

Social Sustainability Pillar Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, May 03, 2022

Electronic Meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Councillor Greg Miller, Chair
Phil Cristi, Director of Community, Recreation and Cultural Services
Jeanette Pillitteri, Director of Corporate Support Services
Diane Foster, Co-Chair Accessibility Advisory Committee
Gail Riihimaki, Chair, Older Adults Advisory Committee
Jim Richardson, Chair, Recreation Master Plan Advisory Committee
Rick Kennedy, Chair, LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee
Saleh Waziruddin, Chair, Anti-Racism Advisory Committee
Trecia McLennon, Chair of the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee

Absent:

Councillor Bill Phillips
Councillor Sal Sorrento
Karen Doyle, Town and Gown (staff liaison)
Chantal Switzer, Equity & Inclusion, LGBTQ2+ and Anti-Racism (staff liaison)

Guests:

Andrea Connelly-Miele, Community and Events Coordinator ~ left at 5:18 p.m.
Emily Kovacs, Chair – Equitable Recovery Subcommittee ~ left at 5:09 p.m.
Matthew Goodman, Accessibility Advisory Committee

Staff Liaison:

Anika Forde, Manager of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Eric Lamothe, Recreation Master Plan
Koby Vanyo, Older Adults Advisory
Megan Detlor, Accessibility Advisory ~ left at 6:00 p.m.
Leanne Kurek, Social Pillar

1. Motion to appoint a Chair

That Councillor Greg Miller be appointed to the position of Chair for the May 3, 2022 Social Sustainability Committee meeting.

Moved by: S. Waziruddin

Carried

2. Call meeting to order (Chair, Greg Miller)

4:33 p.m.

3. Recognition of Traditional Territories

Councillor Miller acknowledged that the land on which the Social Sustainability Committee meets today is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples. Acknowledging this is a reminder that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.

4. Amendments to the Agenda

None

5. Motion to approve the agenda

That the Social Sustainability Committee adopt the agenda as presented.

Moved by: J. Richardson

Carried

6. Motion to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting

Motion to adopt the SSC minutes Feb 3, 2022.

Moved by: R. Kennedy

Carried

7. Declarations of Interest

None were declared

8. Presentations (invited guests)

None

9. Business arising from the minutes

None

10. Business

a. 10.1 Recovery Plan from the Equitable Recovery Subcommittee

- i. Emily Kovacs, Chair presented summary of the plan (attached)

That the Social Sustainability Committee receive the presentation and Recovery Plan from the Equitable Recovery Subcommittee; and

That the Equitable Recovery Subcommittee now be disbanded; and

That the Recovery Plan be referred to the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee to prioritize and report back actionable items within the scope of the municipality to the Social Sustainability Committee

Moved by: G. Riihimaki

Carried

b. 10.2 Review waiving of fees applications

Motion to approve the request for waiving of fees in their applications for the following organizations:

Motion to approve to waive \$458.57 for the BlackOwned905 Spring Ting Market.

Motion to approve to waive \$80.42 for the Fitzgerald Neighbours Easter Egg Hunt.

Motion to approve to waive \$175.20 for the ATTCH Niagara Family Fun and Wellness Day.

Motion to approve to waive \$175.20 for the NHS World Hepatitis Day.

Motion to approve to waive \$217.75 for the Kid's Ultimate Challenge in support of the Niagara Health Foundation.

Motion to approve to waive \$162.33 for the RRPC Innovation Foundation Youth Yuletide Event.

Moved by: J. Richardson

Carried

c. 10.3 Review of applications for vacancies on the Accessibility Advisory Committee and recommendations for the vacancies.

Motion to go into Closed Session at 5:18 p.m.

That the Social Sustainability Committee go into Closed Session for personal matters about identifiable individuals, including municipal or local board employees regarding the appointment of individuals to fill the vacancies on the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by: S. Waziruddin

Carried

Closed Session ~ Review applications for the Accessibility Committee

Motion to move to Open Session at 5:24 p.m.

That the Social Sustainability Committee move to Open Session

Moved by: J. Richardson

Carried

That the Social Sustainability Committee approve the recommended name for the Accessibility Advisory Committee as discussed in the Closed Session and for the recommendation to be referred to council.

Moved by: D. Foster

Carried

d. 10.4 Request to waive rental fees – Royal Canadian Sea Cadets Corps

Motion to approve the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet corps request for waiving of fees for the rental fees at the St. Catharines Museum and & Welland Canals Centre for their weekly parade for 38 weeks (Sept -June 2022-23 training year) at 50% of the rate.

Moved by: J. Richardson

Carried

e. 10.5 LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee annual report and 2022 work plan

i. Work plan attached

Motion to receive and accept the workplan and presentation from the LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee

Moved by: T. McLennon

Carried

11. Date of next meeting

Thursday, August 04, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.

12. Motion to Adjourn

That the Social Sustainability Committee be adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

Moved by: J. Richardson

Carried

Attachments:

- Recovery Plan from the Equitable Recovery Subcommittee
- Summary of the Recovery Plan from the Equitable Recovery Subcommittee
- LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee annual report and 2022 work plan

**An Equitable Recovery Plan for the City of St. Catharines
Recommendations from the City's Equity-Deserving Advisory Committees**

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Summary

In spring 2021 the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee formed a subcommittee with members of the City's equity-deserving advisory committees to review the City's reopening and recovery plans and provide feedback on how the City of St. Catharines could support equity and inclusion through reopening from the pandemic. This is the final plan that provides recommendations for City Council's consideration in both direct action and advocacy and to guide City staff in the implementation of the COVID recovery and re-opening, it contains a total of 18 recommendations as it relates to the social, economic, environmental, and cultural strategic pillars in relation to the City's 2019-2028 Strategic Plan. It should be noted that this document was prepared in good faith with the best information available to the Subcommittee at the time; however, as the Covid-19 situation is constantly in flux, some of the information and data included herein may have changed and should be confirmed for applicability of implementation.

Relationship to Strategic Plan

Many of the recommendations relate directly to Council's strategic plan through implementation, program design and delivery. It is hoped that these recommendations provide a lens for Council and staff to consider when making policy decisions and implementing City programs, policies, procedures, and service delivery. And where possible, to advocate with upper levels of government, funders, and partners for equity considerations in their programs and services as well.

Background

In fall 2020, City staff reached out to several of the City's advisory committees to ask for feedback on the City's COVID recovery framework. Through the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (E&I committee), members came together to thoroughly review the plan and provide broader recommendations for the City to consider in its re-opening and recovery plans, and for future plans, programs, policies, and services past the pandemic. Through spring and summer, a Subcommittee with members from each of the City's equity-deserving advisory committees reviewed the draft recovery strategy, sought feedback, conducted research and a literature review, looked at what other cities are doing and prepared this final report on specific ways that the City could directly (through action) and indirectly (through advocacy) pursue more equitable outcomes from the COVID pandemic.

For the context of this work, equity deserving groups include people who live in the community and identify as women, newcomers, Black, Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC), members of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Two-Spirit + (LGBTQ2S+) community, individuals living in marginalized conditions, persons with physical, developmental, cognitive, and intellectual disabilities and those who are neurodiverse and older adults.

Recommendations

Recommendations are categorized under the pillars of the City's strategic plan: social, economic, environmental, and cultural - although some of these recommendations fall under multiple categories.

Recommendations are either:

- **Recommendations for Action:** to activities the City can take directly in implementation of policies, programs, and service delivery to improve equity and outcomes for equity-deserving communities in St. Catharines; or
- **Recommendations for Advocacy:** areas where the City may not have direct control or influence and can take a leadership role through advocacy with upper levels of government.

RECOMMENDATION 1 –INCORPORATING AN EQUITY LENS

Overall, the Subcommittee is recommending that the City add an equity lens and analysis to all staff reports, policies, and decision-making to improve equitable outcomes for equity-deserving groups and members of the community.

Action:

- Build equity and resilience into decision-making frameworks for social service recovery by:
 - o using local data to inform decision making, funding programs, grants, needs-based data planning.ⁱ
- Factor COVID-19 equity impacts and data in the City's mid-term and long-term plans and strategies and put mechanisms in place to continue monitoring this impact through:
 - o the city budget – both operating and capital
 - o grants and funding programs
 - o transit and transportation planning
- Consider triple bottom-line reporting that considers financial, environmental, social impacts
- Provide Gender Based Analysis+ (GBA+) training for City staff to inform the reopening and recovery, and all City programs and policies to improve equitable outcomes for the future.
- As outlined above, add an equity lens to all Council reports to ensure that equity impacts are considered in all the City's decision-making and policies. This could follow the example of environmental sustainability or financial impacts section in staff reports as a standard analysis for presenting recommendations and reports to Council.
- Embed Indigenous and diverse cultural strategies in the design of the recovery phase and open the door to Indigenous, racialized and immigrant youth and women, LGBTQ2S+ communities to lead local initiatives.

Advocacy:

- Advocate that Niagara Region Public Health, Medical Officer of Health and the provincial government uses GBA+ and an equity lens analysis in criteria for setting or lifting stay-at-home-orders. This includes being aware of the complex needs of for, example, older adults, vulnerable parents, and workers – especially women.ⁱⁱ
- Advocate that Niagara Region, Public Health and all public services in Niagara provide training for staff on GBA+ to improve equitable outcomes in policy and decision-making.
 - a. Equity data generated from diverse sources (municipality, community partners and service providers) is essential to yield a real-time picture of lived experiences, physical and mental health needs, and resources of Indigenous and equity-deserving communities. Equity sensitive indicators such as age, gender, race, immigration status, ability, sexuality, gender identity are indispensable for monitoring signals of COVID-19 social and economic rebound.

