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**Subject:** Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2019 Update

**Report to:** Public Health and Social Services Committee

**Report date:** Tuesday, June 11, 2019

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## Recommendations

That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

## Key Facts

- Since 2008 (COM 53-2008) Regional Council has authorized staff to invest \$1.5 million annually towards Niagara Prosperity Initiatives (NPI).
- NPI focuses on neighbourhood-based interventions to help build capacity and improve the quality of life for residents living in poverty.
- This report provides information on NPI projects approved in 2019.
- Twenty-four projects from 22 agencies across Niagara were approved for funding with service impacts anticipated to include:
  - 11,582 people served
  - 784 jobs created and filled by people who live in poverty
  - \$285,714 in revenue generated from social enterprise projects.

## Financial Considerations

An investment of \$1.5 million for NPI is included in the 2019 Community Services Operating Budget. Of the \$1.5 million, \$150,000 is allocated to the Convener (Niagara Community Foundation) and Secretariat (United Way Niagara) functions to support the administration and stakeholder engagement associated with this initiative. Returned funds from previously completed projects plus interest earned allowed an additional \$114,617 (total \$1,464,617) for allocation through the 2019 Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

## Analysis

NPI focuses on neighbourhood based interventions and development to increase prosperity for Niagara residents living in poverty. The goals of NPI are as follows:

- To guide and direct investments on identified initiatives to alleviate poverty in neighborhoods across Niagara;
- To advocate for change that will reduce and prevent poverty in the community;
- To develop and enhance collaborative relationships between stakeholders; and
- To engage people living in poverty in meaningful ways to ensure that investments reflect need.

Through community engagement in 2017, four priority areas of need were identified and used for the 2018 and 2019 RFP process.

1. **Housing** (outreach, homelessness prevention, enhancing accessibility and improved stability);
2. **Health** (mental health, addictions, emotional health and wellbeing for children, dental needs for adults and sustainable access to healthy food);
3. **Employment** (social enterprises and working with Niagara’s businesses to create secure jobs that pay a living wage); and
4. **Neighbourhood / Community Empowerment** (creating a sense of belonging and engagement in community, increased self-advocacy and creating leaders)

The 2019 RFP was issued February 4<sup>th</sup> and closed March 1<sup>st</sup>. Forty-two applications, with a total funding request of \$4,957,105, were received. Of the 36 agencies that requested funding, seven had never received NPI funding in the past.

Niagara Region approves funding applications based on the recommendations of an independent Review Committee. Review committee members for 2019 included three Regional Councillors (B. Greenwood, L. Ip, L. Villella); three members from Niagara’s non-profit sector; two Niagara Region Community Services employees (Children’s Services and Mental Health Services); one retired District School Board of Niagara teacher; one Brock University employee; one Niagara College employee and one member of the public currently living in poverty in Port Colborne. Two assessors reviewed each proposal independently, and then the group discussed funding recommendations throughout March and April 2019.

The criteria for assessment matched the proposal criteria and scoring as well as a list of review considerations which were used to assist in deciding if the proposal is recommended or not recommended. After all proposals were discussed, the group completed their final approval and corresponding proposed budget recommendations. United Way Niagara finalized contracts based on these recommendations and a list of the approved projects by neighbourhood is attached as Appendix A.

Twenty-four proposals from 22 agencies were approved totaling \$1,464,617 in funding. Below is a distribution summary of the investments. There are 24 projects; however, some projects are taking place in multiple communities.

Projects Approved		\$ (Contracted)	% of Funding
Regional	8	\$714,120	48.8%
St. Catharines	8	\$313,239	21.4%
Welland	6	\$171,449	11.7%
Niagara Falls	5	\$131,017	8.9%
Port Colborne	3	\$41,709	2.8%
Fort Erie	1	\$9,928	0.7%

Grimsby	1	\$35,000	2.4%
Wainfleet	1	\$7,920	0.5%
West Lincoln	1	\$40,235	2.8%
		<b>\$1,464,617</b>	

Each proposal sets out its anticipated service impacts. Based on estimates from the approved projects:

- 11,582 people will be served
- 784 jobs created and filled by people who live in poverty
- \$285,714 in revenue generated from social enterprise projects.

Within the four streams of funding, five projects are under Housing, nine projects are under Health, five projects are under Employment and five projects are under Neighbourhood / Community Empowerment.

