of the status of the need to continue with the mandatory Face Covering By-law; and

WHEREAS it is our desire as a Region to effectively learn how to live with the COVID-19 Virus safely;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the Region of Niagara Public Health Department **PROVIDE** an information report at each Public Health and Social Services Committee meeting providing data that would demonstrate if Niagara Region should or should not continue the enactment of the Mandatory Face Covering By-law (By-law 2020-46); and
2. That the report **INCLUDE** evidence from Provincial, Federal and International Health Agencies.

Defeated

6. **CONSENT ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

Moved by Councillor Rigby

Seconded by Councillor Witteveen

That the following items **BE RECEIVED** for information:

PHD-C 10-2020

COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Public Health & Emergency Services

COM-C 29-2020

COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Community Services

COM 19-2020

Update on Community Based Capital Program and Early Years Capital Program Projects

PHD-C 11-2020

Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs

CWCD 268-2020
Opioid Update Memo

Carried

7. OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 Information Respecting the Requirement for Face Coverings in Common Areas of Apartment Buildings and Condominiums

Councillor Nicholson requested information respecting whether or not mask/face covering by-laws of other jurisdictions, include common areas of apartment buildings and condominiums. Dr. Hirji, Acting Medical Officer of Health, advised that he would collaborate with the Clerk's Office and Legal Services to provide this information to Committee members.

7.2 Business Owners' Concerns

Councillor Dart brought forward concerns from business owners in downtown St. Catharines respecting homeless individuals. He advised that he would be bringing additional information to a future meeting.

8. CLOSED SESSION

Committee did not resolve into closed session.

9. BUSINESS ARISING FROM CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

9.1 Confidential COM-C 30-2020

A Matter of a Proposed or Pending Acquisition or Disposition of Land by the Municipality - Niagara Regional Housing Acquisition of Property in the City of Niagara Falls (Confidential Report NRH 12-2020)

Moved by Councillor Insinna
Seconded by Councillor Foster

That Confidential Correspondence Item COM-C 30-2020, being a memorandum from A.-M. Norio, Regional Clerk, dated October 13, 2020, respecting A Matter of a Proposed or Pending Acquisition or Disposition of Land by the Municipality - Niagara Regional Housing Acquisition of Property in the City of Niagara Falls (Confidential Report NRH 12-2020), **BE RECEIVED** and the recommendations contained therein **BE APPROVED**.

Carried

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Regional Headquarters.

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Councillor Greenwood
Committee Co-Chair

Councillor Chiocchio
Committee Co-Chair

Kelly Lotimer
Legislative Coordinator

Ann-Marie Norio
Regional Clerk