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**Subject:** 2025 Year End Report for Provincial Offences Court

**Report to:** Joint Board of Management

**Report date:** Thursday, April 23, 2026

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## Recommendations

1. That this Report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

## Key Facts

- Pursuant to the 2001 Memorandum of Understanding and Local Side Agreement with the Ministry of the Attorney General (“MAG”) and the Inter-Municipal Agreement, as amended, The Regional Municipality of Niagara (the “Region”) acts as agent on behalf of the 12 local area municipalities (the “LAMs”) to operate the Niagara Region Provincial Offences Court located in Welland.
- Court Services staff administer violations under the Highway Traffic Act, the Trespass to Property Act, the Liquor License Act, municipal by-laws, other provincial and federal offences, including more serious matters such as charges under the Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act, the Environmental Protection Act, the Fire Prevention and Protection Act and the Alcohol & Gaming Control Act.
- The purpose of this report is to provide the Joint Board of Management (JBM) with an overview of court operations, challenges, and successes in 2025. Appendix 1 to Report JBM-C 4-2026 provides some key operational highlights and Appendix 2 through Appendix 5 to Report JBM-C 4-2026 provide overall financial results including year end operating statements with explanations for significant variances from budget, and net revenue distribution summaries, for both Court Services base operations and Vision Zero operations.

## Financial Considerations

The 2025 unaudited year-end results for Court Services and the impact on distributions of net revenues to the LAMs is provided below. This also includes year-end results for net revenues related to automated enforcement as part of the Vision Zero Road Safety Program (VZ) and the impact of these results on distributions to the LAMs. As per the Niagara Region Courts Inter-Municipal Agreement, 50% of the net revenues/net expenditures are shared with/recovered from the LAMs.

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## Base Operations

The approved 2025 Court Services budget for base operations provided for total net revenues of \$200 thousand with \$100 thousand to be distributed to the LAMs. As of December 31, 2025, base operations actual unaudited net revenues are \$728 thousand, in which \$364 thousand will be allocated to the Region and \$364 thousand will be allocated to the LAMs. The net revenues of \$364 thousand represent a \$264 thousand surplus over the budgeted distribution of \$100 thousand. The year-end operating statement including variance analysis for base operations is included in Appendix 2 to JBM-C 4-2026. Details of the distribution by LAM for base operations are illustrated in Appendix 3 to JBM-C 4-2026 including the 2025 budget, 2025 year-end results including variance from budget, Q2 2025 disbursements paid, and 2025 net distribution balance remaining.

## VZ Operations

The approved 2025 Court Services budget for VZ operations provided for total net revenues of \$1,726 thousand with \$863 thousand to be distributed to the LAMs. As of December 31, 2025, VZ operations actual unaudited net revenues are \$1,288 thousand, in which \$644 thousand will be allocated to the Region and \$644 thousand will be allocated to the LAMs. The net revenues of \$1,288 thousand represent a \$438 thousand deficit over the budgeted distribution of \$1,726 thousand. The year-end operating statement including variance analysis for VZ operations is included in Appendix 4 to JBM-C 4-2026. Details of the distribution by LAM for VZ operations are illustrated in Appendix 5 to JBM-C 4-2026 including the 2025 budget, 2025 year-end results including variance from budget, Q2 2025 disbursements paid, and 2025 net distribution balance remaining. It is important to note that all VZ net revenues must be reinvested into road safety programs as per the Inter-Municipal Agreement, as amended.

## Summary

Court Services participates in the Niagara Region's quarterly financial reporting process which provides analysis and commentary on budget to actual results. The Niagara Region Q4 2025 Financial Update Report, as well as previous reports, can be accessed on Niagara Region's external website [Niagara Region Q4 2025 Financial Update Report](https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/budget/finance/default.aspx) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/budget/finance/default.aspx>).