SOCIAL PILLAR

RECOMMENDATION 2 – ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

Affordable housing has been a major issue for equity deserving communities for decades. It is both a social and an economic concern. Housing is a key contributor towards Social and Economic well-being, and is closely connected to issues of employment, transit, liveable and vibrant communities. Niagara was facing a housing crisis pre-Covid. The lack of accessible and affordable housing previously impacted the same equity deserving groups who now find themselves disproportionately negatively affected by the pandemic. The City should use all its tools and resources to pursue non-discriminatory housing practices, promote equitable access to affordable housing for all St. Catharines residents.

Action:

- The City should view housing as a human right and assess all related policy through this lens to identify discriminatory practices
- Ensure that the Planning Act is being followed. This includes looking at policy and by-laws from a human rights perspective
- Follow Stop the Loss initiatives that have been successful in other provinces to help stop the loss of affordable housing:
 - o track vulnerable properties
 - o pursue right of first refusal on vulnerable properties (the city buys the property and sells to a non-profit organization to develop housing)
- Improve housing quality through landlord / rental licensing and regulations (ex. ACORN Canada)
- Implement by-laws to protect tenants, such as renoviction by-laws, vacancy tax, relocation by-laws
- Build new: use tools, strategies to incentivize new affordable housing development:
 - o Continue to support and prioritize affordable housing with financial incentives, grants and in-kind through the CIP and other city programs
 - o Implement a sec. 37 of the *Planning Act* Community Benefits policy to support affordable housing needs
- Update the zoning by-law to be more accessible with clear, plain language and create a Citizen's Guide
 - o reduce the number of zones, overlays, and uses
 - o conduct the zoning by-law review with clear purpose on land use impacts and how it will affect affordable housing
 - o apply human rights and equity tests to the zoning by-law
- Implement development charges – for new developments to pay for the costs of development, saving funds for affordable housing incentives, neighbourhood projects etc.
- Diversify the consultation process for the planning development approval process to include more diverse voices and perspectives
- Review and update the City's Housing Action Plan with all these items
- Create a land development corporation, arms-length agency that has power and autonomy to pursue development for affordable housing.

Advocacy

- The City to advocate with the Niagara Regional Housing to allocate 10% of all resources allocated through NRH be earmarked specifically to support each individual equity deserving group as identified being on a housing waitlist.ⁱⁱⁱ

- Continue to advocate for St. Catharines / Niagara's fair share of affordable housing funding with upper levels of government – and for more tools, resources, grants, and subsidies^{iv}
- Work with Niagara Region to streamline the 2-tier planning process including grants, incentives, zoning by-law updates, and development charges

RECOMMENDATION 3 – HOMELESSNESS

While the City is not directly responsible for homelessness services, St. Catharines has partnered with Niagara Region and service providers to support outreach and help people find emergency shelter and housing. This collaboration should continue as the pressures in housing and rental markets continue to put pressure on the shelters and providers.

Action

- The City should continue supporting and investing in outreach services with Niagara Region and emergency shelter providers to help people find emergency shelter and housing and connect with support services.
- The City should share insights and lessons learned through the outreach pilot project with Niagara Region and partners to improve outreach and homelessness support services.
- The City should continue to work with Niagara Region Public Health and community partners like the REACH mobile clinic to provide vaccine clinics and public health outreach to homeless and vulnerable populations. The City could provide space, PPE, financial support.
- The City should continue to support pilot projects and initiatives that will address the social and economic factors that lead to homelessness and prevent it in the first place. Support programs that address employment, income, food security such as basic income.

Advocacy

- Niagara Region Community Services has reported to Regional Council how it has adjusted its homelessness services and outreach strategies throughout the pandemic and some of these changes have shown positive impacts to support people to find emergency shelter and housing. The City should continue to work with the Region and its funded agencies to learn from the lessons of the pandemic to improve health and safety and support services in emergency shelters, ultimately, to help shelter residents find housing, income security and health and well-being.
- City work with the Region to share information, lessons learned from pandemic, impacts on homelessness
- That all levels of government and funders of housing and homelessness services consider GBA+ in homeless and housing support programs.

RECOMMENDATION 4 – ACCESS TO RECREATION, SOCIAL INTERACTION

Access to community spaces and recreational centres is important for mental and physical health and well-being. However, people from equity deserving groups were typically struggling with social isolation before the pandemic due to higher rates of poverty, inadequate social and physical activity programming lack of access to public transportation, employment, health, recreation, etc. Research indicates that social isolation has been compounded by fear of the virus and anxiety about personal safety. In addition to this, lack of access to public washrooms became a real concern throughout the pandemic closures. There are lessons about access to outdoor and recreation spaces that the pandemic can offer to improve equitable outcomes for access to recreation and outdoor space in the recovery and into the future.

Action:

- The City of St. Catharines publish a list of outdoor activities and locations that are accessible to all to promote safe, outdoor social interactions and mental health and well-being.
- Use online mapping and apps (i.e., Ping St.) to publish lists of outdoor activities, locations, and public washrooms. Work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to support this work – as per the committee’s workplan item around digital way finding and accessible experiences. It should also be remembered that not everyone has access to web-based information and printed information should be considered as well.
- Ensure that public washrooms remain open and accessible throughout future shutdowns / closures and are open to all, including transgender/gender non-conforming individuals to have safe access.
- Ensure that public signage is visible, clear, plain language to improve access to public spaces and washrooms.
- Work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to improve way-finding and signage following principles of universal design.
- Ensure that public spaces are safe spaces: environments that are free of discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other forms of emotional or physical harm.
- The City to work collaboratively with other community organizations, recreation providers to ensure access to indoor and outdoor public spaces for the public.
- The City to consider optimizing / prioritizing use of outdoor spaces for equity- deserving groups, programs, and services for equity- deserving groups for social, recreational groups that support the overall health and well-being of marginalized people.
- Design measures that will prioritize Indigenous and equity- deserving groups to access green and open spaces, cooling and warming centres, summer camps and activities, with no cost for families facing economic hardships.
- Establish equity-based funding programs to support grassroots groups that support equity deserving communities. Allow ad hoc initiatives and non-formal groups to access financial support. This could be done through SCCIP and other grants.
- Support organizations that provide human services and social interaction to improve the health and well-being of residents.
- The City to continue exploring partnerships and sharing resources with community organizations, non-profits to support outreach and secure funding (i.e., YMCA partnership opportunity)

Advocacy:

- Work collaboratively with Niagara Region and funders to provide programming for equity-deserving groups in City facilities and shared spaces (i.e., EarlyON centre model as example).

RECOMMENDATION 5 — EQUITY TRAINING**Action:**

- Ensure that all City staff and transit staff are trained to better recognize those in crisis to be able to support these individuals should an issue arise in all city facilities and city property.
- Ensure that GBA+ training is provided to all policymakers and decision-makers, including Council and staff.
- Be conscious of representation in the City’s media campaigns, public communications and events. Ensure that members of equity deserving groups are represented in everything that the City does and provides – online, in print and in-person.

- Show that the community and workforce of St. Catharines is diverse and inclusive
- Provide training and awareness campaigns for city staff
- Be conscious of subtle forms of ageism, racism, gender stereotyping, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, Anti-Semitism, Anti-Islamophobia, anti-Asian Racism, and stigma that may become more apparent through the pandemic. Build the capacity of staff to identify these as early as possible, as well as identify discrimination or stigma which cause exclusion of equity deserving communities.

RECOMMENDATION 6 – PUBLIC ACCESS TO INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY

While the pandemic highlighted the importance of computers and internet for work and school during lockdowns, not everyone in St. Catharines or Niagara has access to computers and internet. This is both a social and economic imperative.

Before the pandemic a number of solutions were implemented to increase digital literacy and digital access including Cyber Seniors, Tech Connect, United Way/Bell Canada partnership providing 850 Niagara residents with a phone and cell service, the federal Connecting Families program, Bell Smart Kiosks and St. Catharines Public Library Hotspot loans. However, a number of these programs are limited in duration and/or scope or have been discontinued, such as the Bell Smart Kiosk pilot and the Connecting Families program which targets only families so excludes seniors and other adults living on their own. Digital access and literacy are key to supporting social well-being and economic prosperity for the citizens of St. Catharines.

Action:

- The City to provide free public space(s) to access the internet and technology to use the internet (i.e., computers and tablets) to improve access to essential public services
- Provide training and support to use the technology and internet for members of equity deserving groups
- Look at the Smart City initiative for guidance on how to implement free public Wi-Fi and improve internet access across the city.
- Consider fee-for-service agreement model with local agencies to improve public access to Wi-Fi through their networks and technology
- Review the successes and limitations of these programs to optimize success of future programs

Advocacy:

- The City should advocate for and seek out additional opportunities for innovative and collaborative solutions for equity in digital access and digital literacy. Seek new partners, collaborators and grants for Wi-Fi and technology pilots to improve connectivity.
- Work with the federal and provincial governments to access funding to improve free, public access to Wi-Fi networks across the city – outside of the downtown core too.
- Advocate for improved Wi-Fi access and broadband quality in rural areas
- Advocate for more affordable phone and data plans and work with service providers to improve access for equity- deserving groups (i.e., Quest Community Health Centre affordable phone program with support from Telus and the United Way as well as the repurposing old phones)

RECOMMENDATION 7: CLEAR, PLAIN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIONS

Often the City is the first point of contact for news about what is happening in the city and region. This was proven throughout the pandemic as all levels of government worked together to share critical information. The City is well-trusted and well-positioned to reach many groups and demographics with clear, plain language that is accessible to everyone.

