



PORT COLBORNE

**City of Port Colborne
Council Meeting Addendum**

Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2025
Time: 6:30 pm
Location: Council Chambers, 3rd Floor, City Hall
66 Charlotte Street, Port Colborne

Pages

8. Delegations

*8.1 Angie Desmarais - 270 Davis Street

*8.2 Larry Rosnuk - 62 Fraser Street

*8.3 Barbara Butters - 1152 Weaver Road

Written delegation.

1

*8.4 Gary Gaverluk - 21 Woodside Drive

Written delegation.

2

*8.5 Melissa Bigford - 173 Chippawa Road

Written delegation.

4

12. Items Requiring Separate Discussion

*12.1 Community Engagement on the Future of Healthcare in Port Colborne,
2025-19

5

18. Closed Session

18.2 Staff Reports

*f. Confidential Memorandum to Council

Confidential Memorandum to Council pursuant to the *Municipal Act, 2001*, subsection 239(2)(i) a trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information, supplied in confidence to the municipality or local board, which, if disclosed, could reasonably be expected to prejudice significantly the competitive position or interfere significantly with the contractual or other negotiations of a person, group of persons, or organization.

From: **Barbara Butters**

Date: Mon, Jan 27, 2025, at 2:21 PM

Subject: Jan28 meeting

Hello all,

Please accept this letter in regards to public engagement and health services.

I request that in person town hall meeting be included with the menu of outreach. Some would argue this is the best way to engage residents, ask and answer questions and receive suggestions. Virtual meetings play a role but must not take the place of in person.

As well I request the time frame to be longer than the 22-odd days suggested in the report. This does not seem to be adequate to really gather and review the information you will receive. Let's do it right so all parties have a fair chance to engage. Please include my letter and distribute to council and mayor, include in the public record

My thanks for your time

Barbara Butters
1152 Weaver Road
Port Colborne

Page: 1

Friday January 24, 2025

To Port Colborne City Council members, City Staff:

SUBJECT: Community Engagement Concerns on the Future of Healthcare in Port Colborne

I have several concerns with this very short timeline of 22 days to allow public engagement regarding the future of healthcare, specifically 24/7 Urgent care including the use / uses for the Port Colborne Hospital site.

CONCERNS:

- 22 days in my opinion is NOT enough time to hear all in person comments, to collect written input and to analyse the “online” and paper surveys. This expeditious process is destined to fail, as presented items of concern or benefit from the public and others may fall through the cracks.
- Why is this process being “RUSHED”?
- Is there an “*underlying reason*” that we are not aware of as to why this timeline is so aggressive?
- We as taxpayers are stakeholders in the future of our healthcare and demand to know why this is happening?
- If there is to be any “*transparency*”, we as taxpayers and stakeholders, must be involved in all aspects of the decision making process.
- I have concerns that YOU, (City Council Members) are *being put on the spot*. You are being asked to approve (Report #2025-19) via a “*Virtual Only*” town hall meeting. Within our community there are many who are not able to access this meeting as they lack the skills (computer savvy) to login to the meeting, to make written submissions, or to participate in the online survey. Considering our aging population, the elderly are the least computer savvy and they require hospital care the most. Ask yourself why?
- There are many throughout the community who do not own iPad’s, smart phones or computers. This virtual only process totally excludes them from participating in this process or receiving information regarding this decision. Why?
- Has anyone considered the risks associated with the future of healthcare in Port Colborne related to rushing the decision process? If no, why not?
- Why is this very important meeting being held in a “virtual format” only?
- Has anyone considered the risks associated with the hospital site related to future demolition, remediation or excavation plans? Specifically, the discovery and disruption of indigenous artifacts?

Page: 2

AS FOR THE ONLINE AND PAPER SURVEYS:

- Who wrote / authorized the survey questions? Mayor, Council members, Staff, healthcare professionals (NHS members, Lockview Medical Group, Ontario Ministry of Health) City Hall Staff, members of the public?
- What was the question criteria for the survey?
- What is the focus group (demographic) that this survey targets?
- Has the survey been prepared by an impartial, nonbiased professional marketing research company?

IN SUMMARY:

For these reasons and the preceding questions, I respectfully request that you, our elected council members defer the ***“Virtual Only”*** in favour of an ***“in person”*** town hall meeting, enabling full transparency and public engagement.

People spend more time researching their next vehicle purchase. An incorrect healthcare decision could potentially be a life threatening decision for your family or mine.

You only get one chance to get this right.