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## Analysis

### Revenue

Gross revenue is typically influenced by a variety of factors, including but not limited to, applications for extension of time to pay, delinquent fine rates, license suspensions and charges laid. Actual revenues and expenses varied in 2025 due to several influencing factors, largely beyond Staff's control:

- Canada Post disruptions in late 2024 and during 2025 paused the Joint Processing Centre's mailing of tickets, resulting in variations to revenue and expenditures at points throughout the year.
  - Due to Provincial Offences Act timelines, full financial impacts of reduced charging volumes in one month will not be fully realized until future months (e.g. the impact of ASE charging volumes in Q3 2025 extends into 2026).
- Variations in ASE volumes stemming from January 2025 school closures, holidays, as well as the alignment of Spring site rotations with road signage upgrades, and equipment down-time resulting from vandalism.
- Increase in credit card fees as higher transaction volumes led to increased processing costs.
- The introduction of Bill 56, the *Building a More Competitive Economy Act, 2025*, which repealed the authority for municipalities to operate ASE effective November 14, 2025.
- Increase in pre-paid fines and fewer disputes for ASE charges.
- The adjustment of VZ resources based on the elimination of ASE charges, including the elimination of 6 VZ Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) as of December 2025.
- Applications for extension of time to pay fines:
  - The number of applications from 2025 (5929) compared to 2024 (4853) increased by 22%. There is typically a correlation between extension requests and revenue, as defendants usually file for extensions for economic reasons.
- Appeals:
  - The number of appeals received and processed by staff decreased by 0.3% in 2025 (322), remaining consistent with 2024 (323).

- Appeals delay the resolution of matters and receipt of any resulting fine payments. In addition, the increased volume of appeals represents a significant workload increase for prosecution staff to prepare for and attend those hearings.
- Re-opening Applications:
  - There was an 11.6% increase in applications for re-openings in 2025 (1469) compared to 2024 (1317).
    - As of September 2023, the authority to approve re-openings was downloaded to the clerk of the court, where previously this was a judicial administrative function.
  - A reopening application may result in either a delay in revenue collection or a reduction in revenue associated with the original conviction, if the application is successful.
- Fail to Respond (“FTR”) Convictions:
  - Staff completed 14,800 FTR convictions in 2025; a 13% decrease compared to 2024 (16,974). Based on charge type, they are broken down as follows:
    - 7,993 Base Charge FTRs
    - 7,398 VZ Charge FTRs
  - It is important to note that an increase or decrease in FTR convictions does not correlate with any change of revenue following conviction; these convictions occur as a result of the individual’s lack of action related to their charge and do not necessarily result in action being taken by those individuals related to payment.
- Suspension of driver’s licences:
  - The number of suspensions increased in 2025 by 20% (4063) compared to 2024 (3389). Suspensions occur as an enforcement method when certain fines are not paid by the default date. Revenue is impacted through either a delay in a fine being paid or not being paid at all. The likelihood of successfully collecting on revenue decreases as time passes.
- Total Base (Non-VZ) Charges Laid:
  - A total of 30,069 base (non-VZ) charges were filed in 2025; an increase of 7.35% compared to 2024 (28,010).

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Year	New Base (Non-VZ) POA Offences
2015	48,303
2016	40,026
2017	34,709
2018	31,957
2019	35,890
2020	27,308
2021	26,393
2022	25,086
2023	28,722
2024	28,010
2025	30,069

- Total ASE charges laid:
  - ASE launched in September 2023. A total of 21,510 ASE charges were filed with Niagara Court Services from January 1 to November 14, 2025; a 57% decrease from 2024 which saw 50,217 ASE charges in the first full year of operations for ASE.
- Total RLC charges laid:
  - A total of 2,846 charges were filed with Niagara Court Services in 2025, representing the first full year of operations for RLC.
  - RLC launched in March 2024, seeing 2,695 charges in 10 months of operations.
- Delinquent Fine Rates:
  - In 2025, the monthly delinquent case average was 737 cases per month for base charges, and 441 per month for VZ charges. In 2022, there was a substantial increase in delinquent fine rates (888 cases per month) which was a historic high since 2015 when rate tracking was implemented. These rates still demonstrate an historical overall increase in delinquent fines when compared to the monthly average of 518 per month for 2019-2021.
- Prepaid Fine Rates
  - Prepaid fine rates impact revenue as well as dispute rates as the payment of a fine before proceeding to Early Resolution, Trial or FTR equates to a guilty plea to the charge. The prepayment of a fine also reduces the

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overall amount of time and Staff resources required to process that charge.

