

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT 9-2004

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Services Committee held in Committee Room 4, Regional Municipal Building, Thorold, Ontario, on May 31, 2004, commencing at 3:10 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Committee: Councillors Marshall, Vice-Chair presiding; Almas; Casselman; Rigby.

Staff: Mr. Trojan, C.A.O.; Ms. Reid, Commissioner of Community Services; Ms. Reilly, Legislative Assistant.

Staff

Part-time: Mr. Bakewell, Director, Operational Support Services; Mr. Bowles, Executive Assistant; Ms. Heidebrecht, Director, Children's Services; Ms. Horner, Manager, Children's Services; Mr. Hutchings, Director, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities; Mr. Smith, Coordinator, Policy Research and Development; Ms. Stevenson, Manager, Community Services; Mr. Todd, Cost Analyst; Mr. Ventresca, Director, Seniors Services.

QUORUM

There being a lack of ordinary quorum at the meeting, the Acting Committee Chair determined that the ordinary quorum for the meeting be reduced to three members, pursuant to Part 11, Section 11.7 of the Procedural By-law 7174-93.

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

68. **"Quality Child Care Niagara" Initiative Overview**

Ms. Horner, Manager, Children's Services, provided a brief overview of the new child care benchmarking initiative, Quality Child Care Niagara (QCCN) for licensed child care programs in Niagara. The initiative was developed to address ways to improve the quality of care being provided in licensed child care centres and to ensure opportunities are available for all children to fulfill their potential. Ms. Horner introduced Darlene Edgar, Chair, Quality Child Care Niagara. Committee members were invited to participate in the Quality Child Care Celebration to be held on June 14th wherein all early child care educators who participated in the Quality Child Care Niagara training in 2003 will receive certificates.

Moved by Councillor Almas
Seconded by Councillor Casselman

That Report COM 41-2004, May 31, 2004, respecting "Quality Child Care Niagara" Initiative Overview, be received for information.

Carried.

69. Amended 2002 and 2003 Children's Services Contract

Moved by Councillor Casselman
Seconded by Councillor Almas

That Report COM 40-2004, May 31, 2004, respecting Amended 2002 and 2003 Children's Services Contract, be received for information.

Carried.

70. Provincial Budget: Preliminary Assessment of Impact on the Programs of the Community Services Department

Moved by Councillor Casselman
Seconded by Councillor Almas

That Report COM 34-2004, May 31, 2004, respecting Provincial Budget: Preliminary Assessment of Impact on the Programs of the Community Services Department, be received for information.

Carried.

71. Recent Provincial Developments in Long-Term Care

Mr. Ventresca, Director, Senior Services, provided a brief overview of the Ontario Government announcements on funding for long-term care facilities and planned reforms to the long-term care system in Ontario. He commented that implications of this increased funding on Niagara's eight facilities cannot be determined until details become available from the Ministry. The Director also highlighted the report, Commitment to Care: A Plan for Long-Term Care in Ontario compiled by the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Moved by Councillor Almas
Seconded by Councillor Casselman

That Report COM 35-2004, May 31, 2004, respecting Recent Provincial Developments in Long-Term Care, be received for information; and

That a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to acknowledge the funding increases and the subsequent positive impact on the Niagara Region's Seniors Services.

Carried.

72. Rate Structure for Social Assistance
Staff Direction CSC 6-2004

Mr. Hutchings, Director, S.A.E.O. and Ms. Stevenson, Manager, Community Services, provided a brief overview of the inadequacies of the current rate structure for Social Assistance and the fiscal impact of the recent Provincial Budget announcement of a 3% increase to the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs.

Committee expressed the following concerns:

- While the 3% increase is a good first step, the rate has fallen behind due to inflationary rates
- That the new rates do not accurately reflect the current costs of affordable housing, nutritious food and other essential needs of Social Assistance recipients
- That more affordable housing units need to be developed and initiatives implemented to provide for this (eg. Partnerships with developers)
- That Niagara Regional Taxpayers are burdening the costs for Federal Policy as it relates to refugee and sponsored immigrants (given that Fort Erie is the largest Port of Entry outside of Toronto and yet not receiving the additional funding that Toronto has received)

Moved by Councillor Almas
Seconded by Councillor Casselman

That Report COM 36-2004, May 31, 2004, respecting Rate Structure for Social Assistance, Staff Direction CSC 6-2004, be received for information; and

That this report be circulated to all area municipalities; and

That the Director, Social Employment and Opportunities Division, prepare a communication plan on the issues raised at Committee.

Carried.

73. Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO)
Quarterly Report (January 1 – March 31, 2004)

Moved by Councillor Rigby
Seconded by Councillor Almas

That Report COM 39-2004, May 31, 2004, respecting Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO) Quarterly Report (January 1 – March 31, 2004), be received for information; and

That staff continue to keep Committee informed of key program and financial information pertaining to the Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Division; and

That the Regional Chair's initiatives with respect to funding for Newcomer Border Infrastructure be supported.

Carried.

74. Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
Criteria Requirement and Number of Persons
Applying for ODSP Staff Direction CSC 6-2004

Moved by Councillor Casselman
Seconded by Councillor Almas

That Report COM 37-2004, May 31, 2004, respecting Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Criteria Requirement and Number of Persons Applying for ODSP, Staff Direction CSC 6-2004, be received for information.

Carried.

(Refer to staff direction on page CSC 43.)

75. Changes to Employment Insurance (1996)
On Ontario Works Applicants

Moved by Councillor Rigby
Seconded by Councillor Casselman

That Report COM 38-2004, May 31, 2004, respecting Changes to Employment Insurance (1996) on Ontario Works Applicants, be received for information.

Carried.

STAFF DIRECTION

That staff be directed to:

- (i) Provide O.D.S.P. statistics taking into consideration "age adjusted" and Niagara District Health Council Report information. (Refer to minute item 74.)

ADJOURNMENT

Committee adjourned at 4:40 p.m. to meet again on Monday, June 7, 2004 at 3:00 p.m. in Committee Room 4, Regional Headquarters Building.

George Marshall
Vice-Chair

Gail Reilly
Legislative Assistant

Pam Gilroy
Acting Regional Clerk