Respectfully

Gary B. Gaverluk
21 Woodside Drive
Port Colborne, On.
L3K 5G9

Melissa Bigford
173 Chippawa Rd.
Port Colborne, Ont.
L3K 1T6

January 28th, 2025

To: Mayor and Members of Council,

I am writing you in regards to Report 2025-19 Community Engagement Healthcare Port Colborne as I have some concerns and questions with the engagement process.

Why the short engagement process? Who is creating the survey so that relevant questions are being asked to ensure the results and data being collected are not skewed or bias? With the survey being launched tomorrow why is a copy not being presented as part of the report to council for review? Why not a public as well as virtual town hall so that members of the community who do not have access to computers can engage directly with key spokespeople. Council should be aware of the difficulty this presented to many members of the community during Covid!

Lastly, why are parts of this report written and presented as multi-phased and interconnected proposal as this is not how the options were presented at the December 3rd special council meeting? An agreement with a primary care team to lease the space pending approval of the lease agreement was approved by council. Many of the concerns brought up at the special council meeting were in regards to the local share contribution as well as the fight for the continuation of the urgent care!!

Sincerely,

Melissa Bigford



Subject: Community Engagement on the Future of Healthcare in Port Colborne

To: Council

From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Report Number: 2025-19

Meeting Date: January 28, 2025

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Officer Report 2025-19 be received; and

That Council direct staff to implement the proposed comprehensive public engagement plan outlined in this report.

Purpose:

On December 3, 2024, Council considered Report 2024-255 regarding the Port Colborne hospital, including a request from Niagara Health for a \$6.2-million local share contribution to the South Niagara Hospital and a proposal to increase primary care services in Port Colborne.

Council requested that staff bring back a comprehensive public engagement plan to gather feedback from the community regarding the primary care proposal, the local share contribution, and the future of the Niagara Health site in Port Colborne.

Background:

Niagara Health is working toward a three-hospital system, which will ultimately include facilities in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, and Welland. A new hospital, known as the South Niagara Hospital, is under construction in Niagara Falls and is expected to open in 2028.

The South Niagara Hospital will be a 469-bed facility offering a full scope of hospital services including emergency, critical care, diagnostics, therapeutic and surgical

services, as well as Centres of Excellence in Complex Care, Wellness in Aging and Stroke.

When the South Niagara Hospital opens, Niagara Health will vacate its site in Port Colborne and will stop delivering healthcare services at the Port Colborne Urgent Care Centre currently located within the facility – expected in 2028.

To prepare for this shift, on December 3, Council considered a proposal regarding an innovative partnership between the City of Port Colborne, Niagara Health and Lockview Medical Group that would strengthen access to primary care in Port Colborne, while also contributing a \$6.2-million local share to support the purchase of furniture, fixtures, and equipment at the South Niagara Hospital.

The proposed partnership is multi-phased and interconnected:

The first phase would see the City of Port Colborne temporarily lease vacant space within the west wing of the Port Colborne site from Niagara Health and then sub-lease it to the Lockview Medical Group.

The Lockview Medical Group would complete a small renovation and then build out a comprehensive primary care clinic, attracting new family physicians to Port Colborne, and offering expanded primary care services, as soon as this year.

Once Niagara Health transitions out of the Port Colborne site in 2028, Niagara Health has agreed to transfer ownership of the site to the City for a nominal fee of \$2, in return for the \$6.2-million local share request supporting the South Niagara Hospital (if the final phase can be achieved).

Finally, in order to fund the \$6.2-million local share without a heavy burden on Port Colborne taxpayers, staff proposed that a developer be sought through a public process to develop the Niagara Health site in Port Colborne. This could include new multi-residential units, an all-new expanded medical clinic, and/or additional health and wellness offerings for the community.

At the December 3, 2024 meeting, Council requested that staff bring back a comprehensive public engagement plan to gather feedback from the community regarding the proposal, the local share contribution, and the future of Niagara Health's Port Colborne site. The proposed public engagement plan is outlined below. Should Council decide to approve the proposed partnership with Niagara Health and the Lockview Medical Group, additional public consultation would occur, particularly related to the proposed development on the site, as the project progresses.

Also at the December 3 meeting, Council requested the leases for the initial primary care expansion within the west wing of the Port Colborne site, with both Niagara Health and Lockview Medical Group, be brought forward for consideration. At this time, these

leases are still in progress and will come forward to a future Council meeting. One challenge in finalizing a proposed lease is determining what happens once Niagara Health vacates the site, if the City does not take over the facility.

Discussion:

Staff are proposing a comprehensive public engagement plan that would gather feedback from the community regarding the proposed primary care expansion, the local share contribution to the South Niagara Hospital site, and the future of Niagara Health's Port Colborne site.