For members of equity-deserving communities who do not have access to internet, media and social media, many individuals received information about COVID-19 and safety measures from neighbours and community members. Others access news and internet when Wi-Fi is available. Oftentimes information is not in accessible language and only in English. As a result, sometimes people experience information overload in languages that they cannot understand.

Action:

- Ensure that COVID-19 information (and all information from the City) is in plain, accessible language to reduce barriers and increase awareness
- Work with community partners such as Folk Arts, community health centres, InCommunities (211), the YMCA and other partners to provide translation services
- Work with community partners to provide American Sign Language translation
- Provide City information in multiple languages and formats – not only digital or online
- Ensure that all public engagement and feedback opportunities include more languages and translation, building on existing framework and lessons learned from the pandemic.
- Alternative and augmented communication devices should also be provided so that individuals can access services with independence and dignity and reduce barriers to service.

RECOMMENDATION 8: VOLUNTEERS

Reshaping of volunteerism in the re-opening and recovery phase is essential to re-engage residents in the community and appreciate the value that volunteers bring. Examples include neighbour to-neighbour programs and Indigenous culture education campaigns.

Action:

- Build supports for older adults to feel safe and comfortable to resume volunteering activities including providing training, PPE, and modified schedules to follow public health protocols, while still maintaining opportunities for meaningful engagement.
- Work with advisory committees to recognize equity-focused volunteer work and volunteer activities that support and enhance the quality of life for equity-deserving groups, as outlined by the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee's workplan

RECOMMENDATION 9: HEALTH EQUITY

Research has shown the disproportionate mental and physical health impacts of COVID on marginalized people. The fear and anxiety have been compounded for older adults with approximately 90% of those dying of COVID 19 being 60 years of age and older. While the City is not directly responsible for health care services, it can support improved equity by working with partners and upper levels of government to improve health equity outcomes for the residents of St. Catharines.

Action:

- Continue working with community partners to make vaccines widely available and accessible - especially for marginalized groups (i.e., Folk Arts clinic, Public Health pop up clinics, Quest)
- Continue providing City facilities, staff support, technology, and vehicle access to support mobile vaccination and testing sites (i.e., Seymour Hannah vaccination clinic)
- Participate in education, anti-stigma campaigns on vaccines and public health measures to help reach more people in the community
- Act as a champion and help deliver public health services
- As an employer and public service provider, support access to rapid COVID testing to ensure it is easily accessible

Advocacy:

- The City of should advocate to upper levels of government to address the disproportionate physical and mental health risks faced by the Indigenous community and equity deserving groups, as this affects the health and well-being of residents of St. Catharines.
- Prioritize frontline workers and the 5 C sectors (caring, cleaning, clinical, cashiering, catering) for access to personal protective equipment and vaccines.
- Advocate to prioritize community organizations that work with vulnerable communities
- Advocate for the implementation of the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the delivery of mental and physical health services to improve health outcomes for Indigenous communities
- Develop equity-based risk assessment frameworks to assess the recovery needs of equity-deserving groups, who may not have equitable access to health services.
- Establish a monitoring system to monitor lifting of restrictions
- Overall, evidence shows that age, race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status are closely related to rates of infection, hospitalization, and death. Data collected by any health providers should be disaggregated to ensure equitable recovery efforts.^v

RECOMMENDATION 10 – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH**Action:**

- Enhance collaboration and networking with equity deserving groups. Nothing about us without us.
- Continue virtual public engagement and forums formed during the emergency phase to enable long-term representation of equity issues through reopening and recovery
- Engage community partners and allies to find the most effective ways to engage equity deserving populations in City plans and strategies. This will set the foundation for sustainable relationships in the long-term.
- Examine how technology can be leveraged to reach more diverse voices in the community
- Use a GBA+ lens and culturally sensitive approaches to sharing information as education campaigns continue around COVID-19.
- Make public computers available at City facilities to increase access to information and engagement for city and other public services
- Address concerns about safety when planning in-person, face-to-face engagement activities to ensure diverse participation. This includes use of fully accessible sites and safe space set-up where masks, sanitizers, physical distancing seating are available.
- Develop clear, consistent, and accessible protocols on face-to-face meetings until all public health restrictions are lifted including Council meetings and delegations to ensure public participation is still accessible and safe.

- Consider the benefits of improved access to Council meetings for the public through virtual meetings, delegations in setting future and on-going protocols for public participation, city by-laws, council procedures, as considered in the updated Procedural by-law including hybrid models.
- Consider extending advisory committee terms of office that were interrupted due to the pandemic, closures, to ensure workplans are completed, consistency and input through recovery phase.

ECONOMIC PILLAR

RECOMMENDATION 11 – FOOD SECURITY

Household food insecurity refers to the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. Food insecurity is not simply a food problem though. By the time people are struggling to eat or provide food for their family, they are often having trouble meeting other basic expenses (ex. housing, prescription medications, etc). This problem was heightened during the pandemic. It was reported in May 2021 that Community Care St. Catharines and Thorold had experienced a 37% increase in users over the previous 14 months.^{vi}

Several innovative and modified services arose during the pandemic to fill this need. Hot meal programs transitioned to take-out service, hours of operations were modified, anonymous donors funded grocery giveaways, and local businesses also contributed (e.g., Small Scale Farms Food Fed Forward program.) The City also worked closely with Community Care to organize food give-aways providing city facilities and staff to support and help ensure that people in need had access to food.

Action:

- The City should continue to work with food banks and other service providers to ensure that residents have access to food in the event of future shutdowns/closures and/or as various income support programs and grants are discontinued.
- Support food banks to remain opened during potential future closures / shutdowns, including extended hours and additional supports to allow for a safe experience with proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and clients.

Advocacy:

- Work with United Way and food banks to improve food security so that residents do not have to rely on food banks and food give-aways to access healthy food.
- Advocate for the implementation of the Niagara Food Security Network Lived Experience Engagement, November 2021 (Report on Findings February 2021) which address the root cause of food insecurity, income.

RECOMMENDATION 12 – CHILDCARE

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of access to affordable childcare for social and economic well-being and equity and is critical for the long-term economic recovery. The City is commended for the leadership role it has already taken in implementing a childcare policy for all city advisory committees and removing barriers for parents with young children to participate in civic responsibilities. We continue to ask that the City advocates for affordable, accessible, quality childcare - not only through the pandemic, but through the recovery and re-building stages. As has been studied and reported widely, access to quality, affordable childcare has compounding impacts

on an individual's ability to participate in society, in work and school, especially women's ability to be meaningfully engage in their communities.

Action:

- The City considers ways to use its facilities and outdoor spaces for childcare providers to expand services and access to childcare - both through emergency phases of lockdowns (for essential workers) and through recovery
- That the City includes childcare policy, funding, support in all its recovery planning and economic development strategies to support women, entrepreneurs, and equity-deserving groups
- That childcare strategies that the City is involved in goes beyond the traditional Mon-Fri, 9-5 model to support and respond to Niagara's specific economic needs and sectors (i.e., service sector that works nights and weekends)
- Continue to provide childcare options for volunteers and members of committees to continue to participate in meetings and civic life as part of the City's operating budget and procedures.

Advocacy:

- The City of St. Catharines continues to advocate for a national, coordinated, affordable childcare strategy.
- The City uses its relationships and networks (like AMO) to advocate for and call on the provincial government to sign a childcare agreement with the federal government to secure Ontario and Niagara's share of funding to create more spaces and affordability.

RECOMMENDATION 13 – WORKFORCE SUPPORT

As a large employer, there are ways that the City can have a direct, positive impact on the quality of life and wellbeing of its employees and families. The City can also play a leadership role in designing policies and return to work options that work for everyone and improve equity.

Action:

- Address the needs of the City's workforce using GBA+ and an equity lens when designing return to work policies (i.e., flexible work hours, work from home options and schedules) for City staff. Many vulnerable parents and workers may show reluctance to resume use of services because of illness, fear of contracting illness or because they are caring for their own families that become ill.
- Create ways for staff to provide input regarding their needs and concerns.
- Integrate mental health support for staff when planning and implementing recovery efforts.
- Cross-train staff and create tools with easy explanations of the tasks of essential jobs, to build team and agency resilience.
- Work with and provide support to community partners and social service providers in developing their return to work and reopening plans.

Advocacy:

- Work with economic development, chambers of commerce, business sector to advocate for policy and resources that support the needs of municipal service sector to improve services, return to work

RECOMMENDATION 14 – TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS TO TRANSIT

Action:

- ensure that residents can access transit, including accessible transit, to get to food, shelter, work, services, school (essential services) throughout any future closures, shutdowns, stay-at-home orders
- consider the transit fee structure to ensure it is affordable for all, including students, unemployed individuals, single-people, and older adults
- support the integration of local transit services so that people can access school, work, social services, healthcare which are often regionalized services, across Niagara – not only in St. Catharines – and is critical to the most vulnerable populations.

RECOMMENDATION 15 – ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Like parks, recreation and outdoor spaces, access to active transportation became more important through the pandemic, as people looked for places to get outside, be active, and limit their social interactions. There are lessons from the pandemic to continue to improve active transportation networks in the City.

