From the Commissioner

Every citizen in Waterloo Region deserves to be happy and to thrive. This motivates our work in Community Services. When people tell us their lives are better, we know we are making a difference.

In 2018, we helped improve quality of life in many ways. Employment and Income Support assisted more people from Ontario Works to move to employment. Children’s Services used provincial funding to reduce child care fees after families told us cost was their biggest challenge. In Seniors’ Services, a new model of care is helping people with dementia live their best life. In Housing, as part of our 10 year housing and homelessness plan review, we explored ways to increase the availability and quality of our affordable rental units; this plan will be public in 2019.

Throughout Employment and Income Support, Children’s Services and Housing Services, we removed barriers that prevented vulnerable people from accessing the financial help they need to survive. This meant simplifying processes and going into the community to meet clients where they are. This work was a precursor to creating just one entry point for clients who need multiple services. In 2019 we will continue enhancing our service delivery so that citizens see us as partners to achieving their goals. We will collaborate meaningfully with our partners in the community too, ensuring we fund programs that benefit the people we serve.

In prior years we built the foundation for our vision of a community where everyone thrives and no one is left behind. In 2019 we have the opportunity to build on that foundation. We look forward to engaging staff and Regional Council, our clients, and our community partners to succeed in this endeavour.

Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders
Commissioner, Community Services
Motivations for our work

Community Services is a department of the Region of Waterloo and is comprised of four divisions. Together we work towards creating a community where everyone thrives and no one is left behind.

Seniors’ Services
We believe in enabling adults to age with dignity. Seniors’ Services collaborates with the community to plan, support and operate long-term care services and residential and community programs.

Housing Services
We believe communities thrive when everyone has a place to call home. Housing Services engages community partners to end homelessness and to provide a range of quality, affordable housing options with appropriate levels of support.

Children’s Services
We believe in providing a vibrant comprehensive system of early learning and child care that supports the developmental health of all children in our community.

Employment and Income Support
We believe in removing obstacles and creating opportunities. Through financial assistance, employment services and other supports, staff help individuals feel included in the community, find employment and establish financial independence.

How we measure our success

We partner with people to help improve their quality of life. We know how well we are doing by how happy and satisfied a person is with their life.

Many things can influence quality of life.
Our programs and services focus on five key areas:

- Economic wellbeing
- Social inclusion and equity
- Physical and emotional wellbeing
- Skills development
- Relationships
Economic wellbeing

Our programs and services help people meet basic needs: income, a home, getting around, and food. These are fundamental to a person’s quality of life.

We deliver programs that help people with low income afford to live and care for their families.

“The anxiety that comes from the ever present threat of eviction or the oppressive monthly food-or-rent decision can be crippling to the point of paralysis. Having this burden taken from my shoulders freed me up to direct my attention to the business at hand – getting a job.”

—Former Ontario Works recipient

17,676 people in Waterloo Region received Ontario Works.
13.6% of those people were employed.

Family Support Resource Team helped 300 single parent families access child support owed to them, an average of $505 per month per household.

488 individuals and families moved into community housing.

4,647 are on the waitlist.

We helped cover the cost of child care for 2,970 children each month.

Did you know? Families of different sizes and income levels may be eligible for help to pay for child care.
We also provide funding to agencies in the community to help people pay for expenses.

**Did you know?** A monthly Ontario Works payment isn’t enough to cover rent, let alone other basic living expenses.

We added $1.5 million in funding to help people with low income access health care and other benefits.

We provided funding for about 3,400 bus tickets and 3,100 bus passes per month.

We funded over 1,035 grants to help people pay utility bills.

We supported 1,033 people to exit Ontario Works into employment.

**311 people were hired** through our Employment Ontario team.

We partnered with employers in the community to organize, host and promote 20 job fairs.

Region of Waterloo hosted two job fairs and **128 people were hired on the spot.**

We lowered licensed child care fees for 3,796 children with provincial expansion funding.

**Did you know?** Over two-thirds of respondents to a parent survey about child care said cost is a significant stress on their family.