The engagement plan has several high-level objectives, including:

- **Inform the community:** Ensure the community has clear, transparent, and accessible information about the proposed partnership.
- **Gather feedback:** Provide residents with a wide range of in-person and virtual channels so they can freely share their thoughts and ideas.
- **Promote inclusion:** Actively involve diverse community voices to facilitate conversations and representation from often underrepresented groups.
- **Identify concerns and opportunities:** Review feedback to highlight areas of alignment and identify potential improvements or alternatives to the proposal.
- **Ensure transparency:** Provide the community with access to the feedback collected to demonstrate how this information informs Council's decision-making.

The proposed engagement plan includes a variety of channels and mediums to ensure all key audiences are aware of the opportunity to provide feedback and can do so in a way that works best for them. If approved, this plan would include:

1. Online survey / feedback form
2. Paper-based survey / feedback form
3. Pop-up engagements / in-person survey opportunities
4. In-person open houses / drop-in sessions
5. Virtual town hall / panel discussion with community Q&A
6. Stakeholder engagement through Mayor's Healthcare Services Working Group
7. Youth engagement through Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee

Each item is discussed further below:

1. Online survey / feedback form

An online survey would launch on January 29, 2025, and would ask multiple-choice and open-ended questions for community members to offer their thoughts

on the proposed partnership and the future of Niagara Health's Port Colborne site. Multiple-choice questions are an efficient option to collect and analyze feedback, while open-ended questions allow community members to provide qualitative insights in their own words. The survey would close on February 21, 2025.

2. Paper-based survey / feedback form

To accommodate community members without access to the online survey, an identical paper-version would be available at various city facilities (City Hall, Vale Health & Wellness Centre, Port Colborne Public Library), local healthcare facilities, and other key locations throughout the community. The surveys would be collected for analysis beginning February 21, 2025.

3. Pop-up engagements / in-person survey opportunities

A small team of City staff would spend two to three days visiting key locations to engage with residents in-person, using iPads to ask similar questions to the online survey and reporting back on interactions and feedback received. This information would be analyzed and incorporated into the results to be shared with the Council in late March.

4. In-person open houses / drop-in sessions

City staff would host a series of in-person drop-in style open houses on Wednesday, February 19 and Thursday, February 20. Daytime and evening sessions allow residents to attend when it suits their schedule and talk with City staff, representatives from Niagara Health, representatives from the Mayor's Healthcare Working Group, and more. Exact times and locations will follow.

5. Virtual town hall / panel discussion with community Q&A

This interactive virtual event would allow community members the opportunity to engage directly with key spokespeople in a live panel discussion. Residents would be able to submit questions in real-time via chat or a Q&A feature, with a host moderating the event to ensure panelists are able to respond with detailed explanations and provide additional insights. The session would be recorded and archived on the City's website for future reference. The virtual town hall would be a valuable opportunity for residents who may not be able to attend the in-person open houses, allowing them to actively participate and engage in real-time with those involved in the project. The virtual town hall would be scheduled for mid-to-late February.

6. Stakeholder engagement through Mayor's Healthcare Services Working Group

The Mayor's Healthcare Services Working Group was established in 2023. It is comprised of active and retired healthcare professionals, business and community representatives, City staff, and Mayor Steele. The working group will be asked to offer insights and perspectives and will also be asked to share the other public engagement activities within their networks.

7. Youth engagement through the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee

Ensuring younger members of the community have a voice in the project is a key component. The Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee will be asked to offer insights and perspectives from the youth demographic and will also be asked to share the other public engagement activities with their networks.

Successfully communicating about the engagement opportunities will be a vital part of gathering enough meaningful feedback to support Council's decision-making process. The Corporate Communications team would launch a comprehensive communications campaign to promote the engagement opportunities, which would include (but not be limited to):

- Sharing information on the City's website
- Posting social media content and events on City channels
- Digital advertising opportunities
- Postcards with a QR code delivered to each household
- Media outreach/promotion
- Hard-copy posters with QR codes directed to the online survey shared in key community locations and with community special interest groups
- An article in the February edition of City Hall News
- ...and more.

The engagement project would begin on Wednesday, January 29 and end on Friday, February 21. Once completed, results would be collected, analyzed, and provided to Council in a comprehensive summary report in late March 2025.

This engagement plan ensures residents have a meaningful role in shaping healthcare access and development in Port Colborne, fostering a collaborative approach to these important community decisions.

