MEDIA RELEASE: Friday, May 24, 2013, 4:30 p.m.

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WATERLOO
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
AGENDA

Tuesday, May 28, 2013
1:00 p.m.
Regional Council Chamber
150 Frederick Street, Kitchener, Ontario

1. MOTION TO RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST UNDER THE MUNICIPAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST ACT

3. DELEGATIONS
a) Anthony Scian, Waterloo Region Community Garden Council re: Report PH-13-020, Community Gardening Storytelling Project

4. PRESENTATIONS
a) Dr. Fred Mather - Medical Director Sunnyside Home re: SS-13-014, Sunnyside Home Medical Director Report 2012

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS
Items on the Consent Agenda can be approved in one motion of Committee to save time. Prior to the motion being voted on, any member of Committee may request that one or more of the items be removed from the Consent Agenda and voted on separately.

5. REQUEST TO REMOVE ITEMS FROM CONSENT AGENDA

6. MOTION TO APPROVE ITEMS OR RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION
a) PH-13-021, The Health of Waterloo Region’s Food System: An Update (Information) (Appendix distributed separately)

b) CPC-13-002, Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy (WRIDS) Update (Information)

c) P-13-038, Community Housing – Authority to Enter into a Consortium Agreement – Information Technology (IT) Software Development (Approval)

d) CR-RS-13-052/P-13-058, Update on Sand Hills Co-operative Housing Inc., 250 Chandler Drive in Kitchener (Information)
e) **SS-13-018**, Child Care Fee Subsidy Service Pressures (*Information*)  
18
f) **Memo**: Preliminary Results from CIRCUS Exhibit at Waterloo Region Museum  
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g) **Memo**: ECOfest at the Waterloo Region Museum  
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h) **Memo**: Long Term Unemployed Manufacturing Worker Case Study (*Appendix available in councillors’ library*)  
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i) **Memo**: Ontario Works Caseload: April 2013  
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7. **REPORTS – PUBLIC HEALTH**

a) **PH-13-020**, Community Gardening Storytelling Project  
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b) **PH-13-019**, 2012 Food Safety Annual Report  
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c) **PH-13-022**, EMS Scheduler Support  
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**REPORTS – SOCIAL SERVICES**

d) **SS-13-014**, Sunnyside Home Medical Director Report 2012  
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8. **OTHER BUSINESS**

a) **Council Enquiries and Requests for Information Tracking List**  
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9. **NEXT MEETING**

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10. **ADJOURN**
TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: May 28, 2013  FILE CODE: P11-20

SUBJECT: THE HEALTH OF WATERLOO REGION’S FOOD SYSTEM: AN UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION:
For information

SUMMARY:

A new report produced by Region of Waterloo Public Health (ROWPH) reviews Waterloo Region’s progress towards building a healthy food system. The report, The Health of Waterloo Region’s Food System: An Update, is a sampling of research, projects, and organizations that are actively pursuing the six priorities for improving the health of Waterloo Region’s food system as identified by the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable. The report should assist all those in Waterloo Region – including local governments, businesses in the food and agriculture sector, community organizations, and individual residents – who wish to work towards a healthy food system.

REPORT:

Background
Waterloo Region’s first food system assessment – Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region – was published by Region of Waterloo Public Health in 2005. Released as a discussion paper, the report described various aspects of the food system at the time and suggested a goal of working towards a healthy food system, which it defined as one in which “all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally-acceptable food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way and that sustains our rural communities.”

The report was used as a basis for public consultations held by ROWPH which led to the publication of A Healthy Food System Plan for Waterloo Region in 2007. When Council received the plan as part of report PH-07-022, it directed Public Health staff to provide staff support to the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable, which was created in part to oversee the plan for improving the health of the food system.

The Roundtable has refined the plan over the years, eventually coming up with six Food System Priorities which capture the areas most in need of action to improve the food system: food sovereignty, food policy, urban agriculture, local food infrastructure, farm viability, and access to healthy food.

Update
In early 2012, ROWPH partnered with Opportunities Waterloo Region in a proposal to the JW McConnell Family Foundation to update its regional food system assessment. The Health of Waterloo Region’s Food System: An Update summarizes the new information made
available since 2005 in published reports and other sources which were brought to the attention of
the report authors. It is a sampling of research, projects, and organizations that are actively pursuing
the Roundtable’s six Food System Priorities.

The full report is over sixty pages long and has been posted on Public Health’s website. A four-page
Executive Summary of the report is included in Councillor packages.

Application
The report should assist all those in Waterloo Region – including local governments, businesses in
the food and agriculture sector, community organizations, and individual residents – who wish to
work towards a healthy food system.

There has been an explosion of interest in food issues since 2005 in Waterloo Region. Dozens of
student research papers have focused on issues particular to Waterloo Region’s food system,
numerous new organizations have emerged to address food issues, and many new businesses
have been established to meet new consumer demands. The Health of Waterloo Region’s Food
System: An Update will help anyone hoping to contribute to food system change in this community
by informing them of who else is already working in their area of interest and what the latest
research says about it.

An example of the strong interest in food issues is the recent community initiative to develop a Food
Charter for Waterloo Region. The Roundtable based the first draft of the Waterloo Region Food
Charter on its Food System Priorities, and received a high level of public input it through
consultations earlier this year. Many of those people asked what action will follow Regional
Council’s endorsement of the Charter on April 9, 2013. The Health of Waterloo Region’s Food
System: An Update should help inform decisions on any actions proposed as follow-up on the Food
Charter.

For example, one of the Food Charter’s principles is support for community economic development
that prioritizes local food processing, distribution, and retailing opportunities. The Roundtable is
currently seeking to draw attention of Waterloo Region’s economic development community to call
attention to the opportunities in this area. The report’s section on Local Food Infrastructure should
help inform those who wish to take action to implement this Charter principle; the report details
three studies within the last two years which point to the need for better co-ordinated action on
economic development opportunities in the local food sector, and makes suggestions of further
studies that might be conducted to inform action.

ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH STANDARDS:

Public Health’s food system work addresses many of the Ontario Public Health Standards, including:

Chronic Disease Prevention Requirement #6: “work with municipalities to support healthy
public policies and the creation of supportive environments … that support … healthy
eating.”

Chronic Disease Prevention Requirement #7: “increase the capacity of community
partners to coordinate and develop regional/local programs and services related to healthy
eating.”

Chronic Disease Prevention Requirement #11: “increase public awareness in … healthy
eating.”

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

Public Health’s work to analyse and support changes to our food system address many areas of the
Region’s Strategic Plan, including:
Environmental Sustainability – esp. 1.1 Integrate environmental considerations into the Region’s decision making, and 1.5 Restore and preserve green space, agricultural land and sensitive environmental areas.

Growth Management and Prosperity – esp. 2.1 Encourage compact, livable urban and rural settlement form, and 2.3 Support a diverse, innovative and globally competitive economy.

Healthy and Inclusive Communities – esp. 4.2 Foster healthy living through information, education, policy development and health promotion.

Service Excellence – esp. 5.5 Improve awareness of Regional services and facilitate processes for public input and involvement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:
NIL

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:
NIL

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment A: The Health of Waterloo Region’s Food System: A Snapshot

Attachment B: The Health of Waterloo Region’s Food System: An Update (available online at http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/researchResourcesPublications/resources/WRFoodSystemHealth_Update.pdf)

PREPARED BY: Marc Xuereb, Public Health Planner

APPROVED BY: Dr. Liana Nolan, Commissioner/ Medical Officer of Health
Waterloo Region’s Food System: A SNAPSHOT

A Healthy Food System is one in which all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally-acceptable food produced in an environmentally sustainable way and that sustains our rural communities.

This Snapshot is a summary of progress towards a healthy food system as identified by the Waterloo Region System Roundtable since the publication of Towards a Healthy Food System for Waterloo Region in 2005. It is organized by the six priorities for improving the health of Waterloo Region’s food system. It is a sampling of research, projects and organizations that are actively pursuing the priorities.

This Snapshot is not an exhaustive chronicle of all food research and food initiatives undertaken in Waterloo Region since 2005.

Priority #1: Local Food Infrastructure
Rebuilding the processing and distribution infrastructure required to make more local foods available to local residents. Also includes convincing public institutions to buy more local foods.

Since 2005...
• Several new and expanded businesses in Waterloo Region have expanded the options for buying local food, including many new on-farm stores and Community Shared Agriculture Projects (CSAs), and unique innovations like the Elmira Produce Auction and Bailey’s Local Foods.
• There are lessons to learn from the failure of some of these initiatives, like the 100 Mile Market.
• The Ontario government has funded several projects, including one at the University of Waterloo, to help public institutions source more Ontario foods. It also introduced the Local Food Act in fall 2012, aimed at setting targets for public institutions to purchase more Ontario food.
• Some exploratory research by the Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care identified barriers and opportunities for using more local food in hospitals and long-term care facilities.
• Two recent research studies—one by the University of Waterloo and one by Opportunities Waterloo Region—call for stronger connections and the creation of a shared strategy among economic developers and businesspeople to promote the local food sector in Waterloo Region.

Current Assessment
• Urban consumers who want to consume local food have many more options available than they did in 2005, thanks to expanded offerings from farm stores, food buying clubs, wholesalers, and restaurants.
• New and updated research is needed to identify specific economic development opportunities, such as a feasibility study on a local food processing and distribution hub, and to quantify the current potential contribution of food and agriculture to the local economy.
• Better co-ordination is needed to identify specific opportunities and take co-ordinated action to address barriers and make entrepreneurs aware of the opportunities in the local food sector.
**Priority #2: Food Sovereignty**
Working towards giving people greater knowledge about, engagement in, and control over the food in our communities. Also includes food democracy, food skills and food education.

Since 2005...
- By hosting Food Summits and an interactive website, the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable has furthered food democracy by providing opportunities for people and organizations involved in efforts to improve the health of our food system to network with, and learn from, each other.
- Public Health research has quantified the level of food skills among Waterloo Region’s population, and programs like Public Health’s Peer Program and the Working Centre continue to improve gardening and food preparation skills for many people.
- Several local organizations continue to provide food education to people, including Foodlink Waterloo Region, Little City Farm, rare, and the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable.
- Recent research in Waterloo Region drew a strong correlation between the quality of people’s diets and their sense of engagement and control over the food they can access.

**Current Assessment**
- Food sovereignty has seen encouraging progress since 2005, as many more people and institutions begin to incorporate food systems thinking into the way they do things.

**Priority #3: Food Policy**
Advocating for “joined-up” food policies at local, provincial, and federal levels of government and monitoring their implementation.

Since 2005...
- The Region of Waterloo adopted a new section on Access to Local and Other Healthy Foods in its Official Plan, and area municipalities are now following suit with policies on community gardens, temporary farm markets, and retail food stores.
- A comprehensive report on municipal policies that support healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health gives many ideas for strengthening municipal food policies.
- The Ontario government no longer permits the sale of foods high in unhealthy fats, sugar, or sodium in publicly-funded schools. The Waterloo Catholic District School Board nutrition standards exceed provincial directives and apply to all food and beverages that are not only sold but offered in schools (e.g. school celebrations).
- A new report by Ontario nutritionists calls on employers to improve workplace food environments by offering more local, healthy food options.
- New organizations have appeared on the provincial and national scenes to advocate for joined-up food policies. These include Sustain Ontario, Food Secure Canada, and Centre for Food in Canada.

**Current Assessment**
- Significant progress has been made in food policy in Waterloo region since 2005. Municipalities recently incorporated access to healthy food into their municipal official plans and will now move towards implementation.
- Many organizations are giving increased attention to convincing Ontario and Canadian governments to adopt comprehensive food policies, and though policies have yet to materialize, their realization seems possible in the medium term.
Local Food Infrastructure

infrastructure required to make more local foods available to local residents

Food Sovereignty

Food System Icons

Community

Barriers

Policies

Serious

Great

Recent

Urban Agriculture

•

Current Assessment

Since 2005…

• Community garden plots in Waterloo Region have increased by 77%, from 679 plots in 2005 to 1,200 in 2012. Community gardens are now found in schools and workplaces.

• Great strides have been made to build an inclusive community garden movement; gardens have been established to welcome newcomers to Canada, youth, and people with mobility challenges.

• Several research studies on community gardens and urban agriculture in Waterloo Region have been published since 2005. The studies cover the benefits of community gardens, potential for accessible and inclusive gardens in Waterloo Region, and more.

• Policies permitting and supporting community gardens have been established in municipal official plans; these municipalities have varying positions on the raising of hens.

Current Assessment

• Growth in community gardens in Waterloo region is encouraging, and recently-adopted municipal policies should encourage more growth in the future.

• Barriers still exist for community gardens, including access to water and compost, and lack of long term tenure for some community garden sites. Public opinion remains mixed regarding urban hen raising and urban beekeeping.

Priority #4: Urban Agriculture

Encouraging and supporting the expansion of food grown or raised in urban areas.

Since 2005…

Priority #5: Farm Viability

Pursuing policies and other initiatives which return a larger portion of the food dollar to farmers, especially for producing healthy foods for local sale. Also includes paying farmers more and encouraging more sustainable farming.

Since 2005…

• The 2011 Agricultural Census showed that Waterloo Region farms have much higher average incomes than ten years earlier, and continue to be among the highest in the province, despite having smaller average farm sizes. More research is needed to explain this phenomenon and to analyse specific trends such as how many farms are earning a higher percentage of their income from local markets.

• Waterloo Region’s farmers continue to age, though they are six years younger than the Ontario average. New programs like FarmStart and CRAFT encourage younger people to consider farming with training programs for new farmers.

• Recent changes to the countryside policies in the Region’s Official Plan (ROP) could provide more long-term protection for farmland from urban development and give farmers more options for earning income on their farms. The entire plan, however, is under appeal.

• The Perth-Waterloo-Wellington chapter of Canadian Organic Growers has produced numerous studies analyzing the organic farming sector, workshops, and resources aimed at supporting farmers interested in using more sustainable farming methods.

Current Assessment

• While farmers in Waterloo Region continue to be more prosperous on average than in most of the rest of Ontario, many continue to depend on off-farm income, and barriers to entry continue to be an issue for new farmers.

• Serious consideration needs to be given to expanding programs like the Rural Water Quality Management Program to pay farmers for delivering other environmental services.
Priority #6: Access To Healthy Food

Advocating for policies and other initiatives which ensure everyone has access to enough nutritious food. Also includes adequate income, emergency food, walkability, and cultural appropriateness.

Since 2005…

- New research is beginning to call for a different focus on the concept of Access to Healthy Food. Based on evidence that the accessibility of non-nutritious foods may have more effect on diet quality than the lack of accessibility to healthy foods, more voices are calling for measures to limit access to non-nutritious foods.

- The lowest income people in our community still struggle to afford enough nutritious food to feed themselves. While incomes have improved since 2005 for those who rely on minimum wage jobs and for those with children, thanks to the advocacy of several local and provincial organizations, the cost of a nutritious food basket for these people still leaves little to pay for other basic expenses. Single adults on Ontario Works cannot even afford a nutritious food basket after paying rent.

- Food bank usage has increased substantially since 2008. Nonetheless, the Region’s food banks and emergency food programs have coordinated with one another to meet this challenge, and initiatives like Waterloo Region Shares have helped strengthen the emergency food network.

- A successful pilot of neighbourhood markets demonstrated the potential of small temporary farmers’ markets to increase walkable access to food, fruit and vegetable consumption, and farmer incomes. New policies in municipal Official Plans now permit these ventures in most land use designations and set goals for ensuring healthy food is available within walking distance of all residents.

- Recent research summarized the opportunities and challenges for growing more ethnic vegetables locally. The Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is researching the viability of growing ethnic vegetables on a conventional scale in Ontario, and FarmStart is helping new farmers enter this emerging market. Meanwhile new community gardens in Waterloo Region are targeting New Canadians to give them the opportunity to grow foods that are most familiar to them.

Current Assessment

- Too many people still rely on emergency food assistance to feed themselves and their families because their incomes are too low to afford enough nutritious food. This affects the quality of their diets and therefore their health.

- Municipalities in Waterloo Region are starting to adopt policies encouraging walkable access to healthy food, but more work is needed to implement the ideas.

Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH

For more information:
519-883-2004
The full report is available at: http://bit.ly/14qiq0W
Published May 2013
Available in accessible formats upon request.
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Executive Summary

A Healthy Food System is...
- one in which all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally-acceptable food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way and that sustains our rural communities

This Snapshot is...
- a quick summary of progress towards a healthy food system in Waterloo Region since the publication of Towards a Healthy Food System for Waterloo Region in 2005,
- organized by the six priorities for improving the health of Waterloo Region’s food system as identified by the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable, and
- a sampling of research, projects and organizations that are actively pursuing the priorities.

This Snapshot is not...
- an exhaustive chronicle of all food research and every food initiative undertaken in Waterloo Region since 2005.

Local Food Infrastructure

This Priority includes:

Rebuilding the processing and distribution interface required to make more local foods available to local residents. Also includes convincing public Institutions to buy more local foods

Since 2005...

- Several new and expanded businesses in Waterloo Region have expanded the options for buying local food, including many new on-farm stores and Community Supported Agriculture Projects (CSAs), and unique innovations like the Elmira Produce Auction and Bailey’s Local Foods.
- There are lessons to learn from the failure of some of these initiatives, like 100 Mile Market.
- The Ontario government has funded several projects, including one at the University of Waterloo, to help public institutions source more Ontario foods. It also introduced the Local Food Act in Fall 2012, aimed at setting targets for public institutions to purchase more Ontario food.
- Some exploratory research by the Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care has identified barriers and opportunities for using more local food in hospitals and long-term care facilities.
- Two recent research studies – one by the University of Waterloo and one by Opportunities Waterloo Region – both call for stronger connections and the creation of a shared strategy among economic developers and businesspeople to promote the local food sector in Waterloo Region.
Current Assessment

- Urban consumers who want to consume local food have many more options available to them than they did in 2005, thanks to expanded offerings from many farm stores, food buying clubs, wholesalers, and restaurants.
- New and updated research is needed to identify specific economic development opportunities, such as a feasibility study on a local food processing and distribution hub, and to quantify the current and potential contribution of food and agriculture to the local economy.
- Better co-ordination is needed to identify the specific opportunities and take coordinated action to address barriers and make entrepreneurs aware of the opportunities in the local food sector.

Food Sovereignty

This priority includes:

Working towards giving people greater knowledge about, engagement in, and control over the food in our communities. Also includes food democracy, food skills and food education.

Since 2005...

- By hosting Food Summits and an interactive website, the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable has furthered food democracy by providing opportunities for people and organizations involved in efforts to improve the health of our food system to network with, and learn from, each other.
- Public Health research has quantified the level of food skills among Waterloo Region’s population, and programs like Public Health’s Peer Program and the Working Centre continue to improve gardening and food preparation skills for many people.
- Several local organizations continue to provide food education to people, including Foodlink Waterloo Region, Little City Farm, rare, and the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable.
- Recent research in Waterloo Region drew a strong correlation between the quality of people’s diets and their sense of engagement and control over the food they can access.

Current Assessment

- Food sovereignty has seen some encouraging progress since 2005, as many more people and institutions are beginning to incorporate food systems thinking into the way they do things. This creates a strong base on which to build.
Food Policy

*This priority includes:*

*Advocating for “joined-up” food policies at local, provincial, and federal levels of government and monitoring their implementation*

Since 2005...

- The region of Waterloo adopted a new section on Access to Local and Other Healthy Foods in its [Official Plan](#), and area municipalities are now following suit with policies on community gardens, temporary farm markets, and retail food stores.

- A [comprehensive report](#) on municipal policies that support healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health gives many ideas for strengthening municipal food policies.

- The Ontario government [no longer permits](#) the sale of foods that are high in unhealthy fats, sugar and sodium in publicly-funded schools. The Waterloo Catholic District School Board nutrition standards exceed these provincial directives and apply to all food and beverages that are not only sold but also offered in school (e.g. school celebrations).

- A new [report by Ontario nutritionists](#) is calling on employers to improve their workplace food environments by offering more local, healthy food options.

- New organizations have appeared on the provincial and national scenes to advocate for joined-up food policies. These include [Sustain Ontario](#), [Food Secure Canada](#), and [Centre for Food in Canada](#).

**Current Assessment**

- Significant progress has been made in food policy in Waterloo Region since 2005. Municipalities have recently incorporated access to healthy food into their municipal official plans and will now move towards their implementation.

- Many organizations are giving increased attention to convincing the Ontario and Canadian governments to adopt comprehensive food policies, and though the policies have yet to materialize, their realization seems possible in the medium term.
Urban Agriculture

This priority includes:
Encouraging and supporting the expansion of food grown or raised in Urban areas

Since 2005...

- The number of community garden plots in Waterloo Region has increased by 77%, from 679 plots in 2005 to 1,200 in 2012. Community gardens can now be found in schools and workplaces in the region.

- Great strides have been made to build an inclusive community garden movement; gardens have been established to welcome newcomers to Canada, youth, and people with mobility challenges.

- Several research studies on community gardens and urban agriculture in Waterloo Region have been published since 2005. The studies cover the benefits of community gardens, the potential for accessible and inclusive gardens in Waterloo Region, and more.

- Policies permitting and supporting community gardens have been established in municipal official plans; these municipalities have varying positions on the raising of hens.

Current Assessment

- The growth in community gardens in Waterloo Region is encouraging, and the recently-adopted municipal policies should encourage more growth in the future.

- Barriers still exist for community gardens, including access to water and compost, lack of long term tenure for some community garden sites. Public opinion remains mixed regarding urban hen raising and urban beekeeping.
Farm Viability
This priority includes:

*Pursuing policies and other initiatives which return a larger portion of the food dollar to farmers, especially for producing healthy foods for local sale. Also includes paying farmers more and encouraging more sustainable farming.*

Since 2005...

- The [2011 Agricultural Census](#) showed that Waterloo Region farms have much higher average incomes than ten years earlier, and continue to be among the highest in the province, despite having smaller average farm sizes. More research is needed to explain this phenomenon and to analyse more specific trends such as how many farms are earning a higher percentage of their income from local markets.

- Waterloo Region’s farmers continue to get older, though they are six years younger than the Ontario average. New programs like [FarmStart](#) and [CRAFT](#) encourage younger people to consider farming with training programs for new farmers.

- Recent changes to the [countryside policies in the region’s Official Plan (ROP)](#) could provide more long-term protection for farmland from urban development and give farmers more options for earning income on their farms. The entire plan, however, is under appeal.

- The [Perth-Waterloo-Wellington chapter of Canadian Organic Growers](#) has produced numerous studies analyzing the organic farming sector and workshops and resources aimed at supporting farmers interested in using more sustainable farming methods.

Current Assessment

- While farmers in Waterloo Region continue to be more prosperous on average than in most of the rest of Ontario, many continue to depend on off-farm income, and barriers to entry continue to be an issue for new farmers.

- Serious consideration needs to be given to expanding programs like the [Rural Water Quality Management Program](#) to pay farmers for delivering other environmental services.
Access To Healthy Food

This priority includes:

*Advocacy for policies and other initiatives which ensure everyone has access to enough nutritious food. Also includes adequate income, emergency food, walkability, and cultural appropriateness.*

Since 2005...

- New research is beginning to call for a different focus on the concept of Access to Healthy Food. Based on evidence that the accessibility of non-nutritious foods may have more effect on diet quality than the lack of accessibility to healthy foods, more voices are calling for measures to limit access to non-nutritious foods.

- The lowest income people in our community still struggle to afford enough nutritious food to feed themselves. While incomes have improved since 2005 for those who rely on minimum wage jobs and for those with children, thanks to the advocacy of several local and provincial organizations, the cost of a nutritious food basket for these people still leaves little to pay for other basic expenses. Single adults on Ontario Works cannot even afford a nutritious food basket after paying rent.

- Food bank usage has increased substantially since 2008. Nonetheless, the region’s food banks and emergency food programs have coordinated with one another to meet this challenge, and initiatives like Waterloo Region Shares have helped to strengthen the emergency food network.

- A successful pilot of neighbourhood markets has demonstrated the potential of small temporary farmers’ markets to increase walkable access to food, fruit and vegetable consumption, and farmer incomes. New policies in municipal Official Plans now permit these ventures in most land use designations and set goals for ensuring healthy food is available within walking distance of all residents.

- Recent research summarized the opportunities and challenges for growing more ethnic vegetables locally. The Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is researching the viability of growing ethnic vegetables on a conventional scale in Ontario, and FarmStart is helping new farmers enter this emerging market. Meanwhile new community gardens in Waterloo Region are specifically targeting New Canadians to give them the opportunity to grow foods that are most familiar to them.
Current Assessment

- Too many people still rely on emergency food assistance to feed themselves and their families because their incomes are too low to afford enough nutritious food. This affects the quality of their diets and therefore their health.

- Municipalities in Waterloo Region are starting to adopt policies encouraging walkable access to healthy food, but more work is needed to implement the ideas.
Introduction

This report is an update on the status of Waterloo Region’s food system. It builds on the work of a food system assessment published by Region of Waterloo Public Health in 2005—Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region—and summarizes the new information made available since then in published reports and other sources which were brought to the attention of the report authors.

The impetus for this report was funding made available by the JW McConnell Family Foundation to Opportunities Waterloo Region to conduct a regional food system assessment. As the initial stage of the Value Chain Program,2 the Foundation’s Food System Assessment Fund seeks “quick farm-to-table scans of regional food chains,” and asks for food system assessments to address specific questions about the existing and potential demand and supply for sustainable regional food, and to map out plans for getting there.

Waterloo Region already has a food system assessment from 2005,3 as well as a plan to move towards a healthier food system4 which was widely-endorsed by the community in 2006 and endorsed by Regional Council in 2007 (see additional details in Background, below). Waterloo Region also has an organization set up to refine the plan and monitor progress on it (the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable). This report builds on that work, attempting to summarize some of the vast body of food systems work that has affected or taken place in Waterloo Region since.

The report is structured along the lines of the six broad Food System Priorities as identified by the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable in 2010 (see Background). In each section, we start with a brief summary of where we were in 2005 when Towards a Healthy Community Food System was written, and then update the state of progress towards realizing that priority by reviewing new research, initiatives, or active organizations which have surfaced since then, and concluding with a brief assessment of where we are today on the priority. This assessment does not constitute an exhaustive review of all the organizations and projects involved in efforts to improve Waterloo Region’s food system, but attempts to document actions of which the authors are aware. Input into the content of this report, including suggestions of other organizations and projects for inclusion, are welcome.
Background

Waterloo Region’s first food system assessment, *Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region*, was published in November 2005. The report documented that approximately one in ten Waterloo Region residents either did not have enough to eat or worried about not having enough to eat. At the same time, many farmers struggled to make a living growing or raising food, and many who had enough to eat were experiencing health issues because they did not get enough nutrition from the food they ate. It also pointed out that our food system depended far too much on fossil fuel inputs to be sustainable over the long term.

The report suggested a goal of working towards a healthy food system, defined as one in which *all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally-acceptable food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way and that sustains our rural communities.*

It then suggested a number of strategies for moving towards a healthy food system, which ranged from preserving the region’s agricultural lands and strengthening consumer food skills, to increasing urban agriculture programs and reviving the local food processing industry.

Following the release of the 2005 Report, over eighty people from nine sectors of the food system participated in consultations on the report’s recommendations. Focus group participants identified specific actions which they felt were important to achieve the goal of a healthy food system. Then, in a follow-up forum in June 2006, participants chose six priority actions from a list of 26 actions identified in the focus groups, and affirmed the need for a new organization to oversee their implementation. This process, and the resulting plan made out of the prioritized actions, is documented in the 2007 report *A Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region.*

Work began soon after the June 2006 forum to create the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable. The people who make up the group represent key sectors and interests in Waterloo Region’s food system, and see their role as monitoring the status of the *Food System Plan* and identifying current Food System Priorities. Their tagline, repeated at the top of their webpage, is “connecting our community to the work of building a healthy food system” in Waterloo Region. In April 2007, when Regional Council received a published version of the *Food System Plan*, Council passed a motion authorizing Public Health staff to provide administrative support for the Roundtable.
In 2009, the Roundtable held a Food Summit\(^9\) to educate people about the interconnected complexities of the food system and to engage them in actions to address them. Over 170 people attended the Summit, which produced a Declaration identifying actions participants committed to taking. The Roundtable used the Food Summit Declaration to refine its Food System Priorities in January 2010. The following six priorities represent the Roundtable’s priority areas for work towards a healthy food system in Waterloo Region:

1. **Local Food Infrastructure** - Rebuild the processing and distribution infrastructure required to make more local foods available to local residents.