Types of Projects	\$	%	# of Projects
Housing – Outreach	\$115,196	7.9%	1
Housing – Improved Stability	\$39,576	2.7%	1
Housing – Prevention	\$142,466	9.7%	3
Health – Mental Health Outreach	\$202,697	13.8%	3
Health – Wellbeing for Children	\$180,389	12.3%	3
Health – Healthy Food	\$88,468	6.0%	2
Health – Dental Needs for Adults	\$184,192	12.6%	1
Employment – Social Enterprises	\$261,021	17.8%	5
Neighbourhood – Sense of Belonging	\$165,630	11.3%	4
Neighbourhood – Creating Leaders	\$84,982	5.9%	1
		<b>\$1,464,617</b>	<b>24</b>

NPI projects can be funded for one or two years. In 2019, 23 projects are funded for one year and one project is funded for two years. Project funding for 2019 cannot go beyond April 2021.

### Research Study

In 2018, Niagara Region’s Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities division obtained funding of \$476,763 from the province’s Local Poverty Reduction Fund (LPRF) for a three-year research project.

This funding, in partnership with Brock University, will develop an updated report outlining the state of poverty in Niagara using data from the 2016 census, provide analysis on the impacts, outcomes, and efficacy of NPI, and offer recommendations on best practices moving forward. A part of the review will include an assessment of the evaluation

methodology used by NPI to measure project outcomes. To date, key areas of focus for Brock's research team have been a communication strategy, literature reviews, interviews with NPI funded project leads and analysis of NPI service users' testimonials. Early research findings will be used to inform the 2020 RFP process.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

Not applicable.

### **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

Not applicable (pending the development of Council's new Strategic Priorities).

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

COM 04-2008 A Legacy of Poverty Addressing Cycles of Poverty and the Impact on Child Health in Niagara Region

COM 44-2011 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Update (*Building a New Legacy: Building Prosperity by Improving the Quality of Neighbourhood Life*)

COM C 6-2017 Local Poverty Reduction Fund Application

COM 04-2019 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Update and Request for Review Committee Members

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#### **Prepared by:**

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#### **Recommended by:**

Adrienne Jugley, MSW, RSW, CHE  
Commissioner  
Community Services

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#### **Submitted by:**

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Acting Chief Administrative Officer

*This report was prepared in consultation with Marc Todd, Manager Community Services.*

### **Appendices**

Appendix A

List of approved 2019 NPI projects and agencies

Page 6

**Appendix A – 2019 Niagara Prosperity Initiatives**

**Regional**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Gateway Residential & Community Support Services.	Niagara Outreach Worker	Two street Outreach Workers will provide mobile services and supports to some of our communities' most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens. Outreach Workers will establish a presence, build rapport, assess need and provide or connect services to people who are at urgent risk of becoming homeless and those who are chronically or persistently homeless.	Housing – Outreach	\$115,196
Canadian Mental Health Association Niagara	Mental Health and Addictions Coach Project	CMHA Niagara and Community Addiction Services Niagara are collaborating with YWCA Niagara shelters to employ full-time Mental Health & Addiction Coaches. The Coaches support individuals in YWCA shelters who are experiencing mental health and addiction issues that interfere with their ability to find and maintain housing and employment, and help them develop a connection to their community.	Health – Mental Health Outreach	\$136,037
John Howard Society of Niagara	Strengthening Families for the Future	This Canadian best practice project supports families and children who may be at risk for mental health issues and substance use. The program includes individual sessions followed by family sessions and include role-play and interactive activities to promote problem solving and communication skills. Families learn healthy strategies/improve family dynamic.	Health – Children	\$53,262
Community Care St. Catharines and Thorold	Brushed Aside 2019	This project provides access to dental care services and dentures for adults in need of treatment. Community Care is the lead agency working with five partners across Niagara leveraging resources and accepting referrals from other community agencies and services.	Health - Dental	\$184,192
Employment Help Centre	Niagara Community Garden Makers Program	In collaboration with Start Me Up Niagara, this project offers an employment skills training program and market gardening social enterprise for youth and adults. Clients will gain employment training, experience, practical skills, create marketable products, develop self-esteem and cultivate social support networks through community gardening.	Employment – Social Enterprise	\$35,264
Heartland Forest Nature Experience	Employ-Ability Skills for Adults with Disabilities	Heartland Forest is offering structured and goal-oriented work experience programs for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through development of employability skills and exploration of social procurement strategies. Working with local businesses and seniors' homes will leverage participant skills into a self-sustaining program.	Employment – Social Enterprise	\$65,533
Niagara Furniture Bank	Niagara Furniture Bank Training and Skill Development Centre	The Niagara Furniture Bank warehouse is used as a "classroom" for Start Me Up Niagara (SMUN) clients. Training options include warehouse logistics, warehouse maintenance, inventory, janitorial, fleet maintenance, woodworking repair and reception/scheduling. The training is supported by an onsite job developer provided by SMUN employment centre.	Employment – Social Enterprise	\$53,064