- The 2025 prepaid rates were as follows:
  - Base charges:
    - 36% of all base charges were pre-paid.
  - VZ ASE charges:
    - 69% of all ASE charges were pre-paid.
  - VZ RLC charges:
    - 50% of all ASE charges were pre-paid.
- Early Resolution & Trial Request Rates:
  - As of December 31, 2025, Court Services has an 87% resolution rate for matters proceeding to Early Resolution (“ER”), which is a slight decrease over 2024 (89%) due to an increase in VZ matters being set for trial; however, it still represents an increase over 2022 (85%). This resolution rate results in only 13% of those matters being set for trial.
  - Court Services experienced a 10.4% increase in the number of ER matters completed in 2025 compared to 2024. Comparison to previous years is outlined as follows:
    - 7,530 in 2025
    - 6,822 in 2024
    - 4,222 in 2023
    - 4,779 in 2022
    - 5,379 in 2021

This increase can be attributed to an overall increase in base charging volumes and dispute rates, in addition to 12 months of RLC charges, as well as Early Resolution enhancements which occurred in 2023, resulting in a more streamlined ER processing.

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- Judicial Resources & Time to Trial:
    - Availability of judicial resources limits court time allocated to Niagara to hear pending matters, which may contribute to delays in convictions and corresponding payments.
    - Time to trial was 10 months for Part I matters, and 5 months for Part III matters.
    - During 2025, Court Services experienced zero (0) court closures due to lack of judicial resources.
    - At this time, Court Services regularly has only 1.3 of the three (3) available courtrooms scheduled based on judicial resources assigned (average of 6.5 days of courts are running per week, out of maximum 15 days per week of courtroom availability). There have been multiple lengthy trials accommodated with time allocated to our schedule where possible. While there is no indication that our third courtroom will be scheduled consistently during the first half of 2026, Court Services has continued to implement numerous strategies to assist in addressing resulting backlog, such as:
      - ER meetings between defense and prosecution being held on non-presiding days to maximize court utilization when judicial resources are available onsite;
      - Continuous review of pending matters to explore potential for resolution prior to trial;
      - Review of court utilization statistics and refining time allocation for matters scheduled within the tiers to maximize the use of court time within all tiers;
      - Ongoing review of the Court Master Plan by the Trial Coordinator in partnership with MAG scheduling team;
      - Additional court dates are being provided regularly to accommodate lengthy trials and/or backlogs.

Since assuming responsibility for the administration of Provincial Offences Court in 2001, the Region has received \$24.1 million in net revenue, and as per the Inter-Municipal Agreement, the LAMs have shared \$24.1 million in net revenue (based on the unaudited 2025 results). The Region has paid the Province \$43.7 million for Victim Fine

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Surcharges (VFS), adjudication fees, Part III prosecution charges, dedicated fines, monitoring and enforcement charges, and ICON processing charges.

## **Expenditures**

Expenditures are typically impacted by several factors, including but not limited to, charging volumes and the types of charges, trial requests, number of appearances to resolution, re-opening applications, applications for extension of time to pay, appeal requests, as well as the need to undertake enforcement to collect on delinquent fines.

The overall average of court appearances to resolution in 2025 was 3.3 appearances per case for Part I and Part III matters – a slight increase over 3.2 appearances in 2024. When specifically isolating the average number of court appearances to resolution for Part III matters, since the transfer from the Crown's office to Regional Prosecutors as of June 30, 2025, there was a decrease from 6.0 appearances per case to 5.2 – demonstrating early improvement in access to justice within the first 6 months post-transfer.

In Base operations, there were reduced expenses realized in the amount of \$329 thousand in labour-related costs due to position gapping and recruitment timeframes. In VZ operations, expense reductions were realized totaling \$290 thousand in labour related expenses due to budgeted positions which had not yet been filled.