2. **Food Sovereignty** - Work towards giving people greater knowledge about, engagement in, and control over the food in our communities.

3. **Food Policy** - Advocate for “joined-up” food policies at local, provincial, and federal levels of government and monitor their implementation.

4. **Urban Agriculture** - Encourage and support the expansion of food grown or raised in urban areas.

5. **Farm Viability** - Pursue policies and other initiatives which return a larger portion of the food dollar to farmers.

6. **Access to Healthy Food** - Advocate for policies and other initiatives which ensure everyone has access to enough nutritious food.
Assessments of Waterloo Region’s food system from 2005 to the present have continuously identified the broad area of economic development as a priority area for action to move towards a healthier food system. The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable names Local Food Infrastructure as one of its six Food System Priorities, and includes within this priority “rebuilding the processing and distribution network to make local food easily accessible to residents.” Public institutions are key for rebuilding the local food processing sector, since if enough institutions with significant food expenditures could be convinced to buy an increasing percentage of their food from local sources, it could create new markets for local producers and processors.

Several key pieces of research were summarized in Public Health’s 2005 report *Towards a Healthy Community Food System* that described the state of local food infrastructure at the time. Below is a quick review of what was known at that time.

The *Economic Impact Study of the Agriculture and Food-Related Sectors in Waterloo Region* was commissioned by Public Health in 2003 to examine the economic significance of the food system in terms of dollars and jobs. At the time the report was written, 11.3% of the WR labour force worked in the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors of the food economy. Gross sales for all three sectors totaled almost $2.7 billion, including a substantial value-added component.

The 2006 *Study of Redundant Trade in Waterloo Region* looked at the negative economic and environmental impacts of redundant trade on the region. It studied 11 selected fruits and vegetables, and found that Canada imported and exported those foods from other countries during their peak harvest time in Waterloo Region. Scans of grocery store and farmers’ market shelves found imports of the same foods during peak harvest time, too. The study also found local foods not necessarily easy to find and sometimes more expensive.

The 2005 *Region of Waterloo Food Flow Analysis* looked at a specific basket of foods commonly consumed in Waterloo Region and tried to determine what percentage of these items were from local sources. It found that most of what is supplied in local stores did not come from the region.
The 2005 *Optimal Nutrition Environment* study (published in an academic journal in 2010) examined whether the region’s own agricultural lands could supply the required amount of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains needed to help the region’s population fill the gap between its current and ideal nutritional needs. It found that Waterloo Region could help its population meet the *Canada’s Food Guide* dietary standards with food grown on its own land with a 10% (for the year 2026) and an additional 2% (2046) shift in the use of farmland from what is mostly cropland that is currently used as animal feedstock to growing fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.\(^\text{15}\)

**Since 2005...**

Growing public demand for local food since 2005 has led to the creation or expansion of several new businesses in Waterloo Region aimed at delivering local and other healthy foods to Waterloo Region residents. Foodlink’s Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map featured eight Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) farms in 2012, compared to four in 2005.\(^\text{16}\) New businesses like Bailey’s Local Foods, which was established in 2008, created a new model for accessing local foods; the business allows customers to order individual food products online from dozens of local farms and food processors – including meats, cheeses, and a variety of processed foods within a 100-mile radius of Waterloo – and to pick them up from a central location weekly.\(^\text{17}\)

Oakridge Acres, a farm located in North Dumfries, opened up an on-farm Country Meat Store in 2008, and began selling products directly supplied by over 40 local producers or through the Ontario Natural Food Co-op (ONFC). The store won the Premier’s Innovation Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence in 2008,\(^\text{18}\) and continues to attract customers from far and wide with in-store cooking classes, outdoor farm events, and a wide variety of local foods. Grand River Organics started operating as a CSA pooling foods from several organic farms together in 2009. Now operating year round, it allows individuals to customize orders online. They work directly with farmers from Dufferin County to Port Maitland to pickup and deliver orders to a number of drop-off locations (5 in Cambridge, 8 in Waterloo, and 3 in Kitchener).\(^\text{19}\)

Perhaps the most promising update in the development of local food infrastructure in Waterloo Region has been the continued success of the Elmira Produce Auction Co-operative (EPAC). First established in 2004 by a group of Mennonite farmers in Waterloo Region, EPAC EPAC started with 65 producer members coming from a 75 km radius, and had grown to 100 members within a 120 km radius by 2010. It has expanded its original building space, and experienced a 600% increase in sales between 2004 and 2009.\(^\text{20}\) There has been a noticeable impact on the local agricultural community as a result of the auction’s success. New crops are being grown by farmers for the auction, an increase in the number of greenhouses has been
noted, and small producers are finding great gains from their involvement with EPAC. Auction founder Nelson Wideman left the co-operative in 2010 to establish another wholesaler of local foods, Jay West. Jay West is seeking to fill a niche for retailers who do not wish to spend the time bidding on foods at an auction, but who still want wholesale quantities of local produce: it operates year-round.

The success of EPAC has helped other organizations link consumers with local farmers. In 2006, the University of Waterloo Food Services established a “farm market” on its campus run by student volunteers (Food Services covers the cost of buying and transporting the food). The UW Farm Market boasts that its produce selection is 100% local, which is primarily due to its use of EPAC. This in indicative of how the auction can make it easier for other food retailers to provide local food. University employees and students have voiced their support for the market and find it to be an excellent way to eat healthy for less while supporting regional farmers by buying local produce that might otherwise prove difficult to find. Like many other farm market ventures, the University of Waterloo project helps farmers receive a fair price for their produce. It also has the added benefit of introducing young adults and newcomers to Waterloo Region to what can be grown here, allowing local producers to gain a foothold in an emerging consumer base.

Success has not been easy to achieve for all entrepreneurs in Waterloo Region’s local food sector, however. Three entrepreneurs created 100-Mile Market in 2007 as a wholesale distributor of foods from over 160 Ontario producers aimed at restaurants, hotels, caterers, and public institutions like schools and hospitals. The business attracted a large investment from the Waterloo-Wellington Community Futures Corporation and won the Premier’s Agri-food Innovation Award in 2009, but went bankrupt in 2011. The reasons for the failure of this business need to be examined closely in the analysis of the feasibility of future local food distribution enterprises in the region.

The Ontario government has moved strongly to support the development of local food infrastructure by setting up a funding program designed to help public institutions such as schools, universities, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and municipalities purchase more Ontario foods. The Broader Public Sector Investment Fund (BPS) was created in 2009 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs and is managed by the Greenbelt Fund. The fund has disbursed millions of dollars into projects aimed at reducing the barriers to purchasing local foods for institutions, including two projects based in Waterloo Region.

The University of Waterloo was able to hire a Local Food Co-ordinator with BPS funds to conduct a baseline evaluation of the foods it offers through its food services department and
make a plan to increase that amount. The university found that it had to change several internal protocols just to track the food sources at its numerous food service locations, but was able to establish that it purchased 20% of its $6.2 million budget from Ontario sources in 2010. The university believes it can reach a target of 31% by 2015.29

My Sustainable Canada (MSC), a new non-profit organization based in Kitchener which was founded in 2007, has conducted numerous research studies with various partners and funders (including the BPS) on the barriers and opportunities to purchasing more local food in the broader public sector, particularly the health care sector. Through the Canadian Coalition for Green Healthcare (CCGH), MSC conducted a survey of hospitals and health care facilities across Ontario, asking them to describe their food service practices and their local food purchasing in particular.30 One of the hospitals surveyed, St Mary’s Hospital in Kitchener, led a “constellation” of healthcare facilities in conducting further research into the opportunities. The resulting research report described the food procurement and preparation practices of Ontario health care facilities in detail; it found that while senior administrators placed a high value on local food, budget restraints and other policies deter them from being able to purchase much local food. The report made several recommendations for how to address the barriers, including making local food a strategic priority in healthcare institutions as well as the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs.31

Also through the CCGH, MSC conducted case studies with St Joseph’s Health Care Centre in Guelph32 and the St Joseph’s Group Purchasing Organization,33 which purchases food for several hospitals in Ontario. In their case studies, CCGH helped the healthcare organizations conduct food origin audits and then set targets to increase their local food purchasing. Both organizations were able to increase their local food procurement during the case study, providing hope for other healthcare facilities to follow their lead. The final report in the series jointly authored by MSC and CCGH made a number of specific recommendations for all stakeholders in the provision of food in health care facilities in Ontario. It recommended that the Ontario government give flexibility to health care facilities in their efforts to increase Ontario foods, and that it increase programs to support facilities’ “ease of access” to Ontario food suppliers. It recommended that food producers and distributors and health care facilities take full advantage of government ease of access programs to increase their connections with each other, and that health care facilities develop their own policies and procurement contract language that give preference to local food.34

Another promising development for public institutions committing to buy more local food was the introduction of Local Food Act by the Ontario government in September 2012. The Act would, if implemented, empower the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs to
set targets for the purchase of Ontario food in the broader public sector, including colleges, universities, schools, and hospitals.\(^{35}\) As of this writing, the Act is still being debated in the Ontario legislature. Its introduction is a sign that the government is prepared to move in the direction of setting targets for public institutions to purchase more Ontario foods.

A number of studies published since 2005 merit mention for their analysis of the potential to rebuild local food infrastructure in Waterloo Region. A 2010 report by two University of Waterloo students titled *Analyzing the Potential for Local Food in Convenience Stores in Waterloo, Ontario* found that convenience stores have the necessary infrastructure to display and sell local food.\(^{36}\) However, it also found that the cost of local food would be higher than that available at farmers’ markets or in larger grocery store chains. Also, space within convenience stores is limited, and the addition of extra shelving and refrigeration units for local products is not always possible. To make such investments worthwhile, the report argued that a shift in consumers’ perception of the role of convenience stores would have to occur, because people do not typically look to convenience stores for their weekly grocery purchases.

Another study by University of Waterloo researchers suggested that the perception that local food is more expensive is inaccurate and acts as a barrier to the growth of the local food sector. The report, *Is Local More Expensive?*, looked at the prices of local and non-local foods in grocery stores, farmers’ markets, natural food stores, and web-based enterprises in 2010 in Waterloo Region. It found no evidence that local is consistently more expensive than non-local.\(^{37}\) There was even less statistical difference in price if the definition of local expanded from 100 miles to all of Ontario.\(^{38}\)

Research conducted in early 2012 by Opportunities Waterloo Region (OWR) identified a need for further research to quantify the current and potential contribution of the local food sector to the local economy. In interviews with key players in Waterloo Region’s local food sector, OWR found mixed opinions about the true current demand for local food: some felt it was high, and others felt the demand was limited to a small niche.\(^{39}\) On the supply side, most respondents agreed there was a need for more local processing and distribution, and offered varying ideas for how to achieve this.\(^{40}\) Overall, respondents agreed on the need for better coordination among all levels of the food value chain to set clear goals and work together to achieve them: it recommended a dedicated paid convenor to oversee projects related to the economic development of the food system.\(^{41}\) The report recommended an update of the 2003 *Economic Impact Study*\(^ {42}\) and a formal research study to capture real demand for local food, and recommended business feasibility studies for the creation of food processing and distribution hubs.\(^{43}\)
Another study published in 2012 analyzed the networks among economic developers and businesspeople in the local food sector in Waterloo Region. The study found much poorer connections among local food entrepreneurs and municipal economic development officials than in the clean energy and creative sectors, and found that economic development officials paid much less attention to these sectors than manufacturing or technology, despite their economic potential. The paper argued that a strong regional identity was crucial for the success of the local food sector, and that the current fragmented approach to growing the sector results in missed opportunities. It recommended strengthening the regional identity for local food and developing a regional hub for information sharing and co-ordination of food processing and distribution facilities.

A third important study published in 2012 looked at the potential for creating a sustainable food system in Southwestern Ontario. Citing a number of economic, environmental, and social problems with our current food system, the study claims that redirecting exports of Ontario foods for domestic consumption and replacing imports with local production could create over 140,000 jobs, and suggests specific areas of education and training required for those jobs. It documented a long list of existing initiatives that are contributing towards sustainable food production in Ontario, and proposed the formation of “Sustainable Food Clusters” that would be co-operatively-controlled enterprises bringing together producers, processors, distributors, and retailers of local, sustainably-produced food in a region. A “Sustainable Food Cluster Network” would manage trade amongst the clusters of foods that can only be produced in certain areas. As of this writing, the study authors are contacting municipalities in the study area to offer consulting services to aid in the creation of business structures and financing mechanisms, soil and climate maps for determining ideal locations for various crops, brand creation for local foods, and more.

Current Assessment:

Urban consumers who want to consume local food have many more options available to them than they did in 2005, thanks to the many farm stores, food buying clubs, wholesalers, and restaurants expanding their offerings of local food. The failure of one large wholesaler of local food (100-Mile Market), however, should give some pause to the optimism for growth of the local food sector. More research is needed to identify the specific opportunities, such as whether a business case can be made to establish a local food processing and distribution hub, and to quantify the current and potential contribution to the local economy that the food and agriculture makes.

Many people continue to feel there is unrealized potential in the local food economy, and point to the lack of a co-ordinated economic development strategy for local food as the
culprit. Better co-ordination is needed to identify the specific opportunities and take co-ordinated action to address barriers and make entrepreneurs aware of the opportunities.

Food Sovereignty

*Work towards giving people greater knowledge about engagement in, and control over the food in our communities*

The term Food Sovereignty has come into wide use since the adoption of the Declaration of Nyéléni at a world conference of over 500 delegates from 80 countries on Food Sovereignty in Mali in 2007. The Declaration states that food sovereignty is about the right of people – particularly those who produce, distribute, and eat food – to control their own food systems.\(^{49}\) The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable adopted the concept of Food Sovereignty when it re-articulated its Food System Priorities in 2010. It broke the concept down into three themes: food democracy, food skills, and food education.

**Food Democracy** refers to the control that communities should have over all aspects of their food: in a truly democratic food system, people know where their food comes from and how it is produced and distributed, and have influence over those factors. **Food Skills** recognizes that people need the skills to grow, cook, and preserve food if they are to have control over their food. Lastly, **Food Education** is necessary so that people are aware of how the current food system works, its environmental, social, and economic impacts, and how we can work together to change it.\(^{50}\)

Though the term Food Sovereignty was not used in Public Health’s 2005 food system assessment, the report did describe some aspects of the state of food sovereignty at the time. It described a food system which was concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer players. While not as dramatic in the rest of Ontario, Waterloo Region was experiencing the trend towards fewer, bigger farms, with 9.2% fewer farms in operation in the region in 2001 than 1996, and average farm size 6.1% bigger.\(^{51}\) Five corporations employed 55% of all people in the food processing and distribution sector in Waterloo Region.\(^{52}\) In the food retail sector, four food chains operated 71% of the 35 supermarkets in the region.\(^{53}\) The conclusion drawn in the 2005 assessment was that the concentration of ownership in the food sector left the region vulnerable to corporate relocation decisions and made it difficult for small- and medium-scale producers to get their products into supermarkets.\(^{54}\) In the language of food sovereignty, the
concentration of ownership in the food sector takes control of the food system from small- and medium-sized farmers and consumers.

The assessment identified initiatives that were already in place in the region to improve people’s food skills, such as the Community Nutrition Worker Program, Foodlink Waterloo Region’s Local Harvest newsletters, and programs of the Rare Charitable research reserve, and suggested efforts to strengthen food knowledge and skills among consumers as one of seven proposed objectives for moving towards a healthy food system.55

Since 2005...

Food Democracy

Food democracy requires a high degree of cooperation and engagement among individuals and groups from all sectors of the food system. The formation of the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable in 2007 was an attempt at improving cooperation, and the more than 40 members who have served in the organization since then have represented key sectors and interests in the food system, from producers, restaurant owners, food distributors, and community members, to food security advocates, researchers, and nutritionists. The Roundtable’s stated mission is “to connect our community to the work of building a healthy food system,” and in addition to bringing together this group of representatives of the food sector five times a year, the Roundtable built a website aimed at enabling all people involved in food system projects in Waterloo Region to connect with others with similar interests. The website was generating over 40 daily visits on average in 2012, and over 450 people receive bi-weekly updates on various ongoing food projects in the region.56

The Roundtable has co-ordinated some direct efforts to solicit democratic input on the changes needed to improve the health of Waterloo Region’s food system, most notably by hosting the Waterloo Region Food Summit in November 2009. Over 170 people attended the Summit in Kitchener, over one-third of whom had experienced food insecurity at some point in their lives. The Summit was billed as a way to learn about the problems facing the food system and to identify key strategies for fixing it. The Food Summit Declaration, which was signed by the participants as they left the event, committed the participants to working towards 13 different priorities. The Roundtable later incorporated the Declaration into its six Food System Priorities, and then hosted a follow-up Summit in April 2011 which updated the community on the status of each.57

No one has published updated research on the concentration of ownership in Waterloo Region’s food processing and retailing sectors since the 2003 Growing Food & Economy study.
We do know, however, that the number of farms continues to decrease, and the average farm size continues to increase, though at slower rates that the rest of the province. There were 1,398 farms headquartered in Waterloo Region in 2011, 3.2% fewer than 2001. Average farm size was 159 acres in 2011, 2.6% larger than 2001.58

A recent Wilfrid Laurier University study shed light on the strong correlation between the quality of people’s diets and their sense of engagement and control over the food they can access. Through in-depth interviews with forty-four City of Waterloo residents coupled with objective dietary measurements of the same people, researcher Ellen Desjardins was able to conclude that the people who were most involved in neighbourhood food buying clubs, advocating to store managers to stock better foods, educating themselves about the food system, and preserving their own foods were more likely to eat more nutritious foods according to the Healthy Eating Index.59 This finding was corroborated by the NEWPATH study (details below in the Access to Healthy Food section), where researchers found that people who shopped more at CSAs were more likely to have lower BMI and higher diet quality.60

**Food Skills**

Region of Waterloo Public Health produced a report on the food skills of Waterloo Region Adults in 2010. The report found that while the majority (93.5%) of adults in the region felt confident using a knife safely, fewer (78.8%) were confident in their ability to cook from scratch, and even fewer believed they had the ability to freeze (58.5%) or can (33.4%) seasonal foods.61 Women tended to rate their food skills higher than men, and people with lower incomes tended to rate their food skills higher than higher-income people.62 Evidently, there is room for improvement in the skills required to achieve true food sovereignty, and we now have a useful baseline of food skills in Waterloo Region against which to measure future interventions.

The Waterloo Region Peer Program has been improving the food skills of the community since 1988 through an ongoing partnership with local neighbourhood and community organizations. Peer Community Nutrition Workers (CNWs) focus on increasing the knowledge and skills of families and individuals within their community with respect to food, healthy eating and nutrition. In 2012 local organisations hired 15 Community Nutrition workers who ran 131 programs in priority neighbourhoods across Waterloo Region. They reached 2,635 community members. CNWs are community residents that share similar life experiences with members of their communities. CNW’s are trained and certified by Region of Waterloo Public Health in the skills needed to plan and facilitate neighbourhood-based programs to build knowledge on nutrition education.63
The Kitchener-based Working Centre has also recognized the importance of improving food skills in order to strengthen communities. Its most recent food-related initiative, the Hacienda Sarria Market Garden, exposes volunteers to sustainable local food production techniques and gives them valuable business skills. Individuals can simultaneously learn how local conditions influence food production and how to sell the final products to local businesses. The Working Centre gives community members an opportunity to cooperate with one another and access a variety of programs and tools to develop skills in a number of areas. It improves Food Skills primarily through its St John’s Kitchen, Community Shared Agriculture (CSA), and urban agriculture projects. At St John’s Kitchen, staff and approximately 100 volunteers work together to prepare over 300 meals a day and run a marketplace and small greenhouse. Participants gain valuable knowledge of how to prepare healthy dishes with food that may otherwise be wasted and learn about selling agricultural products. The Commons Market CSA run by the Working Centre gives participants a chance to gain skills in food distribution, as local products are received and packed on-site for CSA member pickup. Similarly, community garden projects carried out by the Working Centre allow individuals to learn how to produce their own food in their own neighbourhood using sustainable land use practices, and expose them to the various health, nutritional, and financial benefits of urban agriculture.

Food Education

Food education gives people the opportunity to learn how current and alternative food systems work in order to better understand why change is important. Foodlink Waterloo Region has made significant contributions to Food Education since being incorporated in 2002. It published its eleventh edition of the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map in 2012, which identifies the foods that can be grown in Waterloo Region and where they can be purchased. In 2012, it released a smartphone app which enables users to search for the same Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map information on their phone. Since 2004, Foodlink’s “Local Harvest” newsletter has been providing information on what local products are in season, where to find them, and what dishes you can make with them. Foodlink added the “Local Dish” blog to its Food Education repertoire in 2010, adding an average of three new posts each month about farming experiences, restaurant reviews, and ways to cook with local foods.

Other food education initiatives spring out of sharing the experience of growing one’s own food. Little City Farm is an urban homestead that practices sustainable agriculture, prepares and preserves produce, strives to reduce its environmental impact, and encourages public engagement. It hosts over twenty workshops and tours annually on topics ranging from
canning and preserving to cheesemaking, seed saving, and rainwater collection. Similarly, rare Charitable Research Reserve engages the community in a number of educational programs. Located where the Speed and Grand Rivers meet, rare’s food education programs explore sustainable farming activities, local food operations, and how, when, and what to plant based on the time of year. The valuable exposure to Food Education and Food Skills programs people receive at rare allows them to better understand sustainable solutions and the factors that influence the current food system.

The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable’s Food Education efforts have focused more on alerting people to issues in the food system that may be addressed through policy changes. Through its website and monthly public events at the Kitchener Public Library, the Roundtable has addressed issues ranging from food labeling, genetically-modified foods, and food safety regulations, to gravel pits, migrant agricultural workers, and global food prices. Their KPL events have attracted an average of twenty people per month since starting in the Fall of 2009.

Current Assessment

Food sovereignty has seen some encouraging progress since 2005, as many more people and institutions are beginning to incorporate food systems thinking into the way they do things. The emergence of the Food System Roundtable in Waterloo Region has increased the level of discussion of food issues and many other organizations like Foodlink, rare, the Working Centre, and Little City Farm are training people in the skills to produce their own food. We now have a measurable baseline against which to measure future assessments of the food skills of Waterloo Region’s population: there is certainly room for improvement. A 2003 study found very few supermarkets and food processors and distributors dominating the industry: further research is needed to determine if the concentration of ownership in the food industry has changed since then.
The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable selected food policy as one of its priorities with the context that there is “no comprehensive food strategy or policy... at any level of government [in Canada] which aims to ensure that healthy, environmentally-sustainable food is available to everyone.” Government policy at all levels - locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally – shape how the food system functions. However, a lack of coordination among governments and ministries regarding how best to address food issues can produce unintended consequences. The absence or incompleteness of such a food policy in effect acts as a policy in itself. In its most practical form, a comprehensive national food policy would provide the foundation and guiding principles on which provinces and municipalities could build.

Waterloo Region’s 2005 food system assessment did not discuss Food Policy directly, as very few people in governments or academia were thinking about developing comprehensive food policy at the time. The region of Waterloo had developed a Regional Growth Management Strategy as early as 2003, however, which called for the development of a food system plan and for a growth model that aimed to prevent further encroachment of urban development onto farmlands. The regional Growth Management Strategy’s proposal to adopt a permanent countryside line illustrated the region’s recognition that growth must be controlled to protect our existing agricultural resources and production capacity. Over time, the countryside line strategy has been strengthened and serves as an example of how supportive policies can protect and even encourage growth in the local food system.

Since 2005...

The region of Waterloo introduced the goal of developing an environmentally and economically sustainable regional food system in its new Regional Official Plan (ROP), which received Council approval in June 2009 and was then formally approved by the Province in December 2011. The ROP is a comprehensive document containing all of the planning policies that guide how the region will grow over the next twenty years. The inclusion of food system policies into the ROP alongside growth and transportation strategies illustrates the region’s recognition of the significant role its food system will have in shaping its future. The ROP implemented the concept of the Countryside Line which had been first articulated in the 2003
Regional Growth Management Strategy. The intent of the Countryside Line is to protect the farmlands around the three cities from urban development for at least twenty years, and in some cases permanently. It should be noted, however, that some members of the development community have appealed the ROP, and the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) will decide whether the region can impose these kinds of limits. An OMB ruling in January 2013 accepted the developers’ arguments and concluded that the region underestimated the amount of new land needed to accommodate the region’s growth to the year 2031. This ruling would force the Region to open up approximately 1,053 hectares of new land for development. However, the Region is appealing this decision to the Ontario Divisional Court.

The food policies contained in the ROP are the result of collaboration between the Planning and Public Health departments of the region of Waterloo, but are also in no small part the result of advocacy work done by the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable. The Roundtable was formed in 2006 to coordinate and engage key stakeholders in shaping policy and programs that improve the health of the food system and the public. It regards the influence it exerted on the food policies in the ROP as one of its greatest achievements.

Since the ROP’s approval, the region’s seven area municipalities have made varying levels of progress in updating their own Official Plans, which now must come into compliance with ROP policies. All three cities in the region – Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge – circulated drafts of their new Official Plans to the public in late 2011, and all three contained policies on community gardens, temporary farmers’ markets, or food access for the first time. The Roundtable compiled the relevant food policies from each municipality and provided comments to each on them. The Roundtable’s advocacy met with some success, as the City of Waterloo and City of Cambridge both chose to permit temporary farmers’ markets and community gardens in all land use designations in their final Council-approved Plans. As of this writing, Kitchener and the region’s four rural townships have yet to finalize their new Official Plans, but the Roundtable plans to provide input into the public consultations for each one.

While the regional Official Plan and the area’s Municipal Official Plans now contain promising policies on a number of food issues, a 2012 report cautioned that advocacy will be needed to ensure the policies achieve their intended aims. In early 2012, the Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership hired a consultant to analyse the Official Plans of all seven of the region’s area municipalities for their support for healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health. The resulting report, Supporting Advocacy on Municipal Plans, suggested many areas where the Plans could go even further in their support for the development of a healthy food system. For example, it is unclear how the City of Waterloo’s laudable objective of a
small or medium-sized food store within a 2km walk of each resident will be achieved in practice, or how policies stating all lands “may be zoned to permit” temporary farm markets will actually lead to more farm markets. The report’s detailed analysis recommends citizen follow-up in many areas, including getting involved in processes determining zoning by-laws, informing the public of the new policies so that more food businesses can take advantage of the opportunities, and working with municipal staff to show them the potential of using the policies to build a healthier food system.\textsuperscript{85}

The Ontario Government has taken several steps in recent years to recognize the important connections between health and the food system. In its 2010 guidance document for public health units regarding how best to promote healthy eating, the Ministry of Health Promotion (since subsumed within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care) cites unhealthy diets as a cause of increasing incidence of chronic diseases, and suggests that public health units seek to influence policies and environmental supports rather than delivering messages to individuals or small groups.\textsuperscript{86} In particular, it suggests collaborating with municipalities and retailers to improve access to local food through things like community gardens and community shared agriculture programs.\textsuperscript{87}

The Ontario Ministry of Education introduced the School Food and Beverage Policy/Program Memorandum 150 (PPM 150) in January 2010 to all publicly funded schools. Food and beverages offered for sale on school premises, for school purposes, must comply with the requirements set out in the policy. The requirements specify nutrition criteria that food and beverages must meet in order to be offered for sale in schools. Food and beverage products that contain few or no essential nutrients and/or contain high amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium (e.g. candy, chocolate bars, and high fat, low fibre snack foods) are no longer permitted for sale.\textsuperscript{88} Though not without issues in its implementation, the Ministry of Education’s plan can be interpreted as a significant policy achievement towards improving the food environment for students province-wide.

At the local level, the Waterloo Region Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) is a provincial leader in terms of school nutrition policy work and school based nutrition programs. The WCDSB, in partnership with Region of Waterloo Public Health, developed and adopted a Food and Nutrition Policy for Secondary Schools in 2007\textsuperscript{89} and for Elementary Schools in 2009\textsuperscript{90}. In 2011, the WCDSB nutrition standards were revised to meet and exceed the PPM 150 nutrition standards. Both of the WCDSB nutrition policies go further and apply to all food and beverages that are not only sold but also offered in school (e.g. school celebrations, school rewards, school meetings, healthy classroom snacks, and classroom and staff nutrition education). Workshops led by Public Health in all WCDSB schools have engaged the entire
school community in conversations about how to implement the policies and promote healthy eating. Region of Waterloo Public Health expects to release an evaluation of the implementation of these policies in the WCDSB sometime in 2013.

