
Subject: Partnership with District School Board of Niagara for “The Broken Spoke” Program

Report to: Waste Management Planning Steering Committee

Report date: Monday, June 20, 2022

Recommendations

That the Waste Management Planning Steering Committee **RECOMMEND** to Public Works Committee the following:

1. That Niagara Region **ENTER** into a Permission to Enter Agreement with the District School Board of Niagara to support “The Broken Spoke” bicycle refurbishing program at participating high schools in Niagara; and
2. That the Director of Waste Management Services **BE AUTHORIZED** to execute the Permission to Enter Agreement and any documents related thereto in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal and Court Services.

Key Facts

- In 2016, Niagara Region entered into pilot program with the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) to allow volunteers of “The Broken Spoke” program to collect unwanted bicycles dropped off at Niagara Region facilities.
- “The Broken Spoke” program is a community-based non-profit organization, where participating students earn a credit as part of the High School Special Skills credit program for refurbishing and repairing bicycles for reuse.
- Port Colborne High School was the first high school to participate in the program.
- As part of the program, Niagara Region sets aside bicycles at various locations, where volunteers collect and deliver the bicycles to “The Broken Spoke” program.
- To date, the program has donated over 15,000 bicycles to local and international charities, organizations, and individuals in need.
- “The Broken Spoke” program has now expanded its program to include other devices to assist the public including the collection of wheelchairs and walkers.

Financial Considerations

There is no cost to Niagara Region for the “The Broken Spoke” program nor any additional operating cost associated with setting aside bicycles at the Walker Residential Waste and Drop-off Depot. Promotion of the program is done through existing communication means.

Analysis

Background

In 2016, Port Colborne High School became the first school to participate in “The Broken Spoke” program (the Program) by repairing and refurbishing bicycles and donating them to local and international charities, organizations, and individuals. The Program engages students in learning skills and understanding the benefits of refurbishing bicycles to provide personal (physical exercise, transportation), environmental and socioeconomic benefits.

At Port Colborne High School, Mr. Foley, a volunteer, teaches the students the skills required to refurbish bicycles. Students receive a credit under the High School Special credit program (co-op). In addition, they learn skills that prepare them for further education or employment. Students involved with the Program also learn the value of giving back to the community and the importance of reuse/recycling.

Bicycles are available to organizations and individuals in need through the Program. The Program is currently working with fifteen (15) charitable organizations that have requested bicycles. Some of the charities that have benefitted from the Program include West Lincoln Community Care, St. Catharine’s Community Care, Grimsby Benevolent Fund, Niagara Region Mental Health Services, charities supporting migrant workers in Niagara, and charities supporting refugees from Ukraine. Numerous shipments of refurbished bicycles have also been donated to developing countries, including Africa, since the Program’s inception.

Bicycle Collection at Niagara Region Waste Management Facilities

Residents may drop off used bicycles at any of the Residential Waste and Recycling Drop-off Depots located at the Bridge Street, Humberstone or Niagara Road 12 landfills; the Niagara Region Recycling Centre; and the Walker Residential Waste and Drop-off Depot. Residents do not pay a disposal fee to drop off bicycles. Staff overseeing the

drop-off facility direct residents to a designated area at the depot where the bicycles are stored and collected each week by volunteers from the Program.

A total of 15,000 bicycles have been repaired and redistributed since the inception of the Program over five years ago. The number of bicycles collected by Niagara Region has grown from 1,200 bicycles in the first year of the program, to over 2,100 this past year. It is expected that the Program will continue to expand as awareness among Niagara residents grows. In addition, the Program has expanded to include wheelchairs and walkers.

District School Board of Niagara Agreement

The original agreement between Niagara Region and the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) was for a three (3) year pilot program. With the demonstrated success of the Program, both DSBN and Niagara Region staff are keen on transitioning to a permanent program, which will require an updated Permission to Enter Agreement (attached as Appendix I).

Based on the pilot, the Permission to Enter Agreement between Niagara Region and the DSBN will include the following:

- Insurance covering Niagara Region, DBSN representatives and volunteers of “The Broken Spoke” Program.
- Terms of the agreement will include automatic annual renewals with a termination clause allowing both parties to terminate the agreement with the appropriate notice.
- Niagara Region reserves the right to provide bicycles to other organizations or schools that implement similar programs.
- No fee will be charged to “The Broken Spoke” program for collecting bicycles at the various locations.
- There will be no cost to Niagara Region for providing the bicycles.
- There will be no liability to Niagara Region once bicycles and other devices are collected and removed from Niagara Region facilities.

Alternatives Reviewed

An alternative would be to terminate the Program and include bicycles as part of scrap metal collection at Niagara Region Residential Waste and Recycling Drop-off Depots. This alternative is not being recommended for several reasons.

- The Program has demonstrated success since 2016 in terms of providing students with valuable skills.
- A number of bicycles have been refurbished.
- A variety of local and international charities and organizations rely upon the Program as a source of bicycles.
- As part of the three (3) Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) hierarchy, the reuse of bicycles is environmentally better than recycling them as scrap metal.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This recommendation aligns with the Council's strategic priority of a Healthy and Vibrant Community by supporting local charities and supplying bicycles for those in need as a means of transportation.

Other Pertinent Reports

WMPSC –C-4-2016, Partnership with District School Board of Niagara for “The Broken Spoke” Program for a pilot program

On December 3, 2015, Ann Kennerly, Principal of Port Colborne High School, and Aubrey Foley of “The Broken Spoke” program, spoke to the Waste Management Planning Steering Committee (WMPSC) on the “The Broken Spoke” program implemented at the Port Colborne High School to engage students in refurbishing bicycles.

The WMPSC recommended that staff work with Port Colborne High School “The Broken Spoke” program to examine implementing a pilot program where the Niagara Region assists in providing bicycles and bicycle parts access.

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