**Average amount parents saved on child care fees:**

- **Infant:** 15%
- **Toddler:** 8%
- **Preschool:** 7%

“**I cannot stress enough how important access to affordable transit is to a person who needs to make it to job interviews and to show up to work on time.**”

—Former Ontario Works recipient

“We highlighted [the fee reduction] to prospective families when they were coming in for tours and in many cases it helped with the decision making verses going with [unlicensed] child care that may be less expensive.”

—Child care provider
Once you meet basic needs, it becomes easier to focus on other aspects of your life. Everyone wants to feel safe, valued, listened to, and feel like they belong. We connect people to programs and activities that help them live a full life.

**We funded supports for children with special needs to fully and safely take part in licensed child care.**

1,215 children were served by the Special Needs Resourcing Collaborative. Services can include speech language, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and extra staffing.

We responded to the need for more licensed child care spaces, as parents recognize the value of quality child care.

452 new child care spaces were created for children ages zero to four in 2018, a 10 per cent increase over the previous year.

A parent survey found 94% of respondents believe their child care program has had a positive impact on their family’s day-to-day life.
We supported people to achieve and maintain the independence they need to live a full life.

The Region helped **178 survivors** of domestic violence and human trafficking **rebuild their lives** through the portable housing benefit and community housing.

L. stayed in a shelter until she was ready to live on her own. With a portable housing benefit, she didn’t have to wait for a unit in community housing to open up. L. could afford her own place right away and start to rebuild her life.

“It made the world of difference to whether I got safe housing or just housing... because of that program my life is 200% better. I’m stronger, I’m safer.”
—Domestic violence survivor

We support people to move from the community, hospitals, or long term care into Sunnyside Supportive Housing. This ensures **older adults** receive the right care in the right place, frees up long term care beds and saves costs for the system as a whole.

“It’s been fantastic... It’s something that everybody wants and once they get it, they don’t notice it again... because that’s how we’ve been raised, is to have our own place to call home.”
—Sunnyside Supportive Housing tenant

Ontario Renovates helped homeowners living on low to moderate incomes keep their homes by funding repairs and accessibility features for **12 homes**

“This came at a time when our child’s disability was getting worse and the cost of this work was out of reach. The program... had an amazing impact on our child and their ability to be more independent in our home.”
—Ontario Renovates recipient
Physical and emotional wellbeing

Good mental and physical health can help you cope with stress, adjust to change, and recover from illness or injury. We support people to improve their health and wellness.

We partnered with the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network to expand a program that brings mental health, addictions, and life skills support into Region-owned community housing.

Brian struggled most of his life with mental health, addiction, and homelessness. He moved into Waterloo Region Housing (WRH) in early 2018. Brian opened up to his support team about mental health triggers and hoarding and received help to manage his challenges. He has been in his current home for over a year now, the longest he has stayed housed. His substance use decreased and he now receives support to focus on life skills, including cooking.

93% of tenants who received support similar to Brian’s continue to be stably housed.

We provide funding to agencies to help prevent homelessness.

Did you know? Homelessness can negatively impact a child’s development.

Over the winter, about 44% of the people who called into our new Housing Helplines were supported to stay housed or referred to another safe place to stay. Most were connected with family or friends or appropriate community supports.
Our Homemaking Support program took on an active role in supporting clients to prevent homelessness.

82% of our Homemaking Support program participants said they couldn’t manage without it. 335 people are on the wait list.

We are helping people with dementia adjust to long term care and live their best life with a new model of care in Seniors’ Services called Still ME.

As of 2018, 175 staff have been trained in specialized dementia care.

When Wayne was younger, he liked to take care of people, keep himself busy, and he loved being with his animals. He still gets to enjoy these things as a resident at Sunnyside Home, with spaces and activities tailored to his interests.

“One day I came in and he was walking with a lady and he was pushing the pram,” said Wayne’s wife Anne. “He used to do that with our own kids.”

Wayne also warmed up to a robotic cat that purrs when petted. “Even when we visit our daughter we bring it with us because it makes him feel good.”

Sunnyside Home enabled more residents to be treated where they live, instead of going to the hospital.

We prevented many residents from being transferred to the emergency department, reduced hospital admissions, and shortened how long residents stayed in hospital.

Did you know? Emergency department visits cause stress and trauma, and can lead to infections for long term care residents.