As part of its health promotion efforts with workplaces, Region of Waterloo Public Health produced a guide to encouraging healthy eating in workplaces in 2011. The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health built on this work in 2012 when it released a report calling for action to take a comprehensive approach to promoting healthy eating in workplaces. It calls for a reduction in the typical less nutritious foods and beverages provided in workplaces in cafeterias, during meetings, events and celebrations, or left in common work areas. Many of these foods are described by Canada’s Food Guide as “Foods to Limit” because they contain too much fat, sugar, or salt to contribute to good health. These foods tend to be highly accessible and prominently displayed which promotes consumption. It calls for workplace policies to limit access to these foods and beverages in addition to strategies to increase individual knowledge and food skills.

A new civil society organization emerged in 2008 to network among the increasing number of organizations across the province interested in food issues and advocate for policies at the provincial level. Sustain Ontario is working to transform food and agriculture at a system-wide level to promote healthy food and local sustainable farming. They have advocated for provincial endorsement of their Good Food Policies, which call for a provincial government policy that unites the various provincial ministries to pursue a coordinated food strategy. If adopted, the Good Food Policies would encourage the development and sustainability of local food systems throughout Ontario. Over the summer of 2012, Sustain gave significant input into the Ontario government’s proposed Local Food Act, which the government introduced later that Fall (see more on the Local Food Act in the Local Food Infrastructure section).

Food Secure Canada is a non-profit organization established in 2005 that seeks to develop a comprehensive food strategy for Canada as a whole. Based on the principles of eliminating hunger, providing healthy and safe food, and developing a sustainable food system, Food Secure Canada published a proposed national food policy called Resetting the Table in 2011 and engaged in an advocacy campaign to convince the federal government to adopt it. The proposed policy builds on concerns raised by hundreds of people who participated in their national consultations to present a complete policy framework that can guide the nation towards food sovereignty. It tackles the socioeconomic and environmental problems of the contemporary food system and provides solutions in the form of policies where action plans are absent or incomplete. These proposed policies range from guaranteeing public participation in
and the viability of regional food systems to financing healthy school food and strong poverty elimination programs.\textsuperscript{97}

Food Secure Canada is not the only agent for change at the national level. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) conducted its own consultations among its members and in 2011 published \textit{Towards a National Food Strategy: A Framework for Securing the Future of Food}, which addresses “everything from promoting the Canadian brand and healthy lifestyles to sustaining economic growth and ecosystems.”\textsuperscript{98} The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute published a paper in 2011 called \textit{Canada’s Agri-Food Destination}, which calls for Canada to develop a national food strategy.\textsuperscript{99} The Conference Board of Canada took up that challenge by creating the Centre for Food in Canada, hosting a Canadian Food Summit in February 2012, and drafting its own national food strategy with wide public input.\textsuperscript{100} The consultation has been criticized by some for emphasizing the interests of the largest players in the food industry over issues of local sustainability, health, and poverty, however.\textsuperscript{101}

Canada’s need for a comprehensive national food policy has recently received international recognition. Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on Food, visited Canada in May 2012 and expressed concern that the lack of a national food strategy was illustrative of a “growing gap between Canada’s international commitments and their implementation domestically.”\textsuperscript{102} De Schutter noted that “Canada has no national food policy or strategy,” and recommended that Canada follow the lead of many of the community-based initiatives noted above to develop a comprehensive policy as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{103}

\textbf{Current Assessment}

Significant progress has been made in the area of Food Policy in Waterloo Region since 2005. At the municipal level, the regional government has written food policies into its Official Plan for the first time ever, and its seven area municipalities have begun to do the same, with varying levels of depth and scope. The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable, which emerged in 2007, can take credit for advocating successfully for many of these municipal policies, and seems aware of the need to follow up with all the municipalities to ensure that the policies have their desired effect. People in Waterloo Region are connected with efforts to develop comprehensive food policies at both the provincial and national level, too. Both Sustain Ontario and Food Secure Canada have emerged since 2005 to advocate at their respective levels of government, and have gained support from organizations across the province and country for their proposals. Actual government policies reflecting their proposals have yet to materialize at either level, but seem poised to develop in the short- to medium-term future.
Urban Agriculture

Encourage and support the expansion of food grown or raised in urban areas

Urban agriculture in its broadest definition is the growing of food in cities. It includes backyard and rooftop gardens, community gardens, edible landscaping (e.g. fruit trees and edible flowers), and the raising of animals, chickens, and bees. The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable identifies Urban Agriculture as a priority, arguing that new programs and policies could help realize the potential to grow much more food in our cities. It also advocates for better education and supports for the harvesting of “wild” foods, i.e. foods that grow naturally in local areas without the tending that agriculture requires.  

Waterloo Region’s 2005 food system assessment was able to draw on the work of a 2005 report by Public Health on the state of Urban Agriculture at the time. It documented the existence of 31 community gardens in the region for a total of 679 plots, and 6 green roofs or rooftop gardens. It also reported on a population survey which found that 70% of urban residents felt it was important to be able to grow their own vegetables, and that 38% of residents did so, predominantly in their backyards. Public Health’s Urban Agriculture Report had documented the social, environmental, and economic benefits of urban agriculture, and advocated for its promotion as a way to deal with some of the consequences of population growth such as increased urban heat islands, loss of contact with nature, natural habitat loss, and loss of productive farmland.

Since 2005...

Since 2005, the number of community gardens in Waterloo Region has increased 70%, to 53, and the number of plots has increased 77%, to almost 1,200. Garden organizers attest to waiting lists for most community gardens in the region, which was a source of frustration for many prospective gardeners in 2012. There are several explanations for this increased interest in community gardening. Supportive policies and funds from the City of Kitchener helped increase the number of gardens in Kitchener. Also, the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation provided the resources for many new gardens to get established. Also of significance was the establishment of the Community Garden Council of Waterloo Region, which was established in 2005 when the Community Garden Network, decided that community gardens in the region needed more infrastructural support and advocacy.
In 2008, the Council formed a partnership with Region of Waterloo Public Health and Opportunities Waterloo Region called the Diggable Communities Collaborative (DCC). With funding from the KW Community Foundation, the DCC created promotional materials for gardens and a guide for promoting community gardens called *Sowing Seeds of Interest*. With funds from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the DCC was able to hire a garden mobilizer to conduct a needs assessment of the volunteer garden co-ordinators, promote and support the start up of new gardens, and advocate for municipal policies supportive of community gardens.

The DCC has also made efforts to attract ethnic communities to participate in community gardens. With funding support from the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA), it hired a co-ordinator in 2011 to work with these populations to address the barriers that may prevent their participation. This work led to a guide for creating gardens that are inclusive of all cultural communities (yet to be published), promotion of gardens to multicultural agencies, and workshops on the benefits of community gardens to specific cultural communities. As of the time of the writing of this report, this work resulted in three new multicultural gardens in the region.

After being challenged by a gardener who was not able to garden because of mobility barriers, DCC started a project to create accessible community gardens. Several university students worked with Public Health staff to write a guide to creating barrier-free community gardens. A University of Waterloo professor hosted a design charette with urban planning students for four specific gardens, resulting in detailed designs for the construction of new physically accessible gardens. Further funding from the Trillium Foundation and other local businesses enabled two of these accessible gardens to be built in 2012.

One of the successful outcomes of DCC’s advocacy efforts has been the inclusion of new policies in municipal official plans. Thanks to advocacy from the Community Garden Council, the Food System Roundtable, and others, Regional Council approved new policies in the regional Official Plan (ROP) in 2009 that commit the region to support community gardens wherever feasible by granting access to Regional lands, and by providing rain barrels, composting bins, compost, wood mulch or other forms of in-kind support. The ROP also requires the region’s seven area municipalities to establish policies in their own Official Plans to encourage community and rooftop gardens. Both the City of Waterloo and the City of Cambridge approved final versions of their new Official Plans in 2012: Waterloo’s encourages gardens in all land use areas and commits the City to making City lands available for gardens where appropriate, and Cambridge’s also explicitly permits community gardens in all land use areas.
use designations.\textsuperscript{114} As of the writing of this report, the City of Kitchener had not yet finalized its Official Plan, but its draft Plan would permit community gardens in all residential areas.\textsuperscript{115}

Another new area of development for community gardens since 2005 has been the increase in gardens at workplaces and schools in the region. Both Toyota and Conestoga Rovers now have workplace gardens where employees are encouraged to tend to gardens on their breaks. Two high schools – Eastwood Collegiate and KCI – as well as École Harmonie, a French-language elementary school, have school gardens which become live classrooms for students. All three post-secondary schools in the region – the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Conestoga College – have also put aside school lands for community garden plots open to their students.

Barriers still exist for community gardeners in Waterloo Region, however. Many gardens have to struggle to get access to water, compost, and woodchips. It is also difficult for gardens to establish long-term land tenure in some locations, and some gardens have had to close in Waterloo Region because the landowners decided to use the lands for other purposes. A report on policies in local Official Plans recommended that local municipalities consider Montreal’s example of providing for a permanent agricultural zone in the city, as well as explicitly permitting and supporting community gardens in city-owned parks and greenspaces.\textsuperscript{116}

A significant amount of academic research has been conducted on community gardens in Waterloo Region since 2005. Cheryl Dow’s 2006 Master’s thesis interviewed gardeners, garden co-ordinators, and municipal staff to identify the benefits and barriers to operating a community garden, and made several recommendations for how community gardens should be supported by neighbourhood-level co-ordinators and policy-makers.\textsuperscript{117} Her thesis greatly aided in the formation of the DCC. An undergraduate term paper by University of Waterloo students in 2011 documented the history of the Diggable Communities Collaborative and described its successful approach to partnership as a model for other communities to follow.\textsuperscript{118} Muhammed Shabbir’s 2010 Master’s thesis conducted case studies of six community gardens in the region which were selected for their interest in developing physically accessible or culturally inclusive gardens: it made detailed recommendations for the types of physical alterations required to establish accessible gardens, and how to make gardens inclusive for ethnic communities.\textsuperscript{119} Megan Herod’s 2012 Master’s thesis looked at two Waterloo Region gardens to demonstrate the crime prevention benefits of community gardens.\textsuperscript{120}

Region of Waterloo Public Health conducted an evaluation of community gardens by interviewing over eighty Waterloo Region gardeners in 2012.\textsuperscript{121} The gardeners they
interviewed were young and old, new Canadians and Canadian-born, and with a variety of skills and physical or mental challenges. The study found that the community gardening experience had three main benefits: inclusion of people with diverse backgrounds into the public sphere; opportunities for learning about food-producing plants and where food comes from; and health benefits such as stress reduction, better diets, and physical exercise. The study concluded that there is a tremendous appetite for community gardens in the region, requiring support and resources that are small compared to the potential benefits they bring to any urban environment.

The state of green roofs and rooftop gardens has not changed much in Waterloo Region since 2005. Both Toronto\(^\text{122}\) and Chicago\(^\text{123}\) are examples of cities that are investing in green roof and food-producing roof projects in their cores. There is also growing interest in exploring the potential for partial or full community greenhouses on Toronto rooftops.\(^\text{124}\) Although not used for food production, Grand River Hospital’s four rooftop gardens serve as local examples of how natural landscapes can be incorporated into the urban realm, but its green roof was already in place in 2005.\(^\text{125}\) There are special design challenges that must be overcome when retrofitting older buildings or building new ones with green roofs and rooftop gardens. Designers must consider the additional weight from water, soil, etc., and whether the roof is accessible to those with physical challenges.\(^\text{126}\)

One area of urban agriculture that has seen some new developments since 2005 is the area of urban chicken raising. Many advocates of sustainable food systems see the raising of urban hens (and in some cases even rabbits or goats) as a desirable practice which could help increase the food supply and connect urban residents more closely to the food system. In 2008, a group of residents in the City of Waterloo made media headlines by approaching City Council to consider explicitly permitting raising hens in the City. The issue was debated publicly for several months, with advocates citing the above benefits and opponents voicing fears of noise, smell, and disease outbreaks. In April 2009, a City staff report recommended that Council permit urban hen raising with certain regulations including limits on the number per property, a prohibition of roosters, maintaining a clean coop, and so on. Council turned down the recommendation, but they did agree to grandfather all existing hen-owners and revisit the issue in two years. Council revisited the question in 2011, but did not change its position.\(^\text{127}\) So the situation today is that it is illegal to raise hens in both Kitchener and Waterloo, with some exceptions. The City of Cambridge does not explicitly permit hen-raising, but indirectly does by permitting agricultural uses in all land use designations.\(^\text{128}\)

An undergraduate paper produced by University of Waterloo students in 2011 analyzed the potential of three types of urban livestock raising for the city of Waterloo: hens, bees, and
goats. It described the benefits and potential that the raising of each animal can have, as well as the challenges they pose such as sharing animal husbandry skills and addressing concerns about noise, smell, and food safety. Using examples of policies in other cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Seattle, it provided specific recommendations of ways that local municipal policies could be adapted to encourage urban livestock in Waterloo.  \[129\]

Another student paper in 2010 explored the idea of encouraging urban foraging (or Wild Foods, as the Roundtable describes it in its Food System Priorities) on a formal level at the University of Waterloo and the surrounding community. It talked about the potential that the harvesting of wild foods has for addressing food security, and created a GIS map of 36 identified wild edibles on the university campus, including apples, catnip, buckthorn, lab’s quarters, and wild garlic. While the paper cautioned about the need for education about which plants are safe to eat and how to harvest them sustainably, it demonstrated a potential for harvesting much more food from urban areas with the right kinds of supports and education.  \[131\]

**Current Assessment**

The growth in community gardens in Waterloo Region in the last seven years is encouraging, and the recently-adopted municipal policies should encourage more growth in the future. Several barriers still exist for community gardens, however, including access to water and compost, lack of long term tenure for some community garden sites. These highlight the need for work to ensure that the existing policies are implemented and that adequate resources be made available for that purpose.

However, other urban agriculture initiatives have not had the same experience and have either come across legal and political barriers or have yet to gain the popularity and support that community gardens enjoy. Public opinion remains mixed regarding urban hen raising and urban beekeeping, and to date the raising of urban livestock is prohibited in all urban municipalities except Cambridge. Some initial research has been done in the area of encouraging consumption of wild foods, but much more work is needed to make this a common practice in Waterloo Region.
Farm Viability

Pursue policies and other initiatives which return a larger portion of the food dollar to farmers

The Waterloo Food System Roundtable defines improved farm viability as policies or initiatives which return a larger portion of every dollar spent on food to producers so that they can sustain their business and enjoy an adequate income. Included in the Roundtable’s explanation of this priority is the concept of encouraging farmers to produce food in an environmentally sustainable fashion, and paying farmers for the role they play in providing environmental goods and services for the benefit of all society like carbon-sequestering soils, forests, and wetlands.

Waterloo Region’s 2005 food system assessment described a prosperous farm sector compared to the rest of the province, with the region’s farms ranked second in net revenue per farm, second only to Niagara region. Waterloo Region’s farms, at an average of 156 acres, were smaller than the Ontario average of 226 acres, largely due to the predominance of livestock farms in the region compared to field crop farms. The farm sector was supporting four jobs in the regional economy for every job in farming, and the entire agri-food economy was employing 11.3% of the region’s workforce. Despite all these positive overall measures, however, a study of the health of Waterloo Region rural residents in 2003 found evidence of great stress among farmers resulting from small farms’ deteriorating ability to compete with larger ones and commodities from other countries; many farmers were finding it necessary to depend on off-farm income to make ends meet.

Already in 2005, however, the local food economy was gaining wider support and recognition. A growing number of farmers had begun to grow more foods for local markets and sell directly to consumers, thus earning higher prices for the products: some were earning up to 50% of their income this way. Farmers’ markets were a strong part of the urban and rural culture in the region, with approximately 75% of the population shopping at farmers’ markets between June and October, and a consumer survey found very strong support for buying local food, with supporters citing preserving local farmland and supporting local farmers as two of their top reasons for doing so.
Since 2005...

No comprehensive study on the state of Waterloo Region’s agri-food economy has been conducted since the 2003 Growing Food & Economy report.\textsuperscript{141} As discussed in the Local Food Infrastructure section of this report, a recent economic development study of the region’s local food system recommended an updated review,\textsuperscript{142} but the 2011 agricultural census gives us some indication of broad trends. Average gross receipts for Waterloo Region farmers was $340,461 per farm in 2011, up 30% from 2001, and average net farm income was $59,683, up 52% from 2001.\textsuperscript{143} As mentioned in the Food Sovereignty section above, the number of farms in Waterloo Region continues to decrease, and the average farm size continues to increase, though at slower rates that the rest of the province: there were 3.2% fewer farms in 2011 than ten years earlier, and farm sizes were 2.6% larger.\textsuperscript{144} The average farm operator in Waterloo Region was 48.4 years old in 2011, compared to 46.1 in 2001; this was younger than Ontario’s average, which was 54.5 and 50.7, respectively, but evidently Waterloo Region’s farm operators are getting older, though not quite as quickly as the rest of the province.\textsuperscript{145} Further study is required to explore the reasons behind these farming trends in Waterloo Region, and to document sub-trends like changes in the number of farms selling to local markets.

A significant barrier for new farmers is the high price of farmland. The prices of Waterloo Region farmlands have increased, though the increases are not quite as high as in other neighbouring Ontario regions. In the first six months of 2012, farmland prices in Ontario jumped 16.3%, the highest six-month increase since 1996, and almost twice the Canadian average increase, which was 8.6% for the same six-month period.\textsuperscript{146} A separate farm real estate study found that farm prices in Waterloo Region went from a range of $9,000 to $9,500 per acre in 2010 to $11,000 to $15,000 in 2012: in South Huron and mid-Perth counties, land went from $7,000-$11,000 per acre to $16,000 to $18,000 in the same time period.\textsuperscript{147} Real estate analysts say that the higher prices are due to a combination of a shrinking supply of land (as more farmland is put into urban development) and increased demand from farmers who wish to expand their operations to take advantage of rising commodity prices.\textsuperscript{148} High farmland prices can benefit existing farmers, because they can borrow more money against a higher-value property and make more money if they sell the land. However, higher farmland prices push up property taxes and make it much more difficult for new farmers to get established.\textsuperscript{149}

The phenomenon of high farmland prices is just one barrier for new farmers, though it is a significant one: others include the high cost of entering supply-managed sectors, the perception that farmers earn low incomes, and low interest in farming as a career for young people. These factors all play a role in the rising average age of farmers. Programs encouraging
new farmers will become increasingly important in the near future. Two new programs in Ontario have emerged since 2005 which seek to train prospective farmers in the skills and knowledge required to enter the sector: CRAFT and FarmStart. The Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) is a network of farms in Ontario that offers internships for individuals who wish to learn how to start their own sustainable agriculture enterprise. Participants get a chance to meet established farmers and learn about farming methods and the business side of farming. FarmStart started in Guelph in 2005, and offers programs to provide practical tools, financial and physical resources, skills-building, and assistance in building networks of peers and customers. FarmStart primarily works with New Canadians, young people from non-farm backgrounds, and second-career farmers.

A significant step forward for the viability of Waterloo Region farms has been the adoption of new policies into the regional Official Plan (ROP) in 2009. The ROP enhances the farmland protection by creating new land designations called Protected Countryside for lands which have large concentrations of prime agricultural land and environmental features such as woodlands and wetlands and permanently protects them from urban development. But the ROP also recognizes that “simply protecting farmland will not guarantee that it will be actively and viably farmed,” and “contains policies that support on-farm diversification strategies as a means of supplementing farm income.” These policies include requiring area municipalities to permit secondary uses on farm properties such as roadside produce stands, bed and breakfasts, agri-tourism activities, and uses that provide value-added agricultural products from the farm operation of the property. It should be noted that the entire plan is under appeal by numerous parties, and as of this writing is awaiting a decision by the Ontario Municipal Board.

One initiative that has benefitted from the new policies in the ROP is the Elmira Produce Auction Co-operative (EPAC), which was described above in the Local Food Infrastructure section and highlights efforts to improve farm viability in Waterloo Region. When EPAC was first proposed in 2005, a strict interpretation of Woolwich Township’s agriculture by-law would not have permitted its operation at its proposed location. However, Township planners worked with the EPAC founders to pass a temporary by-law change, and now produce auctions are specifically named as an example of Agriculture-Related Uses permitted on farmlands in the ROP. EPAC’s success in growing the market for local fruits and vegetables has improved farm incomes for hundreds of Mennonite farm families. Its co-operative model gives farmers control over the business, while putting a high percentage of the sales directly into farmers’ pockets.

Registered farm businesses must join one of three accredited farm organizations in Ontario: the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the National Farmers’ Union (NFU), or the
Christian Farmers’ Federation of Ontario (CFO). All three organizations are active voices in the public policy debates on farm issues in Ontario, though the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture (WFA) represents 95% of registered farms in Waterloo Region. Farmers in Waterloo Region who are interested in selling to local markets have also benefitted from the voice of Foodlink Waterloo Region, which has advocated for local farmers on issues ranging from zoning regulations for on-farm food processing to by-laws regulating farm signs on rural roads. All of these farm organizations have been involved in advocacy on issues related to Farm Viability since 2005, including discussions of farm input costs like minimum wages, the role of foreign agricultural workers, the loss of small abattoirs, and aggregate extraction on farmland.

In the area of encouraging more sustainable practices among farmers, the Perth-Waterloo-Wellington chapter of Canadian Organic Growers (COG-PWW) has produced numerous studies analyzing the organic farming sector and workshops and resources aimed at supporting farmers interested in using more sustainable farming methods. A COG-PWW analysis of the 2006 Census of Agriculture found the northwest area of Waterloo Region to have one of the highest densities areas of organic farms in the province, with between 4.2% and 9.5% of all farms being certified or transitional organic. Another of their research reports, written by Theresa Schumilas in 2010, analyzed “producer-controlled distribution systems” as a way for local and organic farmers to attain financial viability. It looked at three models in which farmers can capture more of the food dollar from consumers – CSAs, online farmers’ markets, and multi-stakeholder co-ops – and found that bigger operations did not necessarily mean better returns for farmers using these distribution methods. Another COG-PWW report from 2011 interviewed small numbers of organic producers, distributors, retailers, and consumers, and found opportunities for improving communications among them: retailers were often unaware of the availability of local organic produce, while some farmers were struggling to find people willing to pay fair prices for their products. The study recommended strengthening the relationships among growers and eaters as a way to improve farmer revenues, and finding ways to educate consumers about the difference between local and organic. Subsequent COG-PWW publications have emphasized the importance of seeking out local AND organic foods.

The provincial government’s Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program encourages farmers to identify environmental risks associated with their operations and develop action plans that will mitigate the risks. The program recognizes that farmers are well-positioned to implement environmentally sustainable practices, but often cannot do so without financial assistance. Between 2005 and 2008, 429 EFPs were completed in Waterloo Region.
Similarly, the region of Waterloo funds the Rural Water Quality Program (RWQP) to provide financial incentives for farmers to change farming methods that threaten water quality.¹⁶⁵ Over $9.2 million has been released since the program’s establishment in 1998 to farmers and landowners to carry out over 2800 projects that range from tree planting and reintroducing buffer vegetation along rivers, to the upgrade of old wells and manure storage facilities to prevent runoff.¹⁶⁶ Since its inception, the program has expanded into the nearby counties of Wellington and Brant, and now receives funding support from various municipalities, organizations, and the provincial and federal governments. The success of both the EFP and RWQP demonstrates the potential for improving the environmental sustainability of farming practices through financial incentives.

A 2010 University of Waterloo study compared the RWQP to another program that pays farmers for environmental services – the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program, based in Norfolk County. ALUS provides incentives to farmers to not farm on more marginally productive lands so that the lands can help with pollination, pollution mitigation, air and water purification, among other things.¹⁶⁷ The study compared ALUS and RWQP in terms of their funding sources, types of projects supported, screening processes for applicants, and more; it found that they both encourage environmentally sustainable practices in different ways. It recommended better evaluation of the environmental benefits that farmers provide, and recommended the expansion of both programs to other locations and the enactment of policies to pay farmers for other environmental services. However, it noted that the programs do not adequately address low farmer incomes, and that to do so would require a wholesale re-visioning of how farmers are compensated in our society.¹⁶⁸

Current Assessment

Waterloo Region’s conventional farm sector is relatively prosperous compared to the rest of Ontario: its farm incomes are near the top of both gross and net average farm income for the province. Like the rest of the province, Waterloo Region is experiencing the trend towards fewer, bigger farms, as well as the trend toward higher farmland prices, though to a lesser degree than the rest of the province in both cases. Further research is needed to explain the reasons for Waterloo Region’s higher incomes, and to analyze more specific trends in Waterloo Region’s farm operations, such as how many earn a higher percentage of their incomes from local markets, which farm sectors are doing better than others, etc. Recent changes to the region’s Official Plan (ROP) could provide more long-term protection for farmland from urban development and give farmers more options for earning income on their farms.
Barriers to entry into farming continue to be an issue, but two small programs, FarmStart and CRAFT, have begun to train prospective farmers in the skills needed to enter the sector. Some programs exist to give incentives to farmers to use more sustainable production methods, including the province’s Environmental Farm Plan program and the region’s Rural Water Quality Management program: these could be good models on which to expand to encourage more farmers to adopt more sustainable methods.

Access To Healthy Food

*Advocate for policies and other initiatives which ensure everyone has access to enough nutritious foods*

The ability to access healthy food is influenced by many factors. The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable breaks down this priority into four areas: **adequate incomes**, **emergency food**, **walkable food**, and **culturally appropriate foods**. In its description of **adequate incomes** for food, the Roundtable calls for policies need to be in place to ensure that everyone has a basic sufficient income to buy nutritious food without threatening the ability of farmers to make a viable income. These policies could include increases in benefit rates for income support programs like Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), or policies that subsidize housing or other basic necessities to make nutritious diets universally affordable. While the Roundtable looks forward to the day when **emergency food** assistance is no longer necessary, it also advocates for continued work on improving the delivery of emergency food assistance.

The Roundtable also advocates for the concept of **walkable food**: it argues that having convenient access to food within walking distance of people’s homes, schools, or workplaces will make it more likely for them to eat better diets. Similarly, if the food that people can afford or walk to does not meet their religious, traditional, or special health needs, their food access is diminished: for this reason, the Roundtable emphasizes the aspect of **culturally appropriate food** as part of this priority.

Waterloo Region’s 2005 food assessment described the state of food access in all the above aspects except cultural appropriateness. It cited food insecurity statistics from 2001, which revealed that 42.4% of low-income households in Waterloo Region experienced some degree of food insecurity (defined as not having enough to eat, worrying about having enough to eat or not eating the desired quantity of food due to lack of money). It also reported that
the Food Bank of Waterloo Region had distributed food hampers or meals to over 25,000 people through its member agencies in 2004, which was an 11% increase over 2002. With regard to walkability, the 2005 food assessment cited a Region of Waterloo Public Health report that found that 47% of the region’s urban population did not live within reasonable (450m) walking distance of a grocery store or convenience store.

The 2005 food system assessment suggested that “increasing the availability of healthy food so that healthy choices are easier to make” be one of the objectives pursued by people wishing to work towards a healthy food system in Waterloo Region. It suggested looking at programs such as mobile farmers’ markets and zoning and financial incentives to attract food retailers to targeted locations as ways to ensure healthy food is available in every neighbourhood. It also suggested increasing urban agriculture programs and restricting unhealthy foods in identified neighbourhoods as ways of achieving its healthy food access objective.

Since 2005...

Recent research is beginning to add an important new dimension to the concept of Access to Healthy Food. The rationale behind the Roundtable’s focus on adequate incomes and walkable food is that poor quality diets are associated with a lack of walkable access to, or inability to afford, healthy foods. Certainly, low availability of healthy foods is likely to result in lower diet quality. Similarly, if individuals do not have the means to purchase healthy food, it is unlikely that they will consume healthy diets. However, recent work has shown that relative accessibility of non-nutritious foods (termed ‘food swamps’) also negatively affects diet quality. In addition, it is not enough to have access to affordable healthy food: healthy food needs to be cheaper than non-nutritious foods in order to improve diet quality. So we may need to go beyond making healthy food accessible and affordable: it may be just as important to limit access to non-nutritious foods and to and make them more expensive than nutritious foods to promote improved diet quality.