Action:

- Use GBA+ in transit and transportation planning to consider how all ages, genders and different abilities use active transportation to be sure that roads, sidewalks, bike lanes are safe and accessible for everyone (i.e., safe access to bike lanes)

Advocacy:

- Continue to seek funding opportunities from the provincial and federal governments (ex. Investing in Communities Infrastructure Program) for active transportation projects that improve access and equity throughout the city.

RECOMMENDATION 16 – PROCUREMENT

Through its operating and capital budgets, the purchase of goods and services, the City can support small, local business, entrepreneurs from equity-deserving groups through a social procurement policy that will demonstrate immediate, local impacts in the economic recovery.

Action:

- The City should create a procurement policy where businesses from equity-deserving groups are fairly included in the bidding process for City contracts (Note that this is an item from the Anti-Racism Committee's workplan).
- The City should implement the Niagara-based Living Wage requirement for all contracts, vendors, and service providers.

Advocacy:

- Advocate that Niagara Region implement a social procurement policy to support businesses from equity-deserving groups and maximize immediate, local impacts and economic recovery.

RECOMMENDATION 17 – EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

Paid and volunteer work was affected across all sectors. For equity- deserving groups who are often in precarious work or volunteer positions, this not only helps with their employment prospects, but also improves their sense of self-worth, experience, and feelings of belonging. The sense of purpose that individuals gained from these roles played a large part in their success, and without it many feel increased levels of low self-esteem, boredom, and isolation. People are eager to return to their roles and the City can play a role by supporting local businesses, organizations, and social enterprises to employ members of equity deserving groups so that they feel more supported in their return to work and community.

Action:

- Use GBA+ in developing business reopening plans to ensure that the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 are recognized and addressed in the City's workforce. When and where data is not available, seek best practices from other jurisdictions and implement ways to maintain a GBA+ and equity lens throughout recovery efforts.
- Seek employment equity for municipal employment and indirectly through city-delivered programs such as through the Small Business Enterprise Centre
- be conscious of the "promotion penalty" and potential for two-tier meetings through hybrid work models and return to work plans for both City staff, and volunteers and in public engagement
- Engage small businesses, non-profits, community organizations run by/ owned by members of equity- deserving groups to identify challenges to re-opening and the impacts of relaxing public health restrictions through surveys and group discussions.
- Assess impact of layoffs and legal leave on Indigenous and equity- deserving employees. Consider these impacts when planning for staff deployment/redeployment
- Develop risk assessments to measure workers/businesses most impacted by COVID-19 emergency measures and assess representation of equity deserving groups in businesses and jobs most impacted. Use this data to develop and refine the City's economic development strategies, programs and services provided directly by the City (the St. Catharines Enterprise Centre) and advocacy with other levels of government for economic development and investment programs.^{vii}

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL PILLARS

RECOMMENDATION 18 – SUPPORT HEALTHY, INCLUSIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS

St. Catharines has an excellent foundation in a neighbourhood, asset-based community development approach (Fitz, Queenston, Haig Neighbours, etc.) which can be leveraged for a strengths-based rebuilding from the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic.

Action:

- Use the Neighbourhood Equity Index, based on the World Health Organization Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool as a framework for better understanding neighbourhoods.
- The City reviews and implements recommendations from the "Niagara Community Observatory July 2021 Working Paper: Neighbourhood Associations and the Municipality: Supporting citizen engagement in the city" to support and leverage the Neighbourhood Associations.

- Resume planning for the Neighbourhood Forum and look to opportunities as to “how to better support them [Neighbourhood Associations] through clear communication channels, funding, and access to facilities and amenities” – from NCO report
- Develop a Neighborhood Equity Index to develop indicators for which neighborhoods have been impacted more severely economically by COVID-19.
- Prioritize small businesses and workers in neighborhoods with a majority of equity deserving populations.

Advocacy:

- Advocate that Niagara Region also follow a Neighbourhood Equity-based approach in its regional planning as it impacts neighbourhoods in St. Catharines and across the region.
- Advocate that Niagara Region update the Niagara Prosperity Initiative, following the review by the Social Justice Research Institute at Brock University, to improve neighbourhood outcomes and equity.

Financial and Environmental Implications

It is understood that each of these recommendations will have financial, environmental, and human resource implications for the City, especially the “Action” recommendations. However, it is also important to note that the cost of doing nothing to improve the health and well-being of equity deserving communities also has financial, environmental, and human resource implications for the City – as Council knows.

The Subcommittee is requesting that Council and City Staff consider the equity implications and the disproportionate ways that equity- deserving groups and members of the community may have been impacted by the pandemic in designing and re-designing programs, services, and policies for the future – not only to consider the financial implications, but the equitable outcomes of these decisions too. Essentially, when making a decision, not only to think about the financial or environmental sustainability impacts, but the equity impacts on community members as well.

Conclusion

As we know, marginalized people and members of equity deserving groups have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to experience these effects even after the pandemic is over. Hearing from the leadership of those who are directly impacted along with evidence-based action plans will help our governments and community leaders respond effectively and plan for rebuilding a city that is inclusive of everyone.

We would like to thank the City of St. Catharines for the opportunity for equity deserving groups to contribute to the report by sharing their experiences and providing recommendations. The Committees supporting the work of the Subcommittee would be pleased to continue this conversation as a partner in rebuilding and recovery efforts.

APPENDIX A: Background Research and Statistics

Affordable Housing

The waiting list for provincially funded affordable housing is decades long and we know it is not new. In Niagara alone, over 3500 individuals are waiting for a roof over their head and the wait lists range from 5-18 years for housing. The lack of supportive housing options and the disproportionate poverty rate among this population has contributed to significant overrepresentation of equity seeking people in the violence against women and shelter system, hospitals, jails, judicial system, and recovery centres. What was a housing issue has now mutated into a public-health crisis due to the well-documented dangers of housing insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Niagara Community Observatory:

"The housing crisis affects everyone in Niagara but hits some harder than others. The most vulnerable bear the brunt of the shortage of affordable housing, including Indigenous Peoples, women and children, older adults, newcomers, veterans, at-risk youth, the LGBTQ2S community and people facing mental health or addiction issues" (Source: [Niagara Community Observatory October 2020.](#))

Current housing costs are beyond the reach of many, for example *"rental prices have increased 10-15% since 2019, and 56% of renters cannot afford an average two-bedroom apartment"* (ibid). Furthermore, the relocation of GTA residents to Niagara - largely due to the attractiveness of the area and the increase in remote working opportunities - has resulted in Niagara seeing some of the highest house price changes in the country (Source: [Housing Affordability Plummets in Niagara in 2021.](#) Niagara Regional Housing report disturbingly long wait times, as indicated in the [Wait Times 2020](#)

Neighbourhoods

The most ethno-culturally diverse neighbourhoods in Ontario are experiencing rates of COVID-19 3x higher and death rates are twice as high compared to neighbourhoods that are the less diverse (Source: Public Health Ontario, COVID-19 in Ontario – A Focus on Diversity: January 15, 2020 to May 14, 2020). Further, neighbourhoods experiencing the highest levels of material deprivation are also experiencing disproportionately higher rates of COVID-19, hospitalizations and deaths compared to neighbourhoods that experience lower levels of material deprivation (Public Health Ontario, COVID-19 in Ontario - A Focus on Material Deprivation: January 15, 2020 to June 3, 2020). Therefore, it's important for the City of St. Catharines to consider the importance of neighbourhoods and existing inequities between neighbourhoods in the pandemic recovery plan. This clearly aligns with the City's Strategic Goal to build and support strong, inclusive neighbourhoods that provide a high quality of life for residents of all ages.

Digital Inequity

6% of Canadians and 4.9% of Ontario residents report not having home internet access and 26% of these individuals reported that cost was the primary barrier. Further, 13% reported that the cost of equipment was the primary barrier. The impacts of this digital inequity were amplified during the pandemic as services moved away from in-person to online. These services include health care, education and even applying for pandemic related benefits. During initial lock downs, book borrowing was limited to electronic books and many socialized with friends and family solely online. In addition, usually free access to telephones, internet and computers were eliminated during some parts of the pandemic (ex. computer use at the library, free wireless at dine in establishments such as Starbucks, etc.).

1.5 % of Canadians without home internet access did have some type of mobile data plan. Although this picture does not appear overly bleak, the percentage of those over 65 years of age without home internet access is substantially higher at 17% (Statistics Canada, May 31, 2021). Further, only 59% of Canada's lowest income homes have internet access, compared to 98% of Canada's highest income households ([Source: What is Technology Poverty](#)). These statistics do not reflect additional issues related to limited download speed and data plans, or text only plans. Digital inequality reinforces existing social inequalities.

In addition, the digital divide amongst Canadians and citizens of St. Catharines also includes issues of education and internet security. Only 57% of Canadians consider themselves "digitally literate". 42% of Canadians reported experiencing a cyber security incident during the pandemic. ([Source: What is Technology Poverty](#))

Food Security

It was reported in May 2021 that Community Care St. Catharines and Thorold had experienced a 37% increase in those using the food bank over the previous 14 months (Joint Release: Niagara Food Banks Raise Concerns, May 6, 2021). Food banks were some of the first agencies to see the immediate impact of COVID-19. With widespread closure of thousands of businesses and employers across the province, food banks saw a rapid surge in demand as hundreds of thousands of people were now without sufficient income for their basic needs. Access to food and meal support grew from the ninth most common reason that people contacted 211 Ontario to the number one reason in the first two months of the pandemic (Hunger Report 2020: The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Bank Use in Ontario). Further, it was reported that Community Care St. Catharines and Thorold was anticipating a \$500,000 shortfall with the cancellation of fundraising events (Niagara Falls Review, August 20, 2020).