RAFT	Fresh Paint	This social enterprise project provides at-risk youth opportunities to work with experienced contractors to complete unit turnover preparation for Niagara Regional Housing. This requires youth to clean, repair, and paint units. Youth will be paid competitive wages and gain employment experience/training, while working with Youth Reconnect to ensure healthy life decisions and support to remain housed and connected to their community.	Employment – Social Enterprise	\$71,572
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**St. Catharines**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Start Me Up Niagara	The Niagara Rooming House Project	Assisting landlords and tenants with practical support to ensure issues that negatively impact tenancy in single room occupancy dwellings are addressed. By supporting individuals with complex needs and/or mental health concerns, the goal is to reduce evictions and maintain the availability of single room occupancy dwellings as part of housing stock.	Housing – Prevention	\$55,231
Westview Christian Fellowship	Westview @ Night	This project offers support to sex trade workers and those struggling with addiction by providing a nutritious hot meal, supplies (fem. protection, condoms, etc.), clothing, advocacy and a safe place to share concerns. This project offers services without judgment to women who often fall between the cracks and struggle with acceptance.	Health – Mental Health Outreach	\$13,200
Strive Niagara	Moving Forward	To provide unique, trauma-informed, customized individual / group interventions including information, education/skills building, referral and expert support to teenage parents. Participants will experience greater immediate stabilization and improved outcomes for long-term success through early intervention to break the generational poverty cycle.	Health – Children	\$23,862
Links for Greener Learning	The Good Food Box	The Good Food Box project aims to increase the use of fresh food in daily meals. Our priority is to reach communities with barriers to accessing fresh and affordable produce by providing low cost and high value monthly fresh produce boxes to households.	Health – Food	\$9,928
Food4Kids Niagara	Weekends Without Hunger	Building on current model, this project will expand the weekend program to reach an additional 60 children in four schools that are experiencing food insecurity. Economically vulnerable children will have their basic nourishment needs met by increasing access to healthy foods and reducing barriers to access of food on a consistent basis.	Health – Food	\$12,943
Southridge Shelter	Southridge Jam Company	This social enterprise produces and sells small-batch jams and jellies while providing individuals who are transitioning from homelessness with stability, purpose and positive momentum from job and life skills training. Profits from the social enterprise contribute to funding of Niagara's largest provider of homelessness services.	Employment – Social Enterprise	\$35,588

Westview Christian Fellowship	Westview Centre4Women	Westview Centre4Women opens doors and reduces isolation for women living in poverty through workshops, mentoring, compassion and advocacy. Services include hot meals, pantry access, laundry services, literacy classes, education, employment / housing support, haircuts, hygiene, free clothing, income tax classes, field trips and many other services.	Neighbourhood – Sense of Belonging	\$77,506
Westview Christian Fellowship	Community Champions	This train-the-trainer project invites local experts from the community to teach participants to become future "Community Champions" who will in turn assist other participants. By bringing their life experience and knowledge, the "Community Champions" will provide support and connection to increase the capacity of the Westview Centre4Women to delivery quality service.	Neighbourhood – Creating Leaders	\$84,982

**Welland**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre	Housing Coordinator	The Housing Coordinator will serve newcomer clients to facilitate the housing transition into permanent housing. The project will reduce the risk of newcomers falling into precarious housing or homelessness by providing intake support, promoting self-reliance, educating about housing/renting in Canada, and supporting clients through the process of finding, securing, and maintaining stable housing.	Housing – Stability	\$39,576
The Hope Centre	Return 2 Hope Counselling Program	This project will offer free, high quality counselling service to individuals without access to affordable mental health services. Group and individual counseling sessions will be offered by a registered psychotherapist and is essential to successfully facilitating growth and change to reduce the impact of past trauma and other root causes of homelessness.	Health – Mental Health Outreach	\$53,460
Strive Niagara	Moving Forward	To provide unique, trauma-informed, customized individual / group interventions including information, education/skills building, referral and expert support to teenage parents. Participants will experience greater immediate stabilization and improved outcomes for long-term success through early intervention to break the generational poverty cycle.	Health – Children	\$23,862
Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton / Niagara	Youth Summer Sports Camp- YSSC	This free sports camp will increase the emotional health and wellbeing for Francophone children aged 7 to 13 from low-income families. The safe and inclusive project will be offered over an eight-week period and will include healthy snacks, lunches prepared by the participants with our dietitian, sports fundamentals, structured outings, yoga, meditation.	Health – Children	\$31,680
Links for Greener Learning	The Good Food Box	The Good Food Box project aims to increase the use of fresh food in daily meals. Our priority is to reach communities with barriers to accessing fresh and affordable produce by providing low cost and high value monthly fresh produce boxes to households.	Health – Food	\$9,928