Internal Consultations:

City staff from Corporate Communications, Corporate Services, Development and Government Relations, and the Office of the Mayor and CAO have been working collaboratively with Niagara Health, the Health Services Working Group, and Dr. Vandenberg on ensuring the best possible primary care services can be made available to Port Colborne residents. These key audiences would also be involved in supporting the implementation of the public engagement plan.

Financial Implications:

This report is focused primarily on the public engagement activities related to expanding primary care in Port Colborne, the future of Niagara Health's Port Colborne site, and the local share contribution towards the new South Niagara Hospital. All costs related to the public engagement activities are captured in the 2025 operating budget.

Public Engagement:

Since 2011, there has been considerable public information provided regarding hospital restructuring to a three-hospital system in Niagara. Community discussions and capital submissions to the Ministry of Health for a new hospital in South Niagara were initiated in 2018 and there has been active and ongoing public engagement. According to information on Niagara Health's website, the community planning and public engagement for the South Niagara Hospital includes the following: 196 Subject Matter Experts involved in user group planning meetings in 2020; 550 hours of group planning meetings with stakeholders in 2020; 5000+ residents provided online feedback; and hundreds more shared their thoughts in person, through emails, phone calls and at public events.

Niagara Health leadership gave a community update and held an open house in Port Colborne on March 21, 2024. The Mayor's Healthcare Services Working Group was formed in 2023 to create a strategy and action plan to ensure that Port Colborne has access to primary care when the Urgent Care Centre closes. There has been media coverage about the Committee's work and updates in public at Council meetings.

The proposed public engagement plan outlined in this report would build on the work that has already been completed to engage further with residents to gather feedback regarding the proposed primary care expansion, the local share contribution to the South Niagara Hospital site, and the future of Niagara Health's Port Colborne site.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
 - Economic Prosperity
 - Increased Housing Options
 - Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure
-

Conclusion:

Niagara Health is working toward a three-hospital system, which will ultimately include facilities in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, and Welland. A new hospital, the South Niagara Hospital, is under construction in Niagara Falls and is expected to open in 2028. When the South Niagara Hospital opens, Niagara Health will vacate its Port Colborne site and will stop delivering healthcare services at the Port Colborne Urgent Care Centre currently located within the facility – expected in 2028.

To prepare for this shift, on December 3, Council considered a proposal regarding an innovative partnership between the City of Port Colborne, Niagara Health and Lockview Medical Group that would strengthen access to primary care in Port Colborne, while also contributing a \$6.2-million local share to support the purchase of furniture, fixtures and equipment at the South Niagara Hospital.

This report presents a proposed public engagement plan that would gather feedback from the community regarding the proposed primary care expansion, the local share contribution to the South Niagara Hospital site, and the future of Niagara Health's Port Colborne site. The engagement plan includes digital, paper-based, virtual and in-person opportunities for residents to provide meaningful feedback that Council can use to support their decision-making going forward. It also provides a plan to engage key audiences through community service groups to ensure marginalized audiences are included and have a genuine opportunity to provide their feedback.

Results of the public engagement initiative and recommendations on next steps would be presented to Council in late March.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Boles, CPA, CA, MBA
Interim CAO, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer
905-228-8018
Bryan.Boles@portcolborne.ca

Jasmine Peazel-Graham
Manager, Corporate Communications
905-228-8067
Jasmine.Peazel-Graham@portcolborne.ca

Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.



PORT COLBORNE

**Subject: Port Colborne Hospital Community Engagement –
Additional Community Input**

To: Council

From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Report Number: 2025-19

Meeting Date: January 28, 2025

In preparation for Council's January 28 meeting, the Council agenda and reports were published to the City's website on Tuesday, January 21, 2025. While meeting materials are usually published on the City's website the Thursday before a Council meeting, in this case, to provide Council and the public with additional time to review the report, "Community Engagement for the Future of Healthcare in Port Colborne", staff released the content two days early – extending the typical review period from five days to seven days.

While many residents shared their support of the engagement plan put forward in the initial proposal, some made suggestions to expand it further. In response, staff have compiled a summary of the feedback received via email and through social media over the past week and have provided suggestions to further enhance the proposed engagement plan, ensuring it effectively addresses the community's needs.

The table below provides a high-level summary of the comments received, some recommended additions to the proposed engagement plan, and additional comments from staff.