Rates of food insecurity are especially high for recent immigrants to Canada, racialized communities, single female parents, and Indigenous persons (Building Ontario's First Food Security Strategy, July 2019). The impacts of food insecurity are well documented. Individuals in food insecure households are shown to be at increased risk for poorer mental and physical health, greater stress and chronic diseases. (Eating in Ontario: What Do We Know, March 2021). The importance of addressing food insecurity links clearly with the City's Strategic Goal of building and supporting strong, inclusive neighbourhoods that provide high quality of life for residents of all ages and supports the STC Framework for Recovery of "How do we improve the health and safety of our residents?"

Health Equity

The Alliance for Healthier Communities (www.allianceonorg) has released a 'Health Equity Charter', a living document that reflects a commitment to action to confront barriers to equitable health. Some important aspects from the Charter are helpful here:

Today in Ontario, not all populations have this fair opportunity. People in certain population groups live shorter than expected lives, face discrimination in accessing health services and the social determinants of health, or deal with preventable health conditions. This is not due to any factors inherent in the communities most affected by them. Rather, major gaps in population health outcomes have deep roots in historical and current systems of power. Some populations have been treated as expendable, are marginalized and excluded from decision-making; have inadequate access to resources in our society from food and housing to transportation to literacy to social inclusion; and face a life of discrimination and racism. The results are health disparities that are avoidable and

unjust. The goal of health equity is to remove unjust and remediable differences among groups of people. (Source: <https://www.allianceon.org/sites/default/files/documents/Alliance%20Charter%202021-Full-English-Revised.pdf>)

Mental health: A study examining the impacts of COVID-19 on families with children under the age of 18 found that there are significant and widespread negative impacts upon the family's mental health. 44.3% of parents with children under 18 reported worse mental health as a result of COVID-19. (Source: Examining the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on family mental health in Canada: findings from a national cross-sectional study)

Racialized people impacted: Public Health Ontario has indicated that COVID-19 rates are three times higher in areas where there are more racialized people; hospitalization and ICU rates are four times higher, and mortality rates are doubled

- Toronto Public Health notes that ACB (African, Caribbean, & Black) people comprise only 9% of the city's population, but they make up 21% of reported COVID-19 cases.
- In 2016 Approx. 1/3 of the ACB populations were engaged in precarious work & these proportions were higher among racialized women (43.1%) and newcomer women ([Unpacking the health and social consequences of COVID-19 through a race, migration and gender lens](#), Canadian Journal of Public Health.)

Older adults and elderly: International evidence has shown that ethnic minorities, the socio-economically disadvantaged, and the elderly have all disproportionately suffered the health burden of the COVID-19.

- People who reside in Long Term Care (LTC) homes make up almost HALF of all COVID-19 deaths: Source: [COVID-19 and inequality: are we all in this together?](#) Canadian Journal of Public Health. 2021.

Mental and physical disabilities: A study which examined the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on people living with disabilities found that this population reported heightened concerns & less readily available community supports in relation to their healthcare, finances, employment, and organizational support. This directly translates to inequitable health and financial outcomes for folks living with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of if they become infected with the virus or not.

- Those living with both a physical and mental health condition faced the greatest vulnerability to inequitable outcomes. ([Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on health, financial worries, and perceived organizational support among people living with disabilities in Canada](#), Disability and Health Journal, 2021)

Indigenous communities health impacts

According to experts, "A successful adaptation or integration of Western approaches for Indigenous public health must be anchored in the principles of self-determination for Indigenous Peoples as articulated in the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People to determine their own paths to healing and to health for their communities." It is important to note that Public Health has historically been a tool of colonization. However, several key concepts in contemporary

public health practice resonate with approaches to health and well-being that exist in diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities:

- “During COVID-19 many Indigenous communities have shown self-determination by articulating and enforcing rules on who can enter their communities, often implementing far stricter measures than those enacted by local municipalities, such as closures and checkpoints. [...] Indigenous leaders have advocated for the collection of Indigenous-specific COVID data with clear data sovereignty agreements related to access, control, ownership and possession of the data.”
- “First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities in Canada have had lower rates of COVID-19 overall and a lower case fatality rate than non-Indigenous Peoples despite structural inequities and social determinants that are generally related to poorer health outcomes. 12 First Nations on-reserve have had a COVID-19 case rate 4 times lower than that of the general Canadian population, with 3 times fewer fatalities and a 30% higher recovery rate.” Source: [COVID-19 and the decolonization of Indigenous public health](#)

LGBTQ2S+ community health impacts

According to a Position Statement released by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) about respecting sexually and gender diverse communities, ‘prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination threaten health through violence and social exclusion’. The RNAO strongly recommends the following practices, among others: inclusive communication, safer space and group-based interventions. (Source: https://rnao.ca/sites/rnao-ca/files/bpg/2SLGBTQI_BPG_June_2021.pdf)

LGBTQ2S+

2SLGBTQ+ Youth are a vulnerable population in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the impact on mental health. The economic fallout, job precarity, and isolation experienced during the pandemic has created negative mental health impacts among the trans & gender diverse (TGD) youth population. TGD youth have experienced significant challenges in their family environments, due to self-isolating within their family-homes, which has led to an increase in homelessness amongst this population.

- 71% of TGD youth reported that they were using mental health and substance use services which had been disrupted by COVID-19 (compared to 26.2% of cisgender youth.)
- The mental health impact of the pandemic will likely stretch much further into the future for this group of people than it will for the general population. ([Mental Health Among Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth: An Exploration of Effects During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), American Psychological Association.(8,2: 180-187), 2021)

The effects of Covid-19 is taking a bigger toll on the physical and mental well-being of the LGBTQ2S+community. The LGBTQ2S= community report greater current and expected impacts of Covid-19 on their physical, mental, and overall quality of life. This finding is particularly acute among LGBTQ2S+ communities living with chronic illness. (Source: <https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Impact-of-COVID-19-Canada%E2%80%99s-LGBTQI2S-Community-in-Focus-2020-04-06.pdf>)

Canada's LGBTQ2S+ community has also been disproportionately impacted financially by Covid-19. The LGBTQ2S+ community is less confident in their households' current financial situation as well as their ability to bounce back if they were to lose their jobs. 53% of LGBTQ2S+ households have been affected by layoffs and reduced hours – which compares to 39% of overall Canadian households. (Source: <https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Impact-of-COVID-19-Canada%E2%80%99s-LGBTQ2S-Community-in-Focus-2020-04-06.pdf>)

According to a Canadian study, sexual and gender minority (SGM) people, which collectively includes Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Queer, Intersex and Asexual people, “faced significant structural (eg, access to employment, housing, health care) and interpersonal (eg, violent transphobic attacks) discrimination prior to COVID-19. Pandemic conditions magnify these inequities, exposing and worsening health disparities and producing new ones”. (Source: https://www.schoolofcities.utoronto.ca/sites/www.schoolofcities.utoronto.ca/files/Gibbetal_AJHB_2020.pdf)

ⁱ It was noted by a reviewer of the draft of this document that local data is notoriously difficult to disaggregate in a way that would help City decision-making; but nonetheless, the Subcommittee recommends using local data where possible

ⁱⁱ It was noted by a reviewer of the draft of this document that stay-at-home orders should only be lifted based on health; there is a potential to hurt equity deserving populations at health risk by lifting stay-at-home orders too early because, for example, financial needs are not met

ⁱⁱⁱ There were differing opinions as between some of the drafters and reviewers of this document around this advocacy suggestion given that there are already priority statuses, such as those fleeing domestic violence, which may pose a conflict, that housing is divided by type and geography such that the 10% allocation may be impractical, and that the housing waitlist might not have self-identification components for equity-deserving groups, so it is not clear whether the demographics would make sense for a 10% target.

^{iv} It was noted by a reviewer of the draft of this document that around this issue, the City could consider advocacy with upper levels of government to raise social assistance benefits amounts, at the very least by indexing them to inflation

^v It was noted by a reviewer of the draft of this document that it might be useful to incorporate the Health Equity Impact Assessment tool created by the Ministry of Health: <https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/heia/>

^{vi} It was noted by a reviewer of the draft of this document that while many food banks were able to adapt and set up pickup and deliver services, for example, as a solution to shutdowns, some food banks and social services were closed

^{vii} It was noted by a reviewer of the draft of this document that such data might not be available, and while the Subcommittee in Appendix A provided some research referencing ‘neighbourhoods’, it may be that this is information about ‘dissemination areas’ instead

An Equitable Recovery Plan for the City of St. Catharines

Executive Summary & Next Steps for Mobilizing Change

Prepared by: Anika Forde, DEI Manager & Staff Liaison

February 8, 2022

Executive Summary - An Equitable Recovery Plan for the City of St. Catharines*

**refer to full "An Equitable Recovery Plan for the City of St. Catharines" for details on all 18 recommendations*

Background

In fall 2020, City staff reached out to Advisory Committees to ask for feedback on the City's COVID recovery framework. As a response in spring 2021 the Equity & Inclusion Advisory Committee formed a subcommittee with members from the Anti-Racism, LGBTQ2+, Older Adults Advisory committees to review and provide recommendations for consideration by St. Catharines for its COVID19 reopening and recovery plans.

