

Memorandum

JBM-C 6-2026

Subject: Recognition of 25 Years of Excellence in Court Services

Date: April 23, 2026

To: Joint Board of Management

From: Miranda Vink, Associate Director, Court Services

The purpose of this memorandum is to recognize and celebrate 25 years of excellence in Court Services since the transfer of the Provincial Offences Act Court including prosecution, administration and collection functions (POA Court) from the Province of Ontario to The Regional Municipality of Niagara in 2001.

Background

In January 2001, responsibility for the administration of POA Court was transferred from the Province to the Region. Supported by the Niagara Region Courts Intermunicipal Agreement executed by the Region and 12 local area municipalities, including governance through the Joint Board of Management, the POA Court stands as a strong example of effective shared service delivery. Over the past 25 years, Niagara Region's Court Services team has evolved into a recognized leader across Ontario, known for service excellence, innovation, modernization, and strong partnerships in the administration of justice.

Through continuous improvement, early adoption of technology, and a steadfast commitment to public service, Court Services has modernized court operations, improved access to justice, and supported community safety outcomes across Niagara.

Highlights and Key Milestones

Over the past 25 years, Court Services has received and processed more than 1.14 million POA charges.

Since assuming responsibility for POA Court, Court Services has also achieved numerous significant milestones, highlights of which are listed below;

2001–2003 | Foundation and Early Innovation

Establishing municipal leadership in POA administration and enforcement

- **Transfer of POA Court from the Province** (January 2001)
Establishing Niagara Region as the local authority responsible for the administration of justice under the Provincial Offences Act.
- **Creation of a dedicated POA Collections Department**, including specialized roles, expanded civil enforcement capacity, and the introduction of a locally developed POA Collections software solution. This strengthened delinquent fine enforcement, improving revenue recovery, and positioning Niagara as an early innovator by sharing solutions with municipalities across Ontario.

2004–2010 | Digital Services and Systems Modernization

Improving customer service, operational efficiency, and system reliability

- **Expansion of digital payment and enforcement tools**, including the launch of online ticket payments (Paytickets.ca) and Niagara's first POA Collections RFP for third-party agencies. This enhanced customer convenience while strengthening enforcement options for unpaid fines.
- **Implementation of foundational court technologies**, including the Court Administration Management System (CAMS – a local solution created in-house in collaboration between Niagara Region IT and Court Services staff), and Liberty Court Recording; modernizing case management, improving record accuracy, and streamlining court proceedings, with CAMS subsequently adopted province-wide.

2011–2016 | Enhanced Court Operations and Service Delivery

Improving access to justice, reducing court burden, and strengthening service delivery

- **Operational modernization with justice partners**, including electronic briefs with policing services, the introduction of the Prosecution Coordinator role and the official creation of Niagara Region's Prosecution Team. This supported more efficient case preparation and coordinated prosecution services.
- **Introduction of Early Resolution and alternative enforcement tools**, including both in-person and phone Early Resolution programs and Add to Tax Roll authority for delinquent fines; reducing trial request volumes, improving timeliness of resolution, and expanding delinquent fine enforcement options beyond traditional measures to enhance collection efforts and support deterrence.

- **Service accessibility and program realignment**, including the introduction of video interpretation services and the transfer of Parking Enforcement from POA to municipal administrative penalty programs. This served to enhance access to justice while allowing Court Services to focus on core POA mandates.

2017–2019 | Consolidation and Regional Leadership

Delivering modern, centralized, and customer-focused court services

- **System and service consolidation**, including e-ticketing with Niagara Regional Police Service and the opening of the consolidated modern accessible courthouse at 445 East Main Street, Welland. This resulted in streamlining operations, reducing reliance on paper, and improving service delivery.
- **Expansion of online public services**, including case status lookup and Early Resolution requests; providing enhanced self-serve options and improving transparency for defendants.
- **Provincial leadership in POA collections**, through expansion of Niagara's POA Collections RFP into a joint partnership with municipalities across Ontario; reducing duplication of effort, promoting consistency, collaboration and reinforcing Niagara's role as a sector leader.

2020–2022 | Resilience and Innovation During COVID-19

Maintaining and modernizing court operations during unprecedented times

- **Rapid transition to remote and virtual court services**, including court closures, Zoom trials, and hybrid Early Resolution and trial models; ensuring continuity of justice services while protecting public and staff safety, with Niagara leading Ontario as the first POA court to conduct Zoom trials.
- **Legislative expansion of clerk authority and staffing realignment**, including delegated approval of time-to-pay and fail-to-respond matters, and a staffing restructure supporting modernization and Vision Zero initiatives. This included in transfer of administrative tasks from the judiciary, improving efficiency, and aligning resources with program demands.
- **Facilitation of automated enforcement**, through amended intermunicipal agreements supporting Automated Speed Enforcement and Red Light Cameras - laying the groundwork for Vision Zero road safety initiatives.

2023–2025 | Vision Zero and Continued Modernization

Responding to increased complexity, legislative change, and evolving community needs

- **Recognition for innovation**, including receipt of the Municipal Court Managers' Association's 2023 Innovation Award, acknowledging Niagara's leadership and continuous improvement in Court Services.
- **Optimization of judicial and prosecutorial resources**, including a new Early Resolution model utilizing non-presiding days to maximize court capacity and improving scheduling efficiency.
- **Responsive implementation and adaptation for Vision Zero programs**, including the launch of ASE and Red Light Camera offences and subsequent adaptation to legislative changes under Bill 56. This demonstrated Court Services' agility in responding to evolving legislative and policy environments.
- **Expansion of access to justice and service capacity**, including bilingual court support roles and securing provincial funding to deliver obligations under the French Language Services Act; enhancing equitable access to justice across the region.
- **Transfer and modernization of Part III prosecutions**, including complex matters such as serious driving offences and Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act charges, supported by implementation of Axon Justice (Digital Evidence Management System), enabling the Prosecution Team to manage significantly increased case complexity and digital evidence volumes.
- **Ongoing police, partner, and community engagement initiatives**, including the delivery of a POA Testimony information session to Niagara Regional Police Service and Ontario Provincial Police, which was recorded for inclusion in the provincial police training video library. These sessions support strengthening consistency, preparedness, and confidence in court testimony practices across police services province-wide.

Recognition of Staff and Partnerships

These achievements reflect the dedication, expertise, and professionalism of Court Services staff, as well as the strength of Niagara Region's partnerships with enforcement and policing services, the judiciary, local area municipalities, and other community safety stakeholders.

Court Services' success has been driven by a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and collaboration, positioning Niagara as a trusted leader in POA administration across Ontario.

Planned 25th Anniversary Open House

To mark this milestone, Court Services is planning a 25th Anniversary Open House to recognize staff achievements and showcase the Region's modern court operations. The event will:

- Offer guided tours of the consolidated, modern courthouse facility
- Highlight the work, innovation, and dedication of the Court Services team
- Recognize 25 years of service excellence and leadership in court administration
- Foster connection and shared understanding by providing opportunities for meaningful engagement with colleagues and partners who do not regularly work within the courthouse environment

Further information including the timing of the event will be shared shortly, with invitations to be extended to key partners and relevant parties.

Conclusion

The 25th anniversary of the POA transfer represents an important milestone for Niagara Region. Court Services' evolution over the past quarter century reflects the Region's commitment to effective governance, collaboration, innovation, access to justice, and community safety. These achievements are a direct result of the passion and professionalism of Court Services staff, whose work merits recognition for advancing excellence in court administration and public service.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Miranda Vink
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