
Subject: Regional Emergency Social Services Plan
Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee
Report date: Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Recommendations

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

Key Facts

- Niagara Region is legislated by the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, 1990, to develop and implement an Emergency Management Program which includes an Emergency Response Plan and procedures for the safety or evacuation of persons affected by an incident or emergency event.
- Niagara Region's Community Services Department is responsible for planning, leading, coordinating and managing the delivery of emergency social services (ESS) through the Regional Emergency Social Services Plan – which serves as Annex D to the Niagara Region Emergency Management Plan.
- The Regional Emergency Social Services Plan and its sub-plans, provides a service delivery framework which outlines the response Niagara Region shall provide to meet the essential needs of people during and following an emergency.
- The delivery of ESS is provided through partnerships with first responders, local area municipalities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other Regional departments and community partners.
- The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding an update to the Regional Emergency Social Services Plan and its sub-plans, local community partners involved in ESS delivery, and current capacity and training within Community Services.

Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Resources required to plan for the delivery of emergency social services are accommodated within the 2020 Community Services Department operating budget.

Analysis

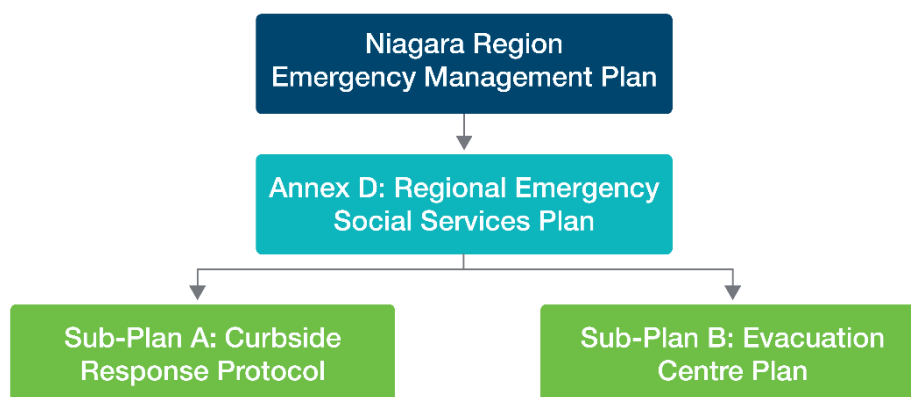
The role of the Community Services Department is to plan, lead, coordinate and manage the delivery of ESS to those affected by a small or large scale incident in Niagara. Emergency social services consist of both standard and specialized services.

- Standard services: reception and information; registration and inquiry; family reunification; food; clothing; lodging; and, personal services.
- Specialized services: first aid; psychosocial support; financial assessment; culturally specific and language services; vulnerable people and unattended children; public health (i.e. infection, disease prevention and control); animal care; and, recreation.

ESS Plan and Sub-Plans

To support the Regional Emergency Social Services Plan (Appendix 1), additional plans and procedures exist that provide more detailed information on how Regional and community partners collaborate and respond within different service delivery settings to provide emergency social services. The Region's ESS Plan consists of two sub-plans (Appendix 2, 3) and standard operating procedures (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Emergency Social Services Plan and Sub-Plans



There are a number of ways to deliver ESS to those affected and in need. Each type of response may be considered in relation to the nature and scale of the incident, preparedness of households, vulnerability of those affected, anticipated level of displacement, and proximity to community resources (rural or urban environments). For those who are not displaced, ESS may be provided through a door-to-door response to support those sheltering in place. In the event of displacement, ESS may be provided through a 'curbside' response and/or at an evacuation centre.

It is important to note that there may be incidents where all three responses are used at different points of time or simultaneously (e.g. delivering a curbside response as an evacuation centre is being prepared to open), depending on the population and as the incident evolves or unfolds (e.g. affecting a growing number of people over a period of time).

Sub-Plan A: Curbside Response Protocol

If the on-scene Incident Command determines a safe area exists to support the ESS needs of those affected, a curbside response may be appropriate. A curbside response can occur on busses, the sidewalk or street, at a nearby park, etc. Should the level of demand for service outgrow the designated safe area, or if there is not a safe and appropriate area for those affected to gather / congregate, then a reception / evacuation centre may be established. A curbside response may also be used while an evacuation centre is being established.

Sub-Plan B: Evacuation Centre

In the event of a large scale incident where people are unable to shelter-in-place and a curbside response is not appropriate or does not meet the demand for service, then the activation and opening of an evacuation centre(s) may occur. Niagara Region, in collaboration with local area municipalities, have designated a number of facilities to be used as evacuation centres (typically community centres, arenas, other municipally owned venues, or high schools).

The evacuation centre may be used to receive people after an evacuation (e.g. of an apartment building or neighbourhood). As a base of operations for ESS delivery, the evacuation centre serves as a source of public information and a resource centre over the course of the emergency until evacuees can return home or find appropriate lodging. The provision of services within the centre is to meet the immediate needs of those displaced, and therefore, not every form of emergency social service will necessarily be provided in each emergency event.

Community Partnerships

Niagara Region's Community Services Department is responsible for coordinating emergency social services in collaboration with local municipalities and external providers, such as non-profit organizations, that provide a specific service to evacuees during an emergency. Local organizations involved in the delivery of emergency social services include:

- Canadian Red Cross
- The Salvation Army – St. Catharines
- St. John Ambulance: Niagara Region Branch and Niagara Falls Branch
- Animal Protection and Care Agencies: Fort Erie SPCA, Lincoln County Humane Society, and Niagara SPCA & Humane Society
- Victim Services Niagara
- INCommunities

Additional partnerships with the Pharmacists' Association of Niagara, Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant (HNHB) Home and Community Care Support Services (formerly the HNHB Local Health Integration Network Home & Community Care) and Niagara Health, are being developed to support non-acute medical needs of evacuees presenting at evacuation centres.

Community Services collaborates with the Public Health and Emergency Management Services Department, specifically the Environmental Health and Mental Health divisions, to ensure respectively, food safety and the provision of psychosocial support to individuals in an evacuation centre.

Capacity & Training

On February 19, 2019, Council approved Regional staff to execute an agreement with the Canadian Red Cross that seeks to build capacity for the provision of emergency social services within the Region and ensures that the desired level of service would be available in the event of an emergency. Capacity-building and preparedness activities under the agreement include participation in emergency exercises, assessments of facilities for evacuation centres, training activities, recruitment of volunteers, pre-positioning of emergency sheltering supplies and the delivery of personal preparedness workshops.

The Community Services Department has established an internal Emergency Social Services Team, comprised of 41 staff trained to support the provision of ESS during an incident requiring the activation of an evacuation centre. If called upon, the Community Services Department ESS Team will acknowledge and respond to a notification as soon as possible, and will deploy within two hours of notification to the assigned location of the evacuation centre.

In 2020, Community Services plans to explore opportunities to design and conduct a human services-based emergency exercise to test the procedures and processes contained in the updated ESS Plan.

Alternatives Reviewed

No alternatives reviewed.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Healthy and Vibrant Community - 2.1 Enhance Community Wellbeing

Other Pertinent Reports

- COM 05-2019: Emergency Social Services – Canadian Red Cross Agreement

Prepared by:

Michelle Johnston, MA
Policy Advisor
Community Services

Recommended by:

Adrienne Jugley, MSW, RSW, CHE
Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Cathy Cousins, Director, Homelessness Services and Community Engagement, and reviewed by Patricia Martel, Emergency Management Program Specialist.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Emergency Social Services Plan
- Appendix 2 Sub-plan A: Curbside Response Protocol
- Appendix 3 Sub-plan B: Evacuation Centre