Comments received	Proposed action
<p>Virtual / In-Person Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is only a virtual town hall being recommended? • Many people will be at a disadvantage if they can't participate in person. 	<p>The original proposed engagement plan included a variety of in-person and virtual channels, offering residents flexibility to share their feedback in the way that suits them best (i.e. in-person open house, in-person survey opportunities, etc.)</p> <p>However, given the feedback received, staff recommend adding an in-person town hall to further ensure the engagement opportunities align with the community's needs.</p> <p>This event would include a live panel discussion with key spokespeople, where residents could ask questions in real-time. A host would moderate the session, and it would also be recorded and archived on the City's website for future reference.</p> <p>The additional in-person town hall would be scheduled for mid-to-late February.</p>
<p>Timeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the timeline be extended? • At 3 weeks, the engagement period is too short. • Additional timeline concerns (winter weather, provincial election is distracting, seniors are not tech savvy to only participate online if weather is bad) • Could snow dates be added in the spring (better weather and past the election) 	<p>The primary goal of the proposed engagement project is to provide Council with some initial feedback from the community regarding the future of Niagara Health's Port Colborne site, primary care in the community, and the request related to the \$6.2-million local share in support of the South Niagara hospital.</p> <p>This phase is intended to gather initial feedback and lay the groundwork for future discussions – it is not designed to deliver a finalized solution for healthcare in Port Colborne and is not meant to be the only opportunity that residents would ever have to share thoughts and ideas related to this matter.</p> <p>While the engagement period is just three weeks long, the use of multiple engagement avenues ensures a balanced approach to gathering input from the community. Additionally, aligning this timeline with the Good Roads Conference provides a critical opportunity for advocacy with the provincial government. Being prepared to discuss the</p>

Comments received	Proposed action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there an underlying reason for the timeline to be so aggressive? 	<p>collected feedback at this conference is essential for advancing discussions related to healthcare in Port Colborne. (Important to note that Good Roads is about much more than just roadway infrastructure).</p> <p>Staff require a minimum of two weeks to thoroughly process the feedback, with an internal deadline of March 13 for reports scheduled for the March 28 Council meeting. Any delay would push the presentation of findings to a later Council meeting, missing key advocacy opportunities and prolonging progress on this important issue.</p> <p>No additional action is recommended. However, if Council wishes to extend the period of engagement, an extended date for staff returning with the results gathered would be required.</p>
<p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional mail should be used to connect with people who don't use computers 	<p>As noted in the original engagement plan, staff intend to send hard-copy postcards with details about the various engagement opportunities to all residential addresses in Port Colborne through Canada Post. In addition, other hard-copy materials will be posted in key community locations and with community special interest groups. This approach aims to reach as many residents as possible, particularly those who may be less familiar with online communications.</p> <p>No additional action is recommended.</p>
<p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillors should also reach out to members of their wards about this matter 	<p>Councillors will receive a copy of all relevant communications materials and will be able to share them on any channels they use to communicate within their wards. This will include: social media content and graphics, digital and hard-copy posters, website content, media release, etc.</p>

Comments received	Proposed action
	No additional action is recommended.
<p>Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the survey questions developed? • Have any experts been consulted? 	<p>All survey opportunities (online, paper-based and in-person) will include both multiple-choice and open-ended questions to provide respondents with lots of flexibility on the types of answers they provide.</p> <p>Some of the proposed questions and subjects in the engagement plan were taken from a draft of a survey created by the Mayor’s Healthcare Services Working Group. Some questions were proposed by staff through research of other communities who have done similar surveys (i.e. the Town of Fort Erie recently did a similar survey), and some questions are based on the specific situation in Port Colborne (i.e. the proposed partnership between the City, Niagara Health, and Lockview Medical Group).</p> <p>Staff are working with experts in community engagement, including an external consultant (Enterprise PR). This firm has extensive experience in complicated community engagement programs, including surveys. Their feedback on the proposed healthcare engagement plan is as follows: “The channels and methods for public engagement all suit the project and offer a variety of opportunities for residents and community members to participate in the process. There is a clear sense of accessibility and transparency from your team that comes through in describing how the public will participate in shaping this project.”</p> <p>No additional action is recommended.</p>
<p>Stakeholders</p> <p>Could the Seniors Advisory Committee be added to the</p>	<p>Staff recommend adding in-person engagement with the Seniors Advisory Committee to the engagement plan.</p>

Comments received	Proposed action
“stakeholder engagement” section of the plan?	
<p>Stakeholders Could the Social Determinants of Health Committee be added to the “stakeholder engagement” section of the plan?</p>	<p>Staff recommend adding in-person engagement with the Social Determinants of Health to the engagement plan.</p>

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Boles, CPA, CA, MBA
Interim CAO, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer
905-228-8018
Bryan.Boles@portcolborne.ca

Jasmine Peazel-Graham
Manager, Corporate Communications
905-228-8067
Jasmine.Peazel-Graham@portcolborne.ca