

Regional Chair Bradley and Members of Council
C/o Office of the Regional Clerk
Niagara Region
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, P.O. Box 1042
Thorold, Ontario L2V 4T7

November 18, 2021

To the Regional Chair and Members of Council,

We, the undersigned, represent four councils of community leaders: the Women in Niagara Council, representing women in business; NEXTNiagara, representing the emerging generation; the Non-Profit Council, representing non-profits in Niagara; and the Government Affairs Council, a policy advisory council to the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce (GNCC).

On behalf of our councils, we ask that you vote in favour of the transit amalgamation plan to be presented at the November 25th special meeting.

Better public transit in Niagara is a need that we have consistently identified for years. The transit system we currently have is simply inadequate to the needs of our community. Some places in Niagara take hours to get to without a car; others are off-limits entirely.

The Niagara Community Observatory calculated that poverty costs our region \$1.3 billion every year. A lack of viable public transit contributes to this. Since it is impractical to live and work in Niagara without a vehicle, every household must add the cost of a car, maintenance, insurance, and repairs to their cost of living. Statistics Canada finds that the average household spends 20% of its income on transportation – more than anything else, with the sole exception of shelter. When including depreciation, the average Canadian household will spend between \$8,600 and \$13,000 each year to own a vehicle. Families are already being squeezed by rising prices for rent and homes (increasing by over 25% per year locally), gasoline (up by 33% in one year), and food (up almost 6% year-over-year).

While pre-pandemic trends saw the percentage of Canadian households in poverty slowly decreasing, the combined effects of the COVID economic slowdown and prices rising far faster than wages risk reversing this trend. While the limited resources of municipal governments make action more difficult than for their provincial and federal counterparts, there are still options for poverty reduction, and the provision of good public transit is one of them.



Investment in public transit should be seen as precisely that: investment. A U.S. study of public transportation systems in Silicon Beach, CA; Austin, TX; and Durham, NC found that investments in public transit paid off in economic activity at a 2:1 ratio. A 2013 study found that the agglomerating effects alone of public transit yielded returns of \$1.5 million to \$1.8 billion per year, depending on the size of the community. Municipal governments already make investments that do not deliver nearly as great a return as public transit will. Niagara should not turn down the opportunity to fund this significant driver of economic growth.

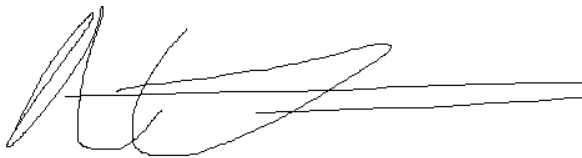
We have heard nothing but enthusiasm for this plan, which is the result of lengthy community consultations and reflects the needs of the community as best they can be met. Most feel it is long-overdue. We urge you to heed the wishes of Niagara's residents and give this plan your support.



Michael Ras
Chair, Government Affairs Council



Clayton Letourneau
Chair, NEXTNiagara Council



Adam Durrant
Chair, Non-Profit Council



Grace Eldajani
Chair, Women in Niagara Council



Mishka Balsom
President & CEO, GNCC