The result of this extensive work done by the Subcommittee is **An Equitable Recovery Plan** consisting of 18 recommendations outlining what the City can directly do through action and indirectly through advocacy to pursue more equitable outcomes from the COVID 19 pandemic. More broadly, the recommendations fall into 3 core recommendation areas to drive actionable change as captured in Fig1.

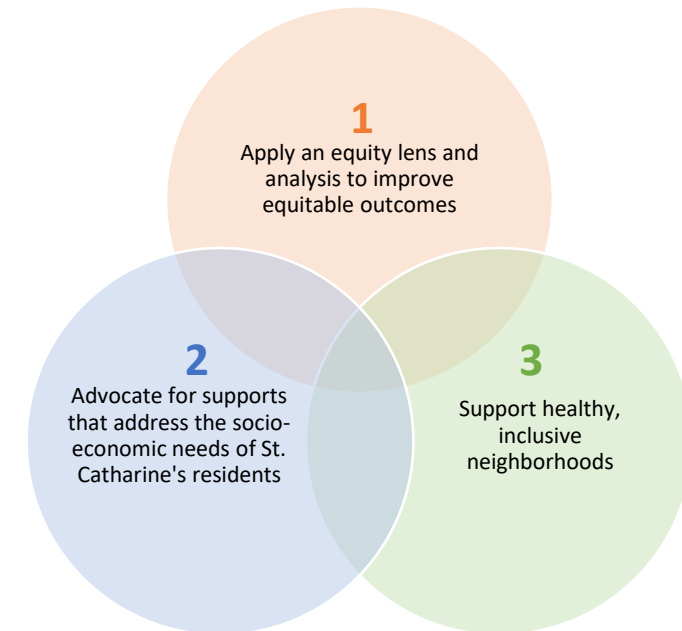
Approach

The subcommittee reviewed the draft recovery strategy, sought feedback, conducted research and a literature review as well as looked at what other cities were doing to prepare the Equitable Recovery Plan.

The purpose of the Equitable Recovery Plan is to provide:

- COVID19 recovery and reopening recommendations for consideration by City Council and St. Catharines as a public body
- Suggested opportunities for action and advocacy to equity deserving groups in St. Catharines
- An equity-based approach and lens to be considered when making policy decisions and implementing City programs, policies, procedures and service delivery

Fig 1. Core Recommendations to Drive Actionable Change



Alignment to Strategic Plan

In the Strategic Plan for 2019-2028 "City Council has reaffirmed its commitment to creating a high quality of life through strategic actions aligned to the four sustainability pillars" with that in mind and taking into consideration the guiding principles the core recommendations are in alignment to the plan.

More specifically, the core recommendations to drive actionable change as captured in Fig. 1 are aligned most closely to the underscored components as noted below:

- **Economic Prosperity:** Support the City's commitment to building and growing a diverse and resilient economy through fiscal responsibility, urban regeneration and collaborative partnerships
- **Social Well-Being:** Build and support strong, inclusive neighborhoods that provide high quality of life for residents of all ages
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Adopt innovative approaches and continue responsible community planning and decision making that balances growth, enhances quality of life, manages emergencies and minimizes the environmental impacts of climate change
- **Cultural Renaissance:** Celebrate the City's rich history, diversity, arts and cultural assets through leadership, promotion and investments that support measurable, sustainable creative growth.

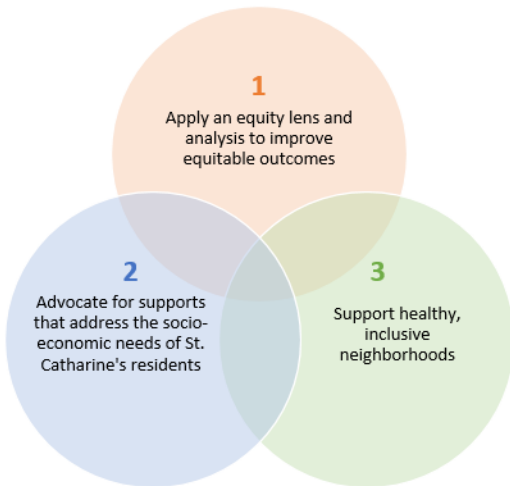
Implications of Inaction

It is well understood and documented that the COVID pandemic has impacted members of our society disproportionately. In acknowledging this fact, it is critical for St. Catharines and Canada at large to consider not only the financial implications of decision making but also environmental and sustainability impacts and its differential toll on our diverse communities.

The cost of doing nothing to improve the health and wellbeing of equity deserving communities also has financial, environmental and human resource implications for the city and beyond.

Summary of Recommendations - An Equitable Recovery Plan for the City of St. Catharines*

Core Recommendations to Drive Actionable Change



Social

- Build equity into decision-making frameworks and risk assessments, taking into consideration Indigenous and diverse cultural strategies in the design of recovery phase
- Consider triple bottom-line reporting
- Advocate for non-discriminatory housing practices and affordable housing i.e. Stop the loss initiatives; tenant protection by-laws
- Diversify consultation process for planning development approval process
- Document and share lessons learned, information and impacts on homelessness with Region
- Include GBA+ training to all St.Catharines staff (Council, Staff, Volunteers etc.)
- Diversify city marketing representation
- Provide information in multiple languages, formats – in plain accessible language digitally or otherwise
- Participate in and advocate for education, anti-stigma campaigns to address physical and mental health risks faced by Indigenous community and equity deserving groups
- Enhance collaboration and networking with equity deserving groups
- [Safe spaces](#)
- [Volunteers](#)
- [Wifi optimization – digital inequity](#)



Economic

- Continue working with food banks and other service providers to ensure access to food and food supports
- Advocate for a national, coordinated affordable, accessibly, quality childcare
- **return to work policies
- Take into consideration the diverse needs of staff when designing policies and return to work options
- Integrate mental health support for staff when planning and implementing recovery efforts
- Advocate for policy and resources that support the needs of municipal service sector to improve services return to work
- Update/ revise procurement policy that is diverse, equitable, inclusive and socially responsible
- Identify opportunities to support and advocate businesses from equity deserving groups that have been adversely impacted by COVID19
- [Use GBA+ in transit and transportation planning to consider the needs of diverse groups](#)



Environmental

- Update the Niagara Prosperity initiative, following the review by the Social Justice Research Institute
- Develop or use a neighborhood Equity Index to develop indicators for which neighborhoods have been impacted more economically by COVID-19
- [Healthy, inclusive neighborhoods](#)

Thought-starters when thinking about recommendations:

What do these recommendations look like in action?

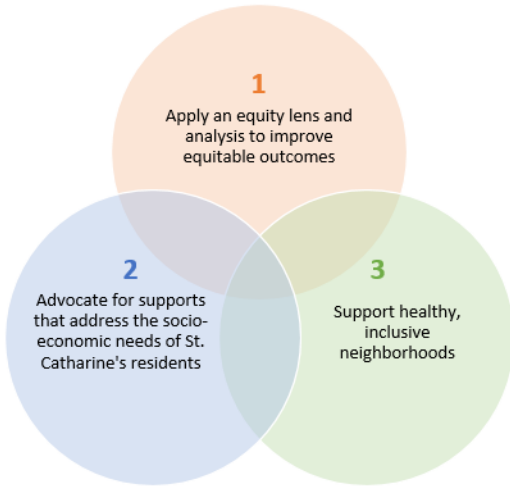
How might the E&I Advisory Committee & others support these recommendations?



Examples:

- What does a safe space look like for equity deserving groups? How might the committee advise on this?
- GBA+, is there a guiding framework that can be leveraged? What does this look like in practice? Is there an opportunity for the committee to work with community partners to raise awareness on this?

Core Recommendations to Drive Actionable Change



Suggestions on mobilizing the group forward, with a focus on the Equitable Recovery Plan

- Prioritize the recommendations to focus on 2022 and beyond
- Identify tangible actions to mobilize the prioritized items forward
 - Keeping in mind and thinking about the actions that can be taken within the scope and mandate of the Advisory Committee
 - This could look like:
 - Partnering with community stakeholders
 - Raising awareness
 - Advising council with clear actionable plans/resources for the recommendation/advise put forward



Report from: LGBTQ2s+Advisory Committee

Report Date: April 6, 2022 (Committee Meeting approval)

Meeting Date: May 3, 2022 (Social Sustainability Committee)

Report Number: ____

File: _

Subject Annual Report 2020 -2021

Strategic Pillar: Social Sustainability 2021 Workplan Report

Background & 2021 Workplan Report

The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Queer 2spirit + (LGBTQ2s+) Advisory Committee's mandate is to advise Council on creating access and inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, plus (LGBTQ2+) communities within the City of St. Catharines. The Committee's lived experience provides voice, visibility, and community expertise.

According to the June 2021 report released by Statistics Canada, "Canada is home to approximately one million people who are LGBTQ2+, accounting for 4% of the total population aged 15 and older in 2018."

