

Subject: Niagara Transit-Regional Municipality of Niagara Seniors Services
Memorandum of Understanding (Long-Term Care Home Evacuations)

Report to: Niagara Transit Commission

Report date: **Tuesday, August 26, 2025**

Recommendations

1. That the Niagara Transit Commission Board **APPROVE** the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Niagara Transit and The Regional Municipality of Niagara Senior's Services Department regarding the evacuation of residents of the Niagara Region's long-term care (LTC) homes; and
2. That staff be **DIRECTED** to finalize and implement the MOU and corresponding procedures, effective immediately.

Key Facts

- The Niagara Region's Senior Services department is legislatively required to have an evacuation plan in case of emergency for all residents of their LTC homes as stipulated in the Fixing Long-Term Care Act and Ontario Regulation 246/22.
- Regional staff have approached Niagara Transit to establish an MOU for Niagara Transit to provide backup to their current evacuation provider to ensure that in the event of a larger scale evacuation requirement they will have the required vehicles to facilitate.
- Niagara Transit is best placed to provide this supportive service as a Regional partner. Toronto, Peel Region, Halton Region, and Hamilton utilize their local municipal transit operators to provide emergency transportation in evacuation scenarios as part of their emergency plans.
- As per the MOU (Appendix 1), Niagara Transit will be the secondary evacuation provider. The Senior Services department will continue to maintain their primary service provider, Switzer Carty.
- Following all evacuation incidents, staff will prepare a report for the Board. The report will provide an overview of the incident, services provided by Niagara Transit and any financial and service impacts incurred as a result.

Financial Considerations

Financial costs will be monitored and reviewed for each potential evacuation incident. Given that emergency evacuation timelines are typically short, it is most likely that buses and operators currently in service would be utilized rather than activating those out of service. This would impact service but should limit financial impact to lost fare revenues and other small incurrences. If the request comes at a time buses are not in service, the incremental costs relating to operators, fuel and maintenance would be reviewed and funded by the Senior Services department of the Region, resulting in no special levy impact. As part of the procedural plan, staff will work together to ensure all costs are minimized. A report will be prepared for the Board to inform them of any incidents, services provided by Niagara Transit and any financial and service impacts.

Analysis

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will establish a mutual understanding between Niagara Transit (NT) and Seniors Services to support the provision of transportation services by NT in the event of an emergency evacuation or relocation involving one or more of the Region's long-term care (LTC) homes. Niagara Transit will be the secondary provider to Switzer Carty who will continue to be the primary provider.

Niagara Region operates seven municipal long-term care homes, located at:

1. Linhaven – 403 Ontario Street, St. Catharines, ON
2. Meadows of Dorchester – 6623 Kalar Road, Niagara Falls, ON
3. Gilmore Lodge – 60 King Street, Fort Erie, ON
4. Northland Pointe – 2 Fielden Avenue, Port Colborne, ON
5. Rapelje Lodge – 277 Plymouth Road, Welland, ON
6. Woodlands of Sunset – 920 Pelham Street, Welland, ON
7. Deer Park Villa and Suites – 150 Central Avenue, Grimsby, ON

Through the MOU, Niagara Transit will provide vehicles and operators to assist with the evacuation of residents from the above LTC homes in emergency situations. Situations such as fire, flood, structural failure, extended power outage, environmental emergencies, etc, could necessitate evacuations.

Given that requests for this service would be for emergency situations, likely requiring an immediate response, temporary service disruptions during normal service hours would be expected. Operations staff would work to ensure disruptions were kept to a minimum and normal service resumed as soon as possible.

It is possible that requests would be made outside of normal service hours. Staff will work with Senior's Services staff to develop an internal procedure to activate the required service in that event.

Roles and Responsibilities

Niagara Transit will:

- Respond to transportation requests from Seniors Services or designated incident commander, subject to vehicle and staffing availability.
- Provide operators and vehicles as able, prioritizing accessible units when required.
- Ensure coordination with the Region's Emergency Operations Centre (if activated).

Seniors Services will:

- Maintain an up-to-date emergency transportation request protocol.
- Provide staff supervision during all transports; NT will not provide medical supervision.
- Ensure receiving facilities or destinations are ready to accept residents.
- Communicate requests clearly and provide estimated number of residents, equipment, and timelines.
- Incremental costs relating to operators, fuel and maintenance would be reviewed and funded by the Senior Services department.

For reference:

[Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39) (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39>)

[O. Reg. 246/22](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r22246) (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r22246>)

Alternatives Reviewed

The Niagara Transit Commission could choose not to provide evacuation transportation services to the Regional Municipality of Niagara's (RMON) LTC homes, but this would likely result in higher costs to the Region overall and a less reliable emergency transportation plan.

Relationship to Niagara Transit Commission Strategic Priorities

Service Excellence

Partnering with Senior's Services to provide emergency transportation for LTC homes is a proactive response to a community need. It ensures that regional government is prepared in the event of an emergency situation.

Safety

Providing emergency transportation ensures Niagara Transit and RMON are doing our utmost to ensure the safety of some of our most vulnerable residents.

Customer Focus

This MOU creates a community partnership that maximizes the use of Regional services and ensures good value for taxpayers.

Other Pertinent Reports

n/a



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Appendices

Appendix 1 Draft MOU-Emergency Transportation