

Niagara Regional Council
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way
Thorold, ON L2V 4T7

February 26, 2025

Re: Urgent Request to Maintain Recycling Services for Downtown Business Areas (DBAs)

Dear Regional Councillors,

On behalf of the below noted Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) in Niagara Region, we strongly urge you to reject staff's recommendation to exclude Downtown Business Areas (DBAs) from Niagara Region's recycling collection services. This decision will have significant financial, environmental, and operational consequences for our downtown business communities, which contribute over **\$3.5 million annually**—above and beyond tax contributions—toward local economic development, beautification, and free community events that attract both residents and visitors.

Environmental and Economic Consequences

Recycling is a cornerstone of responsible waste management and a key element of Niagara Region's own sustainability goals. The proposed elimination of recycling collection for DBAs would:

- Increase landfill waste: Businesses that have relied on regional recycling collection will be forced to divert excess recyclable materials into landfill waste streams, undermining the Region's own environmental commitments.
- Contradict the Region's waste diversion programs: The proposed decision is inconsistent with initiatives like the Niagara Region Business Waste Reduction and Diversion program ([link](#)), which encourages businesses to reduce their environmental footprint.
- Impose financial burdens on small businesses: Without regional recycling services, businesses will need to contract private waste management services, an added cost that disproportionately affects small business owners.
- Create enforcement challenges: Without a clear and cost-effective alternative, some businesses may resort to improper disposal methods, increasing contamination and burdening enforcement efforts.
- Threaten the cleanliness and attractiveness of downtown areas: Our BIAs invest millions into downtown beautification, and excess waste buildup could diminish the appeal of these vibrant commercial districts.

Flawed Consultation Process and Unreasonable Timeline

The process by which this decision was communicated to BIAs has been deeply flawed and rushed, providing insufficient time for meaningful stakeholder engagement. Key concerns include:

- Delayed initial outreach: Niagara Region staff's initial outreach invited BIAs to a brief presentation on January 9, 2025, or January 14, 2025, at which point we learned that the service was potentially at risk of being eliminated.
- Limited time for advocacy: BIAs were asked by regional staff to submit letters to the province, which we did. However, the call for a provincial election has rendered these efforts paused, as our concerns have been deprioritized during the election period.
- Failure to provide timely updates: At a Niagara Region BIA meeting on January 16, staff assured BIAs that they would keep us informed. However, the staff report was only received on February 24, leaving BIAs with virtually no time to consult with boards, engage with members, or advocate for alternatives before a final decision is made.

A Reasonable Compromise: Retaining Recycling Services for DBAs

The Region has an opportunity to reduce costs while still maintaining recycling collection in DBAs, which would align with the recent Council motion supporting Niagara's business community and advocating for economic resilience. The projected savings of approximately \$600,000 (42%) from reducing services outside DBAs demonstrate that a compromise is feasible without eliminating recycling collection for businesses in our downtown cores.

Furthermore, 4,375 non-eligible source properties currently rely on curbside recycling services. Eliminating this service without a viable alternative will create disruption, increase waste management costs for businesses, and burden an already strained landfill system. Instead of a blanket elimination, we urge Council to work with the Province to develop a more effective solution that ensures recycling support for DBAs while addressing financial sustainability.

Our Request

We respectfully urge Niagara Region's Councillors to:

Reject the proposed option number 5 of lapsing recycling collection for all non-eligible sources and support option number three of providing separate recycling collection for non-eligible sources inside DBAs only.

Downtown businesses are vital to the economic and cultural fabric of Niagara Region, and we must be included in waste diversion strategies that align with both environmental and economic sustainability goals. We are ready to work collaboratively with the Region to develop a solution that supports businesses while maintaining Niagara's commitment to sustainability.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your support in ensuring the continued success and sustainability of Niagara's downtown areas.

Sincerely,

Niagara Region Business Improvement Areas:



Stephanie Hicks
Executive Director
Downtown Bench Beamsville
289-241-4599
info@downtownbenchbeamsville.com



Lee Carr
Executive Director
Downtown Welland
905-914-0160
info@downtownwelland.ca



Historic Drummondville
905-931-7046
historicdrummondville@gmail.com



David Jovanovic
Consultant
Lundy's Lane BIA
905-401-8247
davidjovanovic.llbia@gmail.com



Amanda MacDonald
Executive Director
Downtown Grimsby
289-251-9574
Amanda@grimsbydowntown.com



Rachel Braithwaite
Executive Director
St Catharines Downtown Assoc.
289-228-0761
rachel@mydowntown.ca



Amy Schanbacher
BIA Coordinator
Historic Downtown Thorold
TBIACoordinator@gmail.com



Downtown Port Colborne
905-834-3629
downtownportcolborne@gmail.com



Main Street Port Colborne
MainStreetPortColborne@gmail.com



Ryan Harrison
BIA Chair
North Welland BIA
info@northwelland.ca



Tim Parker
Office Administrator
Victoria Centre BIA
tim@vcbia.ca

DOWNTOWN STEVENSVILLE

Mary-Lou Ambrose Little
Downtown Stevensville
downtownstevensville@gmail.com