From the Commissioner

Service Excellence … we know we have achieved it when citizens tell us their experience was simple and smooth and resulted in successful outcomes; and, when staff tell us they not only enjoy the work they do but are learning new skills and expanding their abilities.

Integrating Services … allows us to achieve service excellence with one exchange between a client and one staff member. This means identifying and meeting all client needs and delivering services without barriers and without sending the client to many service windows to talk to many staff.

Service delivery by division creates artificial barriers that see the citizen as having many issues to be resolved with input from many divisions. The best way to deliver service is to base it on the needs of the whole person or household assisted by one knowledgeable staff member.

Integrated service is when a staff member can help a citizen in their area of expertise (such as child care subsidy) but also in other areas of Community Services (CSD) and in the community. Service is client-centred and relationship based and can have a more lasting impact on their quality of life. Ling’s story, Building trust through innovation on the next page illustrates this very well.

Over the past two years, we have been adopting a broad, integrated service philosophy in CSD. This involves changing the structure of the department and how staff deliver services. In addition, we are evaluating the impact of these changes on the lives of citizens we serve and staff who provide services.

The first step was to enable staff across divisions to share information about mutual clients. Historically, a client’s information was held separately in each division based on privacy. This made it impossible to make the connection between staff to address many needs across many divisions. With a simple shared consent form staff are free now to consult with each other to the benefit of the client. This reduces the number of times the client is required to attend multiple offices to meet with multiple staff.
Given that staff has been hired and trained to work in only one program area, the second task was to broaden their knowledge, skills and abilities by working in teams. Creating an integrated pilot team with staff from three divisions led to much richer discussion between the citizen and staff. This looks at all of the citizen’s or household’s needs as a whole and allows for more collaborative planning to meet those needs.

Our research tells us that clients receiving services through the pilot were happier with the reduction in the number of interactions required to reach a plan. It also tells us that the service was more impactful and clients reported an increase in their quality of life. This research further shows that working with colleagues from multiple divisions enhances the skills of all staff by addressing issues not previously part of their job. It provided a better understanding of the client’s full situation. Staff also saw that learning skills from other service areas can lead to job opportunities in those areas.

This is concrete recognition that the Region’s focus on “people, service and trust” works; that high quality service from engaged staff leads to positive outcomes for citizens and enhanced trust in Region services.

Moving from a pilot to implementing integration as our service delivery model is now the focus of the department; continuing to ensure that the client is at the heart of all service delivery and that through this, staff has every opportunity to enhance their skills and abilities.

Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders
Commissioner, Community Services

Building trust through innovation: An integration story

Ling lives a quiet, private life in community housing. She takes good care of her son, keeps her townhouse clean and tidy, and pays her rent. Yet last year she was almost evicted.

All tenants are required to renew their lease each year in order to keep their rent subsidy. However, Ling couldn’t be reached. She didn’t speak English, had no phone, and was uncomfortable coming to the door and leaving her unit. After several notices and a few knocks, she lost her subsidy and then, her social assistance.

She could soon lose her home. In the old system, this would have been Ling’s reality. If several attempts to make contact fail, the file is closed. But the Community Relations Worker (CRW) in Ling’s building knew that wasn’t the full story. Ling may have some mental health concerns and didn’t have a support network.

“We needed to look at the whole picture to see what was going on.”

The CRW looked for a solution and checked in with the integrated service delivery team. They decided to try a home visit together. Ling was inside and accepted the help. That day she filed her taxes, re-applied for Ontario Works and renewed her lease at her kitchen table. She and her son would keep their home. The CRW continued providing information on potential services for Ling and her son. A year later, she went to visit for some required paperwork. For the first time ever, Ling came to the door and opened it. The CRW was pleased.

“It felt like I made a connection and gained a little bit of trust.”
SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

We have learned a lot over this past year. One of the biggest things we learned was that sometimes when people come to us for services, they do so as a last resort and sometimes the services they are trying to access are not tailored to their needs. We are making changes to support all citizens where they are at. Here are a few examples.
One place to have many needs met

There are four separate divisions in Community Services: Children’s Services, Employment and Income Support, Housing Services, and Seniors’ Services. Many people access services from more than one division.

Those who do would have to travel to different locations and tell their story many times. To make it easier, we brought staff from these divisions together to work as one team at one location. We learned that better service led to a better quality of life for people we serve. We will launch similar teams across the department in 2018.

