
REPORT TITLE: Creating a Welcoming Streets Pilot Program for Brampton

FROM: Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the Region of Peel enter into a one-time grant agreement with The Corporation of the City of Brampton in response to Resolution Number 2020-991, which directed Regional staff to investigate the feasibility of a grant program administered by the Downtown Brampton Business Improvement Association (BIA);

And further, that a one-time grant be issued to a maximum of \$250,000 to The Corporation of the City of Brampton, to be funded from Regional Tax Rate Stabilization Reserves;

And further, that the subject grant agreement be used to fund a “Welcoming Streets” Pilot Program to assist vulnerable individuals and to provide support to local businesses and property owners in the downtown Brampton area;

And further, that the Commissioner of Human Services be delegated authority to enter into and execute the subject grant agreement and necessary documents with The Corporation of the City of Brampton on business terms satisfactory to the Commissioner of Human Services and on legal terms satisfactory to the Regional Solicitor.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On November 26, 2020, through Resolution 2020-991, Council directed staff to investigate the feasibility of a grant program that would support business owners with services to include, but not be limited to, additional garbage collection and graffiti clean-up.
- Based on the feasibility study, staff recommend that a “Welcoming Streets” Pilot Program be created in response to Regional Council’s motion, ongoing concerns reported by the Downtown Brampton Business Improvement Association (BIA) and other constituents, and gaps identified on issues affecting businesses and vulnerable individuals in downtown Brampton.
- To implement the program, staff seek approval to provide one-time funding to the City of Brampton, to be utilized to hire two program staff for a one-year pilot program, funded from Regional Tax Rate Stabilization Reserves to a maximum of \$250,000.
- The pilot program would be co-designed by the Region of Peel and the City of Brampton. The two-program staff would support vulnerable populations in accessing programs and services designed to improve their outcomes and act as a liaison between these individuals and downtown stakeholders, building trusting and effective relationships over time.
- Throughout the pilot period, Regional staff, together with City of Brampton staff, will monitor program outcomes and determine where program funding, administration and oversight are ideally suited.

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- Regional Staff will return with recommendations to both City of Brampton and Region of Peel Councils in advance of the 2023 budget deliberations.
 - Should the Region be directed to fund the program beyond a one-year pilot, it will require an incremental increase to the net levy.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

At the September 24, 2020 Regional Council meeting, several delegations came forward to share concerns about homelessness in downtown Brampton. Following these delegations, on October 15, 2020, the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Committee directed staff to explore further actions. On November 26, 2020, Regional Council approved a report on “Additional Immediate Actions to Address Concerns about Homelessness”, whereby up to \$550,000 of temporary COVID-19 funding provided by senior levels of government would be used to support homelessness programs and other vulnerable residents. At the same meeting, through Resolution 2020-991, Council directed staff to investigate the feasibility of a grant program that would support business owners with services to include, but not be limited to, additional garbage collection and graffiti clean-up.

2. Feasibility Study – Methodology

To assess the feasibility of a grant program to support businesses in downtown Brampton, staff reviewed the legislation that governs the relationship between Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) and government. Staff also reviewed the roles and responsibilities of regional and local governments as well as that of business improvement associations.

Staff also interviewed key stakeholders, including:

- Downtown Brampton Business Improvement Association;
- Ontario Business Improvement Area Association;
- Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Association;
- Region of Peel staff in Human Services, Waste Management, Health, Legal, Finance, Planning, and Corporate Security;
- City of Brampton staff in Economic Development, Community Services, Public Works, and Security Services;
- Local Councillors representing the area; and,
- Program staff from successful ambassador programs located in the cities of Guelph, Oshawa and Cambridge.

A survey of businesses located in downtown Brampton was also conducted with the assistance of the City of Brampton and the Downtown Brampton BIA.

Finally, staff reviewed best practices in other municipalities in Ontario to understand how they were addressing similar concerns.

3. Feasibility Study – Summary of Findings

The feasibility study led to several key insights that informed the recommendations of this report.

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a) Legislative Framework

A review of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, confirmed that local municipalities are the level of government to fund and establish a board to manage a business improvement area. The *Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, under certain conditions, also provides authority for a municipality to make a grant on such terms as to security and otherwise as the council considers appropriate, to any person, group, or body within or outside of the boundaries of the municipality. In addition, the *Planning Act, 1990* permits local municipalities to establish Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) to offer financial incentives such as grants to private business owners that can be used to make improvements to an area such as a BIA. There is no legislative relationship between a BIA and a regional municipality.

b) Roles and Responsibilities

There is an established relationship between the City of Brampton and the Downtown Brampton BIA built on funding, incentive programs and supports to local businesses. There is a Downtown Area Subcommittee of the Brampton Community Safety Advisory Committee that reports to City Council, City representation on the BIA Board, and services that address litter and security on public lands. The Region's role in downtown Brampton is focused on street outreach, other homelessness services, curbside waste pick-up and needle drop boxes. Please refer to Appendix I for a Map of the Downtown Brampton BIA.

c) Survey of Downtown Businesses

Twenty-seven out of 224 businesses (12 per cent) surveyed provided a response. These results revealed that respondents were most concerned about the behaviour and loitering of vulnerable individuals, followed by community safety, litter and cleanliness. The survey results reinforced the need for a program that responds to concerns from local businesses and residents outside of a police response, that assists individuals who loiter in the downtown and provides opportunities to regularly liaise with and build trust among key downtown stakeholders.

d) Jurisdictional Scan

A review of programs in Guelph, Oshawa, and Cambridge demonstrated that staffing resources dedicated to liaising between the business community and vulnerable individuals in a downtown setting are very successful. The review also revealed that these programs are typically led and funded by the local municipalities as opposed to Regional government. Please see Table I below for outcomes.

