

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

**PHSSC 10-2023
Tuesday, October 10, 2023
Council Chamber
Niagara Region Headquarters, Campbell West
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold, ON**

Committee: Bateman, Bradley (Regional Chair)*, Chiocchio (Committee Co-Chair), Craitor, Easton*, Foster*, Insinna, Ip, Kaiser*, Morocco (Committee Co-Chair)*, Seaborn*, Siscoe*, Sorrento*, Whalen*, Witteveen

Other Councillors: Ganann

Absent/Regrets: Diodati, Jordan

Staff: A. Basic, Legislative Assistant, C. Banach, Director, Housing Services*, C. Cousins, Director, Homelessness and Community Engagement, R. Ferron, Chief/Director, Emergency Medical Services, Dr. M. M. Hirji, Associate Medical Officer of Health, A. Jugley, Commissioner, Community Services, Dr. A. Kasmani, Medical Officer of Health, S. Kearns, Public Health Chief of Staff*, H. Koning, Director, Senior Services, D. Lorenzo, Associate Director, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, K. Lotimer, Legislative Coordinator, K. Lutz, Deputy Chief/Associate Director, Emergency Management Services, F. Meffe, Director, Human Resources*, B. Menage, Director, Procurement & Strategic Acquisitions*, A.-M. Norio, Regional Clerk, R. Tripp, Chief Administrative Officer, L. Watson, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities, D. Woiceshyn, Housing Services Project Consultant*

* indicates members who participated electronically, all other members participated in person

1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Co-Chair Chiocchio 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 Food Affordability in Niagara

David Lorenzo, Associate Director, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, provided information respecting Food Affordability in Niagara. Topics of the presentation included:

- 2023 Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) Survey
- Is Income Adequate for Covering the Cost of Living?
- Household Food Insecurity (HFI) in Niagara
- Resident Voices
- Food Insecurity is a Public Health Issue
- Household Food Insecurity Solutions

3.2 Community Services Social Assistance Discretionary Client Benefits

Lori Watson, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities, provided information respecting Community Services Social Assistance Discretionary Client Benefits. Topics of the presentation included:

- Basic Necessities
- Discretionary Client Benefits
- Local Priorities and Policy
- Response to Client Needs
- Mechanism for Change

4. DELEGATIONS

There were no delegations.

5. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 PHD 8-2023

Food Affordability in Niagara: Results of the 2023 Nutritious Food Basket Survey Information

Moved by Councillor Witteveen
Seconded by Councillor Bateman

That Report PHD 8-2023, dated October 10, 2023, respecting Food Affordability in Niagara: Results of the 2023 Nutritious Food Basket Survey Information, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendations **BE APPROVED**:

1. That Regional Council, as the Board of Health, **ACKNOWLEDGE** food insecurity as an income problem requiring income solutions; and
2. That Regional Council, as the Board of Health, **BE DIRECTED** to send a letter to the federal and provincial governments, advocating for the implementation of evidence-based policy solutions to reduce food insecurity including: increasing social assistance rates, increasing minimum wage to a living wage, and implementing a study of a basic income guarantee project in Niagara to reduce poverty in a sustainable way.

Carried

5.2 PHD 7-2023

Workplace Violence Strategy - Mitigating the Impact of Increased Violence to Niagara Emergency Medical Services First Responders

Karen Lutz, Deputy Chief, Operations, Niagara Emergency Medical Services, provided information respecting Workplace Violence Strategy - Mitigating the Impact of Increased Violence to Niagara Emergency Medical Services First Responders. Topics of the presentation included:

- Campaign to Raise Awareness
- Internal Survey of Workplace Violence Results - Underreporting is Common
- Total Incidents for 2023 so far greater than year totals for 2018 and 2020
- Mitigation Strategies
- Request to Support Bills C-321 and C-345 and amend the Criminal Code of Canada

Moved by Councillor Craitor
Seconded by Councillor Whalen

That Report PHD 7-2023, dated October 10, 2023, respecting Workplace Violence Strategy - Mitigating the Impact of Increased Violence to Niagara Emergency Medical Services First Responders, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendation **BE APPROVED**:

1. That the Regional Chair, on behalf of Regional Council, **BE DIRECTED** to send follow-up correspondence to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to communicate Council's request that the Criminal Code of Canada be amended to provide protection for first responders and to make violence against first responders an indictable criminal offence.

Carried

Councillor Information Request(s):

Consider reporting all incidents of violence against Niagara Emergency Medical Services first responders to Niagara Regional Police Services for follow-up. Councillor Insinna.