Staff knowledge of programs and services increased by over 20%

[Worker] listened, knew her stuff and was able to advise of things that existed that I didn’t know. Like a free crib and bus passes. I wasn’t just another number, [worker] genuinely cared. Did her best to make sure I got what I needed, where I am at.”

Everyone you need to speak to is there. It is a deterrent when you have kids and are told you need to go to different places – it really isn’t worth it. With kids, a few minutes is a lot.

Making our housing policies more people-centered

In our Housing Services Division, we are working to make finding and keeping a home easier for all citizens of Waterloo Region. As part of this work, we’re modernizing our approach to service delivery and making our waiting lists more seamless. To help us achieve our goals, we’ve arranged our division into three integrated service teams, each with their own focus: tenants and applicants; housing programs and development; and housing policy and homelessness prevention. All three teams work together in their roles as Service Managers for Housing and Homelessness.

People give up because they get treated like numbers. When you’re at the bottom treated like a number, what’s going to motivate you to move forward? Nothing.

Problem solving helps family succeed

A family who recently came to Canada with savings to start their own business struggled to meet basic needs. With their savings they wouldn’t normally qualify for social assistance, but we made an exception to help them get started. Within four months they were off social assistance and their business was up and running.
Freeing up time to meet people and their needs

Service delivery is becoming more flexible for people who access Ontario Works. In some locations, people can now walk in to get help applying; they don’t need an appointment. We also offer services at more locations, and realigned some administrative work to give caseworkers more time to have conversations with clients. There will be more changes to come in 2018.

“[My brother was in the hospital, and] the worker came to the hospital and filled out all the paperwork there, which I did not expect. To my surprise, everything was processed so quickly and smoothly.”

Service enhancements help staff support older adults with dementia

Moving from your own home to a long-term care home can be life changing. At Sunnyside Home we are changing our culture of care to help residents adapt to this change through an innovative program called Still ME. In 2017, more than 100 Seniors’ Services staff received specialized training that enhanced their ability to support and engage residents with dementia.

“Being able to set up activities on the unit has allowed me to encourage residents to become more interactive and sociable and has shown less behaviours in residents, which has made it easier to provide care. Giving the residents additional activities to keep their minds and bodies busy brings me pleasure as I watch them build new relationships with one another and with staff.”

— Personal Support Worker at Sunnyside Home
Our many changes to improve services in Community Services are about improving people’s quality of life. But what does that mean?

Quality of life means different things to different people. Most simply, it measures happiness and life satisfaction. It can be influenced by many things, including your health, level of independence, income, housing, and relationships.

“Many things influence your quality of life, but there are five key areas”

Using five key areas, we have started to measure the impacts of our programs and services on people’s quality of life. We have learned that telling our story this way is more meaningful.
Basic needs are fundamental to a person’s quality of life. Our programs and services help people access income, a home, and supports to help them stay housed or reach their employment goals.
Even with some form of employment, Ontario Works is not enough to cover basic living costs.

Our Employment and Income Support division helps people prepare for and find steady employment and provides financial help through Ontario Works.

16,909
Average number of people receiving Ontario Works per month.

That's 2.9%
of the population in Waterloo Region (includes full-time post-secondary students).

13%
Ontario Percentage of people receiving Ontario Works who are employed.

14%
Waterloo Region

50%
of the 306 people hired by employers through the Region's Employment Ontario program were Ontario Works recipients.

$721
per month
Ontario Works allowance for a single person.

$872
per month
2016
Average market rent for a one-bedroom apartment has increased five per cent since 2016.

$917
per month
2017

481 individuals and families moved into community housing but

Over 4,000 people are on the wait list

More than 34,408 people accessed food assistance,

36% are children.

850 individuals and families received grants to cover utility costs through our partnership with local utility companies.

$917
per month
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48% increase
We helped more people with a history of homelessness find homes in 2017.

26 renters became homeowners through loans provided by the Affordable Home Ownership Program.

Home prices rose over 20 per cent from 2016 to 2017.

We expanded eligibility to reflect changes in the real estate market.

With the cost of living going up, we provide support to help people afford a home.

There are many programs and services to prevent the loss of a home and help citizens achieve stability.

The Region funded over 1,200 grants/loans to people who are homeless or at risk of being evicted to move into new housing.

$350 per month
105 people who previously struggled with homelessness received monthly rent assistance to help them stay in their homes.

Ontario Renovates helped homeowners living on low to moderate incomes keep their homes by funding repairs and accessibility features for 23 homes.