**Adequate Incomes**

The Ontario government has made some significant changes affecting people on low incomes since 2005. The minimum wage increased from $7.75 to $10.25/hour between 2006 and 2010, and, since 2009, low income families with children can receive up to $1,100 per year per child with the Ontario Child Benefit, whether or not they are employed. However, people who rely on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program earn less today, in real terms, than people who depended on those programs in 2005, even when accounting for the effect of the Ontario Child Benefit for families with children.
Many people living on low incomes cannot afford to eat a healthy diet in Waterloo Region. According to the 2012 Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) survey for Waterloo Region, it costs $177 per week to feed a family of four, and $59/week to feed a single 35-year-old male.\textsuperscript{179} Extrapolating from the NFB data, a single person on Ontario Works does not earn enough to cover the cost of rent and nutritious food, let alone any other expenses. A family of four on Ontario Works would have only $237 per month left over for all expenses after paying for rent and the cost of nutritious food, while the same family depending on one minimum wage earner would have $844 left over.\textsuperscript{180}

Another measure of affordability of food is the Canadian Community Health Survey’s food insecurity survey. According to this source, 8.6% of Waterloo Region residents experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2009-2010, meaning either they had to compromise the quantity or quality of food consumed for income-related reasons (moderate), or they had to reduce food intake and disrupt eating patterns (severe).\textsuperscript{181}

A number of organizations in Waterloo Region advocate for adequate incomes. Awareness of Low Income Voices (Aliv(e)) is a group supported by Opportunities Waterloo Region that draws attention to the extent of poverty in the region, disproving myths, and informing the public of policy changes that have negatively impacted low income families.\textsuperscript{182} Poverty Makes Us Sick (PMUS) is an anti-poverty advocacy group based out of Kitchener-Waterloo that focuses on improving Ontario Works and ODSP assistance, and emphasizes the need for enough money for healthy food to be provided by these programs.\textsuperscript{183} Poverty Free Waterloo Region calls upon the provincial and regional governments to increase funding for social assistance programs and reinvest in the Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy (2009 Poverty Reduction Act).\textsuperscript{184}

At the provincial and national levels, there are a number of advocacy, coordination, and monitoring groups trying to address poverty and adequate incomes. The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) gives the poor, unemployed, or homeless a means of voicing grievances against government policies ranging from unemployment to increased assistance for food purchasing.\textsuperscript{185} The Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) educates individuals on their legal rights to ensure they receive the financial assistance they deserve and advocates for the adoption of government policies that strive for a decent standard of living for all Ontarians.\textsuperscript{186} Finally, the National Council of Welfare (NCW) was a federal monitoring program that provided objective information regarding the status and adequacy of welfare programs and research and advocacy on the broader economic impacts of poverty.\textsuperscript{187} Federal government funding of the NCW was eliminated in the 2012 Federal Budget,\textsuperscript{188} and the organization has been disbanded.
The number of people seeking emergency food assistance in Waterloo Region remains high. Across Ontario, the number of people accessing food banks spiked during the recession which started in 2008, and has not declined since. In March 2012, 412,998 people accessed food banks in Ontario, which was a 31.4% increase over the pre-recession month of March 2008. 38.7% of food bank beneficiaries were children. In Waterloo Region, 77,415 food hampers were distributed and 451,411 community meals were served in 2011, serving a total of 36,458 different people. This represented an 18% increase compared to 2008.

Further, there is evidence that only one in four people who experience food insecurity actually access emergency food services. Valerie Tarasuk of the University of Toronto has studied this issue since 1994, and finds that many people choose not to use emergency food services because of the perceived stigma associated with their use. In addition, some people recognize that the food they can access through emergency food services is often inadequate nutritionally or culturally inappropriate. A Canadian Journal of Public Health article describes the food available at food banks as “often inadequate to meet recipients’ nutritional needs, and therefore provides respite from severe hunger but little else.”

Waterloo Region is served by a Food Assistance Network that consists of two food banks and a network of over 100 food assistance providers (meals, hampers, residential & shelter programs). The two food banks are Food Bank of Waterloo Region (FBRWR) and Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank (CSHFB). FBWR works on the supply side of the emergency food distribution network: soliciting donations of food and money from farmers, large food companies, and the public; it operates a warehouse and distribution network to the many direct providers of food assistance in the region. CSHFB has integrated the traditional food bank model with a co-operative model of delivering food directly to individuals. It does some of its own soliciting of donations, but also encourages people to join its co-operative and participate in the work of running the food program to gain them access to the bank’s co-op food store.

In 2006, the two food banks partnered with Woolwich Community Services, the House of Friendship, and Region of Waterloo Social Services complete research on the Emergency Food System. The Waterloo Region Shares report led to a project of the Food Assistance Network to address nine recommendations that included improving coordination of food collection and distribution, improving consistency of service levels, and addressing service area gaps. The Waterloo Region Shares progress report in December 2011 lists a number of
accomplishments for the five years of work on the recommendations, including defining the roles and responsibilities of network members, the creation of consistent guidelines for food hamper programs, and the development of a system for collecting data on food distribution from all partner agencies. The Food Assistance Network in Waterloo Region continues to provide accessible programs & services that provide nutritious & culturally appropriate food, coping & prevention supports & community development programs to improve overall food security in our community.

**Walkable Food**

One of the first projects to get off the ground after the adoption of Waterloo Region’s Healthy Community Food System Plan was a pilot project to bring healthy local food to select neighbourhoods. In 2007, Region of Waterloo Public Health initiated a pilot project funded by the Lyle S Hallman Foundation to establish five neighbourhood markets in areas that had poor walkable access to fresh foods. Communities were chosen based on whether or not there were food stores within walking distance as well as the socioeconomic status of the area. An evaluation of the markets suggested that they were successful in enabling people on low and fixed incomes to improve their fruit and vegetable consumption. 90% of these regular customers indicated that they ate more vegetables and 53% said that they ate more fruit as a result of the markets. Three of the neighbourhood markets continue to operate seasonally to date.

The neighbourhood markets encountered many barriers in their first year, as zoning and licensing regulations did not permit temporary structures set up in parking lots to sell food. Area municipal staff only permitted the markets after seeing that Regional government was promoting them as part of its Food System Plan. In 2009, the region adopted a new policy in its Official Plan that required area municipalities to establish policies in their own Official Plans to permit “temporary farmers’ markets” wherever appropriate. The Preston neighborhood market, which operates to this day in Cambridge, was the first to receive permission to operate without the intervention of the region after the implementation of the new ROP provisions.

In addition to this new ROP policy on temporary farmers’ markets, area municipal Official Plans in Waterloo Region have made more progress towards improving walkable access to food. The region of Waterloo’s Official Plan encourages developments that have a mix of land uses, including food destinations, within close proximity of each other to facilitate access to locally grown and other healthy food products. The City of Waterloo Official Plan aims to make this a reality by setting targets of one small- to mid-sized food store for every 10,000 residents, and a food store within a 2km walking distance of every resident. Both
Cambridge’s 2012 Official Plan\textsuperscript{201} and Kitchener’s draft Official Plan\textsuperscript{202} emphasize the importance of developing “complete communities,” which would make streets more bicycle and pedestrian friendly and result in a full range of services within walking distance of residences and employment centres. Although walkable food access can be more difficult for the townships to achieve due to low population densities, Woolwich has attempted to improve food store access for residential communities by encouraging food stores as appropriate “Neighbourhood Commercial Facilities” and a means of reducing travel times.\textsuperscript{203}

A 2010 University of Waterloo report examined whether or not the sale of local food was possible at convenience stores in Waterloo. The authors found that convenience stores provided necessary infrastructure for the display and sale of local food throughout neighbourhood communities. However, as with most products carried in convenience stores, the cost of local food would be higher than in farmers’ markets or larger grocery stores. Space within convenience stores is also limited, and extra shelving and refrigeration units for local products is not always possible. The study concluded that while convenience stores could potentially support municipal plans by improving local healthy food access in some areas, they cannot replace small to mid-sized grocery stores as the main source of food service in the surrounding neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{204}

A recent study by Region of Waterloo Public Health in partnership with the University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, and the University of Waterloo will help bring understanding to the question of how much of the region has walkable access to healthy food. Known as NEWPATH (Neighbourhood Environments in Waterloo Region: Patterns of Transportation and Health), the study is analyzing the effects of the built environment and the food environment on physical activity, transportation patterns, diet, and health. The study created a walkability index for every postal code in the region, and assessed the “nutrition environment” of every food retail location in the region, and will be able to state whether there are relationships between distance to food destinations, nutrition environment of those destinations, and diet quality and health outcomes. As of this writing, researchers are awaiting publication of some initial findings: one is that over three times as much shelf-space is dedicated to energy-dense snack food as compared to fruits and vegetables within 1km of Waterloo Region homes. Another finding is that women who lived closer to convenience stores had higher body weights than those further away: every kilometre closer from home to the nearest convenience store predicted increased body weight of 5.9kg (13.2lbs) for an average height female (1.63m; 5’4”). And finally, people who lived closer to food destinations where nutritious foods were more affordable relative to non-nutritious foods had a lower Body Mass Index (BMI) rating. These findings seem to add weight to the evidence that we need to be
more concerned with the proximity and convenience of unhealthy foods than the proximity of healthy foods.\textsuperscript{205}

\textbf{Culturally Appropriate Food}

Waterloo Region is the second largest market for ethnic vegetables in Ontario, and a 2010 University of Waterloo study identified numerous opportunities as well as challenges for getting local producers to grow more of the currently imported vegetables and fruit.\textsuperscript{206} The market for ethnic vegetables is growing in Waterloo Region, presenting an opportunity for local economic development of this sector. Although not all crops can be grown locally, production of a number of varieties is possible. The Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is currently researching the viability of growing many ethnic vegetables in Ontario soils. The challenges, however, are not small. There are very few registered pesticides for growing ethnic vegetables, making the prospect of growing them conventionally on a large scale feel risky for established farmers, and the prospect of navigating the regulatory system can feel too daunting for New Canadian farmers.\textsuperscript{207} It is also not clear that consumers are willing to pay the premium that would likely come with domestically-produced vegetables, since competing with imported produce is already a challenge for Ontario farmers, and growing them organically or on a smaller scale would be more labour-intensive and result in higher costs.\textsuperscript{208}

FarmStart, the Guelph-based program which trains new farmers (mentioned in the Farm Viability section above) is making a contribution to training farmers interested in growing ethnic vegetables. The program has become an attractive training centre for new Canadians in particular, as they can use the program to integrate their traditional agricultural knowledge and foods into the local food system and ensure that their new crops and practices meet government regulations.\textsuperscript{209}

Many New Canadians in Waterloo Region grow foods from their home countries in community garden plots. Through careful seed saving, they are able to continue to grow foods that are either only available in stores in Toronto or not at all. The Patchwork Community Gardens in Waterloo Region was founded in 2011 to enable New Canadians to grow foods that are familiar to them and to facilitate their integration into the community.\textsuperscript{210} Organizers have successfully tapped into the region’s cultural diversity by uniting people from many cultures around a shared passion, in spite of language differences.\textsuperscript{211} The African Community Wellness Initiative has seen that these gardens offer an opportunity to increase communication among cultural community leaders in the region. The Initiative sees “all culture” gardens as a means of reconnecting immigrants with the land, improving food education, and preserving cultural practices.\textsuperscript{212}
Current Assessment

New research is beginning to call for a different focus on the concept of Access to Healthy Food. Based on evidence demonstrating that the accessibility of non-nutritious foods may have more effect on diet quality than the lack of accessibility to healthy foods, more voices are calling for measures to limit access to non-nutritious foods.

The lowest income people in our community still struggle to be able to afford enough nutritious food to feed themselves. While incomes have improved since 2005 for those who rely on minimum wage jobs and for those with children, thanks to the advocacy of several local and provincial anti-poverty groups, the cost of a nutritious food basket for these people still leaves little to pay for other basic expenses. Single adults on Ontario Works cannot even afford a nutritious food basket after paying rent.

While Emergency Food usage has increased substantially in the last four years, the region’s food banks and emergency food programs have coordinated with one another to meet this challenge, and initiatives like Waterloo Region Shares have helped to strengthen the emergency food network.

A successful pilot of neighbourhood markets has demonstrated the potential of small temporary farmers’ markets to increase walkable access to food, fruit and vegetable consumption, and farmer incomes. New policies in municipal Official Plans now permit these ventures in most land use designations and set goals for ensuring healthy food is available within walking distance of all residents.

Finally, as Waterloo Region becomes more culturally diverse, we may see an increase in demand for Culturally Appropriate Foods grown locally. Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is researching the viability of growing ethnic vegetables on a conventional scale in Ontario, and FarmStart is helping new farmers enter this emerging market. Meanwhile new community gardens in Waterloo Region are specifically targeting New Canadians to give them the opportunity to grow their own foods that are familiar to them.
Conclusion

This report provides an update on the status of Waterloo Region’s food system. It is structured along the lines of the six Food System Priorities of the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable. For each Priority, it summarizes what we knew in 2005 when *Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region* was written, and then updates the state of progress towards realizing that priority by reviewing new research, initiatives, or active organizations which have surfaced since then. Each section concludes with a brief assessment of where we are today on the priority.

We hope that this report will be useful to everyone who is interested in improving the health of Waterloo Region’s food system by providing them with information they need to do that work.
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TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: May 28, 2013

FILE CODE: C06-70

SUBJECT: Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy (WRIDS) Update

RECOMMENDATION:

For information

SUMMARY:

This report provides a brief update of the activities since the Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy (WRIDS) was approved in principle by the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (WRCPC) in December 2011.

The development of an Integrated Drugs Strategy is identified in the Corporate Strategic Plan (4.4.1) under Fostering Healthy, Safe, Inclusive and Caring Communities: Enhance Community Safety and Crime Prevention.

REPORT:

1.0 Background

The Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy provides a roadmap to make Waterloo Region safer and healthier for everyone via 99 recommendations, the purpose of which is to “prevent, reduce and/or eliminate problematic substance use and its consequences”. The substances of interest in the WRIDS are alcohol, prescription medications and substances subject to provisions contained within the Controlled Substances Act.

The WRIDS was developed over 2.5 years by a multi-sectoral Task Force of 26 members, informed by the best available evidence and the wisdom gleaned from consultations with more than 300 citizens and services providers.

The 99 recommendations are framed within a 5-pillar strategic framework: prevention, harm reduction, recovery & rehabilitation, criminal justice, and integration & collaboration.

The WRIDS is often utilized as a model for process and outcome by other municipalities in Ontario and is soon to be featured in a report card on best practices in Canadian drug policy.
The Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy Final Report is available on the WRCPC website at http://www.preventingcrime.ca/documents/2012-WRIDS-FINAL.pdf

2.0 Updates: January 2012 – May 2013

Two streams of activities are taking place since adoption of the WRIDS by WRCPC. The first is providing supports for implementing the recommendations contained within the WRIDS. The second is focused on responding to opportunities that can reasonably be seen to advance recommendations, primarily unanticipated policy changes at other orders of government and/or community priorities.

The WRIDS provides a framework that encourages rapid responses to emerging issues within the community while implementing and monitoring the 99 recommendations contained therein. The following overview comprises a mix of both planned and responsive activities.

Education, Policy and Program Development Activities

- 24 local public events on issues of substance use to engage and educate.
- Primary Care forum for physicians and nurses involving 62 Ontario communities
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder forum hosted collaboratively with Lutherwood and KidsAbility
- 13 national webinars on preventing and reducing opioid-related harms delivered by physicians and other experts from Canada, USA and Scotland
- Province-wide webinar on overdose prevention with public health units
- Forum on preventing and/or delaying the onset of substance use
- Eyes Wide Open, a film on issues related to accidental overdose prevention and addiction, seen by more than 6,000 people in the first 7 weeks since release
- A second film in progress for first responders
- A new, on-going initiative -Take Back Your Unused/Expired Medications in partnership with the Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy
- Support of the development of a methadone film funded by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Continued participation with the Municipal Drug Strategy Coordinators Network of Ontario, established in 2008 by the WRCPC with almost 20 members from across Ontario
- Facilitation of “Preventing Overdose Waterloo Wellington” (POWW), a group of citizens who train service providers and citizens in overdose prevention, established in 2009 by the WRCPC, now self-supported

Opioid webinars, films, the prescription initiative and related resources can be found at: www.preventingcrime.ca/Rx
Research Reports

- Oxy to Oxy: Community Survey and Forum Response
- Oxy to Oxy 2: Community Forum Proceedings
- Pharmacists Survey and Report
- Between Life and Death: The Barriers to Calling 9-1-1 During an Overdose Emergency

Media Attention

Activities identified in the WRIDS continue to receive significant local and provincial media attention in print, radio and television. By the time of this report approximately 50 media interviews have been completed.

Public Education

Approximately 40 presentations on issues of substance use have been provided locally and beyond.

Overdose Prevention with Naloxone Initiative

Accidental overdoses are a leading cause of death in Ontario and were identified as a priority by the WRCPC. As a result of this direction, staff:

- Facilitated the introduction of overdose prevention programs at area CHCs, Family Health Teams, and Medical Clinics
- Are working with Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to improve naloxone access and overdose prevention tools.
- Are working with a national group to prevent accidental death and injury

WRIDS Development

Two coordinating committees have been established by Waterloo Region Public Health to support the harm reduction and prevention recommendations of the WRIDS. The Prevention Committee meets for the second time in May 2013. The Harm Reduction Committee meets for the third time in June 2013. The WRCPC continues to be responsible for steering the overall implementation of the WRIDS. A steering committee has been established and is scheduled to begin meeting in June 2013.

3.0 Challenges:

The delisting of OxyContin by the MOHLTC in February 2012 was an unanticipated policy change that caught most health care, social service and law enforcement professionals in Ontario off-guard and unprepared. The WRCPC continues to work with local partners and others in the province to mitigate the negative outcomes and advance measures consistent with several recommendations in the WRIDS.
The WRIDs implementation is likely to continue to operate in a tension between planned and unanticipated developments. The WRCPC is committed to supporting the implementation and monitoring of the 99 recommendations within the WRIDS as well as responding to current trends and issues that affect substance use and its connection to community health and safety.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

Fostering Healthy, Safe, Inclusive and Caring Communities: Enhance Community Safety and Crime Prevention

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The WRCPC has received in-kind and limited financial resources to undertake the activities noted above, including support from Service Canada, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network and others within the local community.

Waterloo Region Public Health continues to provide in-kind support critical to the implementation of WRIDS recommendations.

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:

The recommendations contained with the WRIDS align with other Regional departments and divisions including Social Services, Public Health and Waterloo Region Police Services. Waterloo Region Public Health is committed to supporting the WRIDS as identified in the Regional Corporate Strategic Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

NIL

PREPARED BY: Michael Parkinson, Community Engagement Coordinator, WRCPC

APPROVED BY: Christiane Sadeler, Executive Director, WRCPC
TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: May 28, 2013

FILE CODE: D27-80

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY HOUSING – AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO A CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Municipality of Waterloo formally participate in the collaborative Service Manager Housing Software initiative with other municipal Service Managers and enter into a Consortium Agreement (CA) regarding the development of a software solution, as outlined in Report No. P-13-038, dated May 28, 2013;

AND THAT the Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services be authorized to sign the Consortium Agreement between the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, and other Service Managers, to a maximum commitment to the Region of Waterloo of up to $180,000, including HST, to be financed from the Housing Reserve Fund, which agreement shall be satisfactory in technical content to both the Director of Housing and the Director of Information Technology and in a form satisfactory to the Regional Solicitor.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to provide information and background on a collaborative initiative that has been undertaken with a number of Ontario municipalities to develop and implement an administrative Information Technology (IT) solution to deliver a Service Manager Housing Management System. This initiative has been included in previous Housing Progress Plans (P-012-057 and P-013-034).

The Region of Waterloo’s share of the initial development costs are not expected to exceed $180,000 including taxes. On-going data hosting and program maintenance costs are estimated at $22,000 per year which would be funded by re-allocating recent savings recognized due to lower than budgeted interest rates in the approved Housing operating budget.

If staff do not proceed with this initiative, the Region of Waterloo will continue to use a system of spreadsheets developed since transfer to maintain and track housing costs and to provide any Ministry (MMAH) and Council required reporting on an on-going basis. This approach is prone to data integrity errors (formula errors, deleted data, etc.) and is labour intensive to ensure the reliability of the information on a daily basis. Finally, the Region’s current process is not flexible enough to respond to future data gathering and reporting requirements. The successful completion of this initiative would result in many benefits including streamlined program delivery and improved report capability.

REPORT:

The community housing sector in Ontario is in need of an automated information technology system to effectively support and align housing with the client-focused housing first program approach to be implemented by Service Managers. Information technology is also necessary to help meet regulatory requirements and to increase efficiency in the delivery of programs.
Current systems (excel-based) are not flexible, and are difficult and labour intensive to add/change housing programs. The existing systems either do not contain or have difficulty retrieving pertinent data essential in making sound management decisions. Current systems are paper intensive, information is duplicated and numerous functions are managed manually outside the existing system.

A new single system would provide Service Managers with the necessary tool they need to operate their programs more effectively and efficiently. This would allow for the ability to easily and directly enter data and access information on such things as housing provider performance, program funding, client demographics, asset management, subsidy allocation, operational reviews, risk management and tenant satisfaction surveys. In addition, it would provide the Region with the ability to improve it's reporting to Council, the Province and to community stakeholders. These improvements include consistent data presentation, reduced reporting timelines and the ability to create performance indicators for the Region as the Service Manager and for housing providers.

Steps Taken To Date

In 2000, senior levels of government transferred the administration and funding of community housing to municipalities. Despite the change in responsibilities, there was no supporting information technology (IT) platform or system provided to Service Managers at devolution. Service Managers had to develop, create and purchase IT systems or find alternative solutions in order to support their business operations.

Since 2002, a small number of service managers have undertaken to develop solutions to fit their specific needs (City of Toronto, Nipissing DSSAB, and City of Ottawa). Both Nipissing and Ottawa have offered their solutions for sale to other Service Managers. Region of Waterloo Housing Programs, although interested in finding a suitable solution, determined at the time of investigation that neither system would fit the Region of Waterloo needs.

In 2011, four municipal CAO's (London, Windsor, Hamilton, and Kitchener) embarked on an initiative to establish teams from each municipality in order to develop potential initiatives that would benefit the stakeholders, particularly in the areas of innovation, efficiencies, cost savings and service delivery. The municipalities were expected to identify initiatives that have been effective in one or more of the cities, document those initiatives, share the findings, and showcase them at an Ivey Business School session that the City of London was, at the time, sponsoring.

As a result of this initiative, one of the areas identified was the need to look at potential solutions to the current information technology gap in the community housing sector. As community housing is an upper tier responsibility, the Region of Waterloo housing staff became involved in these discussions with the other three municipalities in the spring of 2011.

As the lead municipality, London sent out individual emails requesting information on each service areas' current IT environment and future plans moving forward, in light of the Ministry's indifference in supporting a single provincial IT system for community housing. The responses received showed that each service area is dealing with the same issues and trying to manage its' information needs using multiple, independent programs (i.e. Excel, Access, Yardi, Oracle and Archibus). Many were in the process of finding or looking at alternative IT solutions.

From that initial exchange, London facilitated a number of meetings in mid 2011 to discuss the possibility of establishing a collaboration project to develop a single IT housing system. The meeting produced a number of the outcomes, including the following:

- Service Managers recognize the need and benefit of having one system and are interested in collaborating on a project.
• Service Manager’s internal resources are limited including business expertise, IT support and funding.
• The system needs to be web-based, with the ability for housing providers and applicants to access their information.
• The system needs to be hosted and supported in one location so that future enhancements and associated costs are shared by all stakeholders. This will also solve the problem that the majority of Service Managers do not have the capacity or interest in software development or hosting. Service Managers’ IT environments vary considerably in the use and understanding of different IT platforms and databases (Oracle vs. SQL Server).
• The system needs to be comprehensive but flexible enough in order to support multiple programs, delivery models and accommodate changes in policy, reporting and auditing requirements.

Other Service Managers in the Province were invited to join in on the discussion and the core group expanded to include the Region of York, Halton Region and the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. The Housing Services Corporation, as a Service Manager support agency also joined the group to provide their expertise and assistance. In February 2013, as a result of on-going discussions during the program requirements phase, the City of Ottawa joined the project team. Ottawa staff brings a wealth of experience and knowledge, having previously developed a housing software system.

The core group of Service Manager representatives, consisting of Housing division staff and various IT staff from each municipality, have been meeting on a regular basis since the summer of 2011. This group has been working to develop a common set of requirements for the solution and to define and address the technical, purchasing, legal and privacy requirements of all municipalities. In addition, a group of IT staff from each Service Manager area have met periodically and been kept apprised of the progress of the project to date. The Region of Waterloo currently has three staff who have participated in this endeavour to date. The business requirements phase of the project is nearing completion.

Governance

Consortium Agreement

As the initiative moves toward the completion, a comprehensive governance model, including a Collaboration Agreement is now needed. The agreement identifies the partners, responsibilities, deliverables and the full commitment in terms of a cost sharing agreement with other Service Managers. Through this agreement, each active member municipality will be required to provide a financial commitment should they wish to continue to participate in the project and be part of the process going forward. In addition, a neutral and fair cost sharing agreement has been established between other interested Service Managers to cover the cost of future development, hosting and support related expenses.

The Consortium Agreement document is currently under development and will outline the obligations, rights and responsibilities of the collective group, as well as the assessment of costs, payments of costs and other provisions to outline and protect each municipality and the group as a whole. Prior to presentation for signature by the Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services, the final agreement will be vetted through each municipality’s Finance, Legal, Purchasing and IT divisions to ensure the compliance with all regional by-laws, policies and procedures.

Cost Sharing

The total cost of the project will be dependent on a number of factors including the number of municipalities involved, the involvement and program support of organizations such as Housing Services Corporation (HSC) and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) regarding the
detail of the program design. The group of municipalities involved have spent a large amount of time and effort to create very detailed requirement documents, spreadsheets, flow charts and narrative documents which, it is felt, will assist the selected developer greatly and result in lower development costs.

The Region of Waterloo is now being requested to provide a financial commitment to the continuation of this initiative. Initial estimates of the governing group, in consultation with their respective IT departments, project the development costs to be no more than $1.5 million. These costs would be shared by each participating municipality based on the number of transferred housing units (as defined by the Housing Services Act, 2011) as at December 31, 2011 and provided by MMAH. Based on this share structure, the Region would be responsible for approximately 12 percent of the initial development costs or up to $180,000 including HST. Should the projected cost exceed our commitment of $180,000, the Consortium Agreement will allow a process to move forward, on a consensus of all signatories, to complete the development within the funding approval. The initial development costs would be borne based on the agreed share structure by the eight governing group municipalities.

The Province has 47 Service Manager (SM) areas responsible for the delivery and administration of housing programming in Ontario. As the IT solution is being designed as a solution that would be able to be used by all SMs, it is the intent of the group to market the software to other interested SMs. A number of service manager areas have indicated that they would be interested in viewing the completed software package for possible implementation within their respective municipalities. In the event that additional service managers purchase the software, the original eight municipalities (including the Region) will receive a "rebate" of the initial costs based on the agreed percentage for each additional service manager who commits to purchasing the program. This would reduce the overall development costs borne by each of the original eight municipalities.

The cost estimate of $1.5 million reflects the development cost. On-going data hosting and program maintenance costs are estimated to be $22,000 per year for the Region and would be funded from the existing approved housing operating budget once the solution is developed and implemented. There would be no impact on the 2013 operating budget for the funding of the initial development costs of up to $180,000 inclusive of HST. Funding for the Region’s share of this project has previously been approved in the amount of $245,000 (2005 - $60k; 2011 - $185k) from the Housing Reserve Fund and is included in the 2013 approved capital budget. This amount is available to fund the estimated cost of this initiative. It is recommended that Regional Council approve the Region’s participation in the Consortium Agreement. It is further recommended that the Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services be authorized to sign the Consortium Agreement which is in satisfactory form to the Regional Solicitor.

If staff do not proceed with this initiative, the Region of Waterloo will continue to use a system of spreadsheets developed since transfer to maintain and track housing costs and to provide any Ministry (MMAH) and Council required reporting on an on-going basis. This approach is prone to data integrity errors (formula errors, deleted data, etc.) and is labour intensive to ensure the reliability of the information on a daily basis. Finally, the Region’s current process is not flexible enough to respond to future data gathering and reporting requirements. The successful completion of this initiative would result in many benefits including streamlined program delivery and improved report capability.