In Base operations, increased expenses occurred within the Victim Fine Surcharge costs, Payticket expenses, and fines collected from other POA jurisdictions, compared to the 2025 budgeted expenses. These increases have been partially offset by savings within external collections charges. In VZ operations, lower than budgeted expenses occurred in trial related costs including interpreter expenses and adjudication costs, as well as charge volume related expenses including credit card fees, Victim Fine Surcharge, ICON Processing Charges, and Payticket expenses.

## **Delinquent Fine Enforcement**

In 2025, \$3.64 million in delinquent fines were collected, which represents a 21.7% increase (\$650 thousand) compared to 2024.

Despite the significant increase in delinquent fine rates over the last several years, it is important to note that there continues to be an increase in the number of lower-value fines being paid, while the overall value of the delinquent fines has decreased.

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In 2014, a partnership was created between the Region and all 12 of the LAMs in the “add to tax roll” program, which has proven to be an effective enforcement tool. Since its implementation, \$2.58 million has been added to tax rolls in the Region and to date \$2.17 million has been collected, which is an 84% collection rate. In 2025, \$242,535 of that amount was collected.

Staff utilize several other enforcement methods. These include the suspension of driver’s license, plate denial, use of third-party collection agencies, and civil enforcement. Civil enforcement includes the garnishment of wages, bank accounts and the filing of Writs of Execution to secure property owned by the defendant.

Through ongoing investigative and collection efforts by staff, \$7.2 million has been secured and \$5.49 million collected (a 76.6% collection rate) since implementing the writ process in 2003. It is anticipated that these Writs of Execution will continue to contribute to revenue in future years.

### **Continuous Improvement**

Court Services continues to leverage every opportunity to do business differently through innovation and process improvements to ensure access to justice while simultaneously increasing productivity and improving operational efficiencies.

Continuous improvement initiatives achieved in 2025 include:

- Transfer of Part III Prosecutions from Crown Prosecutor to Regional Prosecutors; resulting in enhancements due to consolidation to one team and one site. Key successes identified thus far are detailed further in this report.
- Implementation of Axon Justice (Digital Evidence Management System “DEMS”) to effectively manage the substantial increase in digital evidence resulting from the Part III prosecution transfer
- Delivery of a POA Mock Trial and Testimony information session for Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS), Ontario Provincial Police, and Niagara Parks Police officers. The session was recorded by NRPS’ Video Unit to be used as part of a provincial policing training video library.
- Creation of collections resources in partnership with Communications division to easily share information to defendants and offenders regarding options for avoiding delinquency, opting into payment plans, etc.

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- Extensive planning related to ASE wind down, including forecasting workload, revenue and staffing needs
  - Completion of Business Impact Analysis and refreshed Business Continuity Planning
  - Continued enhancements to support bilingual services under the French Language Services Act (FLSA), including website translation, physical signage, digital signage, phone system updates. Any costs related to these enhancements were fully subsidized by FLSA funding from the Province
  - Hosting the Municipal Court Managers' Association of Ontario's POA Collections Conference
  - Upgraded courtroom technology with docking stations & monitors at the prosecution desks for better performance
  - Expanded service level alerts in Qmatic & Phone System to quickly allocate resources during peaks in business activity, resulting in reduced wait times and increasing customer service experience
  - Updated site fire plan in partnership with Facilities for enhanced coverage
  - Implementation of new digital exhibit processes for submission and secure storage
  - Updated "no fixed address" processes with an external vendor to reduce approx. \$5 thousand in annual Notice of Fine and Due Date postage fees

### **Part III Prosecutions Transfer**

The transfer of responsibility for Part III Prosecutions from the Crown to the Region commenced on June 30, 2026, and took full effect on September 1, 2026. Although it is still early to assess all outcomes, several efficiencies have already emerged. Customer service has improved, as all prosecution services - including disclosure, screening, and Crown pre-trials - are now delivered at a single location. This "one team/ one site" model has reduced confusion and enhanced public access.

Disclosure is now available on-site at the first appearance, ensuring defendants receive the information they need to move their matters forward more quickly. Fewer matters are being adjourned due to defendants failing to request or obtain disclosure or screening. Contact information is updated at every interaction, keeping prosecution and court records current and enabling timely communication, which further reduces delays.

