

February 24, 2023

**CL 3-2023, February 23, 2023**  
**PHSSC 2-2023, February 14, 2023**  
**COM-C 14-2023, February 14, 2023**

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***SENT ELECTRONICALLY***

Motion Respecting Declarations of Emergency for Homelessness, Mental Health and Opioid Addiction

COM-C 14-2023

Regional Council, at its meeting held on February 23, 2023, passed the following recommendation, as amended, of its Public Health and Social Services Committee:

Whereas Niagara Regional Council acknowledges that the challenges of homelessness, mental health and the opioid crisis are exceptionally complex issues that have a measurable and significantly detrimental impact on the residents of the Niagara region, including the loss of life;

Whereas addressing these issues places extreme stress on upper and lower-tier municipal programs and services, the Niagara Regional Police, Niagara Health, Emergency Medical Services and various non-profit service providers across the region;

Whereas the challenges of homelessness, mental health and opioids have seen a trend of becoming more prevalent in recent years and continue to have a significant impact on the Niagara community;

Whereas Niagara Region, through the staff in Community Services and Public Health, has taken many steps to address these issues with the development and provision of best-practice programming designed to mitigate their impact on the community;

Whereas Niagara Regional Council acknowledges that the challenges of homelessness, mental health and the opioid crisis are intrinsically diverse and should not be viewed as a single monolithic problem;

Whereas addressing these challenges will require strategies and tactics that are specifically designed for each of the unique issues;

Whereas Niagara Region accepts that the responsibility to address these challenges rests with multiple stakeholders, including the provincial government and its agencies;

Whereas 26 Niagara agencies within the Region, including Public Health and Emergency Medical Services, have collaboratively developed a Substance Use Prevention Strategy known as the Opioid Prevention and Education Network of Niagara, and are actively implementing it;

Whereas Niagara Region is a “Built for Zero” community that has accurate and timely data regarding its homeless population and delivers programs and services targeted for strategically helping those individuals experiencing homelessness;

Whereas the challenges of homelessness, mental health and opioid addiction are found throughout the entire province of Ontario and are not unique to Niagara;

Whereas Niagara Regional Council recognizes that municipal emergencies in Ontario are declared by the head of council as per the process detailed in the Emergency Management and Civil Protections Act; and

Whereas Niagara Regional Council acknowledges that the declaration of an emergency does not immediately result in a municipality receiving any additional funds or resources from senior levels of government.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to formally issue three separate declarations of emergency, in the areas of homelessness, mental health and opioid addiction, as per the procedure outlined in the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act;
2. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to send correspondence to the Provincial Government requesting that action be taken on the eight measures proposed by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (as previously endorsed by Regional Council on June 23, 2022), including:
  - a. Creation of a multi-sectoral task force to guide the development of a robust provincial opioid response plan that will ensure necessary resourcing, policy change, and health and social system coordination;
  - b. Expanding access to evidence informed harm reduction programs and practices including lifting the provincial cap of 21 Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS) Sites, funding Urgent Public Health Needs Sites (UPHNS) and scaling up safer supply options;
  - c. Revision of the current CTS model to address the growing trends of opioid poisoning amongst those who are using inhalation methods;
  - d. Expanding access to opioid agonist therapy for opioid use disorder through a range of settings (e.g. mobile outreach, primary care, emergency departments, Rapid Access to Addiction Medicine Clinics), and a variety of medication options;

- e. Providing a long-term financial commitment to create more affordable and supportive housing for people in need, including people with substance use disorders;
  - f. Addressing the structural stigma and harms that discriminate against people who use drugs, through provincial support and advocacy to the Federal government to decriminalize personal use and possession of substances and ensure increased investments in health and social services at all levels;
  - g. Increasing investments in evidence-informed substance use prevention and mental health promotion initiatives that provide foundational support for the health, safety and well-being of individuals, families, and neighbourhoods, beginning from early childhood; and
  - h. Funding additional and dedicated positions for public health to support the critical coordination and leadership of local opioid and substance abuse strategies;
3. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to send correspondence to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing requesting action be taken to correct the funding allocation model for homelessness based on the results of Auditor General's 2021 report which found that provincial funding in this area is incorrect;
  4. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to send correspondence to the Ministry of Health and the CEO of Ontario Health requesting that the province immediately commit to fully funding gaps in mental health service as have been identified in the Needs Based Planning project by Niagara Ontario Health Team's Mental Health and Addictions Working Group, as well as funding ongoing annual increases as required by inflation and population need;
  5. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to send correspondence to Federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General, David Lametti, and Federal Minister of Health, Jean-Yves Duclos, reaffirming Regional Council's October 22, 2020 motion urging the Federal government convene a task force to explore the legal regulation and decriminalization of all drugs in Canada;
  6. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to send correspondence to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) requesting that targeted advocacy be conducted in these areas, including the development of a singular motion that can be ratified by municipal councils across Ontario calling on the province to take immediate action;
  7. That Niagara Region, through its Public Health and Social Services Committee, **URGE** the federal government to declare homelessness as a humanitarian crisis; and

8. That this motion **BE CIRCULATED** to the local area municipalities, all municipalities in Ontario, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and local MPs and MPPs.

Yours truly,



Ann-Marie Norio  
Regional Clerk  
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CLK-C 2023-019

Distribution List:

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All Ontario Municipalities  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities  
Chris Bittle, Member of Parliament, St. Catharines  
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