
Memorandum

COM-C 9-2025

Subject: Cost and Benefit of Expanding Street Outreach Service Hours

Date: May 6, 2025

To: Public Health and Social Services Committee

From: Jeffrey Sinclair, Manager Homelessness Services

At the Public Health and Social Services Committee meeting held on March 4, 2025, the following Councillor Information Request was made:

“Provide information outlining the cost of delivering overnight outreach services.”
Councillor Kaiser.

The memo describes the potential cost and limited benefits of expanding Niagara Assertive Street Outreach (NASO) hours of operation to provide evening and overnight service coverage.

The estimated annual cost to add the eight additional NASO workers required to provide service coverage from 5:30 pm to 9:00 am seven days per week is \$368,240.00. This cost includes wages, mileage, technology, and training.

As of January 2025, the outreach services provided through a contract with Gateway Residential & Community Support Services provide assertive street outreach throughout the Niagara Region seven days a week from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm. Previously, NASO supports were provided beginning at 7:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm with the additional hours used to support people staying at seasonal shelters, which provided no daytime space and required people to be out on the street during the day. The new NASO service hours reflect a system-wide shift to only permanent shelter facilities operating 24 hours every day, which eliminated the need for NASO to support any shelter users between 7:00 am and 8:00 pm. The new service hours are also a response to the findings of an encampment pilot project completed in 2024. This pilot identified significant improvement of NASO service outcomes (moves to shelter, moves to housing, resolution of encampments) when outreach services were focused on providing ongoing case management to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness (persons staying in encampments, parks, vehicles, or other places unfit for human habitation) as compared to impromptu responses to community concerns. The revised

model continues to see far superior success, with 92 people moved from street to shelter and 18 people moved from street to housed in the first three months of 2025.

Case management provided by NASO supports people to end their unsheltered homelessness. Service activities include assessing need, referring to appropriate health or other services, obtaining personal identification, moving to shelter, applying for affordable housing, and obtaining housing. The bulk of these activities can only occur during the daytime when other health, identification or other services and rental unit viewings are available. Safety risks to outreach staff are significantly higher after dark, requiring team members to work in pairs, and making many locations inaccessible or requiring additional police presence.

Other outreach programs in Niagara are available to the community primarily during the day on weekdays, with limited or no weekend, evening or overnight services (see the table below). For people experiencing homelessness emergency shelter spaces are available 24 hours a day by calling 211 or by physically going to a shelter without the need to connect with NASO.

NASO does not provide emergency responses for people experiencing homelessness. All people, including those who are homeless, who require emergency services should call 911 to access emergency services available 24 hours a day every day.

Service Availability for NASO and Related Services

Service	Weekdays	Weekends	Evenings	Overnight
Niagara Assertive Street Outreach	Yes	Yes	No	No
Welcoming Streets (St Catharines, Beginning April 2025)	Yes	No	No	No
Seniors Community Programs	Yes	No	No	No
Public Health Outreach	Yes	Yes	No	No

Service	Weekdays	Weekends	Evenings	Overnight
211 and Emergency Shelters	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Outreach	Yes	No	Yes	No
Niagara Regional Police Community Oriented Response and Engagement Unit (CORE) (St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland)	Yes	No	Yes	No
The Niagara Regional Police Service Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
911 Emergency Services	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

Jeffrey Sinclair
Manager, Homelessness Services