5.3 COM 35-2023

Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO) Contract Extension Approval

Moved by Councillor Witteveen
Seconded by Councillor Insinna

That Report COM 35-2023, dated October 10, 2023, respecting Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO) Contract Extension Approval, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendations **BE APPROVED**:

1. That the current contract with 2045162 Ontario Limited o/a Clark Marketing Communications (Clark), for a sector specific technology solution, used to support the delivery of Social Assistance and additional benefits for low-income individuals and families in Niagara, **BE EXTENDED** under the same terms and conditions to December 31, 2026, for total estimated cost of \$605,137.80, including 13% HST; and
2. That the Regional Chair and Regional Clerk **BE AUTHORIZED** to execute the contract extension which would increase the awarded value of the contract to be over the \$1,000,000.00 (\$1,484,169.11) single source threshold and any required documents related hereto in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal and Court Services.

Carried

5.4 PHD-C 5-2023

Resolution in Support of Basic Income for the Niagara Region

Moved by Councillor Ip

Seconded by Councillor Witteveen

WHEREAS, Niagara Region recognizes the social and economic challenges faced by its residents that have a detrimental impact on the determinants of health, including income inequality, poverty, inadequate housing, and precarious employment;

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of Niagara Region to strive for the well-being and prosperity of all its residents, which includes ensuring access to basic needs and opportunities to improve health;

WHEREAS, through addressing poverty and improving access to healthcare, a Universal Basic Income can potentially reduce healthcare costs, enabling people to afford preventive care and timely treatments while preventing more costly healthcare interventions, leading to better overall population health;

WHEREAS, a Universal Basic Income program was tested in Hamilton during the Ontario Basic Income Pilot project between 2017 and 2019 and more than 1,000 local residents reported positive outcomes, including the alleviation of food and housing insecurity, improved physical and mental health, financial stability, social equity and greater connection to the labour market;

WHEREAS, Niagara Regional Council passed a motion on July 14, 2020, calling upon the federal and provincial governments to prioritize measures to reduce poverty and income inequality in our society;

WHEREAS, Niagara Regional Council passed a motion on July 14, 2020, recommending that the federal and provincial governments re-engage in pilot projects to study policy innovations that can address poverty and income inequality, including the study of a basic income guarantee project in Niagara region;

WHEREAS, the Federal Budget Office upon reviewing the concept of a national Universal Basic Income program determined it could, if properly set out, be a major economic driver to the Canadian economy; and

WHEREAS, a Universal Basic Income program can complement and enhance existing social support systems, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing the needs of Niagara Region residents including persons with disabilities and aligns and complements Niagara Region's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That Niagara Regional Council **SUPPORTS** the concept of a Universal Basic Income to combat poverty, income inequality, and economic insecurity within our community; and supports the continued work of developing a Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy and the continuing advocacy of the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network;
2. That Niagara Regional Council **CALLS UPON** the provincial and federal governments to collaborate to implement a national Universal Basic Income program;
3. That Niagara Regional Council **DIRECTS** the Regional Chair to write a letter to the Prime Minister, local Members of Parliament and the Senate, the Premier of Ontario, local Members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, calling on these orders of government to work collaboratively towards implementing a Universal Basic Income to eradicate poverty and homelessness, and ensure everyone has sufficient income to meet their basic needs; and
4. That Niagara Regional Council **ENCOURAGES** other municipalities across the province and the country to join in advocating for a Universal Basic Income as a key policy tool in the fight against poverty and inequality, and to this end, Niagara Regional Council will advocate through its representatives at Ontario Big City Mayors, Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, for Universal Basic Income resolutions at meetings of those organizations.

Recorded Vote:

Yes (14): Bateman, Bradley, Chiocchio, Craitor, Easton, Foster, Insinna, Ip, Kaiser, Seaborn, Siscoe, Sorrento, Whalen, Witteveen.

No (0).

Carried

6. CONSENT ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

6.1 COM 36-2023

Temporary Emergency Shelter Operations - St. Catharines

Moved by Councillor Witteveen

Seconded by Councillor Insinna

That Report COM 36-2023, dated October 10, 2023, respecting Temporary Emergency Shelter Operations - St. Catharines, **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Carried

6.2 CWCD 2023-172

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Correspondence - Re: Bill 103, Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act (Vaping is not for Kids), 2023

Moved by Councillor Insinna

Seconded by Councillor Ip

1. That Correspondence Item CWCD 2023-172, dated September 7, 2023, respecting Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Correspondence to The Honourable Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier of Ontario and Minister of Health Re: Bill 103, Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act (Vaping is not for Kids), 2023, **BE RECEIVED** for information;
2. That Regional Council as the Board of Health for Niagara Region **ENDORSE** stronger vaping restrictions such as those included in Bill 103 Smoke Free Ontario Amendment Act (Vaping is not for Kids), 2023; and
3. The Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to communicate this endorsement by writing to the Minister of Health, the Associate Minister of Mental Health & Addictions, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Niagara Members of Provincial Parliament, and Ontario Boards of Health.

Carried

7. OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 7, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Regional Headquarters.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:42 p.m.

Councillor Chiochio
Committee Co-Chair

Kelly Lotimer
Deputy Regional Clerk

Ann-Marie Norio
Regional Clerk