**Procurement and Next Steps**

The group of eight municipalities, consisting of Cities of Windsor, London, Hamilton, and Ottawa along with the Region of Waterloo, Region of Halton, York Region and Municipality of Chatham-Kent have issued a Pre-Qualifying Bid leading to an eventual Request for Proposal (RFP) to select a vendor to develop the IT solution. The successful proponents from this process will have the opportunity to reply to the Request for Proposals (RFP) issued later this year. This procurement
process for this initiative has been undertaken by the Region of Waterloo and Regional staff is prepared to issue the RFP on behalf of the municipalities as the lead municipality.

A committee of the governing group will form an evaluation committee to review responses to the Pre-Qualifying Bid and RFP, and report back to the governing group for decisions on moving forward. Each municipality will be responsible for ensuring compliance with their respective purchasing and legal requirements throughout this process. The Region’s Purchasing Bylaw specifically allows cooperative purchasing efforts that reflect the Region’s requirements for competitive process. This RFP would satisfy those requirements. In the event that there is significant change, the Region reserves the right to not issue an RFP and/or terminate the entire process at any time, in its sole and absolute discretion.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report supports and meets the objective of Focus Area 5: Service Excellence, to ensure Regional programs and services are efficient and effective and demonstrate accountability to the public.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The collaborative participation in a Service Manager Housing Software initiative and Consortium Agreement with seven (7) other municipal service managers will address the issues of data integrity errors (formula errors, deleted data, etc.) and labour intensive work needed to ensure the reliability of the information on a daily basis.

Currently, the Region of Waterloo Housing Division’s capital budget for this project is $245,000 (approved by Regional Council in 2005 and 2011) financed from the Housing Reserve Fund. The overall project cost is estimated to be $1,500,000 and based on the share structure; the Region of Waterloo would be responsible for approximately 12 percent or $180,000 including HST of the initial development costs. The annual data hosting and program maintenance costs estimated to be about $22,000 per year for the Region would be funded by the existing approved housing operating budget as identified, once the solution is developed and implemented. Should the projected cost exceed the Region of Waterloo’s commitment of $180,000, the Consortium Agreement will allow a process to move forward, with the consensus of all signatories, to complete the development within the funding available.

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:

Staff from Legal, Finance, Purchasing and Information Technology Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

ATTACHMENTS:

NIL

PREPARED BY: Jennifer Murdoch, Manager, Housing Programs

Deb Schlichter, Director of Housing

APPROVED BY: Rob Horne, Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services
TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: May 28, 2013

FILE CODE: L04-20

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SAND HILLS CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING INC., 250 CHANDLER DRIVE IN KITCHENER

RECOMMENDATION:

For information.

SUMMARY:

This report is intended to provide an update to the previous report to Regional Council on April 17, 2013 (CR-RS-13-034/P-13-042) concerning the management of Sand Hills Co-operative Homes Inc., an eighty (80) unit community housing development located at 250 Chandler Drive in the City of Kitchener. The Region of Waterloo has oversight responsibility for this property in its capacity as “Service Manager” under the provincial Housing Services Act (“the Act”) and provides an annual combined operating and rent geared to income subsidy of $486,000.

A new Board of five external community volunteers was appointed to Sand Hills Co-operative, effective April 15, 2013, for a period of up to two years. The intent of this action was to stabilize the financial and operational management of the Co-operative, and provide proper maintenance of the property, including capital repairs. This action followed due process by which Regional staff repeatedly expressed serious concerns to the existing resident member Board regarding the management of the Co-operative, starting in late summer of 2012. In accordance with the Act, the Service Manager provided written notices detailing the nature of the concerns and what must be done to rectify them, and offered various forms of assistance which were not accepted.

Since the Board failed to undertake the necessary steps to remedy the lack of proper management of the Co-operative, the Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services, pursuant to his delegated authority, delivered a final notice to the Board on March 21, 2013, informing the Board of the Region’s intent to remove all of the current members of the Board of Directors and replace them with a five (5) member Board of Directors in accordance with the Region’s authority under the Act.

Since the new Board has been in place, a number of activities have occurred which are detailed in the body of this report. Based on a preliminary review of the finances, there will likely be a substantial deficit in the current 2012/13 operating budget (June 30 year-end) of approximately $75,000 due to loss of revenue in member housing charges (arrears) and vacancy loss, audit fees of over $20,000, plus additional legal expenses of more than $40,000 incurred prior to the appointment of the new Board.

Since the appointment of the new board in mid-April, the Region has received a Notice of
Application for Judicial Review to the Divisional Court issued April 19, 2013 seeking a review of the Region’s decision to terminate the former Board and the appointment of a new Board. The application was initiated by several members of the former Board of Directors. No date has been set yet for the hearing of this application.

Also, a lawsuit was initiated against the Co-operative just prior to April 15, 2013, by Victoria Park Community Homes Management Project, a former property manager, seeking approximately $39,000 for monies it spent on behalf of the Co-operative to make repairs to the property, primarily during late July to August of 2012. The new Board will retain its own legal counsel to advise them on this matter. The additional cost and possible resolution of this claim will further add to the estimated financial deficit for the Co-operative.

REPORT:

The Region of Waterloo has a statutory role as “Service Manager” in accordance with the Housing Services Act to oversee the management and provide funding to the Sand Hills Co-operative, an 80-unit community housing property located at 250 Chandler Drive. In 2011, the combined member rent-geared to income and operating subsidies paid by the Region totaled approximately $486,000.

The Co-operative has been governed by a volunteer Board of Directors with each director also being a resident of the property as per a requirement of the Ontario Co-operative Corporations Act. The Board has not, however, provided adequate documentation confirming that it is either legally constituted or that it continues to act with the approval of the membership of the Co-operative.

Beginning in late summer of 2012, Regional staff has expressed concerns regarding the lack of proper management by the Board. These concerns were detailed in two previous notices sent to the Board of the Co-operative on October 18, 2012 and January 2, 2013. In November of 2012, Regional staff had two meetings with the Board’s legal representative and the Chair of the Board. Despite repeated offers from the Region to meet since then, the Board did not choose to accept these invitations.

In accordance with the Act, the Service Manager has provided written notices to the Board detailing the nature of the concerns and what must be done to rectify them. The Service Manager has also offered various forms of assistance including assistance with procuring property management services and assuming certain property management functions on behalf of the Co-operative on a temporary basis. The Board has failed to undertake the necessary steps to remedy the lack of proper management of the Co-operative.

As a result of the ongoing failure of the Board to properly manage this property, and after consideration of other several remedies that would potential cause considerable additional hardship for members of the Co-operative, risk of greater harm or significant additional expense (i.e. termination of subsidy, appointment of a receiver), the Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services had, in accordance with this delegated authority, removed the existing Board of Directors and replaced the Board with five (5) community volunteers who have assumed the governance of the community housing provider for up to a two year period. The effective date of the appointment of the Board was April 15, 2013. The intent of this action is to improve the management and governance of the housing provider. Section 98 of the Act provides authority to the Region, as Service Manager, to appoint non-resident directors Housing Services Act notwithstanding membership in the Co-operative being a requirement of the Co-operative Corporations Act.
New Sand Hills Board Update

The new Sand Hills Board is, as follows:

- Kathi Zarfas, Chair
- Arli Klassen, Vice-Chair
- Filipe Mendes, Secretary
- Tim Sullivan, Treasurer
- Martin Buhr, Member-at-Large

The new Board of Directors has met on several occasions since April 15, 2013, and has been working closely with Regional staff to stabilize the financial and operational management of the Co-operative. They will also oversee the procurement of suitable property management and maintenance services for the Co-operative. As an interim measure, Regional housing staff has been providing the property management function at Sand Hills until the procurement process can be completed, and are providing a staff presence on site for approximately 18 hours per week. Activities include getting contractors in place to address member unit repair requests and urgent health and safety capital repairs, getting the office system and member files back in order, ensuring vacant units are properly filled, and rebuilding and reviewing financial records. Based on a preliminary financial review, it appears that there will likely be a substantial deficit in the current 2012/13 operating budget of approximately $75,000 due to loss of revenue in member housing charges (arrears) and vacancy loss, plus additional expenses for legal costs incurred by the former board of directors, without consultation of the members, in excess of $40,000 and $20,000 in audit fees. A Building Condition Assessment (BCA) is also underway to help to identify and prioritize short-term and long-term capital repairs. Pending the completion of the building condition assessment, urgent repairs have been already been initiated by the new appointee Board. As well, a vacant unit is undergoing substantial repairs to return it to a condition where it is fit for re-occupancy.

Since April 15, 2013, the process of getting the administrative affairs of the Co-operative in order has been complicated by a number of factors including:

- On the evening of the appointment of the new board, at least one member of the former board entered the administrative office of the co-operative, after the locks had been changed, and attempted to remove corporate records of the Co-operative leaving the paper and computer records of the Co-operative in disarray. With the intervention of the police, records were returned to the Co-operative, however, it appears that these records are not complete;

- The financial records of the Co-operative were incomplete requiring the expenditure of more than $20,000 on audit services by the current auditor prior to the appointment of the new Board. Generally speaking, in usual circumstances, housing co-operatives in the Waterloo Region spend approximately $5,000 per year for audit services; and

- Files kept for calculating rent-geared-to-income subsidies are incomplete as are records of housing charges collected. For example, some members have been in arrears of payment of their housing charges for long periods of time and instances of inconsistent follow up to ensure members are responsible for payment of utilities have been discovered, with the result being the Co-operative has paid utilities on behalf of members when it should not have done so.

The Board initiated a “meet and greet” event for members on April 19, 2013, and had the opportunity to speak with a number of Co-operative members about their housing concerns. A community clean-up day is being planned for Saturday May 25, and preparations are being
made to start up the community garden again. A Members Meeting/Annual General Meeting (AGM) is also planned for June 4, 2013. At that time, the appointee Board will present financial statements for the year ended June 30th, 2012 to the members, which action has been outstanding since November 20, 2012.

The new appointee board has been working closely with both the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada and Central Ontario Co-operative Housing Federation to create a plan for member education and training, with a goal of adding resident members to the Board and ultimately returning management of the Co-operative back to a board comprised entirely of members.

Legal Matters

The Region has received a Notice of Application for Judicial Review to the Divisional Court issued April 19, 2013 by a lawyer ostensibly representing several former board members, although the application names the Co-operative as the actual applicant. The application seeks to review the Region’s decision to terminate the former board and to appoint a new Board. No date has been set yet for the hearing of this application. In addition to the legal costs associated with this application, the former Board members have already utilized funds belonging to the Co-operative in excess of $40,000 to date to fund legal services since the fall of 2012. The Region will oppose this application as it believes it would be detrimental to the interests of the Co-operative to return responsibility for management of the Co-operative to the former board of directors.

A lawsuit has also been initiated by Victoria Park Community Homes, a former property manager, and served on the former board prior to April 15, 2013, seeking approximately $39,000 for payment of monies it spent on behalf of the Co-operative to make repairs to the property, mostly during late July to August 2012. The new appointee Board will be retaining a lawyer to advise them in this matter as no steps were undertaken by the former Board to respond to this legal proceeding. The additional legal costs for the defence of this lawsuit and its possible resolution will add to the projected financial deficit for the Co-operative for its fiscal year ending June 30, 2013.

Next Steps

Regional staff will provide Council with further information concerning this Co-operative in the fall of 2013 once the financial situation of the Co-operative is reconciled for its year ended June 30, 2013.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

Council’s Strategic Focus includes improving accessibility to housing. This report seeks to both maintain and, where possible, enhance this focus area by stabilizing the accessibility to housing and ensuring that the Region of Waterloo and its housing providers operate in a responsible and sustainable environment.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The costs of supporting the Region’s community housing providers are provided for in the Region’s annual operating budget. Any additional subsidy requirements will be communicated through subsequent reports regarding this matter.
OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:
NIL

ATTACHMENTS
NIL

PREPARED BY:  Jeff Schelling, Solicitor (Corporate)
                Deb Schlichter, Director of Housing

APPROVED BY:  Debra Arnold, Regional Solicitor and Director of Legal Services
                Rob Horne, Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services
REGION OF WATERLOO
SOCIAL SERVICES
Children’s Services

TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee
DATE: May 28, 2013
FILE CODE: S02-20
SUBJECT: CHILD CARE FEE SUBSIDY SERVICE PRESSURES

RECOMMENDATION:
Information only.

SUMMARY:
Nil

REPORT:

1.0 Background
Child Care Fee Subsidy provides financial assistance with the cost of child care to families who are working, attending school or training, have a child with special or social needs or who are ill, disabled or attending a day treatment program. A Provincial Income Test is used to determine eligibility for child care fee subsidies. Financial eligibility is based on the parent/guardian adjusted net income on their most recent Federal Notice of Assessment. Families with a net income of $20,000 or less per year are eligible for full subsidy and families whose income is above $20,000 pay a portion of their child care costs (called a parent contribution). Families are determined ineligible when their parent contribution is more than their actual child care costs.

Children of subsidy eligible parents can be placed in a licensed child care centre, licensed home child care agency home, an approved summer camp or a full day kindergarten before and after school program in Waterloo Region. The current funding allows for placement of an annual monthly average of about 2800 children per month. Since 2009 the demand for fee subsidy has continued to rise. A waiting list was implemented for approximately eight months in 2010. An increase to the fee subsidy budget in 2011 alleviated the need for a waiting list, since that time children have been placed in child care on an ongoing basis.

2.0 Current Child Care Fee Subsidy Funding
The fee subsidy budget is one of the largest operating budget expenditures for Children’s Services. It includes all payments made on behalf of subsidy eligible families for licensed early learning and child care services across the Region. The total fee subsidy budget is $16,765,979.

The current demand for fee subsidy is exceeding the current 2013 budget allocation. Provincial investment in child care fee subsidy has increased by $8M over the previous five years but has not kept pace with growing demand. Since 2005, Provincial cost sharing formulas have not included a municipal contribution or cost sharing agreement. In 2010 a budget issue paper addressed the need
for an increase in funding for the fee subsidy program. Council approved an increase in the fee subsidy budget of $1.35 million ($270,000 net levy) for 2011 and ($400,000 net levy in 2012). These funding increases paired with new 100% Provincial funding allocations provided for an increase in the overall fee subsidy budget of 1.3 million.

The current fee subsidy funding provides for expenditures of $1.2M per month on average. The actual expenditures each month varies depending on the hours of care and cost of care for children. The chart below provides an overview of the monthly expenditures as well as budget targets to maintain expenditures within the current approved budget. In 2013, expenditures in the first quarter of the year are high demonstrating the need to activate a waiting list as of June 01, 2013 until expenditures drop within the monthly targets.

Figure 1 – Fee Subsidy Monthly Expenditures vs. Budget

3.0 Service Levels and Anticipated Demands

Staff review service demand and expenditures on a monthly basis, to date expenditures and demand exceed the current budget allocation. There are currently 3100 children in receipt of subsidy at an average monthly cost per child of $460.00. At the current spending level the budget could be overspent by $1M by year end. In order to bring expenditures in line with the budget staff will be implementing a waiting list for fee subsidy. The waiting list will mean that new subsidy eligible families will not be placed in a licensed child care program until expenditures for the program have been reduced.

4.0 Waiting List Priority System

Movement from the fee subsidy waiting list is determined using a priority system that was approved by Committee in 2011. The priority system determines what families move off the waiting list first. The waiting list categories are as follows:

- Category 1 – families with a special needs child
• Category 2 - families with income of $0-$20,000
• Category 3 – families with income of $20,001 - $40,000
• Category 4 – families with income of $40,001-$60,000
• Category 5 – families with income of $60,001+

It is anticipated during the month of June that very few placements will occur from the waiting list until the number of children and expenditures decrease to the targeted levels. Once this is achieved placement from the waiting list will occur on an attrition basis.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

The administration of fee subsidy aligns with the 2011-2014 Region’s Corporate Strategic Focus Area 4; Foster healthy, safe, inclusive and caring communities; Corporate Strategic Objective 4.6; (to) work collaboratively with the community to support the development of services for children

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The 2013 Childrens’ Services budget totals $40,982,772 million, of this total $16,310,140 million is allocated to fee subsidy. Current monthly expenditures of approximately $1.4 million exceed the monthly budget target of $1.2 million and if continued could result in an over expenditure of approximately $1 million by year end. Implementation of a waiting list for fee subsidy will allow for reduction of expenditures to align with the approved budget.

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:

The ongoing assistance of Finance and Information Systems is required to support monitoring of monthly expenditures.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

PREPARED BY: Sheri Phillips, Manager Child Care Subsidy
Nancy Dickieson, Director, Children’s Services

APPROVED BY: Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders, Commissioner, Social Services
To: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee  
From: Lucille Bish, Director, Community Services  
Subject: Preliminary Results from CIRCUS Exhibit at Waterloo Region Museum  
File No: R13-07

“CIRCUS! Science under the Big Top”, produced by the Ontario Science Centre, ran from February 9 to May 5, 2013 in the short term gallery of the Waterloo Region Museum. It was a highly acclaimed and popular exhibit with visitors.

Almost 20,000 casual visitors, in addition to school groups, enjoyed the exhibit during its 86-day run. That averages out to 230 visitors per day. The exhibit was a particularly popular draw during March Break, with more than 7,000 visitors during the nine day period. This was a record-breaking week for attendance and earned revenues at the Waterloo Region Museum.

The increased visitation boosted gift shop and food kiosk (Hazel’s) revenues as well. A focus on selling individual and family memberships (valid for one year at all Region of Waterloo museums) was also very successful, with 587 new memberships sold during the three months.

Other key revenue and attendance statistics for the period February 9 – May 5 (note that these are preliminary and do not include complete school group data):

- Casual visitors, 2013: 19,656
- Casual visitors, 2012: 5,631
- Revenue (excluding membership sales) 2013: $146,952
- Revenue (excluding membership sales) 2012: $29,403

This type of educational, entertaining and family-friendly exhibit is a key strategy in increasing attendance and revenue at the Waterloo Region Museum. The success of this exhibit is shaping future planning for exhibits in the museum’s short term gallery.
To: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

From: Lucille Bish, Director, Community Services

Subject: ECOFest at the Waterloo Region Museum

File No: E07-01

The Region of Waterloo is excited to host the 6th Annual ECOFest at the Waterloo Region Museum on Saturday June 1, 2013. This free and fun-filled day focuses on ways we can all work to reduce our footprint on the environment, one step at a time.

ECOFest runs from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and includes many fabulous hands-on activities, horse drawn wagon rides and musical entertainment by Ottawa based Junkyard Symphony who will impress with their recycled instruments, rhythms, and endless energy. Other event highlights include a bird of prey exhibit, art activities with the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery and “Aboriginal Voices” - a performance by Chief Topleaf. The Marketplace of Ideas will inform and inspire visitors with environmentally friendly products and ideas.

The Water Wagon will also be on site for visitors’ needs and Grand River Transit is offering a $6 Family Day Pass and a direct shuttle bus from Fairview Park Mall to the Waterloo Region Museum for families wanting to travel green all day. This year’s theme is “reduce your footprint...one step at a time” and highlights the importance of the steps we can take as individuals to protect it and reduce our environmental footprint by making simple and sensible lifestyle changes.

ECOFest began in 2008 as a partnership of local municipalities and environmentally-focused agencies and businesses. Now in its third year at the Waterloo Region Museum, it complements the annual Waterloo-Wellington Children’s Groundwater Festival, which runs from May 27-31 this year. It also complements initiatives of the Area Municipalities, most of which are focused in April.

Promotional activities include distributing free “tickets” to all local school children, posters, and radio spots. Several participating vendors are also including ECOFest information on their websites and signage.

The event runs rain or shine, and Waterloo Region Museum provides the perfect venue even for inclement weather. Many activities are indoors, and visitors are also able to view the gallery exhibits, which this year includes the new short-term exhibit, *Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee*. 
To: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of Community Services Committee  
From: Tamara Kerr, Social Planning Associate  
David Dirks, Director, Employment and Income Support  
Copies: Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders, Commissioner, Social Services  
File No: S14-90  
Subject: LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED MANUFACTURING WORKER CASE-STUDY

Long-Term Unemployed Manufacturing Worker Case-Study
The Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (WPB) in partnership with Employment and Income Support, Social Services developed the 2012 Long-Term Unemployed Manufacturing Worker Case Study to share stories of ten participants (nine of which were on Ontario Works (OW) at the time of study) who were displaced from the manufacturing industry to draw upon the lived experiences of these individuals as they transition from employment, to unemployment, and seeking re-employment in the manufacturing industry.

Since 2008, the manufacturing industry has experienced a displacement of thousands of workers from the labour market. The case study examines the effects of the 2008 economic downturn on the manufacturing industry by exploring the experiences of displaced workers. Drawing on observations from the case study interviews, this report makes recommendations to assist displaced workers to re-enter the workforce. This report attempts to gain a better understanding of how individuals experience displacement while applying for or receiving Ontario Works (OW). Increasing this awareness offers an opportunity to enhance services and supports for unemployed workers and facilitate re-entry into the workforce.

Key Findings
Ninety percent of the case study participants are Canadian born and have an average age of 47 years. On average, participants have been displaced from the manufacturing industry for 1.6 years; ranging from one to three years. Sixty percent of participants had less than a High School education, thirty percent had graduated from High School, and ten percent had some or graduated from a post-secondary institution.

The case study found that participants are generally satisfied with the level of services being provided to them. Specifically, participants found the resume writing services and the Toward Employment program to be very useful. However, the case study also identifies that the age of
participants is a barrier to job searching due to the rigorous application process and job market competitiveness.

The case study identifies some gaps in the range of employment services available to the study participants. All of the participants express that public transportation is a challenge to workforce re-entry; in fact they believe that increasing the accessibility and advancing intercity travel options would improve the chances of finding employment. Outside of transportation issues, ninety percent of participants identified themselves as having one or more additional barriers affecting their ability to find employment; i.e., criminal record, teenage parent, low education, and poverty.

It is observed that the study participants may not be utilizing the range of services currently being offered by OW for a number of reasons. Primarily, most participants were not open to comprehensive career retraining programs and instead are disengaging from the process due to a limited sense of job guarantee and education requirements. This study also found that despite eligibility, participants are not accessing available Employment Ontario (EO) employment programs and services prior to applying for Ontario Works.

Priorities
In terms of unemployment in the local manufacturing industry, this case study identifies several gaps between services and the participant. The recommendations in this study offer three priorities that warrant further investigation to address the barriers faced by displaced workers. These include revisiting transportation planning with a direct interest from social services so innovative solutions are developed to have a direct impact on the needs of Ontario Works (OW) participants. Secondly, re-evaluate how training programs are offered to participants with the goal to invite active participation by participants and encourage individuals to actively engage in their road to re-employment. Thirdly, look at how counseling services are being offered to OW participants considering ninety percent of study participants identified having one or more barriers blocking access to employment, i.e., criminal record, teenage parenting, low education, and poverty.

This work supports the Region’s Corporate Strategic Focus Area Two: Growth Management and Prosperity; Strategic Objective Three: Support a diverse, innovative and globally competitive economy.

A copy of the report will be placed in the Councillors’ library. For further information please contact Tamara Kerr, Social Planning Associate at (519) 883-2040 or tkerr@regionofwaterloo.ca; or David Dirks, Director, Employment & Income Support at 519-883-2179 or ddirks@regionofwaterloo.ca.
Long-term Unemployed Manufacturing Worker Case Study

Prepared For:
The Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Social Services Department

Prepared By:
Workforce Planning Board Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

October 2012
Report compiled by Sean Wierda, Communications Officer
Editorial support provided by Carol Simpson, Executive Director
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1.00 Executive Summary

Since the start of the economic downturn in 2008 the manufacturing industry has experienced displacement of thousands of workers from the labour market. The Kitchener census metropolitan area (Kitchener CMA) encompasses the area of Waterloo Region not including Wilmot and Wellesley Townships. Pre-recession figures from 2005 indicate a manufacturing workforce in the Kitchener CMA of 63,700. Annual employment numbers in the manufacturing sector were reduced to 59,300 in 2007 and to 50,400 in 2009, a drop of nearly 21% in the four years from 2005 to 2009. Locally, the manufacturing sector employed 61,700 in August 2012 (three month average), and comprised 18.4% of the workforce in 2011. The local manufacturing sector has recovered some, but the types of employment and skill level requirements have changed dramatically. This has meant that many former unskilled manufacturing workers have been unable to re-enter the labour market and many who are still out of work, may now rely on supports from social assistance.

The Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (WPB) approached the Regional Municipality of Waterloo’s Social Services (ROWSS) department to be a partner in the Long-term Unemployed Manufacturing Worker: Case Study to identify and interview people who were displaced from the manufacturing industry to uncover some common themes emerging in the sector. Together, WPD and ROWSS identified ten (10) participants (nine of which are currently receiving OW) from the targeted population. They were selected through an initial telephone screening then participated in an hour-long one-on-one interview where their experiences were documented and summarized in this report. Their stories will be pulled from their lived experiences to help future transitioning manufacturing workers as they seek re-employment.

This report aims to highlight the observation of interview themes and make recommendations for future action based on these themes. If we could better understand the participants’ experiences between job-loss notification and application for OW, the information could assist other displaced workers to access training supports, job search assistance and help with basic needs, facilitating a more efficient re-entry into the workforce on the road to reemployment. Providing clients with this information proactively could eliminate or reduce the occurrences of long-term reliance on OW. In reviewing each client’s situation, a detailed account of post-employment activities will uncover service gaps and highlight successes: what interventions were used or considered; from what agencies did the client seek information; and, was there a critical step missed that could have revealed underlying barriers preventing a seamless transition into employment or training.

The study uncovered that Ontario Works (OW) clients are generally very satisfied with the level of services being provided to them. Specifically, clients have found the resume writing services and the Toward Employment program to be very useful. These programs were also the most commonly accessed by participants.

An observation made from these stories is that clients are having greater success looking for work online than clients who are using other means to find work. The clients who do not apply to work using online methods generally refrain from doing so because they lack the necessary
computer skills. Study participants expressed that they were having difficulty transitioning into the new job search market because they are not accustomed to the new rigorous application process including; writing resumes and cover letters, self-marketing, multiple interviews, online job search, and job market competitiveness.

The study identified some possible gaps in the range of employment services and supports being offered to the study participants. These participants express that public transit is inadequate and this is a fundamental problem for them. Participants are seeking transit times to be extended but also new development of intercity travel to improve the participants job search radius, believed to improve the chances of finding employment.

It is further observed that participants may not be utilizing the range of services currently offered by Ontario Works (OW) for many reasons, including that most of the participants in this study were not open to comprehensive career retraining programs. Participants shared stories that this may be due to the fact that the programs offer no job guarantee and require some form of schooling. Also, some clients are not accessing available Employment Ontario (EO) employment programs and services prior to qualifying for Ontario Works.

The study will attempt to offer recommendations around programming and service provision pulled from the observations from the samples stories.

1.01 Case Study Methodology

A set of questions was developed and reviewed by WPB and ROWSS in an attempt to delve further into how former manufacturing workers and now current Ontario Works recipients find themselves in this situation. The Long-Term Unemployed Workers Case Study was executed as follows to ensure the study was completed in the utmost professional and ethical manor.

By placing posters in OW resource centres and promoting the study to OW case workers, WPB had interested candidates self-identify for the recruitment process. By using a non-compulsory type recruitment process, this study wanted to ensure it attracted participants who were comfortable sharing their experiences without reservations. The interview process aimed to get a better understanding of the road to re-employment being taken by previously employed manufacturing workers. Once interested candidates came forward, WPB staff determined whether the individual’s history and work experience was relevant to the study. During the first point of contact, that included a brief telephone screening, a draft profile was created for potential participants indicating how long they have worked in manufacturing, where they were employed, as well as what part of the region they live in. Using this information, the candidates whose experiences best match the criteria outlined were offered the opportunity to take part in the case study.