273 people were able to keep living independently with some help through homemaking support.
Living on low income makes it tough to meet the basic needs of your children. As part of our poverty reduction strategy, the Family Support Resource Team works with parents to help them obtain child and/or spousal support.

Child care is another cost many families can’t afford. The Region helps families pay for care so that parents can go to work or school.

In 2017, 2,860 families received child care subsidy each month.

The average daily market rate for child care

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<tr>
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<td>$44.17</td>
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211 families obtained support they were owed.

Families increased their monthly income by an average of 57%.

Before, I had to get a credit card to pay for diapers. Now, the extra money helps me get by without getting behind.

Now there are more groceries in the house. We have the extras – no longer tight. We go out more. There is a huge difference. There were times before that I would go without food so the kids could eat. We used to eat cheap, now we have healthier options.

Living on low income creates barriers around transportation, which is essential to being able to work and access services.

The Region provided discounted bus tickets to an average of 16,000 people every month with the help of community partners.
Once you meet your basic needs, it becomes easier to focus on other aspects of your life. To live well you need to feel safe, valued, listened to, and feel like you belong. We support people to take part in community life.
Seemingly small things we take for granted can be very meaningful. We help connect people to programs and activities that help them live a full life.

“The cost of museum passes is like groceries for a week.” When given a family pass for taking part in a survey, one mom said she went with her kids and felt like they were doing “normal activities, like everyone else.”

Engaging tenants in their community
Tenants in community housing take part in programs that encourage meaningful, enjoyable activities.

- exercise programs
- dining together, through community partners
- gardening clubs
- jigsaw puzzle exchange

A community garden that began with one green thumb has grown into a collaborative effort. It is available for all to enjoy.

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New website helps newcomers belong

The Immigration Partnership provided a platform for all stakeholders in the community to work together to develop a new website for newcomers. Every month, it helps more than 1,500 newcomers connect to services they need.

"To feel belonging, you have to help others feel it too."
- Newcomer

"You feel you belong when you are able to give, as well as take."

1,391 children received support funded by the Region to fully and safely take part in licensed child care.

Support to include children in licensed care is provided by our partners in the Special Needs Resourcing Collaborative (SNR).
Helping domestic violence survivors start a new life

The Region helps survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking escape violence with faster access to housing. Survivors receive a benefit that helps them afford rent. This means they don’t have to wait for a unit in community housing to open up; they can use the benefit to find a home right away in the private market.

"It saved my life. Without it I would have been forced back to my abuser when my time at the shelter was up, with the long wait times for housing."

23 households who received the benefit remain safely housed

Over 60% of recipients were families

100% of participants felt a sense of autonomy after receiving the benefit, up from 36 per cent before

"If I did not have stable safe housing I would never have been able to be strong and feel safe enough to venture out of my home to find this job."
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Good mental and physical health can help us cope with stress, adjust to change, and recover from illness or injury. We support people to improve their health and wellness.
The basis for a healthy life starts with your childhood. For early childhood educators, building relationships and caring about their work is good for a child’s wellbeing, social development, and behaviour.

Expansion supports learning and development in children

Early years programs are essential to a child’s learning, development, health, and wellbeing. We encourage settings that offer a chance for children to play, explore, and be inquisitive. In 2017, provincial funding helped child care programs add physical space (and licensed spaces!) – turning a closed-in room into an open, inviting area that encourages interaction and creativity.

“I feel great knowing my child is safe with people they trust and love.”
– Parent

“We are blessed to be in a region that so wholeheartedly believes in quality child care and is willing and able to provide financial and practical supports.”
– Licensed child care supervisor
Strengthening quality and consistency in licensed child care

The Ministry of Education created the “How Does Learning Happen?” guide for educators about how children learn through play and relationships.

“Children are creative and imaginative, bringing their interests to life at home and at school, and our relationships strengthen as we build learning partnerships with children, families, educators and the community.”—Licensed child care supervisor

838 members accessed Sunnyside Wellness Centre services in 2017.

Physiotherapy  Hydrotherapy

Registered Massage Therapy  Foot Care

We all know that exercise is good for your body; it is also one of the best ways to improve your mental health. The Wellness Centre provides a welcome space for older adults to exercise in a comfortable, accepting and barrier-free setting.
Making the decision to go to the hospital can be a difficult one. Many visits are non-urgent and can be diverted. **People living in Sunnyside Home** receive support and medical care from a team of nursing staff, physicians and a nurse practitioner. This means they **can often be treated for medical conditions where they live** and can be spared a difficult transfer to hospital.

