

November 22, 2024

Ann-Marie Norio Regional Clerk  
Office of the Regional Clerk  
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way  
St. Catharines ON L2V 4T7

Sent via email: [Ann-Marie.Norio@niagararegion.ca](mailto:Ann-Marie.Norio@niagararegion.ca)

**Re: Welcoming Streets Pilot Project**  
**Our File: 35.11.2**

Dear Ms. Norio,

At its meeting held November 21, 2024, St. Catharines City Council approved the following motion:

WHEREAS The Niagara Region is responsible for overseeing Community Services in the City of St. Catharines, including Homelessness and Community Engagement, as well as Housing Services; and

WHEREAS the Downtown St. Catharines Safety and Well-Being Committee has identified the success of peer-to-peer outreach programs in other communities across Ontario, such as Brampton, Ottawa, Belleville, and Sudbury, in improving safety and well-being in downtown areas; and

WHEREAS REACH Niagara and Positive Living Niagara are established organizations within the community that have demonstrated a strong commitment to health and social support services, particularly for marginalized and at-risk populations; and

WHEREAS REACH Niagara and Positive Living Niagara have expressed interest in collaborating to develop and implement a Welcoming Streets pilot project in downtown St. Catharines, aimed at fostering community connections, reducing barriers, and promoting safer, more inclusive public spaces (see correspondence from REACH Niagara and Positive Living Niagara - Agenda Item 6.4.5); and

WHEREAS The proposed Welcoming Streets project represents a collaborative approach involving REACH Niagara, Positive Living Niagara, the Region of Niagara, and the St. Catharines Downtown Association, leveraging peer-led street outreach to build trust and support among individuals experiencing homelessness or other social vulnerabilities; and

WHEREAS An allocation of \$128,000 in financial support has been identified as necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the Welcoming Streets pilot project in St. Catharines for the fiscal year 2025;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of St. Catharines formally endorse the Welcoming Streets pilot project proposed by REACH Niagara and Positive Living Niagara as an effective, collaborative solution to enhance community safety, inclusivity, and well-being in downtown St. Catharines; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of St. Catharines request that the Niagara Region include a financial allocation of \$128,000 in the 2025 Regional Budget to support the Welcoming Streets pilot project, recognizing its potential to improve safety, reduce homelessness-related challenges, and strengthen the downtown community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of St. Catharines commit to continued collaboration with REACH Niagara, Positive Living Niagara, the St. Catharines Downtown Association, and the Region of Niagara, to ensure the success and sustainability of the Welcoming Streets initiative and other community-based safety and well-being programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this motion be circulated to Niagara Region Council, REACH Niagara, Positive Living Niagara, the St. Catharines Downtown Association, and the Province urging prompt consideration and approval of the requested budget allocation for the 2025 fiscal year.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of the City Clerk at extension 1512.



Donna Delvecchio, Acting City Clerk  
Legal and Clerks Services, Office of the City Clerk  
:sm

cc: REACH Niagara  
Positive Living Niagara  
St. Catharines Downtown Association  
Premier Doug Ford

Encl. Correspondence from REACH Niagara and Positive Living Niagara

## Pilot Project: Welcoming Streets

**Purpose:** Collaborative approach between REACH Niagara, Positive Living Niagara, the City of St. Catharines, and the local Downtown Association to build community connections and remove barriers by providing peer-led street outreach to create safer and inclusive communities.

### About REACH Niagara:

REACH Niagara is a non-profit, charitable organization that provides low-barrier, judgment-free healthcare. We bring comprehensive care and service directly to shelters, food bank services, domestic violence shelters, and other community organizations through our health clinics. We see people directly in their time of need. Our vision is that 'All individuals who are homeless or marginalized have equitable access to healthcare across the Niagara Region'.

### About Positive Living Niagara:

Positive Living Niagara is a non-profit, charitable organization that supports people living with or affected by HIV. With the goal of reducing transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C and other blood-borne pathogens, the StreetWorks program uses a harm reduction approach to care and supports people who use substances through the Needle Syringe Program, peer support, case management, supervised consumption, outreach, and training and distribution of naloxone.

### Overall Objectives:

- Connect with people congregating in public spaces to ensure they have access to supports relevant to their lives
- Improve conditions in the neighbourhood by bringing back the sense of community and positive street culture of the past where people work together to support one another
- Monitor the community to ensure everyone is safe, and provide support as needed
- Act as a positive role model for our community
- Help individuals link up to service providers by providing warm transfers to service
- Creating positive representation of equity deserving populations to minimize stigma and stereotypes

**Neighbourhood Teams are:**

- Ambassadors/peacekeepers – Build relationships with neighbourhoods, businesses, and relevant stakeholders, giving space to have discussion and to identify concerns while working towards solutions
- Proactive and not reactive - Prevent issues before they arise
- Friend - Encourage kindness; getting basic needs met
- Advocates - Support clients to help them achieve their goals by accessing relevant support services; understanding the greater community's concerns and building capacity to better understand the challenges people are facing
- Educators - Provide additional information, resources, and skills-building for the community to empower people to be part of the solution to the dual homelessness and substance use crises

**Neighbourhood Teams are not:**

- Police or Security – the team will not 'remove' community members from private premises
- Healthcare professionals
- Responsible for the problems people are experiencing
- Not the only solution to the current homelessness and drug use crisis

**Proposed Model:**

- 1 Block Leader and 1 Peer for each shift
- Responsible for engagement within a defined neighbourhood
- Listen to business and community concerns working towards shared solutions
- Person(s) with Living Experience are given the opportunity for meaningful employment

**Length of shifts:**

- Mon. - Fri.:
  - 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
  - 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
  - 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- Block Leader shift would be 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**Neighbourhoods:**

- Downtown core
- Queenston
- Fairview Mall area

*Note: The team is meant to be mobile and responsive to needs where there is flexibility in the neighbourhoods being serviced.*

**Staffing model:**

- 2 Part Time Outreach Workers (28 hours/week)
- Persons with Living Experience: 25 - 30 peers

**Annual Budget Request**

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
<b>Salaries &amp; Benefits:</b> 2 PTEs (28 hours/week) Outreach Workers (includes MERC + benefits)	Operate as Block Leaders; experienced in system navigation	\$128,240 + \$25,000 (in-kind contribution)  Total Cost = \$103,240
<b>Materials &amp; Supplies:</b> Water and food		\$4,000
<b>Other Costs:</b>  Peer Honorarium (\$25/hour)	Paired with Block Leader; required to have living experience of homelessness and/or substance use	\$19,500
Monthly Cellphone(\$75/month)	Standard monthly cellphone cost to be able to call services in real time	\$900
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$127,640</b>

**Total In-kind donations:**

- Staff IT requirements - 2 laptops and 1 cellphone
- Staff and peer training and development
- Telus Health Mobile Health Clinic - for morning shift
- \$25,000 from Hydro One for contribution to staff salaries and benefits
- \$12,000 biohazard disposal fees
- Basic necessity supplies

**Targets:**

- Total # of clients engaged: 150 – 200/month
- Total # of interventions: 200 – 250/month

**Pilot Program Indicators:**

- # of community members served
- # of community interventions
- # of business engagements
- # of community referrals
- # of supplies distributed
- Client experience surveys
- % of clients who became peers