The study aimed at attracting a diverse pool of candidates so that it could give a fair representation of participants within the region to mitigate the use of such a small sample size. The sample of participants was composed of both men and women from a variety of different manufacturing industries, with different levels of experience and residing within all parts of the region. This cross-section reflects a variety of the unemployed manufacturing population in Waterloo Region. The group consisted of 10 workers who have been displaced in the past 1-3 years, and are still unemployed and accessing supports through the Ontario Works Program. Once candidates were offered the opportunity to participate, hour-long interviews were scheduled.
The interviews were conducted at a chosen satellite location (either the Employment and Income Support division at ROWSS (E&IS) office or another local agency office) near the participant’s home to help accommodate any transportation difficulties. No interviews were conducted at participants’ homes. A private meeting room with a door was used to ensure participant safety and confidentiality so that all participants felt comfortable sharing their experience without reservations.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer explained to participants the nature of the study, to help set the scope for the discussion. Specifically, it was stressed that the interviewer was not knowledgeable about OW benefits and the discussion could not include any client/case worker issues or complaints. Given the severe nature of the challenges some OW clients may be facing, ensuring participants understood the object of the study was vital. This ensured they were less apt to focus on the events that fall outside the scope of the research. The interview was organized into sections including one on “personal circumstances”. Thus, if participants felt the need to vent their frustrations on matters outside the scope of the study, the interviewer was able to keep it aside from the more relevant factors, which in turn avoids compromising the integrity of the rest of the interview.

All participants’ identities have been kept anonymous. The interviews were taped using a voice recorder for the interviewer to consult when compiling the final report. All identifying information has been removed from the report, and includes only identification markers such as “participant #1, 2, 3, 4”. The raw interview data has been converted into printable stories identifying only general and/or other non-specific identifying information. Since only the interviewer has had access to the raw data collected from the interviews, this discretion helped promote an environment of trust between the interviewer and participants so they could share their perspective with ease. In agreement with ROWSS, WPB would have only disclosed interview findings to the relevant authorities if a participant had disclosed being the victim of a serious criminal offence, e.g., violence or abuse, sexual assault, or harassment. Participants were also made aware of this fact and this situation did not arise in any of the interview scenarios.

During the interview, WPB built a profile around the participant’s background, skills, personal development, personal circumstances and their road to re-employment. In addition, the interviewer discussed with participants what (if any) retraining programs (e.g. Second Career), upgrading of skills services (e.g. literacy upgrading), and any other programs that were accessed during their search for employment. If participants did not access any programs, the interviewer attempted to identify any obstacles that may have impeded them from access. If participants had used any programs or services, the interviewer delved further into other reasons why these participants are still unemployed and now accessing Ontario Works (OW).
Table 1: Participant Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years On OW</th>
<th>Employment Term (years)</th>
<th>Years Seeking Work</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Are you volunteering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Born outside Canada</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>recurring</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WPB offered a small incentive ($50.00 grocery store gift card) to participants who successfully completed the interview process. WPB provided participants with bus fare if it was needed to help accommodate for any transportation difficulties. The WPB interviewer was fluent in French and English, so the interview could be conducted in the language of their choice if necessary. An interpreter service was available should any participants require one because they weren’t fluent in either official language. This was not required.

The findings have been compiled into this report which outlines the themes observed in the study. There is potential to use these findings in order to help future transitioning of manufacturing workers on their road to re-employment.
Part 2

2.00 Introduction

The Workforce Planning Board (WPB) has undertaken a research and analysis project on the paths that transitioning manufacturing workers take as they seek re-employment. The focus of this study is on displaced workers who have been unemployed long-term, and who are now receiving Social Assistance. By undertaking the research in a case study format, WPB has attempted to identify potential strategies that would further enable workers to transition themselves back into the labour market. The goal was to identify the critical intervention points in the worker’s journey through unemployment, i.e., where they’ve had the most success and challenges. By understanding these critical points, the findings can be extended to other workers with similar challenges and backgrounds who may become unemployed in the future. This analysis has set out to provide an account of participant’s stories to:

- determine which programs (see Table 2), employment services, job search strategies and supports may have been utilized by unemployed manufacturing workers;
- identify any possible gaps in the range of employment services and supports being offered from the clients’ perspective;
- help future laid off workers be more aware of some of the setbacks they may encounter during their job search, and offer advice and/or strategies for coping with them;
- further our understanding of the road to re-employment of former manufacturing workers on Social Assistance;
- determine what strategies, if any, could be implemented and/or promoted to assist unemployed manufacturing workers to shorten their transition time back into the labour force.

2.01 Participants at a Glance

The case study’s sample was composed of 10 participants with long-term manufacturing experience. As a result of the confidential nature of this study, all identifying information has been removed from the report. All participants have been numbered and are referred to accordingly. Participant who were interviewed in this study were sixty-five percent male. The greatest number of participants was in the 51-55 age group (4 of 10). Seven of the ten participants were from Kitchener, two from Cambridge, and one from Waterloo. Seventy-five percent of the sample at the time of the interviews had been receiving Ontario Works (OW) for less than two years. The following charts identify some general information about the composition of our sample.
Table 2: Training Programs and Workshops Used by Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Programs and Workshops Used by Study Participants</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resume Workshop (alone and as part of a program)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Ontario Service Provider Agencies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Matters (food/retail, industrial, and office)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Training (alone and as part of a program)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Workshop (alone and as part of a program)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Career</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward Employment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Employment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2.02 Participant 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Job Search</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Born outside Canada</td>
<td>Welder-Fitter, upholsterer</td>
<td>Uses online, and in-person applications/searches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Struggles**

- Son has cancer, trade tools stolen at previous job (valued in the thousands $), no personal transportation

*Participant 1 (P1)* is an immigrant from the Caribbean who has been working and living in Canada since 1968. P1 has a high school diploma, has been trained as an upholsterer, and has successfully completed a 2 year welder certification program at a community college here in Ontario. P1 has 20 years experience working in manufacturing as a fitter welder.

P1’s employer went out of business when a recession hit in 2000 and he never received a severance package to help him cope. In order to survive without his former income, P1 has been self employed doing small renovations at odd jobs. P1’s main set-back since being unemployed has been coping with the illness of a family member fighting cancer.

Seeing no future in the industry, P1 has attempted to transition away from manufacturing. He began looking for work immediately after losing his employment. For the most part, he’s applied to sales representative positions since being on social assistance because he has some relevant experience and has a charismatic personality. Prior to going on social assistance, P1 obtained only a single interview in manufacturing at a welding shop in Cambridge. Unfortunately, management thought P1 would be to be too old to be hired as a welder as he’s nearly 60. In other fields, P1 has obtained interviews but was equally unsuccessful at securing these positions.

P1 does not believe he lacks any qualifications or skills that would put him at a disadvantage when looking for work. In fact, he believes his search for employment has been hindered mainly by not owning a vehicle (a requirement for many sales positions). P1 has been applying to jobs online with the assistance of his children, as well as in person. He’s also considered moving to Alberta because of the abundance of work, although he’s never seriously pursued it because he cannot realistically expect to move his family out west.

When P1 lost his last job and was struggling to pay rent, he started using OW programs and services. P1 was never aware that there were retraining courses, skill upgrading opportunities and other programs and services available to him before he accessed OW. Once on OW, P1 took a computer class at one of the community centres in Kitchener. He thought this was very helpful and a big improvement on the resume he had been previously using.

For P1 social assistance is an important resource to help him keep up with his responsibilities. P1 only regrets not being able to access more money during his unemployment journey. He sought aid from friends, family, and financial institutions alike, but due to his poor finances nobody would help him. He strongly believes greater access to capital would have stabilized him enough to help him in his job search and find employment.
2.03 Participant 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Job Search</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>General Labourer, Operator, CNC abilities</td>
<td>Networks often Uses online, cold calls, networking and in-person applications/searches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Personal Struggles

Both of P2’s parents died in the same year back to back, and this was traumatic for his sister. P2 put his job search on the back burner to help his sister. He thinks volunteering helped him get out of this rut because it brought some structure back in his life. Through volunteering he’s also been able to network with other people. No personal transportation.

Participant 2 (P2) is a Canadian born manufacturing worker who’s worked a variety of different roles including, general labourer, press operator, entry level CNC operator and tow motor driver. P2 has a low education level having only completed some grade 9 and 10 courses. P2 has not completed any additional post-secondary or diploma programs.

P2 was laid-off and never received a severance package. P2 has depended on EI, the proceeds from selling his truck, and from income he received from doing subcontracted dry walling work for various employers. P2’s journey through unemployment took a major setback when both his parents died back to back in the same year. P2 put his job search on the ‘back burner’ whilst helping his family cope with the grief of both deaths.

P2 has been applying to positions in manufacturing that match his experience, e.g., tow motor operator, press operator and general labourer. In addition, he’s applied to auto mechanic assistant positions because he has some experience working on cars. In short, P2 is willing to consider any full-time job short of desk work. When he first lost his job he thought he may move to Cape Breton to work with some friends, but it never materialized and he was forced to start looking in the region again. P2 has not been able to secure a single interview since the recent economic downturn. With no luck, P2 has been volunteering 4 days a week at a local church based food bank that his caseworker set him up with. He hopes this may lead to an opportunity where he can be hired to work on a part-time basis. P2 applies to jobs in person, online, or through networking with the people he’s met during his placement.

There are multiple factors that have affected P2’s ability to find work. First, P2 quit school at a young age because he struggled with his basic math skills. He’s aware that this can sometimes put him at a disadvantage when looking for work because more and more employers require the full diploma. Also, P2’s dependence on public transportation makes it impossible for him to broaden his search radius beyond the KW region. Finally P2 had struggled with a substance abuse problem which has at times made it impossible for him to look for work.

Since being on social assistance, P2 has been getting his WHMIS certification updated every year through Lutherwood. He’s also taken the computer course offered at the Working Centre, which he found very instructive. Besides this, P2 started doing volunteer work once he entered
the Placement Services program. Not only has this been a great networking opportunity for him, but it’s also been good for his mental health adding some much needed structure to his life. P2 has also completed the Experience Matters (industrial) course. He found this especially helpful because you’re taught key interview skills, given a forklift license, and explained what personal skills employers are looking for. In order to better market himself, P2 took the Toward Employment Program. P2 was not aware of any retraining programs at the time of the interview other than what was available now through OW. He had considered getting some training in welding but had concerns it might not be viable due to his extremely low education level.

P2’s desire to find work is in no way hindered by his dependence on social assistance. In reflection, P2 exclaimed, “if I could do it all again, I’d have gotten my grade 12”. Today, he hopes to find a job that enables him to work alongside people that are also struggling. He believes OW should consider developing a program designed to help people cope with the stress of not only the job search, but also returning to work.

2.04 Participant 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Job Search</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>GED Hairstyling school</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>Order Picker Shipper/Receiver</td>
<td>Networks Uses online and in-person applications/searches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Struggles**  
No personal transportation, extreme personal finance issues (bankruptcy)

Participant 3 (P3) is a Canadian born manufacturing worker who for the most part has worked as an order picker and a shipper and receiver. P3 has successfully obtained her GED since her layoff, although prior to this she had only completed grade 10. P3 has also obtained a diploma in hairdressing through the Second Career Program. P3 is a single parent with 2 kids.

The last manufacturing employer P3 worked for claimed bankruptcy so she never received a severance package. In order to continue supporting her family, P3 went through her RSP’s, maxed out her credit cards and then finally claimed bankruptcy. To this day P3 is unable to obtain a credit card as a result of her financial past. More than any other factor, P3 had struggled financially to keep herself afloat living off of about $500 a month whilst she was getting retrained in a new field.

Applying into Second Career was an extremely difficult process and took 3 attempts. First, the participant felt there were errors in her paperwork, her second, application came when the guidelines were changed and she no longer qualified, and in her last application they reversed their previous decision and she was eligible. In addition to her application difficulties, P3 was only given a week’s notice before the program’s start date. She chose hairdressing as a career after she had been informed by her case worker that it was an in demand field. She found the quality of training she received was satisfactory, but it lacked the certification component that employers are so keen on. In her opinion she wasn’t able to successfully transition into her new field because she lacked the proper certification that requires 1500 apprenticeship hours.
Therefore the diploma program she was put through didn’t turn out to be very practical for finding work. With her new training in hairdressing, P3 has also been applying to local funeral homes to be a mortician, although she similarly lacks the proper qualifications required as she has not been trained in embalming.

Given the lack of proper certification, P3 eventually stopped applying to hairdressing positions altogether. She has also been trying to get away from working in manufacturing because she sees it as unstable. Consequently she spends her time applying to customer service, retail and sales, administrative assistant, and shipping and receiving type positions. P3 searches for work online, in person, and through different networking opportunities. P3 had only secured a single interview prior to going on social assistance. Since being on OW, she’s completed a Co-op placement in her low-income housing building as the President of the internal Board. This opportunity actually led to some interviews for administrative assistant positions, although she was never able to successfully secure them.

A major setback for P3 has been her lack of post-secondary education. After she lost her job, P3 managed to complete the rest of her schooling and pass the GED. Yet for her, this has made little if any difference. In her view most employers are not concerned about base level education caring only about post-secondary degrees. Other setbacks she’s encountered include transportation difficulties as she also depends on the bus to get around. As a final point, P3 feels equally at a disadvantage when looking for part-time work because employers prefer to hire students.

It wasn’t until later in her road to reemployment, that P3 started accessing employment services because she was put right into the Second Career program. When P3 finally came to Lutherwood it was for their resume writing service and interview skills course. Taking this course wasn’t very effective for her, and she eventually dropped out. She felt intimidated being surrounded by younger generations in the classroom. In her view, classes should be divided according to age so older clients don’t feel so outdated. She eventually went to the Working Centre to get some help with her resume. She thought the counseling was the most beneficial service of all because her mental health improved so much, “Through OW, I guess my Worker could tell I was really stressed and she says ‘we have 5 free sessions of our counselling and it’s right down stairs’. I’m seeing someone there and she’s helped me out; she’s great!”

In P3’s opinion OW doesn’t do enough to help clients struggling financially. When she asks for money for clothing allowances, she needs a cash advance; and not the promise of a reimbursement because she’s only living off of $600 a month. It’s not realistic for her to buy interview clothes when all her money goes towards covering her living expenses. P3 would like to be doing some type of administrative or social work at a women’s shelter in the future. Having gone through everything she has, she would have preferred to get another manufacturing job over going through Second Career. She’s also affirmed that there needs to be more education program options offered.
2.05 Participant 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Job Search</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>General Labourer</td>
<td>Uses in-person applications/searches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Struggles**

No personal transportation, health problems

*Participant 4 (P4)* is a Canadian born manufacturing worker who’s worked on production lines, in the plastic industry as well as in food processing plants. P4 is 2 credits shy of receiving his high school diploma and has no other educational certifications.

The employer P4 worked for last didn’t give any severance packages when they closed their doors. In order to survive without his income, he relied on the help of temporary staffing agencies. P4 feels extremely stigmatized and embarrassed about being an OW client, and as a result refuses to seek assistance from friends who could potentially help him out. He hopes to get off of OW as soon as possible.

P4 applies to general labourer positions in manufacturing because it matches his experience. Unable to secure even an interview, P4’s resorted to working at various temp agencies, although now he’s even frustrated with them and refuses to use their services. For this reason, P4 has decided he now wants to get retrained in a new field and start a new career. Although he hasn’t enrolled in any specific programs, he’s looking into the different career options that are available to him with his case worker. If this retraining doesn’t work out, P4 plans to continue looking for unskilled general labour jobs. P4 is volunteering at the YMCA because it entitles him to a free bus pass and a discounted gym membership. As a result of his poor computer skills, P4 doesn’t look for work online. As of recently he’s noticed employers are increasingly less receptive to the old approach of applying for a job in person. On top of all this, P4’s limited by where he can look for work because he relies on public transportation.

P4 feels his age and lack of high school education are some of the contributing factors that make him less easily employable. In his situation, not graduating wasn’t as a result of some learning difficulty but rather a matter of situational poverty. Wanting more food and a better life, P4 left school with a month to go and started working in manufacturing.

When P4 came onto OW, his first step was getting himself “cleaned-up” and fixing his teeth. This helped him with becoming more presentable to employers. Initially, P4 completed the finding work seminar. He then received help with writing his resume from the Working Centre. As of recently, he’s joined the program for older workers over 55. P4 is grateful for the help he’s received from OW and their staff. He attempted to access the Second Career program but didn’t qualify due to how many times he’d accessed EI in the last 5 years. Had this not been the case, nothing would have stopped him from enrolling.
P4 believes temp agencies are taking advantage of OW clients in desperation. Because most temp agencies control the entry-level manufacturing positions, people are left with no choice but to use their services. The problem though is that they don’t lead to full-time permanent work opportunities. “8 years with temp agencies in dead-end jobs, for minimum wage, junk jobs, poor working conditions and they don’t make an attempt to make you part of the team with a future here. No benefits and no security. You can be replaced with a single telephone call!” This is as much a problem with temp agencies as it is with management in the manufacturing industry. According to P4, they make workers disposable to keep unions out of their factories. Otherwise, P4 thought OW was much more helpful than EI. P4 is grateful for the “let’s get you fixed up and back out there” position of his OW Case Worker. He believes they should bridge the two types of assistance and make programs more available to workers in their early stages of unemployment.

2.06 Participant 5

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<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Job Search</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>Assembly, Operator, Tester, Welder, Shipper/Receiver</td>
<td>Uses online and in-person applications/searches, Networking</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Participant 5 (P5) is a Canadian born OW client with extensive experience in manufacturing. P5 has worked as an assembly worker, a press operator, milling machine operator, equipment tester, welder, packer and shipper and receiver. P5 is currently working towards completing the GED, as she left high school partway through grade 11 to begin working. P5’s spouse is also an OW client.

To survive without her former income, P5 worked part-time jobs, placements at various temp agencies, and also did some “under the table” work distributing flyers or cutting peoples grass. P5 has been applying to “everything and anything”, e.g. retail, service industry, food, manufacturing, and shipping and receiving. During her search, she managed to secure a few interviews for full-time work. She searches for work online and uses the services of temp agencies. P5 has also been helped by a staff member at the Multicultural centre who e-mails her job postings.

Not having a grade 12 has kept P5 from finding work. She knows of employers who would hire her tomorrow if she had the proper schooling. P5’s also been negatively impacted by her lack of complete medical benefits. P5 is currently awaiting some much needed medical treatment for a knee injury she sustained at one of her previous jobs. This injury limits her from doing work that requires standing for extended periods of time. Without comprehensive medical coverage, P5 can’t afford this treatment that would enable her to return to work. Her OW benefits don’t cover the full costs of the procedure and the special orthotics she requires for after care. But in order to get said treatment, she first needs to return to work; thus she finds herself at an impasse. Otherwise, P5’s struggled to deal with the bus routes. On multiple occasions P5 could have
returned to work but was forced to turn it down because there aren’t always viable transportation routes. For instance, if P5 had secured a job working the afternoon shift, she could get to work but would be left stranded for trying to get home.

P5 is content with the level of services available to her. Since being on OW, she has taken the 45+ program where she learned how to use a computer. It was by taking this program that P5 learned about all the OW programs and services. Thereafter, she took the Working for Work program at the Multicultural Centre where she learned how to market herself to employers. Other courses P5 has taken and thought were helpful include a resume building course at the ROWSS Employment & Income Support division/OW in Kitchener, Experience Matters (industrial) and service excellence. As P5 said herself “every course offered has been really helpful in my job search, and opened my eyes to other areas I ordinarily wouldn’t have thought of.” P5 considered Second Career program at one time but wasn’t very interested, preferring to instead focus on her job search. P5 wouldn’t have changed anything she’s done; she simply thinks there’s a lack of opportunity.

2.07 Participant 6

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<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Experience</th>
<th>Job Search</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Grade 12 University Diploma</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>General labourer.</td>
<td>Uses in-person and fax applications/searches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant 6 (P6) is Canadian born and has worked in manufacturing since he moved to Ontario from Newfoundland. P6 has mainly worked in food processing plants; however he also has some experience working in a foundry and for a pharmaceutical company. P6 has always worked as a general labourer in manufacturing. P6 has a grade 11 education from Newfoundland, which is equivalent to a high school diploma here in Ontario. In addition, P6 has obtained a diploma in tourism and hospitality from a university in St. Johns.

P6 received a $7600 severance package when he left one of his former employers due to grim circumstances. P6’s manager was murdered on the job. This event was so troubling for P6’s mental health that he was never able to return to work. In addition to his severance, P6 was dependent on the assistance of staffing agencies to give him some temporary work. Because P6 has no income, he’s currently living with a friend. P6 is also recovering from a long-term cocaine addiction. This cocaine addiction resulted in him losing a good paying job he had at a pharmaceutical manufacturer here in the region. In January of this year, he checked himself into a local rehabilitation program that he was connected with through St. Mary’s counseling. He’s been sober ever since.

P6 has been applying to general labourer positions in manufacturing in person and by fax. He’s been unable to secure an interview since being on Social Assistance. P6 doesn’t volunteer because he doesn’t believe it’ll help him gain employment.
P6 believes his lack of computer skills is his biggest setback. First of all, P6 doesn’t apply to jobs online as he isn’t comfortable doing something as basic as sending an e-mail. Secondly, his job search strategy seriously limits the scope of work available to him as he can only take on unskilled labourer positions that don’t involve working with computers. Furthermore, P6 is limited by the public transportation routes available to him and also has a criminal record. Thus even if he secures an interview, he needs to ensure they aren’t an employer doing criminal record checks.

P6 struggles with the volume of jobs that are going through temp agencies. Recently when looking for work, 200/236 jobs he saw were being offered through temp agencies. From his perspective, chances are none of those positions will lead to any form of steady employment so ultimately they aren’t worth applying to. P6 feels he is very limited in his job search.

It wasn’t until P6 was already on OW that he realized he needed a resume. When P6 originally started working in Ontario, he didn’t need a resume as he’d only be asked to fill out application forms. Since that time, things have changed considerably, and so, P6 started accessing Lutherwood’s resume writing service which he found very helpful. This is the only service P6 has used since he feels too old to go through the retraining options OW offers. He isn’t interested in upgrading his skills; he simply wants to go into a low skilled job until he retires.

P6 attempted to enroll himself into the Second Career program through Northern Lights but kept feeling like he was “getting the run around”. Staff would often give him conflicting information and no clear guidelines. Eventually he was directed to the E&IS office where he was moved around to 3 different employment counselors because of changes in the office. Ultimately, he felt the process was so unorganized that it wasn’t worth pursuing.

2.08 Participant 7

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<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Job Search</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>General Labourer, Assembly</td>
<td>Uses online (with help from family), and in-person applications/searches</td>
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</table>

Participant 7 (P7) is a Canadian born manufacturing worker who’s worked as a general labourer in various factories since he dropped out of school. P7 has an extremely low education level having only completed grade 8.

P7 received a severance package when his last employer closed. In his view, the severance package didn’t assist him whatsoever. P7 also accumulated a large debt during this period which ultimately forced him into bankruptcy. Combined, P7 was broke and unable to collect EI and other types of assistance until his severance package ran out.
When looking for work P7 focuses his search on the manufacturing industry. Prior to going on social assistance, he’d only secured a single interview at a food processing factory. P7 believes his poor interview skills may have contributed to him not getting that position. P7 doesn’t do any volunteer work because he thinks his current job search deserves his full attention. When P7 loses a job, he’ll often take a 1-2 week vacation before he recommences his search. P7’s education is not only incomplete but also very outdated. To be more competitive with younger workers, P7 acknowledges he should complete his diploma and develop some type of computer skills. Besides this, his experience in assembly doesn’t offer him very many transferable skills to sell himself on. He feels too old to return to school and is simply waiting for an opportunity to come his way.

Only once he was on OW did P7 start accessing the programs available at Lutherwood. He did this solely because it’s a requirement to keep collecting his OW income. Thus far, P7 has completed the planning for employment, creating opportunities, and Experience Matters (industrial). He’s also gotten some assistance with re-writing his resume. He thought the courses were all well structured, but didn’t do much in terms helping him find work. In essence, P7 feels every moment he spends in a program is wasted time he could have spent looking for work. P7 hasn’t sought help to learn computer skills simply because he isn’t interested in learning it.

There is an arrangement locally that OW clients can remain in receipt of OW while in the Second Career funded training program. P7 also isn’t interested in Second Career for two reasons; he feels too old and doesn’t think he can keep up with his bills while on it. P7 admitted to not having any sort of concrete knowledge about the program. Unless at the end of the program he was guaranteed employment, he would never seriously consider enrolling. If P7 was to go through Second Career, he’d like to be trained in welding.

2.09 Participant 8

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<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>Shipping &amp; Receiving</td>
<td>Has a good track-record of getting interviews. Has problems accepting jobs when he finds out the wage or the distance needed to commute.</td>
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Personal Struggles

Criminal record, young parent,

Participant 8 (P8) is a Canadian born manufacturing worker who specializes in driving forklifts. The majority of his experience has been in shipping and receiving departments, but he’s also worked as a packer in a meat processing plant. P8 has a grade 11 for education; he was forced to leave high school before his graduation as a result of having a child. P8 is not an OW client.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Although P8 is not an OW client, he nonetheless has long-term manufacturing experience and is unemployed. His interview was included in the study as a point of reference to compare with the other participants.
P8 has never received a severance package from an employer. In order to supplement his former income, P8 has been working part-time (12-20 hours per week) for a family member installing hardwood flooring. While this type of income helps, it’s seasonal in nature so he can’t depend on it for a steady income. He’s also resorted to selling a washer and dryer he owns and is moving into a smaller apartment.

P8 is confident his lack of a high school diploma has contributed to his inability to find ‘good’ work. Likewise, he has poor computer skills so he can’t apply to positions that involve working in an office. The other factor P8 believes has affected him has been his criminal record.

P8 applies to positions that match his experience in shipping and receiving. P8 has obtained multiple interviews, and even been offered positions, although he’s had to turn them all down for a variety of reasons. Some were only offering minimum wage and required commuting an hour to get there. Others required criminal record checks or weren’t offering permanent work. P8 doesn’t currently volunteer anywhere.

When P8 was laid-off by his previous employer, he was given the opportunity to take an advanced food handling course. He’s added it to his resume but hasn’t found that it’s made a bit of difference. Since being unemployed, P8 has used Lutherwood’s resume writing service, which he found extremely insightful. He had originally started coming to the facility in order to use the job bank and computer resources available. In addition, P8’s currently using the job consultant who sends him job postings.

P8 hadn’t heard about the Second Career program at the time of the interview. Likewise, since he isn’t an OW client he isn’t eligible for most of the other retraining or upgrading courses available. He may be eligible for some EO skills upgrading type programs, although he isn’t aware of their services so he hasn’t been looking. When reflecting on his past decisions, P8 wishes he would have gotten his grade 12. He’s now stuck in a position where can’t transition into other fields because he has no relevant experience or education. He also thinks the job market has evolved considerably in the last 5 years. Never before has he found so many people looking for so few jobs.

2.10 Participant 9

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<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Job Search</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Secondary Incomplete</td>
<td>Canadian Born</td>
<td>General Labourer, Team Leader, Sorter, assembly line worker</td>
<td>Uses online and in-person applications/searches</td>
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Participant 9 (P9) is a manufacturing worker who’s lived in the Waterloo Region all her life. In the manufacturing industry she’s worked as a general labourer, team leader, part sorter, assembler and line worker. P9 is 2 credits shy of completing her grade 12. P9 has also received her Smart Serve, Service Excellence and Food Safe certification.
P9 didn’t receive a severance package. P9 was forced to sell her vehicle and relies on the income she receives through social assistance. 11 years ago P9 had Family and Children’s Services (F&CS) get involved in her life to take care of her children as a result of an abusive ex-husband. She currently devotes a lot of her time and energy fighting in court to get one of her daughters back from F&CS.

Since being unemployed, P9 has applied to retail positions, restaurants (both front and back of house), as well as local manufacturing facilities. P9 is apprehensive about how much she applies to manufacturing because most jobs appear to be temporary. P9 hasn’t obtained a single interview in her job search. She used to only apply in person taking the “old school approach”, but has since learned about the hidden online job market. She finds applying online is more tedious and frustrating because it’s less direct and involves more administrative work. Through the Experience Matters program, P9 has been doing a placement at a local thrift store to gain some experience working in a retail environment.

There’s a multitude of setbacks that have impacted P9’s job search. P9 was forced to end her employment at a local office equipment manufacturer due to a failure by management to address a situation of sexual harassment. Thus her most recent job loss was completely out of her control. Next, she has gone through various stages of depression as a result of her financial constraints and boredom without work. She’s contemplated returning to school, yet with the current legal proceedings she’s going through its unrealistic. Otherwise, P9 has been impacted by the resources she has at her disposal. First, she only relies on public transportation to get around and secondly, she doesn’t have a computer with internet at home so she’s forced to rely on the resources available through the community agencies—which aren’t always as readily available as she’d like them to be. For instance she can’t access the computers after hours or on weekends which suits her better. Thus she wishes there was a little more flexibility with their hours of operation.