58 residents who normally would have been sent to hospital were treated onsite. **This saved the health care system $318,000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of times discretionary benefits were accessed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>17,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>17,967</td>
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Many people who are employed don’t have benefits for health care. This means a disability or health concern can go untreated and prevent them from being able to work. The Region gives $1.5 million above and beyond what the Province provides to help pay for these expenses.
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Building personal, employment and leadership skills can improve all areas of a person’s quality of life. We provide and promote opportunities for learning.
Youth Force
A group of 23 youth helped their communities and prepared for their careers through YouthForce. This employment program is a partnership with five local agencies hiring students to do unit inspections and cleanups in Region-owned community housing. Youth also attended workshops on personal development and skill-building.

91 youth attended on recruitment day, nearly double from the year before

Youthforce has been a pathway for me to grow as a person, it is one of the stepping stones that has gone a long way in helping me in my financial state, my self-esteem has gone off the roof (yah it really has!), I became more responsible and independent.

Once supported to remove barriers, people can take advantage of learning opportunities that can improve quality of life.

Our employment-related training and workshops helped
371 people broaden their skill set

As I walked into the interview room, right away the Human Resource Manager saw my pin (Service Excellence) and asked if I completed the course... this is one of the courses they like to see their employees have... I was the successful candidate... thank you for your support the day before my interview and I look forward to starting my new job.

— Graduate of Service Excellence training.

We administer the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant, which gives employers opportunities to invest in their workforce

With the generous COJG grant funds it was possible to access training to help our technicians increase their knowledge and skill sets... this helps us to better serve out clientele, which in turn continues to grow our business.

— Employer
RELATIONSHIPS

Healthy and supportive relationships help people through tough times. Building trusting relationships with each other, our community partners and with people who access our services is key to improving quality of life.
Making connections to get through difficult times

The Region funds the Family Outreach Program to help families navigate the broad range of services out there. Outreach workers meet with families and connect them to the services they need to make it through difficult financial times.

When people need information or help, they often go to family, friends or their social networks. But not everyone has these supports.

Providing support through a stressful situation

Our Family Support Resource Team helps parents obtain child and spousal support so that they can meet their children’s needs – emotionally and financially.

I was leaving an abusive situation and was in a woman’s shelter...I needed to focus on my kids but I also needed a custody order to protect my kids. Having the Family Support Worker allowed me to focus on what is important in my life, my kids. I was so stressed with everything else; this was one less thing for me to worry about. The Family Support Worker supported me and helped me go through it all. I could not have done it on my own.
In Community Services, we don’t work alone. We rely on partnerships with the community. These are a few of the partnerships we have in place.

**Working together for the wellbeing of children and youth**

Community Services supports the Children and Youth Planning Table. This is a community-led group of more than 480 partners. They work together to improve the well-being of children and youth in Waterloo Region.

- 1,600+ hours were dedicated to this work in 2017
- 10% increase in membership since 2016.
Immigration Partnership provides platform for building relationships

Waterloo Region developed a plan to help immigrants and refugees settle, find work, and belong. The Immigration Partnership was a platform for this. It brought community service agencies, employers, municipalities and other stakeholders together.

When asked what their biggest challenges were, immigrants and refugees said finding work, learning English, and figuring out where to go for things. Sharing these experiences helps the Region and other service agencies to more effectively serve newcomers.

Between 2011 and 2016, 14,045 permanent residents settled in Waterloo Region, bringing the immigrant population to just under a quarter of the total population.

Better coordination helps to end and prevent homelessness

We are putting more focus on how programs are coordinated so that people can more easily get the help they need, when they need it. One of the changes we made last year was to strengthen the role that emergency shelters play in preventing homelessness. Shelters now focus more of their efforts on helping people to connect to other services and to explore where else they can stay that is safe and appropriate, before they are referred for a shelter stay. We’ve also centralized our waiting list for housing support so that people with the greatest need get help faster.
A large portion flows to our partners to deliver programs and services in the community. The rest goes towards direct operating costs.
$284,065,065
total amount spent on program and service delivery in Community Services.

- Children’s Services: 51,088,537
- Employment and Income Support: 118,767,774
- Housing: 77,578,630
- Seniors’ Services: 35,271,297
- Commissioner’s office*: 1,358,826

*Includes integration, quality initiatives, and grants to community.
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Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.