
Memorandum

COM-C 7-2026

Subject: Referred Motion – Winter Weather Emergency Procedure for Unhoused Residents

Date: February 10, 2026

To: Public Health and Social Services Committee

From: Ann-Marie Norio, Regional Clerk

At its meeting held January 29, 2026, Regional Council considered a motion from Councillor Bateman respecting Winter Weather Emergency Procedure for Unhoused Residents. Regional Council subsequently referred the motion to the Public Health and Social Services Committee.

The motion before Committee for consideration is as follows:

WHEREAS exposure to temperatures at or below 0°C, including wind chill, presents an immediate and life-threatening risk to unhoused individuals;

WHEREAS the *Missing Persons Act, 2018* authorizes urgent, non-criminal judicial orders to obtain records necessary to locate missing persons whose safety is at risk;

WHEREAS the *Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023* establishes a framework for Vulnerable Persons Alerts for individuals at heightened risk due to care needs or precarious living conditions;

WHEREAS unhoused individuals during extreme cold events may reasonably be considered vulnerable persons whose safety is in jeopardy; and

WHEREAS Niagara Region, in partnership with Niagara Assertive Street Outreach (NASO) and Welcoming Streets, provides outreach and emergency supports but lacks a unified regional protocol for extreme cold responses.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That Regional staff **BE DIRECTED** to immediately develop a Winter Weather Emergency Procedure, to be activated when temperatures, including wind chill, are forecast to reach 0°C or below, which shall:
 - a. Treat any known unhoused individual who cannot be located during an activated event as a missing and endangered person for coordination and response purposes;

- b. Require immediate notification and coordination among NASO, Welcoming Streets, municipal outreach and housing staff, and emergency services as appropriate;
 - c. Provide for rapid outreach, wellness checks, and transportation to shelters, warming centres, or emergency accommodations; and
 - d. Ensure compliance with applicable privacy legislation and principles of dignity and respect;
2. That Regional staff **REPORT BACK** to Council by the February Council meeting with the draft procedure and implementation recommendations for the current winter season; and
 3. That the Region **REAFFIRM** its commitment to preventing cold-related injury and death among unhoused residents.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Ann-Marie Norio
Regional Clerk