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210615/dq210615a-eng.htm>

Although census data does not indicate how many LGBTQ2s+ people live in our community, a 2021 report published by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario observes that "It is difficult to determine the exact number of people who identify as 2SLGBTQI+ due to lack of adequate and longitudinal data. However the Pan Canadian Survey suggests 13 per cent of Canadians may identify as 2SLGBTQI+. Other reports indicate that up to 14 per cent of high school students identify as LGBTQ. Additionally, non-binary and intersex people are frequently overlooked and erased from data collection and statistics."*

The importance of having an Advisory Committee that is connected to the communities it serves honours the principle of community development within the queer community that states "nothing about us without us." The first ever meeting of the LGBTQ2s+ Committee took place on September 11, 2019 and 4 meetings were held that year. The initial workplan in 2019-identified the following priorities;

- 1) A request by Council to the Advisory Committee to consider the creation of a rainbow crosswalk
- 2)) Conducting an environmental scan of the services/resources/educational opportunities for members of the LGBTQ2+ communities that exist in St. Catharines in order to determine: what if any gaps exist, and partnership opportunities with community organizations; If/how organizations are marking days of significance to LGBTQ2+communities
- 3). Recommendations/information related to gender and sexual diversity training for City Staff.
- 4) Gathering information regarding Gender Inclusive Washrooms (GIW) including: Where these washrooms are located in city run facilities; Best practices; and rationale for the need for GIW

facilities

5). Inclusive Business Program

In 2020, only 5 meetings were held due to the April onset of the pandemic resulting in the cancellation all advisory committee meetings. After 8 months of inactivity, the Committee resumed meetings electronically in January 2021. It met 10 times in 2021, doubling the activity of the prior year. There was significant transition among the Committee membership. When the Committee reconvened in 2021, only 5 of the original 10 members remained. In that same year 3 different people held the position of Chair, and 3 different people provided staff liaison. Most members were new to the committee, and had not participated in the work that created the 2019-2020 workplan. As a result, there was a need to rebuild both our team and its knowledge base to finish the tasks at hand. We appreciated the patience and understanding of the Social Sustainability Committee while we worked through the pre-existing priorities from 2021 and identified new priorities based on existing and emerging issues.

Respectfully submitted by the LGBTQ2s+ Advisory Committee.

*Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO). Promoting 2SLGBTQI+ health equity. Toronto (ON): RNAO; 2021, page30

Accomplishments in 2021

The Rainbow Crosswalk -Installation of the Rainbow Crosswalk took place in June during Pride month. This achievement was the outcome of; advocacy by Elspeth Silverwood, Cindy and Brandon Potter ,the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Niagara Chapter, work of the Advisory Committee members over a 2 year period, the motion made by Councillor Miller and the support of Council, and the installation by Transportation Services The Committee worked in partnership with the Anti-Racism committee to create a unique design , with elements signifying; the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe territory, City of St. Catharines, the Two Row Wampum agreement, PRIDE and Progress, the trans gender community, and racialized communities. The installation ceremony was co-led by Mayor Sendzik and former Committee Chair Liam Coward... Staff and Committee members supported logistics including a media release and interviews. Unfortunately the crosswalk was vandalized, but was repaired. Interviews were given by the Mayor and Committee members to local media about the vandalism. Subsequently, the municipality of Port Colborne installed a rainbow crosswalk ,and both Niagara Region and Niagara On The Lake have planning underway The Association of Municipalities of Ontario featured a video of the St. Catharines installation on their website for PRIDE at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7VLxZRJHyo>

Environmental scan of services – The Committee researched and developed a data base of LGBTQ2s+ service providers to the St. Catharines community categorized by businesses, social services and health providers. The next step is finding a home for this data bank with either Niagara Connects or the municipal website,

Calendar of Awareness/ Days of Remembrance in LGBTQ2s+ Community –the committee researched and supported the recognition of 18 important dates that are observed in the lgbtq2s+ community that increase awareness of specific issues. Recognition of these days of significance is made during the opening of Committee meetings by a person with lived experience, plus an ally to lead. This also provides an opportunity to acknowledge the good work done by local agencies The Mayor’s office is also given a reminder of important dates

Recommendations related to gender and sexual diversity training for city staff- the Committee met with Lori Mambella, Manager of Recreation Programs & Culture Services who sought guidance on registration questions asked for municipal recreation programs regarding gender expression and identity. Ongoing work for 2021 is the need to revise other municipal forms.

Universal Washrooms - the committee passed a resolution that signage in “public spaces” should clearly indicate where washroom facilities are designated as “Universal washrooms.” People of all genders, including Trans and non- binary people, are welcome to use a universal washroom. Terminology such as “family washrooms” should be avoided Universal washrooms do not prioritize some users over others. We support the advocacy of the Accessibility Committee for Universal Washrooms that are truly accessible and available to all.

Inclusive Business program – The Committee created a data bank of LGBTQ friendly businesses to share with the community. It will be helpful to “My Main Street” a new municipal initiative funded in partnership with the Federal government. Ongoing work of the Committee is to develop criteria that clearly articulates what is meant by an LGBTQ business.

Conversion Therapy-The Committee passed a motion expressing concern about the issue of conversion therapy, an “attempt to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual or gender identity to cisgender.” Council noted this concern at its October 18, 2021 meeting and subsequently received a staff briefing. Federal legislation made conversion therapy illegal on January 7, 2022.

Equitable Recovery COVID -19 – Committee members actively participated in drafting the recommendations in partnership with the Equity and Inclusion workgroup

New Workplan Items (Balance of Council Term 2022)

To increase understanding of the issues there is a brief description of why this is a workplan priority. This is necessary because these issues are often invisible, misunderstood or minimized.

A. ITEM 1 Creating and Identifying “Safer” Spaces

Description of the Issue: Violence, discrimination and harassment affect many people who are LGBTQ2s+in Canada.

The report for 2021 issued by the Niagara Regional Police confirms that in 2021 there were 21 investigations for hate crimes, mostly related to racism or LGBTQ2s+ phobia, and anti-Semitism 9 of the 21 investigations (approximately 43%) were in regard to hate crimes affecting the LGBTQ2s+ community.

A 2021 survey of 25,636 LGBTQ2 people living in Canada published by the Government of Canada's LGBTQ2 Secretariat reported "39% of LGBTQ2 respondents reported experiencing violence due to homophobia, transphobia, biphobia or other forms of discrimination directed at their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression in the last five years. That violence most often took the form of verbal abuse". 17% reported physical violence, 13% reported sexual violence and 9% reported property damage. <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/free-to-be-me/lgbtq2-action-plan/survey-findings/quick-stats.html#a2>

Objective(s): Support the development of campaigns to create and support "safer" public spaces and services in St. Catharines where people of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations can participate equally without the risk of judgement or harm.

Strategic Alignment: This workplan priority aligns with the Strategic Plan goal to build and support strong, inclusive neighbourhoods that provide high quality of life for residents of all ages. We want to elevate the conversation from equity seeking groups being "included" to recognize that we are "co-owners." "We belong here too".

Involvement with other Advisory Committee/public: "The LGBTQ2s+ community has distinct needs, challenges and opportunities. We are "strong, compatible and connected" with the Advisory Committees addressing anti-racism, accessibility, recreation, older adult and student quality of life concerns. The spectrum of our rainbow is a beacon for equity that includes all of these human issues across the life span. A "Safer space" campaign is a public benefit for all as co-owners of public space. Community groups such as "Out Niagara" are also advocating for the creation of safer spaces and we propose to link with their efforts and that of other community groups.

Project Risks:-Although progress is being made, St. Catharines and Niagara Region have struggled with issues such as PRIDE events, Homophobia, bi-phobia, and trans-phobia. Asking organizations to consider how they are actively engaging the LGBTQ2s community and providing equitable services may be challenging and not a straight path. We are also relying on the availability of volunteer labour within our committee and occasionally in other organizations, time frames and availability may vary or be subjected to unanticipated constraints.

The Advisory Committee has experienced a 60% turnover in Members in the past 16 months, as well as 3 different staff liaisons. This has affected Committee recruitment, team building and created an extended "learning curve" The limited availability and time constraints of qualified volunteers and the lingering effects of the pandemic may impede progress.

How:

Step 1- The Committee will contact similar sized and larger Ontario municipalities regarding training materials/ policies, wise practices on creating and supporting Safer space that pertain to the LGBTQ2s+community. We will consider if these policies are applicable, practical and replicable in St. Catharines and create a databank. Contact will include selected members of the Coalition for Inclusive Municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and The Niagara Region. (Time frame 2 months)

Step 2 – The Committee will interview local organizations within our St. Catharines LGBTQ2s+ databank; businesses, health care providers, social service providers, and social venues to determine what policies are in place to create safer space and to engage LGBTQ2s+ staff, volunteers, clients and to recruit Board members. Do they have access/completed professional training on LGBT issues or do they have plans to pursue it?

Step 3- Acknowledging historic and ongoing colonialism and the impact on 2 Spirit Indigenous people. We will reach out to the Niagara Native Friendship Centre, and the De dwa da dehs nye>s Indigenous Health Centre to learn about wise practices such as “we’re taking care of each other amongst ourselves.” As part of our individual and collective commitment to truth and reconciliation we will seek to create dialogue that advances a non-colonial approach within the LGBTQ community that works in partnership with 2 spirit people. Out Niagara, The St. Catharines Library and Brock University will be contacted as potential partners. (6 months)

Step 4 Explore possibility of cohosting/ supporting a community awareness event with Out Niagara to foster awareness, partnerships and develop community awareness training and support needed in creating truly safer spaces. (5 months)

Step5- LGBTQ2s and public Space- - we will connect with the 8 municipalities in Ontario listed on the AMO Pride events website to determine what their experience has been with installation of Rainbow Crosswalks and benches- For example last year Milton painted 2 benches in rainbow colours in addition to installing a rainbow crosswalk. Have they been responding to acts of vandalism –and engaging with the public on the issue? We will look for innovative ideas and share lessons learned.