Before the transfer, matters were often adjourned for approximately six months. Since the transition, that timeframe has significantly improved and is now roughly ten weeks. Reducing adjournments and unnecessary appearances enhances access to justice and allows for more efficient use of Court resources and Justice of the Peace time.

Staff will continue to monitor the program and pursue further improvements wherever possible.

### **Customer Service**

In a year-over-year comparison between 2024 and 2025, recent operational enhancements - including the implementation of alerts and refinements to staffing processes - have continued to yield positive results for customer service delivery. From 2024 to 2025, the average speed of answer for phone calls improved by 56%, dropping from 2:05 to 0:55, and the call abandonment rate was reduced from 9.1% to 4.9%. In-person service levels also improved, with average visitor wait times decreasing by 16%, from 3.5 minutes in 2024 to 2.94 minutes in 2025. In-person counter service volumes declined to 14,373 individuals served in 2025, representing a 9% decrease compared to 2024, while total phone call volumes decreased by 23% to 20,622 calls. Collectively, these results demonstrate that the recent process and duties changes have had a measurable and sustained positive impact on customer experience and service levels.

To support enforcement agencies and the LAMs, Court Services hosted two information sessions in 2025 (“POA Mock Trials & Testimony” and “The Life Cycle of a POA Charge”) which were both well-attended. Staff also continue to work with enforcement agencies and the LAMs on an ongoing basis to provide guidance in working toward consistent charging and prosecutorial practices.

A variety of information, including service changes, frequently asked questions, and answers, was updated on the Court Services webpage to assist members of the public with information regarding business changes and current court procedures.

Highlights of Court Services’ 2025 operations are provided in Appendix 1 to Report JBM-C 4-2026.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

Not applicable; this report is provided for information.

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## Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report supports the Effective Region Council Strategic Priority through the delivery of fiscally responsible services, in accordance with the Inter-municipal Agreement.

## Other Pertinent Reports

Bullet list of reports that relate to this topic/subject/issue. When available, include hyperlink to provide easier reference. See hyperlink example below – include link with report title and full URL in brackets below.

- [PW 24-2025 Award of Contract 2025-T-25 Annual Strength and Resurfacing Program](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=0133a977-aa52-4fd2-955f-528b86bff5fd&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=17&Tab=attachments>)

- [JBM-C 11-2023 – Court Services 2024 Operating Budget](#)

([https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:kxndu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx%3FDocumentId%3D33097&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwiuiuvQ95iMAxWilokEHXkZIK4QFnoECA8QAg&usg=AOvVaw1DkZu1k\\_uMvTiuMABGhiX6&fexp=72913893,72913894](https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:kxndu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx%3FDocumentId%3D33097&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwiuiuvQ95iMAxWilokEHXkZIK4QFnoECA8QAg&usg=AOvVaw1DkZu1k_uMvTiuMABGhiX6&fexp=72913893,72913894))

- [JBM-C 4-2024 – 2023 Year End Report for Provincial Offences Court](#)

(<https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=005774670460367375179:kxndu-yx3mm&q=https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx%3FDocumentId%3D36796&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwiNudf595iMAxWUK1kFHW0SPZ8QFnoECAYQAg&usg=AOvVaw1-7IhaeBcilbuEfHWI5gBv&fexp=72913893,72913894>)

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This report was prepared in consultation with Adam Niece, Program Financial Specialist, and Renee Muzzell, Associate Director, Program Financial Support, and reviewed by Scott Crocco, Senior Legal Counsel, and Donna Gibbs, Regional Solicitor/Director, Legal & Court Services.

**Appendices**

Appendix 1	2025 Court Services Highlights
Appendix 2	2025 Year-End Budget vs. Actual Variance Analysis – Base Operations
Appendix 3	2025 Distribution to Local Area Municipalities – Base Operations
Appendix 4	2025 Year-End Budget vs. Actual Variance Analysis – VZ Operations
Appendix 5	2025 Distribution to Local Area Municipalities – VZ Operations