P9 took the Planning for Employment course offered at E&IS/OW Kitchener when she started collecting social assistance. In her view, this course was over simplistic and should also include aspects on resume writing. This way you don’t waste any time applying to jobs with a bad resume. She’s also completed the Experience Matters (food and retail) course where she obtained her Smart Serve certification. Because P9 struggles with depression, she tried taking advantage of the counseling services offered at KW counseling, though for her it wasn’t very effective. First and foremost, P9 has a fear of being judged and thought she was being judged when telling her story. Secondly, she was often given different counselors so she didn’t feel as if she made a connection with anyone to more easily work on these issues.

P9 has heard about the Second Career program but never delved any deeper into it. She did not believe she could cover her portion of the tuition, and furthermore she was getting a lot of conflicting information about what is and is not covered. She felt that Second Career was presented to her as being more a headache and paper work than something productive that could help her find employment. P9 also thinks OW could use some more self-esteem programs for clients.
2.11 Participant 10

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<tr>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Machine Operator, Tester</td>
<td>Uses online, fax, and in-person applications/searches along with networking,</td>
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**Personal Struggles**

No personal transportation, recent surgeries, spouse also out of work,

*Participant 10* (P10) is Canadian born and started working in manufacturing right out of high school. P10 worked for an auto parts manufacturer for 20 years prior to being laid-off. Since then, P10 has only been able to secure ‘temp’ work in the region. P10 possess a high school diploma.

P10 was given a substantial severance package from her former employer that amounted to approximately a year’s wages. Initially, P10 only had to rely on these funds and her husband’s salary to get by. Eventually these funds diminished and her husband also lost his job, so she was forced to start working for various temp agencies. Part of P10’s problem was that her severance package enabled her to take a year off before returning to work, so by the time she had started looking, she had already missed out on a year’s worth of job searching. Another setback P10 encountered was the 2 surgeries she’s recently gone through. From February 2012 to May 2012 P10 she couldn’t realistically look for work knowing she had these medical procedures coming up. Likewise, she’s limited by the public transportation available to her.

Prior to being on OW, P10 only applied to positions in person or through fax. Since then, she’s begun applying both in person and online as she can now use computers. P10 would focus her search on full-time, then part-time, and then temporary work. In her view, there aren’t many full-time permanent manufacturing opportunities in the KW region. P10 hasn’t secured an interview since being unemployed. P10’s also started networking since being on OW. She meets with a networking group once a week at the Kitchener E&IS office, although she finds the discussion often ends up off topic and into people’s personal lives.

P10 only started using the services that are offered at the different service providers once she got on OW. She began with taking the Toward Employment course. Since then, she’s completed the Experience Matters (Office) program where she developed her customer service and computer skills. All in all, P10 thought these were informative but didn’t do much for her in terms of finding work. After the completion of the experience matters office course, P9 began applying to office administrator type positions. She also completed a volunteer placement at a day care centre doing administrative work as part of the Experience Matters program.

P10’s lack of a post-secondary diploma has negatively impacted her job search. She wasn’t able to gain employment at her placement upon its completion because they required that she possess a diploma. This coupled with the fact that all her experience is in manufacturing has made for a difficult transition into office work.
P10 considered the Second Career program but decided against it because she’s not interested in doing that much schooling. In her position this may be as a result of her success-or lack thereof-with Experience Matters. Experience Matters is a 6 month course during which you have to put your job search on hold. P10 completed the course a year and a half ago and has yet to get an interview doing administrative work. Hence her line of thought is the following; why invest two years into retraining when the six months I’ve already invested hasn’t gotten me anywhere. Similarly, there’s no job guarantee with Second Career so you’re essentially taking a leap of faith when you enroll.

P10 regrets not having gone back to school when she lost her job in 2007. She feels extremely outdated going through the application process because she’s grown so accustomed to the old “walk across the street and find work” type of job market.
Part 3

3.00 Emerging Themes

The following section details some of the emerging themes that arose throughout the interviews. The trends have been organized according to the initial learning objectives that the Workforce Planning Board set out to investigate. The Part 1 and Part 2 of this analysis details the critical intervention points identified from the client’s perspective. Part 3 uses this knowledge as a reference point to offer guidance to future Ontario Works clients when they encounter comparable setbacks during their job search. Finally, Part 4 attempts to offer some reinforced insight into the chain of events that can lead someone to start accessing Social Assistance. A shorter summary of these trends has also been included as an appendix at the end of the report.

3.01 Programs and Services

The programs and services accessed by clients varied based on several factors. First, it depended on their stage of employment readiness, i.e., planning for employment, looking for employment, moving to employment, or addressing the barriers they have to employment. Secondly, it was greatly impacted by their willingness and ability to learn and try new things. Lastly, a client’s age, education level, and prior work experience also played a pivotal role in determining where they sought help. The resume writing service was the most commonly accessed program of all, having been used by all participants alike. This is most likely due to the fact that it’s the first place clients look when re-evaluating their failed job search, as well as it’s the most basic service offered. It was universally agreed upon that this is an invaluable service whether it’s being taken directly at the Employment and Income Services office, or another community agency such as Lutherwood or the Multicultural Centre.

Another course that was commonly used among participants was the Toward Employment program. This course is designed to help clients learn job search strategies, self-marketing and interview skills. Because the job search process has evolved, most clients are finding they need to reassess how they present themselves as they’ve fallen behind the curve. Participants agreed this was a useful program because it lays a strong foundation to build off of when learning about the new job market.

3.02 Applying for Work

It also appears most of the participants feel they are having better success applying online vs. in person. More and more jobs are being posted through the online medium because it’s a quick and inexpensive way to find future employees. Bearing this in mind, it’s not surprising that participants have found employers are less receptive to receiving applications in person. The commonly employed “early bird gets the worm” approach is now outdated and for the most part ineffective. Any successful job search strategy will be predicated on searching for work online, as that’s where the opportunities lie. A failure to do so will result in lost opportunities which subsequently may result in a longer period of unemployment. Not looking for work online is
generally a symptom of the bigger problem of not having basic computer skills or access. Hence a successful job search strategy will involve having basic computer skills.

3.03 Transportation

It was unanimous among participants that the public transportation in the region is inadequate. Because manufacturing workers tend to be limited to applying to low skilled jobs, they often need to compensate by broadening their search radius to other cities. Especially if they have been unemployed for a long period of time and aren’t having success close to home. But this equally puts clients at the mercy of the transit schedule. And as it currently stands most transit routes aren’t viable for someone looking to commute from KW to Cambridge or vice versa. Simply getting from one city to another can have commute times upward of an hour; never mind actually getting to the final destination within that city. If an employer has an early start time such as 7 a.m., someone relying on public transportation cannot expect to get to where they need to go on time. E.g., according to P5, it poses a great challenge to get home from work via public transportation if you’re working an afternoon shift that ends past 11 p.m. This coupled with the fact that the bus isn’t always reliable, e.g., during the winter, if a bus is cancelled, or if there’s a delay, can make for an extremely difficult if not impossible commute. And given that most OW clients rely on public transportation due to their poor financial condition, it is posing a major setback in their job search.

Similarly, there aren’t any bus routes that connect the Waterloo Region to Guelph. This is a huge issue for many OW clients. Guelph has a strong manufacturing community that currently isn’t being tapped into by anyone who relies on public transportation. If both regions could connect and develop a transit system along the lines of the iXpress, it would surely be mutually beneficial.

3.04 Expectations

Most participants agreed that the services being offered are effective, but they didn’t share the same consensus when discussing what needs to be done differently. On the whole, participants did not think there were any major problems in the range of services available. This is encouraging because it means that OW is largely meeting client expectations when considering the sample.

It appears most participants haven’t associated their lack of success with OW specifically, instead holding the poor economy responsible. Inasmuch as the economy might be partly to blame, in some instances, these workers are also failing to recognize that their skill deficiencies have equally contributed to the overall problem. It’s concerning because they’re aware of their skill deficiencies, and yet still choose not to do something about it when help is made available to them. For example, if some participants have basic computer skills, they could look for job postings online and improve their chances of finding employment. Regardless though, some have not accessed any programs to help address this skill deficiency. In a situation such as this, clients are not willing to develop themselves as a worker to attain basic skills in technology which results in a less productive job search. This is problematic because even if they can secure
employment, they’ll still be at risk of having to re-rely on social assistance in the future. Until clients recognize the value in upgrading their skills, they’ll regrettably have a greater difficulty finding employment. Subsequently, they may also be more likely to rely on social assistance. Thus, it is important to connect these clients with appropriate training and emphasize to them that upgrading their skills is necessary and invaluable.

3.05 Accessing Training/Upgrading

Another apparent theme from the study is that OW clients aren’t accessing any employment programs or services prior to being on OW. Workers go through the early stages of unemployment navigating the job market on their own. This means clients may be using a poor resume, lack a particular qualification or are using an outdated application strategy until they get onto OW. These types of errors are easily avoidable and costly bearing in mind they have access to help through Employment Ontario (EO) when struggling in their job search. Workers need to start assessing their skills and experience earlier on in their job search so they aren’t making the same mistakes throughout their initial search. This may also make clients more apt to considering long term retraining options such as the Second Career program.

The study found clients aren’t interested in the more comprehensive skill upgrading options available. During the interviews an emphasis was placed on determining whether the participants had access to the Second Career program. If participants didn’t access these programs, the interviewer attempted to identify the obstacles that impeded them from accessing them. Ninety percent of participants haven’t used the Second Career program and only P3 successfully completed her retraining. It was determined there are three predominant reasons that the case studies suggest might impact why OW clients are not enrolling; participants had either, never heard of the program, weren’t interested in retraining, or didn’t think it was a viable option due to lack of information or misinformation. Participants who weren’t interested in retraining either felt they were too close to retirement to begin a new career or weren’t open-minded to going back to school in general. The difficult application process may also be partly to blame. Some participants had considered enrolling, but didn’t continue because the application process didn’t seem very straightforward. On the whole, it appears OW clients don’t fully understand how the Second Career program works. Some participants didn’t think the program would offer them the financial assistance they’d need for their subsistence due to lack of concrete knowledge about the programs inner working.

Participants expressed that they would be more likely to enroll in retraining programs if they included a job guarantee at the end. A key issue with the program from one client’s perspective is that they’re essentially taking a leap of faith when they enroll. Those who join will sacrifice the next 2 years of their life and job search to get retrained, but they may be equally unsuccessful in their new field once they complete their training. P3’s experience in Second Career is a typical example of this problem. She was put into a diploma program that she thought would offer her more opportunities, but as it turned out, her qualifications weren’t what employers were looking for. Clients struggling to make ends meet today aren’t going to be captivated by promises of success for tomorrow. Presenting a clearer road map of program and how re-training can take participants to re-employment would be beneficial to recipients of OW.
3.06 Pieces of Advice for Future Ontario Works Clients

This section aims at helping future Ontario Works clients entering the system for the first time become aware of potential setbacks they may encounter during their job search. For each point, a corresponding piece of advice has been offered from participants’ perspective to help them manage these issues.

- **Temporary staffing agencies are a great source of temporary employment or work experience during a transition.** While in some cases taking a temp position can lead to being hired on full-time, it appears to be less and less the case according to the participants of this study. Clients should refrain from expecting opportunities offered through temp agencies to necessarily lead to permanent employment. If hoping to find permanent work, only utilize their services while looking for other opportunities and for additional income. Never exclusively look for permanent work through temp agencies.

- **Low morale when time invested in retraining and skills upgrading didn’t produce results.** It can be difficult to stay motivated when looking for work, especially if you’ve invested your time and efforts into retraining and you still haven’t seen any results. It’s important not to associate this lack of success with the retraining specifically, and to persevere in your search. Even if a retraining program doesn’t directly lead to a job, it can often be a good stepping stone to other opportunities. You never know when retraining or upgraded skills may play in your favor when looking for work. Several participants suggested not to give up on OW programming just because one program hasn’t worked out. Continue to invest in yourself and work towards your future employment in whatever way possible.

- **The job market has evolved.** Employers are no longer recruiting their staff as they did in the past. The times when you could walk across the street without a resume and secure another job is now a thing of the past. Getting a job in manufacturing is now extremely competitive and requires a more thorough application process than ever before. In order to keep up with these changes, manufacturing workers should be aware of 3 things. Firstly, employers usually prefer receiving applications online vs. in person. This is simply due to the fact that nowadays most jobs are being posted online. Secondly, applying to manufacturing jobs also requires a strong cover letter and resume. Even ten years ago it was possible to secure a manufacturing job by simply filling out an application, but this is no longer the case. A strong resume and cover letter is the foundation to a strong application. Third, one must know how to self-market oneself. Given the competitive nature of the application process, the better you present yourself, the better chances you’ll have at landing an interview or a job. The best way to go about doing this is to assess both your skills and shortcomings, to better position yourself in your search.

- **Boredom during unemployment.** Being unemployed can be especially difficult because of the lack of structure that goes along with it. You fall out of a daily routine and can sometimes feel in a sort of ‘rut’ or depression. A good tool to counteract this boredom is
to volunteer somewhere in your community. Volunteering is not only a productive way to pass the time, but can also be good for your mental health. It can be an opportunity to learn new skills and network, all while giving back to the community. Volunteering can also be attractive to employers as it shows your initiative and sense of community.

Table 2: Multiple barriers affecting each participant

![Bar Chart]

3.07 Other factors

Another key goal of this study was to further our understanding of the chain of events that can lead someone to start accessing social assistance. There were 4 contributing factors that consistently arose during the interviews, (1) low or incomplete education, (2) teenage pregnancy, (3) criminal record, and (4) situational poverty. Several of these factors were interrelated inasmuch as one could cause the next.
The following charts outline the percentage of participants that had been affected by these sorts of factors.

**Affected by Teenage Pregnancy**
- Not affected: 3
- Affected: 7

**Affected by Situational Poverty**
- Not affected: 3
- Affected: 7

**Possess a Criminal Record**
- No Criminal Record: 3
- Criminal Record: 7

**Affected by Low or Incomplete Education**
- Not affected: 7
- Affected: 3
Part 4

4.00 Recommendations

The goal of this study was to determine what steps can be taken in the future to better address some of the issues identified by participants that affect displaced workers in the manufacturing industry. By resolving these issues, Ontario Works can further increase the effectiveness of their programming and services. Ultimately, this could help future Ontario Works clients shorten their transition time to meaningful employment. Three main recommendations have been identified by clients.

1. The Region of Waterloo invest more resources into the public transportation system. Generally, OW clients don’t own a vehicle because it’s a luxury they can’t afford. As a result, they need to rely on the bus to get everywhere, including their job. Having trouble accessing transportation makes the average OW client’s job search all the more difficult. Participants felt that the current transit available is limiting because of 3 factors:
   a. Intercity travel needs to be developed; this means not only improving transit within the Region of Waterloo but also developing plans to create new transit routes connecting the Region to Guelph.
   b. Transit times need to be extended in both the morning and evening. Not only will this allow commuters with early start times to get to work on time, but it will also enable those working afternoons’ to use public transportation to get home.
   c. OW should have access to cheap bus passes so taking the bus is more economical. Currently, there are programs that OW clients can enroll in and receive a free bus pass, e.g., through the volunteer placement. If this type of assistance was extended to other programs, it would be an alternative option to consider looking into further.

2. Social assistance needs to re-evaluate how comprehensive training programs are being offered to clients. E.g. it was evident most clients weren’t aware that programs such as Second Career existed. We can deduce from this that there’s a need for greater program awareness. Clients need to be encouraged to seek out information from program coordinators. This will help spread word about retraining options by encouraging clients to get more information from the proper source.

   In the case of EO’s Second Career, clients who had actually heard about the program had received a lot of misinformation about it, e.g., didn’t think they’d qualify due to education, didn’t think there was financial assistance offered, etc. If a client tried enrolling but didn’t succeed, they may, incorrectly, tell others in comparable situations to theirs that they wouldn’t qualify, when in reality that might not be the case. It needs to be better emphasized that enrolling in Second Career isn’t the same for everyone. The application process might also be partly to blame for the misinformation being spread as it is seen as very rigorous. Although it’s understandable why it’s required, it’s important to note that it does deter some from enrolling. It might be worth considering other ways to try and make the process less intimidating.

   Not only is greater advertisement needed for the Second Career program, but also for all EO programs and services in general. It was unanimous that clients aren’t accessing EO
employment services in the early stages of their unemployment. This is problematic because these programs can help an unemployed worker find work before they end up needing to depend on social assistance. These unemployed manufacturing workers aren’t getting the help they need until they get onto OW. This means they may be using their outdated or failed job search strategy for some time and missing out on opportunities. Clients may be having some trouble distinguishing EO employment assistance from OW social assistance. Thus, if EO can create more awareness about their services, people will seek help earlier on in their job search, and have better chances of securing employment.

It’s worth noting that most of the participants aren’t consistently including a cover letter with their resume like they were instructed. In the future, it would be beneficial to further stress the importance of including both a cover letter and resume when applying to a job. Considering some of these clients haven’t even secured an interview thus far, addressing these sorts of problems may be a good starting point to try and tip the scale in their favor. OW clients may be struggling with this portion of the application process because they lack the writing skills and experience to do so on their own. Some of these clients have low education levels and even lower experience applying to jobs in the “new” job market. If the OW office compiled a comprehensive resource with readily available, semi-tailored cover letters for a variety of different jobs, clients may be less intimidated and more apt to submit a cover letter with their application. Another option would be to offer a specific course teaching the ‘art of the cover letter’.

3. Participants had mixed reactions about using counseling services. On one hand we can see that P3 accessed these services to help her cope with her stress, and found it very therapeutic; on the other hand P9 didn’t have the same positive experience. It’s important to point out that P9 didn’t have a positive experience with counseling services due to her own fear of being judged. Given that other clients may share P9’s difficulty of sharing their feelings, it may be beneficial for the region to consider offering an additional counseling phone service. This would offer more timid clients a less stressful avenue to express their feelings and seek out help.
Appendix 1- Summary of Major Trends Identified from Case Study Interviews

- The resume writing service was the most commonly accessed program of all. Clients agreed that this is an invaluable service wherever it’s being taken.
- Participants enjoy the Toward Employment because teaches the basics of self-marketing.
- Participants are having better luck looking for work online vs. in person.
- Public Transportation in the region is inadequate.
- Clients aren’t always fully taking responsibility for their failed job search. Not all clients are seeing the value in skills upgrading and retraining.
- Participants didn’t access employment programs and services prior to coming onto OW.
- The study found clients aren’t interested in the more comprehensive skill upgrading options available.
  - Participants want a job guarantee if they’re going to enroll in the more comprehensive retraining programs.
## Appendix 2-Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>OW</td>
<td>Ontario Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Employment Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPB</td>
<td>Workforce Planning Board (Waterloo Wellington Dufferin)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3- Marketing Material

Have Manufacturing Experience & Struggling to Find Work?
Participate in a Case Study and Discuss the Troubles You’ve Encountered

The Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin is looking for people to join in a short case study about manufacturing workers who are seeking re-employment.
The study will include a short phone call and a one hour in-person meeting at a location near you.
The interview process is completely private, voluntary, and will not be discussed with your case worker.
Why join?
Share your experiences privately and help someone else in the community.

WHO: Ontario Works clients, with more than 2 years manufacturing experience (all industries) that are seeking work, and live within the region of Waterloo.

Interested in talking about the problems you’ve faced? Contact Sean today at 519.622.7122 or communication@workforceplanningboard.com to share your feedback.
Participants who complete the study will receive a FREE $50 Zehrs Grocery Gift Card.

For more information, please contact Sean
Telephone: 519.622.7122 or
Email: communication@workforceplanningboard.com

Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin
Region of Waterloo
Appendix 4 – Survey Questions
Case Study Interview

Questions

Background
1. What education or training level have you completed? (High school, GED, Post-secondary, diploma, etc.)
2. Are you a Canadian born citizen? If not, how recently did you immigrate here?
3. Is English your first language?
4. Do you struggle with your reading, writing, or basic math skills? [If yes probe into further during personal development section]

Personal Circumstance
1. What was your occupation(s) as a manufacturing worker?
2. What was your manufacturing salary?
3. Did you receive a severance package when you were laid off?
   a. If yes, what was the package?
   b. Did receiving a severance package make you feel less urgency to find other employment?
4. Have you had to rely on financial support from friends, family, or had to resort to selling expensive valuables?
   a. If not, how did you compensate for your lost wages prior to going on to Social Assistance?
5. What, if any, major set-backs have you experienced from your initial layoff until now? (potential responses may include marriage breakdown, depression or other health issues, bankruptcy e.g.)

Job Search
5. What types of jobs have you applied to since being unemployed? (i.e. what industries & types of positions)
6. Prior to going onto social assistance did you manage to get any interviews or actual work since your initial layoff?
   a. If yes, please tell me about this? (full time, temp work, part-time work, or “under the table” work?)
7. Have you done any volunteer work over the course of your job search or completed any placements at any community agencies or local businesses?
8. What marketable skills do you think you possess?
   a. Are there a specific skills or qualifications you don’t possess that you believe put you at a disadvantage when looking for work?
9. Did you change your job search strategy during the course of your search for work? (i.e. is what did more recently different than when you first begun your search?)
Personal Development

10. Please tell me about how and where you’ve been looking for employment (search medium used to find jobs, locations, networking, etc.)
   a. Did you start looking right away? If not, why not and when did you reenter the labor force?

11. Did you access any programs or services to help you find employment? (e.g. adjustment centre, employment services, etc.)

12. If you did, at what point after your layoff? (e.g. was that immediately, during/after severance period, once on EI, etc.)

13. If not, why not? (e.g. didn’t need them, didn’t know about them)

14. If yes which service provider(s) did you go to and what did they have to offer to you? (e.g. upgrading, language, LEAP, resume writing, career counseling)

15. Did you take advantage of any retraining or skill upgrading opportunities available to you from either your employer or another program such as second career, self employment etc? If yes please describe them.
   a. If not, what obstacles or personal circumstances stopped you from accessing them?
   b. What do you think has stopped you from finding a job in your new field?

Closing Questions

6. Has being on social assistance unmotivated you from continuing to seek employment or upgrading?

7. What kind of work would you like to be doing now?

8. Knowing what you know now would you have done anything differently upon first becoming unemployed?

9. Are there any other aspects of your unemployment journey we failed to touch on, and that you would like to share?
To: Chair Sean Strickland, and Members of Community Services Committee
From: David Dirks, Director, Employment and Income Support
Copies: Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders, Commissioner, Social Services
File No.: S09-80
Subject: ONTARIO WORKS CASELOAD: APRIL 2013

This memorandum is provided as information for members of Council. Employment & Income Support, Social Services with Finance monitors the Ontario Works (OW) caseload on a monthly basis. Below is a chart summarizing the caseload at the end of April 2013 with comparisons to the months of March 2013 and April 2012 as well as September 2008.

Very briefly,

- The OW caseload at April 2013 was: 8,637
- The OW caseload at March 2013 was: 8,575
- The increase from March 2013 was: 62 (+0.7%)
- The decrease from April 2012 was: 128 (-1.5%)
- The increase from September 2008 was: 2,345 (+37%)

- Waterloo Region unemployment rate for April 2013 was: 7.1%
- Waterloo Region unemployment rate for April 2012 was: 6.6%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April 2013</th>
<th>March 2013</th>
<th>April 2012</th>
<th>% Change March to April</th>
<th>% Change Year to Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OW Caseload</td>
<td>8,637</td>
<td>8,575</td>
<td>8,765</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>(1.5%)</td>
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</table>

Ontario Works Caseload and Unemployment Rate

April 2013
Ontario Works Caseload
Unemployment Rates – Seasonally Adjusted*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>April 2013</th>
<th>March 2013</th>
<th>April 2012</th>
<th>% Change March to April</th>
<th>% Change Year to Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterloo Region</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>(1.4%)</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As revised by Statistics Canada

The April caseload continues to stay around the first quarter average of 8,600 cases. The activity at intake or first point of contact increased from the month of March (+16%) and was higher than April 2012 (+21%). The caseload remains 37% higher than at the outset of the 2008 recession.

The provision of social assistance supports the Region’s 2011-2014 Corporate Strategic Focus Area 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities; (to) foster healthy, safe, inclusive and caring communities.

If you have any questions or comments or for further information, please contact David Dirks, Director, Employment and Income Support at 519-883-2179 or ddirks@regionofwaterloo.ca
TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: 28 May 2012 FILE CODE: P20-80

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY GARDENING STORYTELLING PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION:
For information only

SUMMARY:
The _Community Gardening Storytelling Project_ provides a vivid picture of how community gardening has become a valuable health promoting and community building activity that, as one gardener explained, “is more than a passing fancy”. Community gardening is establishing itself as an inexpensive and effective way to reach a number of public health goals and support several Regional initiatives. Community gardens are a valuable tool in creating high quality urban and rural gathering spaces and supporting people’s efforts to stay healthy.

REPORT:
Since 2005, the number of community gardens in Waterloo Region has increased 70%, to 53, and the number of plots has increased 77%, to almost 1,200. This growth is due to the combined efforts of many community partners, local municipal governments and the Region of Waterloo.

Region of Waterloo Public Health (RWPH) has provided staff support to community gardens since 1999. A considerable amount of research has been done on the benefits of community gardens during the past decade. RWPH felt it was important to add to this literature by asking about the benefits of community gardening specific to Waterloo Region. In the _Community Gardening Storytelling Project_, eighty four gardeners participated in unstructured ethnographic interviews through which the meaning of gardening in their lives emerged from the stories they told. An ethnographic interview approach differs from more traditional questionnaires which ask a set number of questions in order to be able to quantify and generalize about outcomes. The strength of an ethnographic approach is that it provides a more in depth understanding of people’s experiences and behaviours. However, this approach does not allow us to quantify, for example, the number of gardeners who experience a certain health benefit. The stories revealed eight main reasons for gardening which were grouped into three themes. Nine stories were highlighted and written up as vignettes and three videos were produced – one for each theme.

The first theme to emerge was health. For some people, gardening helped to address mental stress. Stories included insightful anecdotes about mental health which included the role of gardening in abating current stress and also in healing past trauma or anxiety. Health benefits also included physical activity and increased consumption of healthy food due to ease of availability. Stories included children and adults eating more produce and eating more or different parts of the plant. While many gardeners commented on the financial benefit of growing vegetables and fruits, some gardened specifically in order to save money on food. Community gardens help Public Health reach its mandate of working with community partners to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and good mental health. The following quotes from gardeners are a few of many which illustrate the theme of health.

> I can see and I can feel the energy just kind of calm down. It just settles and everybody
just becomes more, I feel, more expressive; like they have more affect; they smile more; their shoulders drop; just a lot of physical changes I can see in everyone when they get out here. And we don't talk a lot about smelling the fresh air and feeling the breeze, but I think that all of that is so very impactful. And it is nice because it resonates through the day - so a lot of them will feel better through the day. And some of them have an evening walk this evening and when we see them you can tell they have the glow; this after-glow, the gardening after-glow.”

“I’m supposed to be eating a healthy diet because of my conditions. I get a little bit here and there. Fresh beans, zucchinis, tomatoes, and you should see my onions! I’ve enjoyed it because I’ve been eating it every day I’ve had it. It puts a smile on my face and makes my body feel happy. You can’t get better than that.”

“Yes it helps us save a lot [of money]. During the summer I do not buy any vegetables. Yes, only in the winter time I buy vegetables.”

The second theme was inclusion. The Community Garden Storytelling Project suggests Community gardens lend themselves to the inclusion of people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, ages, income levels, and needs. The theme of inclusion emerged from participant’s comments about community building, involving children, and preserving culture. Community building happens when people connect over a common activity and build a personal social network. It happens when people organize themselves and work together to create and maintain a garden. It also happens when attitudes and prejudices are challenged and communities experience greater cohesion. Stories from gardeners illustrate these community building activities. Gardeners mentioned the importance of involving children as a way to teach them skills, spend time with them, and have them appreciate food. Lastly, some gardeners mentioned that community garden plots contributed to preserving culture, by maintaining the traditional foods, skills, and language that linked them with their birth country or that of their parents. Community garden supports the Region’s Diversity and Inclusion strategy – which aims to “create inclusive programs and services that meet the needs of our growing and changing community”. They are environments where people’s skills are valued and shared – in spite of differences. The following quotes from gardeners are a few of many which illustrate the theme of inclusion.