“I can’t tell you just how much I appreciate what you did for me. You came to the rescue when I was ready to give up.”
—Homemaking Support recipient
“I wound up landing a job... last year they officially bumped me up to working a single project as the team lead for North American support for a client...Things have been going fantastic, I've got health/dental/vision benefits, and I've learned so much since then!” —Working From Home participant

“I have been gainfully employed since completing training... had it not been for my training I feel I would still be on the outside looking in as far as meaningful employment goes.” —Second Career participant

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Skills development

Building skills can improve all areas of a person’s life. We provide and promote many opportunities for learning to people of all ages.

Employment Services provided courses and workshops, and connected people to programs to help them prepare for and find work.

169 people completed the work from home course.

We connected 21 job seekers to Second Career training.

Second Career allowed D. to train in heavy equipment, an area of work he had never considered.

When A. was laid off, he received Ontario Works to meet basic needs while career planning. He wanted to get into truck driving but couldn’t afford the training. Through Second Career, tuition costs were paid. He now works full-time in the field. “I have not only been surprised at how well this is going, I feel like I have accomplished a big task in my life.”

— A., Second Career participant
YouthForce added a recruitment fair in Cambridge as it works toward expanding the program.

Youth between the ages of 15 and 29 who live in or near affordable housing communities do work in their neighborhoods while building skills to help with their future careers.

Immigration Partnership, a collaborative venture between the community and the Region, helped newcomers develop the networking skills needed to gain employment.

“This program and agency partnership provides jobs and learning that lead to opportunities for success... adding a Cambridge site will help us accommodate the growing number of applicants.” —Manager of Waterloo Region Housing/Client Services

Over 400 newcomers strengthened their networking skills and connected with over 120 employers to explore job opportunities.

Did you know?
78% of employers in the 2018 EmployerOne Survey listed word of mouth, personal contacts, referrals and informal networks as top recruitment methods.
Healthy and supportive relationships help people through tough times. Building trusting relationships with each other, with our community partners, and with people we serve is key to improving quality of life.

Community Services removed barriers to improving quality of life by building relationships with partners and meeting clients where they live.

"Having an onsite OW caseworker is essential. It’s so difficult for people to make appointments at Region offices. It takes two bus transfers to get there but here, they can just walk over... and it’s more of a personal relationship... this helps removes barriers and enables people to share easier."

—House of Friendship Program Coordinator

"Don’t need to worry about booking an appointment. Thank you so much for setting the caseworker (up) in the school! This is really helping. I am really anxious when talking on the phone. Thank you!"

—St. Louis student and survey respondent

We reduced the number of people each caseworker works with by 8%, giving staff more time to meet with and understand client needs and make appropriate referrals.

Our staff are working out of community centres to get people access to services faster. J. came by the Chandler-Mowat Community Centre because she needed help paying for child care. Her Ontario Works caseworker arranged a meeting at the centre with a child care subsidy caseworker and Family and Children’s Services, and within two days J. had a special needs assessment for her children.

Our partnerships with St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education is making it easier for students to access support and succeed in school. With our staff working at the school, S. could be supported out of a financial crisis without missing class because she was able to apply for Ontario Works right away and received her cheque the next day.

Survey found 100% said it was helpful to meet staff closer to them 98% got services needed.
Over 20 community organizations worked together to support the development and launch of Family Compass, a website to help children, youth and families connect to the right services.

“It is a great resource! A one stop shop, quick hit where the resources a parent needs to navigate the system are simple.”

8 starting point organizations with a shared philosophy to support children, youth, and families in connecting to the right services, regardless of where they start.

Over 6000 users

60 referrals through the “I Have A Concern” tool

Family Compass Waterloo Region
Guiding you to services for children and youth

Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region
A collaborative partner with the Region of Waterloo, made up of 70+ organizations/groups
$313,176,329

total amount spent on program and service delivery in Community Services.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Services</td>
<td>71,789,446</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment and Income Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Services</td>
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<td>Seniors’ Services</td>
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<td>Commissioner’s office*</td>
<td>1,584,379</td>
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</tbody>
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*Includes integration, quality initiatives, and grants to community.
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