

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

REPORT CS-2026-01
April 28, 2026

SUBJECT: Response to Notice of Motion: Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions

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RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the General Committee receive this report for information as a response to the referred Notice of Motion 2025-144 (Ref. 21-30).

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This recommendation is aligned with Council's strategic priority of ensuring "**Health and Wellbeing**" to promote personal health and well-being by offering an abundance of activities that meet the diverse needs and interests all while, advocating for improved health care throughout the city, and supporting the need for safety and security.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides information requested through Notice of Motion 2025-144. It explains that the City of Welland has declared a *crisis*, while the Niagara Region has declared an *emergency*, and outlines the difference between the two. The report also summarizes the mental health, addiction, and Indigenous-focused services currently available in Niagara, including treatment beds and mobile crisis supports. This information is intended to give Council a clear understanding of current services and the City's role when considering future advocacy or partnership opportunities.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of this report is to provide a response to the referred [Notice of Motion](#) presented to council on October 14, 2025. The Notice of Motion asked staff to:

1. Follow up with the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre and the Solicitor General regarding response to the "declared emergency."
2. Request the Ontario Ministry of Health to fund and establish more addiction treatment beds in Welland.

3. Approach Indigenous Services Canada regarding funding for an Indigenous Treatment Centre in Niagara.
4. Ask Ontario Health to support an Indigenous mobile mental health crisis unit.

To respond effectively, staff were directed to:

- Clarify Welland’s role within the broader emergency framework.
- Identify related initiatives already underway at Niagara Region.
- Establish timelines and responsibilities for potential actions.
- Ensure consistency across municipal divisions.

Clarification of “Declared Emergency” in the Notice of Motion

The [Notice of Motion](#) states “*WHEREAS, City of Welland is in a declared emergency for addictions (mental health and homelessness).*”

After confirming with the Acting Fire Chief, Niagara Region Emergency Management, and the [Provincial Emergency Operations Centre](#) (PEOC), staff can confirm that the City of Welland has not declared an emergency under the [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9](#) (the “EMCPA”).

What Welland has declared:

- May 16, 2023, Council [declared a mental health, homelessness, and addiction crisis](#) (Motion 2023-278). This is not a declared emergency as provided for under the EMCPA.
- March 27, 2023, Council approved Motion 2023-27 recognizing homelessness as a social, economic and health crisis.

Niagara’s Region declarations:

- On February 23, 2023, Niagara Region declared an emergency on homelessness, mental health, and addictions.
- September 25, 2025, Regional Council carried Motion 13.2 reaffirming the emergency and continued advocacy to the Province for coordinated support and additional funding.

Under the EMCPA, an “emergency” is reserved for acute, time-limited incidents (e.g., floods, storms, disease/health risk i.e. COVID-19 pandemic, infrastructure failures). Homelessness, addictions, and mental health crises are chronic systemic issues, and do not meet EMCPA criteria. Declaring an EMCPA emergency would not provide additional authority or resources.

AMO

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has noted in its 2026 report *Municipalities Under Pressure* that homelessness in Ontario has grown steadily over several years and should be understood as a systemic issue, rather than a short-term emergency. This reinforces the need for long-term, multi-government solutions rather than reliance on emergency management tools.

Addiction Treatment Beds in Niagara

Niagara Health and non-profit partners currently operate 216 treatment and recovery beds:

Organization	Number of Recovery Beds
NHS Withdrawal Management Services	20
NHS New Port Addiction Treatment Centre	35
Non-profit Organizations' Supportive Treatment beds	61
Total	116

Additional addiction-supportive housing units include:

- CASON Addictions Supportive Housing: 40 units
- Gateway/HART Hub: 60 supportive units for individuals with addictions, homelessness, and mental health challenges.

Culturally Informed Indigenous Supports in Niagara

Niagara Region works closely with Indigenous organizations to develop culturally informed health and social services. This includes the Region's Indigenous Health Specialist and leaders from the Niagara Region Native Centre, Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre, De Dwa Da Dehs Nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre, and Community Addictions Services of Niagara (CASON).

Niagara Health also supports Indigenous residents through its Indigenous Health Services and Reconciliation Team, based at the Marotta Family Hospital in St. Catharines. This team also travels to Welland Hospital to support Indigenous patients. A full list of Indigenous community resources is included in Appendix I.

Niagara Region is also a partner in the Homelessness Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub, led by Gateway Residential and Community Support Services. The HART Hub brings together 10 agencies to support people who are chronically homeless and living with addiction and mental health challenges. De Dwa Da Dehs Nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre is one of the service partners and provides Indigenous-informed treatment. In Welland, the HART Hub offers services in community settings such as shelters, supportive housing, satellite offices, and encampments.

Mobile Crisis Supports

The Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team (MCRRT) is a partnership between CMHA Niagara and the Niagara Regional Police Service. Each team includes a mental health worker and a specially trained police officer who respond together to mental health crises. Their goal is to provide on-site support and reduce hospital visits and police involvement.

The Welland–Pelham MCRRT was established in 2026 after the Niagara Regional Police received provincial funding. The team operates Monday to Friday from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m.

DISCUSSION:

Niagara Region is responsible for delivering health, social services, and emergency supports using local tax contributions. These include programs related to mental health, addictions, and homelessness. As a lower-tier municipality, the City of Welland does not provide these services directly. Instead, the City collaborates with Niagara Region, Niagara Health, Indigenous Friendship Centres, and other partners and advocates for additional supports when needed.

The City’s work with Indigenous communities should align with AMO and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres through the [Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship](#). [AMO’s Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan](#) emphasizes the importance of building relationships and working with Indigenous leadership when developing culturally informed programs.

If Council wishes to support further actions on the issues raised in the Notice of Motion, the following potential actions have been identified for Council’s consideration.

Potential Actions	Potential Assignment
Explore the feasibility of an Indigenous addiction treatment centre in Niagara with Niagara Health.	Social Services Advisor
Explore the feasibility of additional addiction treatment beds in Welland with Niagara Health	Social Services Advisor
Engage Niagara Region and Indigenous partners on an Indigenous-led mobile crisis team for Niagara.	Social Services Advisor
Consult Niagara Region’s Indigenous Health Specialist and Indigenous Friendship Centres to strengthen alignment with AMO and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres’ Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship.	Social Services Advisor

FINANCIAL:

There is no financial impact resulting from receipt of this report.

CONCLUSION:

The homelessness, mental health, and addictions crisis continues to significantly affect the Welland community. While Welland has not declared an emergency as defined in the *EMCPA*, the City remains committed to working with Niagara Region, Indigenous partners, and provincial and federal agencies to advocate for expanded treatment capacity, culturally informed supports, and crisis response services.

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix I – Niagara’s List of Culturally Appropriate Indigenous Supports