Table I: Summary of Similar Programs in Other Jurisdictions

City and Program	Partners and Funders	Outcomes	Annual Costs & Staffing Resources
City of Guelph: Welcoming Streets	Guelph Community Health Centre, Guelph Police Services, Downtown Guelph Business Association	Over 5 months, 670 interactions, 145 calls for support, 24 presentations to local businesses.	\$156,000 2 FTEs
City of Oshawa:	City of Oshawa, C.A.R.E.A. Community Health, Downtown Oshawa BIA	Since 2019, 2,092 client interactions, 385 referrals to supports, 584 visits	\$240,000 2 FTEs & 1 PT student

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Welcoming Streets		to businesses, 250 workshop participants	
City of Cambridge: Downtown Ambassador	City of Cambridge	Annually supports 448 businesses , receive 1,200-1,600 calls , removes 10-15 tonnes of trash , response time of 25-30 minutes .	\$913,000 9 FTEs (3 downtown areas)

4. Recommendation – Welcoming Streets Pilot Program

While both the Region of Peel and the City of Brampton offer services in the downtown, a program to promptly respond to businesses' concerns about the activities of individuals who loiter in the downtown as well as perceptions of community safety, littering on private property and graffiti, would address current service gaps.

While the jurisdictional scan revealed that these gaps in service are typically addressed by local municipalities due to legislative requirements and mandates, the issues of concern in downtown Brampton cross organizational boundaries and require coordination among the City of Brampton, the Region of Peel and Peel Regional Police. As such, staff are seeking approval to provide Regional funding to the City of Brampton for a one-year "Welcoming Streets" pilot program to a maximum of \$250,000. This would take the form of a grant from the Region to the City of Brampton, as opposed to funding the local businesses directly, and therefore would not trigger the legislative restrictions for municipal grants. The program would be co-designed by the Region of Peel and the City of Brampton in collaboration with Peel Regional Police and the Downtown Brampton BIA. Based in downtown Brampton, the program staff would act as liaisons between the vulnerable and downtown stakeholders, with the objective of building trusting, effective relationships over time.

In addition, the pilot program will also involve Regional staff and City of Brampton staff in investigating the inclusion of seasonal employment at the local level through social enterprise opportunities for the vulnerable in downtown Brampton, who could assist with litter pick-up and other activities.

Anticipated outcomes of the program include more timely responses to businesses' requests for assistance with loitering individuals, enhanced communication and collaboration among stakeholders, improvements in cleanliness as well as in perceptions of community safety and well-being, more options to resolve issues outside of police involvement and security responses and improved support to vulnerable populations in accessing programs and services to improve their outcomes.

Throughout the pilot period, Regional staff, together with City of Brampton staff, will monitor program outcomes and determine where program funding, administration and oversight are ideally suited. Staff will return with recommendations to both the City of Brampton and Region of Peel Councils in advance of 2023 budget deliberations.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed pilot program supports the goals of Peel's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan. It seeks to address gaps in service to the vulnerable population in downtown Brampton while improving coordination among the City of Brampton, the Region of Peel and Peel Regional

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Police. It will be important that the design of the program meets the needs of the business community and other stakeholders, while upholding the dignity of our community's most vulnerable. It will also be essential to explore how to involve the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health Teams, and other community health organizations, as these organizations fund and/or provide mental health and addictions services in our community.

With respect to the financial implications below, a permanent program, whether funded at the regional or local level, will require additional funds to operate over the long-term. Should a permanent program be recommended, the program will increase the net levy, particularly if expanded to the entire Region.

Finally, while addressing the concerns of the business community, the program is contrary to the expectation that private businesses are responsible for addressing litter on their own property, which is confirmed through local municipal litter by-laws. The pilot program could create a precedent, such as heightened expectations among property owners and/or a standard of service that is difficult to sustain in the longer term.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To fund the one-year pilot program, the Region of Peel will provide the City of Brampton with a one-time grant to a maximum of \$250,000 through the Regional Tax Rate Stabilization Reserves with no net impact. Should the Region be directed to fund the program beyond a one-year pilot, it will require additional funding and if the program is made permanent, an incremental increase to the net levy to cover operating costs would be required.

CONCLUSION

Through Regional Council's 2015-2035 Strategic Plan, Peel is striving to be a "Community for Life" where everyone enjoys a sense of belonging and has access to the services and opportunities they need throughout each stage of their lives.

The proposed Welcoming Streets Pilot Program has the potential to support this vision and address gaps in service for downtown Brampton businesses and residents, while also supporting the needs of the homeless and other vulnerable groups.

Should Council approve the pilot program, Regional staff, together with the City of Brampton and other partners will work to launch the program in 2021.

APPENDICES

Appendix I – Map of the Downtown Brampton Business Improvement Area
Appendix II – Background Information: Feasibility Study

For further information regarding this report, please contact Aileen Baird, Director, Ext. 1898, Aileen.Baird@peelregion.ca.

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Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner, Division Director, Financial Support Unit and Legal Services.