Food4Kids Niagara	Weekends Without Hunger	Building on current model, this project will expand the weekend program to reach an additional 60 children in four schools that are experiencing food insecurity. Economically vulnerable children will have their basic nourishment needs met by increasing access to healthy foods and reducing barriers to access of food on a consistent basis.	Health – Food	\$12,943
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**Niagara Falls**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Project SHARE of Niagara Falls Inc.	Intensive Case-management	An Intensive Case Facilitator specializing in mental health and addictions will help chronically homeless individuals find stable housing. They will work one-on-one to address the needs of clients with multiple barriers to provide support, accountability, community referrals and advocate for the client in their search for stable housing.	Housing – Prevention	\$52,235
Strive Niagara	Moving Forward	To provide unique, trauma-informed, customized individual / group interventions including information, education/skills building, referral and expert support to teenage parents. Participants will experience greater immediate stabilization and improved outcomes for long-term success through early intervention to break the generational poverty cycle.	Health – Children	\$23,862
Links for Greener Learning	The Good Food Box	The Good Food Box project aims to increase the use of fresh food in daily meals. Our priority is to reach communities with barriers to accessing fresh and affordable produce by providing low cost and high value monthly fresh produce boxes to households across Niagara.	Health – Food	\$9,928
Food4Kids Niagara	Weekends Without Hunger	Building on current model, this project will expand the weekend program to reach an additional 60 children in four schools that are experiencing food insecurity. Economically vulnerable children will have their basic nourishment needs met by increasing access to healthy foods and reducing barriers to access of food on a consistent basis.	Health – Food	\$12,943
Third Space Cafe	Building Community on Queen	This social enterprise builds community and provides an inclusive workplace for those who face barriers to employment because of physical, cognitive, and invisible disabilities. Through our suspended coffee program, customers can pay-it-forward to give free food or drink to anyone in need.	Neighbourhood – Sense of Belonging	\$32,050

**Port Colborne**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Strive Niagara	Moving Forward	To provide unique, trauma-informed, customized individual / group interventions including information, education/skills building, referral and expert support to teenage parents.	Health – Children	\$23,862



		Participants will experience greater immediate stabilization and improved outcomes for long-term success through early intervention to break the generational poverty cycle.		
Links for Greener Learning	The Good Food Box	The Good Food Box project aims to increase the use of fresh food in daily meals. Our priority is to reach communities with barriers to accessing fresh and affordable produce by providing low cost and high value monthly fresh produce boxes to households.	Health – Food	\$9,928
Community Living Port Colborne Wainfleet	With My Friends	"With My Friends" is an opportunity for children, from low income families to attend summer camps at Heartland Forest, I CANTER or YMCA in July and August 2019. Children at camp will increase self-confidence and self esteem, decrease isolation and improve communication skills.	Neighbourhood – Sense of Belonging	\$7,920

**Fort Erie**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Links for Greener Learning	The Good Food Box	The Good Food Box project aims to increase the use of fresh food in daily meals. Our priority is to reach communities with barriers to accessing fresh and affordable produce by providing low cost and high value monthly fresh produce boxes to households.	Health – Food	\$9,928

**Grimsby**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Grimsby Benevolent Fund	Rental Assistance Service	The Rental Assistance Service provides eligible, low-income households with assistance to help with monthly rent payments in the private market. The program provides one-time rent assistance for people facing eviction and subsidy for people paying more than 30% of their total income on rent.	Housing – Prevention	\$35,000

**Wainfleet**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Community Living Port Colborne Wainfleet	With My Friends	"With My Friends" is an opportunity for children, from low income families to attend summer camps at Heartland Forest, I CANTER or YMCA in July and August 2019. Children at camp will increase self-confidence and self esteem, decrease isolation and improve communication skills.	Neighbourhood – Sense of Belonging	\$7,920

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**West Lincoln**

Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Stream	Contract
Fort	Helping West Niagara Youth	The FORT will continue to offer free after-school and summer programming, resources, and guidance in Smithville. This project will build on effective programs in West Lincoln that help youth stay in school, get jobs, or receive support with mental health and crisis intervention.	Neighbourhood – Sense of Belonging	\$40,234