Timeline: 3 months

B. ITEM 2 Supporting LGBTQ2s+ Owned or Led Businesses and Non-Profits as engines for social inclusion that increase the wellbeing and prosperity of diverse communities

Description of the Issue - The 2019 Nielsen Survey for the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce reports that approximately 1 out of 40 Canadian businesses are LGBT+ majority owned or operated. Many LGBT businesses remain invisible or risk exclusion and discrimination if they are “Out”. 46% purposely hide their company’s LGBT ownership, 33% report that

identifying lgbtq+ ownership resulted in loss of business opportunities and 28% reported discrimination because of lgbtq+ ownership.

A 2021 Deloitte Canadian survey indicates that many LGBT businesses are almost wholly owned, operated or controlled by members of diverse communities – **an average of 23.6% companies**. This is a higher level of diverse participation than Canadian ownership averages which are measured at 14.1% (12.2% Visible Minorities, 1.4% Aboriginal Persons, 0.5% Persons with a disability) (Government of Canada, 2020)

“In a 2016 TELUS commissioned survey of 814 Canadians regarding lesbian and gay experiences in the workplace respondents, 37% believed that their workplace was not inclusive of lesbian and gay people, while almost half (45%) believed that the same workplaces were not inclusive of trans people”

prideatwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PrideAtWork_2018_Round_FINAL-s.pdf.”

PRIDE at Work Executive summary page 12

https://www.cglcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Deloitte_CGLCC_Report_vF_052621.pdf

Objective(s):

- Inform decision making pertaining to the City’s proposed Diverse Supplier Policy
- Support and enhance Council & staff’s ability to include LGBTQ2S+ representation when making decisions City’s dealing with local organizations and businesses.
- Develop a metric or assessment tool for determining if a business or non-profit organization can be classified as “LGBTQ2s+ owned” or “LGBTQ#s+ operated” or “provider of” LGBTQ2s+ specific services and is a “fair wage” employer
Reduce “rainbow washing” and tokenistic efforts at LGBTQ2s+ inclusion
- Create a guidance document for businesses and organizations in the community seeking to be recognized as; LGBTQ2s+ owned, LGBTQ2s+ operated, or providing LGBTQ2s+ specific services

Strategic Alignment: This workplan priority aligns with the Strategic Plan goal to build and support strong, inclusive neighbourhoods that provide high quality of life for residents of all ages.

Potential risks – businesses and NFPs. may be reluctant to disclose HR policies, or practices. Organizations who exhibit rainbow symbols but do not provide any meaningful engagement safety or opportunity may resist/ lack resources to change

How:

- Research and information gathering - Starting from resources provided below, review what comparator municipalities in Canada are doing. Look to large municipalities for guidance & engage contacts within the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities
- Indicate the level of inclusion or engagement a business or NFP organization’s claims of representing/ serving the LGTBQ community when dealing with the city or asking for its endorsement or support. This would ensure that initiatives intended to create

employment equity or to equitably serve the LGBTQ2s+community are actively engaging and benefitting LGBTQ & 2S folks

Timeline: 1-3 months

- Policy development phase
 - Using a working group format, draft the resource document. Working group suggestions to be returned to the full committee for final decision making.
 - Timeline: 3months
- Collaboration Phase
 - Seek input from other equity seeking committees (Anti-Racism, Accessibility, Equity and Inclusion)
 - Seek input from Niagara Region Native Centre regarding applicability of this policy to Two Spirit community and process of community development
 - Incorporate Feedback into Policy
 - Timeline: 2 months
 - Recommendation for Council Approval & Implementation

Potential Resources:

- <https://www.cglcc.ca/resource/deloitte-business-survey-summary-analysis/>

C. ITEM 3 Deepening commitment to Gender Diversity and LGBTQ2s+ equity by developing and supporting local initiatives

Description of the Issue –Council needs to more fully articulate its commitment to “Gender Diversity” and how it will either support or co-lead as appropriate, community, regional, provincial and federal initiatives on gender diversity that recognize that this is a fundamental human rights issue and that gender is non –binary.

On June 11, 2019 “St. Catharines signed the “Leadership Accord on Gender Diversity” created by Electricity Human Resources Canada. Their website states that the “key beliefs” that led to the creation of the Leadership Accord on Gender Diversity are as follows “Our key beliefs - Canada's electricity workforce includes a much lower representation of women, indigenous people, racialized people, persons with disabilities, **LGBTQ+, gender diverse people** and newcomers to Canada.” The City publicly linked the issue of gender identity to the LGBTQ community the Budget Standing Committee memo (October 21, 2019) () describing “Equity Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives **This role will be the Staff Liaison for LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee** for Council and further support Council’s commitment to the signing the Leadership Accord for Gender Diversity” (*bolded for emphasis*).

The Corporate Report to Council of June 10, 2019 described the “key beliefs” of the Leadership Accord on Gender Diversity as follows; “**Through the Accord, Electricity Human Resources Canada have developed a set of key beliefs to support and further promote women in the workforce** that can be applied across sectors and in municipal government. The Accord outlines

actions to support **and promote women in the workforce that will benefit all employees and employers** by the following: Increasing **women's** economic power through increased earning potential, Adding skills and diverse thinking to organizations nationwide as well as the wider Canadian economy.”(bolded for emphasis) <https://stcatharines.civicweb.net/document/71691>

However, an approach that seeks to hire an equal amount of women to men, would more accurately be described as “gender parity” not “gender diversity.”

<https://genderrights.org.au/information-hub/what-is-gender-diversity/>

Objective(s): If requested by Council, work with Electricity Human Resources Canada to revise and/or provide input on the document (Leadership Accord on Gender Diversity) to align with the originally stated key beliefs of the document .

Strategic Alignment This workplan priority aligns with the Strategic Plan goal to build and support strong, inclusive neighbourhoods that provide high quality of life for residents of all ages. The LGBTQ 2s+ community fully supports the commitment to gender parity made in the Leadership Accord, and would be allies in the intention to take an equity approach to reduce gender dominance in employment

Involvement with other Advisory Committee/public: -Revision of all municipal documents for registration to reflect diversity in gender identity, gender expression and choice of pronouns.

Potential risks: If the City does not clarify its position it risks being out of alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Commission directives on gender identity and gender expression as it relates to employment

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/gender-identity-and-gender-expression-brochure>

The City also risks being out of alignment with recent Federal Initiatives on diversity such as the 50/30 challenge that seeks “to improve access for women and/or non-binary people and other equity-deserving groups, including those identifying as: Racialized, Black, and/or People of Colour (“Visible Minorities”), People with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), 2SLGBTQ+ and/or gender and sexually diverse individuals, and Aboriginal and/or Indigenous Peoples.”

<https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/07706.html>

The 50/30 has been endorsed by a growing list of **1,521** Canadian Organizations including; the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre, Niagara Health, Niagara –on –the- Lake Chamber of Commerce., Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Niagara-Halton, Solidarité des femmes et familles immigrantes francophones du Niagara (SOFIFRAN) Goodwill Industries Ontario Great Lakes.

The endorsement of the Leadership Accord on Gender Diversity was an important step in creating a more equitable municipal workplace. Council may or may not choose to revisit the subject during the limitations of its current term. Since this matter was voted on by Council more than 21 months ago there is no bar against the Committee asking the Council to entertain a motion related to the Leadership Accord (article 12.7 of Simplified Meeting procedures) but time to consider it may be a barrier.

How:

Step 1 – Advise the Social Sustainability Committee to clarify what is meant by “gender diversity” Using the term “gender diversity” signifies to the LGBTQ2s+ community that the City recognizes the human rights perspective that gender is not only a binary male/female construct.

Step 2- Advocate that the City clarify with, **Electricity Human Resources Canada** that According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the *Code*) people are protected from discrimination and harassment because of gender identity and gender expression in employment, housing, facilities and services, contracts, and membership in unions, trade or professional associations.”

If requested, work with Electricity Human Resources Canada to revise the document to align with the originally stated key beliefs of the document

Step 3 – Endorsement of the 50/30 Challenge is not open to municipalities, Work with Council and municipal staff and Niagara Region to align priorities consistent with the Federal 50/ 30 Challenge which states

The 50 – 30 Challenge asks that organizations aspire to two goals:

1. Gender parity ("50%" women and/or non-binary people) on Canadian board(s) and/or senior management; and
2. Significant representation ("30%") on Canadian board(s) and senior management of other equity-deserving groups: Racialized, Black, and/or People of Colour ("Visible Minorities"), People with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), 2SLGBTQ+ and/or gender and sexually diverse individuals, and Aboriginal and/or Indigenous Peoples. The program and participants recognize Aboriginal and/or Indigenous Peoples, including those that identify as First Nation Peoples, Métis Nation, and Inuit, as founding Peoples of Canada and underrepresented in positions of economic influence and leadership

Step 4- Research what is the practice among other AMO members and other municipalities when using the honourific terms in Council to address Municipal employees or speakers. Is the term “Mr. Mayor” or “Ms. Mayor” appropriate when it appears to be the only gender based form of address to a municipal employee who presides at Council meetings and who

champions municipal initiatives ? Is there an opportunity to model the way, and also give all Municipal employees, including the Mayor and members of Council the opportunity to identify their own choice of pronouns?

It should be noted that in 2017 the first publicly disclosed transgender Mayor was elected in Canada.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n85ZkLEyxaMeetings>

Step 5- Reach out to the not for profits and businesses in our LGBTQ2s+ data base to convene a meeting to discuss the 50/30 challenge and invite guest speakers from the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce and Niagara Health.

Timeline: 5 months

Potential Resources: Staff assistance with scheduling, legal opinion on what honourific terms may/ must be used in Council to address the personage of the Mayor