“It’s beyond growing vegetables; it’s well beyond that. Truth be told, we have had a great blend from the beginning in terms of cross-generational participants; socio-economically, we have a blend of people; ethnically, we have a blend of people; it’s a pretty amazing sort of hodgepodge. It seems to work because of our one central love; which is the garden itself. And it’s a great sharing environment.”

“…and kids are way more into eating stuff. I remember my daughter would see peas and pick them right off and eat them. When you are introduced to food in its natural state you appreciate it and are much more open to eating different things. That was when she was little but I think that applies to all children. Kids love to run through and eat the raspberries off the bushes and they’ll eat more fresh things when they’re there, especially when they grow it.

“Gardening has made me more aware of my heritage and my history. My grandfather was a farmer and my grandmother had a massive garden and it was how my mom grew up gardening and it’s something that is passed on. As prairie farmers, the more time you spend with the earth, the more you understand how they see things. It shapes their knowledge of their spirituality and their identity as farmers and people of the land. In the prairies you’re always aware of the land because you always see it, there’s nothing in the
way to lose track of where you are. That’s something that stuck in my head, the history.”

The third theme was learning. Community gardeners may start by learning how to grow a few vegetables but this quickly spreads to a curiosity about the cultivation of other vegetables or fruits, how to prepare or preserve the fresh fruits and vegetables, and numerous other environmental issues. Knowledge leads to greater understanding but also to more questions; consequently it tended to raise both respect for farmers and concern about the environment and issues in the food system. Participants often spoke passionately about the greater sense of control and confidence that gardening had brought them. They expressed excitement and pride about the rewards of their labour and learning. The learning which happens at community gardens supports one goal of the Waterloo Region Food system Roundtable – which is to work towards giving people greater knowledge about, engagement in, and control over the food in our communities. A recent PhD dissertation makes the link between increased engagement in the food system and greater likelihood of eating more nutritious foods. (Desjardins, 2010) The following quotes from gardeners are a few of many which illustrate the theme of learning.

“Yeah – a lot of things just kind of motivated me. I wanted to see how much I can actually grow for myself and I wanted to learn how to harvest the seeds – I save seeds now – and I wanted to learn how to store the stuff in the winter. And I wanted to basically be self-sustainable – for myself.”

“I do think we should have more vegetable gardens. We have to start being more self reliant. I don’t think people understand. We go to the grocery store thinking there is an endless supply of food, but the way food is right now it’s a little bit dangerous. All of these monocultures …people don’t understand the risks of what we’re doing.”

Gardeners spoke about the importance of support for garden infrastructure, leadership gardener cooperation. They also spoke about strategies that would foster the expansion and continued success of community gardens – such as an inventory of potential sites that could be used for community gardens, land being set aside for community gardens in multi-unit dwelling developments, more start up funds for community gardens, and more staff support.

This is an exciting time for community gardens in Waterloo Region. The demand for and interest in community garden plots is high – evidenced by many gardens with waiting lists. Building on current policies and practices that encourage and advocate for community gardens would allow more residents of Waterloo Region to experience the benefits of inclusion, learning, and health.

**RELEVANT PUBLIC HEALTH STANDARDS:**

**Chronic Disease Prevention Standard**

**Requirement 1:**
The board of health shall conduct epidemiological analysis of surveillance data, including monitoring of trends over time, emerging trends, and priority populations, in the areas of:
• Healthy eating;
• Physical activity;

**Requirement 7:** The board of health shall increase the capacity of community partners to coordinate and develop regional/local programs and services related to:
• Healthy eating;
• Physical activity;
CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

**Environmental Sustainability** – esp. 1.1 Integrate environmental considerations into the Region’s decision making, and 1.5 Restore and preserve green space, agricultural land and sensitive environmental areas.

**Growth Management and Prosperity** – esp. 2.1 Encourage compact, livable urban and rural settlement form, and 2.3 Support a diverse, innovative and globally competitive economy.

**Healthy and Inclusive Communities** – esp. 4.2 Foster healthy living through information, education, policy development and health promotion.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:
NIL

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:
NIL

ATTACHMENTS
None

PREPARED BY: Judy Maan Miedema, Public Health Planner

APPROVED BY: Dr. Liana Nolan, Commissioner
TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: May 28, 2013

FILE CODE: P10-80

SUBJECT: 2012 FOOD SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

RECOMMENDATION:
For information

SUMMARY:
The goal of the Food Safety program is to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness in the residents of Waterloo Region. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) outlines activities for this program in the Ontario Public Health Standards Food Safety Protocol. In 2012, Region of Waterloo Public Health applied a more stringent approach in the way that inspection completion rates are calculated and reported so that they reflect the scheduled expectations as outlined in the Food Safety Protocol. In 2012, the Health Protection & Investigation Division achieved the highest inspection completion rate for high, medium and low-risk food premises on record and conducted more food premises inspections and special event inspections than in any other year. Public Health continues to use a balanced education and enforcement approach with food premises operators to raise awareness of food safety and ensure food premises meet required food safety and sanitary standards in their establishments.

REPORT:

Routine Inspections
Public Health Inspectors routinely inspect food premises to ensure compliance with Ontario Food Premises Regulation 562/90 through education and enforcement activities. A risk assessment is conducted every year on each food premises to determine its risk category: high, medium, or low risk. The MOHLTC mandates how frequently each risk category is to be inspected:

- high risk premises (e.g., full service restaurants) inspected at least three times per year,
- medium risk premises (e.g., fast food facilities) inspected at least twice per year, and
- low risk premises (e.g., convenience stores) inspected at least once per year.

In 2012, there were a total of 5,088 inspections and 623 re-inspections of food premises in Waterloo Region. The total number of inspections conducted has steadily increased in recent years (see Appendix A, Figure 1). More inspections were conducted in 2012 than in any other year. The inspection completion rate measures the number of actual inspections conducted in the expected time frame compared to the number of required inspections as determined through the risk assessment. In the Accountability Agreement with the MOHLTC, Public Health has agreed to inspect 100% of high risk food premises in our region once every four months. The completion rate for high-risk premises was 99.7% (an increase from 82% in 2011); note that this was rounded up to 100% completion by the MOHLTC. In 2012, 99.8% of medium risk premises were inspected once every six months (an increase from 84% in 2011). Low risk premises had a completion rate of 93% (an increase from 84% in 2011).
Compliance and Enforcement

Food premises compliance with the Ontario Food Premises Regulation 562/90 is measured by the number of critical and non-critical infractions noted by Public Health Inspectors during routine inspections. Critical infractions are violations that can lead to foodborne illness if not corrected. Non-critical infractions are mainly those that affect the structure and sanitation of a food premises. **In 2012, there were 2,734 critical infractions and 6,366 non-critical infractions in food premises in Waterloo Region.** These numbers were lower than reported infractions from 2011, which is a positive compliance trend for the food safety program. The most common critical infraction in 2012 was *failure to protect food from potential contamination and adulteration*, which can mean that food is not properly stored or covered.

When a food premises continues to fail to comply, enforcement actions may be taken. These actions may include issuing tickets (Provincial Offences Notice), summons, or a closure order. In 2012, 23 tickets and one summons (3 counts in total) were issued to 18 separate food premises in the Region. The most common infraction that led to a charge was *failure to maintain hazardous foods at internal temperature between 5°C and 60°C* (see Appendix A, Table 1). In 2012, Public Health also issued three closure orders. In addition, Public Health Inspectors seize and dispose of food that has been deemed unfit for consumption and could put the public’s health at risk. In 2012, approximately 806kg of food was seized and disposed on 115 separate occasions during inspections and investigations; this was consistent with the past two years.

Special Events

For each notification of a special event hosted in the Region, a risk assessment is conducted to determine whether or not the special event will be inspected by a Public Health Inspector. In addition, consultation and education with a Public Health Inspector occurs to ensure that each vendor is aware of the food safety requirements. In 2012, Public Health:

- received **526 notifications** of special events in the Region
- inspected **428 food vendors at 54 special events** in addition to inspecting **over 50 vendors at the International Plowing Match**

In recent years, the number of special event notifications has been increasing gradually; 2012 saw the highest number of inspections at special events. In 2012, significant time was dedicated to planning for and conducting inspections and oversight at the International Plowing Match as part of the food safety program response to this event. Public Health Inspectors conducted over 100 food safety inspections and provided food handler training for volunteers and vendors at the event.

Community Food Safety Activity and Surveillance

Region of Waterloo Public Health responded to 39 suspect community foodborne illness complaints and 176 general consumer complaints related to food safety in 2012. Investigations of suspect foodborne illness and complaints were responded to within 24 hours of receiving the information.

Food Recalls

Region of Waterloo Public Health actively responded to three food recalls in 2012. In all three cases, Public Health Inspectors contacted all nursing homes, retirement homes, hospitals and day care centres (over 300 premises) to raise awareness of the recall and determine if any premises were in possession of recalled food products. The outcomes of Public Health’s participation in each food recall are summarized in Appendix A, Table 2. No illnesses associated with these products were reported in Waterloo Region.
Education and Promotion

Food Safety Training
As outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards, public health units are required to ensure food handlers in all food premises have access to training in safe food-handling practices and principles. This requirement is met through a partnership with Conestoga College Institute of Technology that designates the college as a delivery agent of the Region of Waterloo Food Safety Training Certification Program. Public Health provides oversight of the course curriculum and delivery of the program. The program certified 1,211 participants in 2012.

Community Food Safety
In 2012, food safety information was promoted in the community using a variety of methods including: local media, media releases, newsletters, Public Health’s website, and displays at community events. There were ten separate media interviews related to food safety information in 2012. Public Health staff published and distributed two different newsletters for food premises operators: The Front Burner newsletter and At the Market newsletter.

The Commitment to Food Safety program advertises the disclosure of inspection information to the general public. This promotes food safety and transparency between operators of food premises and customers and allows patrons to make informed decisions. In 2012, over 1,200 food premises voluntarily participated in the Commitment to Food Safety program by placing a sign in their premises with details on how to access inspection information. The Food Premises Inspection Reports website provides the most recent inspection and re-inspection information for food premises and continues to be the most popular way inspection results are accessed by the public. The website received 235,850 hits in 2012.

A balanced education and enforcement strategy with the aim to reduce food borne illness in our community incorporates our commitment to transparency, efficiency, collaboration and timely service to the public.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

4. Healthy and Inclusive Communities: Foster healthy, safe, inclusive and caring communities
5. Service Excellence: Deliver excellent and responsive services that inspire public trust

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

These activities are carried out within existing resources.

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:

NIL

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: Table and Figures

PREPARED BY: Julie Stoneman, Public Health Planner, Health Protection & Investigation
Chris Komorowski, Manager Food Safety, Recreational Water and Cambridge & Area Team

APPROVED BY: Dr. Liana Nolan, Commissioner/Medical Officer of Health
APPENDIX A: TABLES & FIGURES

Figure 1. Total number of food premises inspections 2005-2012

![Figure 1](image)

Table 1. Most common infractions that led to charges in 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infraction</th>
<th># of Charges Issued in 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain hazardous foods at internal temperature between 5°C and 60°C</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail to protect food from contamination or adulteration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail to sanitize/clean equipment, surfaces, utensils, or multi-service</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>articles after use or as necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate food premises, mechanical equipment not maintained to provide</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sufficient chemical solution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate food premises, maintained in a manner adversely affecting sanitary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summary of 2012 food recalls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recalled product</th>
<th>Contaminant</th>
<th>Number of premises in possession of recalled product</th>
<th>Total weight of product removed/disposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground beef</td>
<td>E. Coli 0157:H7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground beef</td>
<td>Salmonella</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salad products</td>
<td>Listeria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>54 kg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REGION OF WATERLOO
PUBLIC HEALTH
Emergency Medical Services

TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: May 28, 2013

FILE CODE: P05-01

SUBJECT: EMS SCHEDULER SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Municipality of Waterloo approve the addition of 2.0 FTE of non-supervisory EMS schedulers (inclusive of backfill and coverage requirements) with 1.0 FTE to be implemented on July 1, 2013, and 1.0 FTE to be implemented December 1, 2013;

That the 2013 expenditures be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund;

That the 2013 operating budget for Emergency Medical Services be increased by $56,400 gross and zero net Regional Levy; and

That the 2.0 FTE Non-supervisory EMS Schedulers be included in the 2014 Base Budget for Emergency Medical Services as outlined in PH-13-022, dated May 28, 2013;

SUMMARY:

2.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) non-supervisory schedulers are requested for approval in 2013 to provide scheduling support 10 hours per day, 7 days per week (including a provision for cross coverage and back up). This would allow redeployment of the 2 EMS supervisors who currently primarily perform a scheduling function 12 hours per day, 7 days per week to on-road supervision. The new positions would be management support positions that also include responsibilities for monitoring and reconciliation of attendance, pay codes and related human resources data.

In consultation with Arthur Graham, Interim Director, Pomax Consulting and Human Resources staff at the Region of Waterloo, it has become clear that further analysis is not necessary to determine the appropriateness and need for transferring scheduling responsibilities from 2 FTE’s of EMS supervisors to 2 FTE’s of schedulers in management support positions. The entire complement of current management resources is necessary, and requires some realignment of responsibilities to start to address identified gaps including the need for more on-road supervision. The addition of the scheduler position will allow the EMS supervisors to be redeployed to support on-road paramedics, and will ensure that an appropriate staff position has been assigned the duty of scheduling. Although the creation and funding of new positions will be necessary to carry this out, it will result in a more cost-effective approach to scheduling and will improve supervisory capacity.

Pomax Consulting and Arthur Graham, Interim Director both support this recommendation as necessary and essential, after completing the first 3 months of their work with Region of Waterloo EMS. According to Pomax Consulting, this recommendation is complementary to the direction of future recommendations they will be providing with regards to optimizing EMS management. In their opinion, waiting an additional 3 months for their more detailed recommendations is unnecessary and will slow down the process of change. The Region can expect further recommendations from Pomax
that build on the addition of schedulers and redeployment of supervisors, after they complete the current 3 month contract for the assessment of EMS management.

REPORT:

As part of the 2013 budget process, an EMS issue paper was presented that recommended the addition of non-supervisory scheduler support and additional supervisory positions. The scheduler positions would free up 2 existing EMS Operations Supervisors for reassignment. The purpose of the request for scheduler support was to relieve supervisors of scheduling responsibilities that could be carried out more cost-effectively by a non-supervisory technical support position. This affects 2 supervisors who currently fulfil scheduling responsibilities 7 days a week for 12 hours a day, and who would be redeployed as a result of this decision. The addition of non-supervisory scheduling staff positions would allow the 2 existing EMS supervisors to be reassigned to provide more direct “on-road” supervision and support for paramedics. This will lead to increased support, monitoring and will improve service.

At budget time, Council deferred a decision to mid-year regarding the addition of schedulers and supervisors as per the budget request, pending further assessment regarding the EMS service.

The original need for non-supervisory support in EMS scheduling and additional on-road supervision was identified in the EMS Management Reorganization review that occurred from 2011 through to early 2012 and was reported to Council in August 2012 (PH-12-032). Two main gaps identified in the EMS Management Reorganization review were 1) lack of on-road supervisor coverage and 2) the need for coverage 7 days a week in vital support functions that had previously been supported only 5 days a week. At that time, increasing the scheduling responsibilities (currently provided by supervisory staff) from 5 days per week to 7 days per week significantly improved the effectiveness of the complex task of scheduling of paramedics for shifts, but it impacted on supervisor time because additional resources were not allocated to being on the road. The reorganization occurred in parallel with the implementation of a new electronic Time and Attendance Management software system, which has facilitated the practical ability to transfer this scheduling and time-tracking function from a supervisor to a management support position.

The scheduling function in EMS is a complex task. The complexity is a result of over 200 part time and full time staff working 24 hours 365 days per year. There is complexity in the Collective Agreement, the legislated requirements for scheduling, the fluctuating demand for service and resources based on call volume and offload delays, and the consistent need to backfill every absence. Focused scheduling resources are needed on a daily basis.

The EMS Management Reorganization review process gathered input from EMS Management, the EMS Dispatch Centre, the union (CUPE 791) and ROW Labour Relations. There was strong support from all of these groups for more EMS on-road supervision. This is also supported by feedback from the recent Employee Survey which indicates the need for greater contact between paramedics and supervisory staff.

In consultation with Arthur Graham, Interim Director, Pomax Consulting and Human Resources staff at the Region of Waterloo, it has become clear that further analysis is not necessary to determine the appropriateness and need for transferring scheduling responsibilities from 2 FTE’s of EMS supervisors to 2 FTE’s of non-supervisory schedulers. This will allow the EMS supervisors to be redeployed to support on-road paramedics, and will ensure that an appropriate staff position has been assigned the duty of scheduling. Although the creation of new positions will be necessary to carry this out, it will result in a more cost-effective approach to scheduling. It is also more cost effective to have proactive scheduling to ensure the appropriate utilization of overtime, while still keeping within the provisions of the Collective Agreement. The scheduler positions will be accountable both the EMS and Human Resources.
At this time a more detailed review of EMS Management is underway by the consulting firm Pomax with regards to roles, responsibilities and the efficient use and alignment of existing supervisory resources. With an immediate goal of optimizing current supervisory and management resources, further requests for additional supervisor resources will be deferred until this review is complete and, if needed, will occur as part of a future Regional budget process. It is clear the entire complement of current management resources is necessary, and requires some realignment of responsibilities to start to address identified gaps. The Pomax review is underway as a result of the recent Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) report which identified a need for quality assurance and other improvements to ensure consistent compliance with MOHLTC EMS standards. Enhanced on-road supervision, along with supervisory role realignment and re-prioritization of activities will help ensure a high quality of patient care and more consistent compliance with MOHLTC standards.

As a result of the EMS Management reorganization review, it was envisioned that an ideal supervisory staff complement might include 2 EMS on-road supervisors 7 days a week at least during peak hours, whereas there is currently only one supervisor deployed to the road at any given time. The redeployment of supervisory resources to the road (after the schedulers are hired) will help ensure that there are 2 supervisors deployed to the road at peak times (i.e. during the time of day with peak call volumes and maximum staffing deployed). The consulting firm Pomax will provide an external assessment of this issue within the context of optimizing existing resources. There will be a clearer picture of how the management gaps may be addressed through realignment of current roles and responsibilities, as part of their assessment.

In the mean time, upon hiring a new scheduling support position, immediate redeployment of one scheduling supervisor will provide capacity for a second supervisor providing on-road support at peak times. The benefit and the impact of hiring management support staff to carry out scheduling and immediately redeploying supervisory staff to the road does not need to wait for Pomax’s more detailed review, as this will start to optimize the use of existing supervisory resources immediately. Key areas of focus in redeploying supervisory staff to on-road supervision will be to increase capacity to:

- manage and minimize the impact of offload delays at local hospitals during peak hours
- monitoring and management of missed lunches and overtime
- provide performance support including mentoring, monitoring, coaching and feedback for paramedic staff
- resolve labour relations issues
- implement quality assurance measures to ensure regulatory requirements are met
- problem solve issues in real time on the road, and
- communicate directly with more front line staff on a regular basis.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

EMS strives to decrease premature morbidity and mortality where possible through the delivery of its ambulance service, and contributes to the Strategic Focus area of fostering a healthy, safe, inclusive and caring community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

As part of the 2013 budget process, an EMS issue paper was presented that recommended the addition of 1.5 FTE’s of non-supervisory scheduler support ($123,108 annual cost inclusive of wages, benefits and corporate charges) to free up 2 existing EMS Operations Supervisors for reassignment, for a July 1 start. The budget request also included 2 additional supervisors (annual cost of $298,309). The request in this report is for only the scheduler positions with an FTE complement of 2. This is due to the additional analysis of the requirements of the scheduling
position including the requirement for cross coverage and back up, with input from Pomax, Arthur Graham and Human Resources. It also acknowledges that the current emphasis is on re-alignment of roles for the existing supervisory complement, prior to consideration for additional supervisory FTEs.

When Council reviewed the original budget request for additional supervisory and scheduling support resources in EMS, it determined that a decision would be deferred until after further information was available from the consulting firm Pomax. At that time, Council did indicate a willingness to consider the issue again mid-year.

The following chart itemizes the costs related to the addition of 2 FTE’s of management support scheduler positions with accountability both to Human Resources and EMS (with 1.0 FTE commencing July 1, 2013 and 1.0 FTE commencing December 1, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Costs</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$195,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training / Telephone/ Computer</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>2,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost</td>
<td>$56,400</td>
<td>$198,435</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2013 Operating Budget does not include any provision for the costs related to these positions. Prudent financial management would have a source of financing identified in advance of the expenditures being approved. It is recommended that the 2013 expenditures of $56,400 be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund. This provides a clear source of funding for the additional 2013 costs. An alternate approach would be to allow EMS to overspend its 2013 approved budget. Any over expenditure would be funded by the 2013 Regional surplus.

The total annualized cost for these positions in 2014 will be $198,435. The annual provision includes cross coverage and back up, for 10 hours per day 7 days per week. This will replace the assignment of two EMS supervisors 12 hours per day 7 days per week, who are currently primarily performing the scheduling function, and will provide scheduling support in a more cost effective manner. Staff will review the subsidy implications resulting from these positions as part of the 2014 Budget process.

The staggered implementation of the scheduler positions will require a corresponding staggered transition of EMS supervisory responsibilities.

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:

Finance and Human Resources have reviewed this report. Pomax consulting has also provided input, as has Arthur Graham, Interim Director EMS.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

PREPARED BY:  Dr Liana Nolan, Commissioner/Medical Officer of Health

APPROVED BY:  Dr Liana Nolan, Commissioner/Medical Officer of Health
TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: May 28, 2013

FILE CODE: S07-80

SUBJECT: SUNNYSIDE HOME MEDICAL DIRECTOR REPORT 2012

RECOMMENDATION:

For information

SUMMARY:

This report summarizes the inter-disciplinary and research activities at Sunnyside Home over the past year. Dr. Fred Mather’s leadership as Medical Director and as Chair of the Professional Advisory Committee contributes to setting a high standard of care and quality of life for Sunnyside Home residents.

REPORT:

Dr. Mather’s report is attached as Appendix A.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

The service provided by the Medical Director and the other physicians at Sunnyside Home supports the Region’s Corporate Strategic Plan, Focus Area 4: Healthy, safe, inclusive and caring communities (to) collaborate with the community to support older adults to live healthy, active lives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Nil

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A Sunnyside Home Annual Medical Director’s Report 2012

PREPARED BY: Helen Eby, Administrator, Resident Care

APPROVED BY: Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders, Commissioner, Social Services
Appendix A
2012 Medical Director's Report

This report summarizes the improvements and achievements in medical care at Sunnyside Home over the past year, as well as the goals for the year ahead.

Improvements and achievements made in 2012:
1. Physicians have transitioned from written notes to electronic documentation using the electronic health record (EHR) in the Point Click Care software. The system also provides access to the electronic pharmacy system, called eMAR.
2. The use of physical restraints has been reduced from 21% to 6%. While numbers are not completely comparable, the provincial use of restraints is 13%.
3. Forty new beds have been purchased with the goal of reducing injuries related to falls and to replace full-length bed rails, which are classified as “restraints,” with one-quarter length bedrails. Bedrails pose a significant risk for entrapment and injury.
4. Incontinence care is beginning to improve with the introduction of a Continence Care initiative.
5. Falls were reduced through the Falls Reduction initiative by 8% compared to 2011.
6. A new attending physician, Dr. Tom Irvine, joined the professional staff.
7. All physicians renewed their annual contract.
8. All staff supported student programs in pharmacy, medicine, nursing, personal support worker, dietitian, food services and others. Supervision of a nurse practitioner was an additional education service added this year.
9. Policies and procedures were developed for the ethical approval of research proposals.
10. Policies and procedures were developed for ethical decision-making.
11. Participation in a successful accreditation program contributed to receiving an “exemplary standing”.
12. The engagement of pharmacy co-op students provided a number of audits, reviews and instruction which enhances the professional practice of our health care providers.
13. With the support of two BScN students, a research project was conducted on the decolonization of MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus – an Antibiotic Resistant Organism common in healthcare settings) with residents on Pioneer Tower.

Goals and objectives for 2013 are:
1. Continue to fully implement the resources of the electronic health record (EHR) to ensure that all diagnoses and progress notes will be accessible on the EHR. A physician order entry tool, which interfaces with the pharmacy software, will be introduced.
2. Continue to participate in the next phase of the congestive heart failure management study. This trial is supported by the Ontario Heart and Stroke Foundation. The lead investigator is Dr. George Heckman.
3. Continue to report and show improvements on the Health Quality Ontario (the Province’s long-term care quality program). The quality indicators for public reporting are continence, restraint use, falls and skin care.
4. Continue to support student programs.
5. Maximize support for residents with mental illness and responsive behaviours secondary to dementia through the Behaviour Supports Ontario (BSO) initiative.
6. Become a partner with Clinical Connect, a secure web portal delivering an integrated EHR.
7. Participate in the Ontario Telemedicine Initiative approved by the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) to receive funding consideration for the purchase of telemedicine equipment. Telemedicine will enable Sunnyside to provide remote access to practitioners for resident health care consultations.
8. Participate in the integration of rehabilitation service review through the LHIN. This review may result in changes to the Convalescent Care Program at Sunnyside Home.
9. Through the Medical Director’s participation on the provincial long term care medical committee, influence provincial decision making with respect to long-term care issues, including supporting the need to increase direct care hours for resident care.

Sunnyside Home has benefited from providing practice opportunities in Long Term Care for Family Medicine Residents. This is part of their second year integrated post-graduate residency program. One of our former residents, Dr. Tom Irvine, joined the attending staff last year. The other physicians and their assigned areas are summarized in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physician</th>
<th>Care Area</th>
<th>Type of Care</th>
<th>Team Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Tom Irvine</td>
<td>Buttonworks</td>
<td>Special Care</td>
<td>Marion Tschirhart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laurel Creek</td>
<td>(Dementia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Fred Mather</td>
<td>Greenfield (10 beds)</td>
<td>Short Stay</td>
<td>Tammy Hirsmaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Convalescent Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Jonathan Peet</td>
<td>Cider Mill</td>
<td>Complex Physical and Palliative Care</td>
<td>Ruth Bremner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woodside</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Castle Kilbride</td>
<td>Complex Physical and Palliative Care</td>
<td>Diana Stajduhar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shantz Hill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kent McKinnon</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Complex Physical and Palliative Care</td>
<td>Krista Amato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Pat Landy</td>
<td>Pioneer Tower</td>
<td>Complex Physical and Palliative Care</td>
<td>Sophie Matern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three Bridges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fourth year students from the School of Pharmacy of University of Waterloo spend a four-month rotation under the supervision of the consultant pharmacist, Sally Ebsary. The following are projects conducted last year:

- The benefits and risks of statin medication in the elderly
- Novel anticoagulants, versus warfarin, to prevent stroke in atrial fibrillation
- Monitoring and management of diabetes at Sunnyside Home
- Magnesium levels in residents on proton pump inhibitors
- Monitoring of residents on warfarin while receiving antibiotic therapy
- Update on prophylactic antibiotics prior to dental work
- Fish oil use and benefits

The transition to the electronic health record is a significant achievement. Sunnyside has been a leader in use of the EHR in long term care after recent software changes facilitated its implementation. As a community partner in Clinical Connect, real-time consolidated information will be available in seconds, from 31 regional hospitals and Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) involved in the circle of care for Sunnyside residents. The immediate availability of reliable health information will result in the reduced duplication of investigations and improved patient care and safety.

One area of concern to the medical team is the need to support the increasing care requirements and medical complexity of the residents. There is a need to ensure that staffing levels are enhanced to ensure that residents’ care requirements can be met and the provincial standards maintained.

I am pleased to continue to provide leadership as the Medical Director at Sunnyside Home. Medical care in long term care is inter-disciplinary care. The physicians work with the interdisciplinary team not only to meet the needs and challenges of the residents, but also to provide education, research and innovation.

Fred Mather MD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting date</th>
<th>Requestor</th>
<th>Request</th>
<th>Assigned Department</th>
<th>Anticipated Response Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27-Nov-12</td>
<td>S. Strickland</td>
<td>That the matter of mandatory CPR and AED training for all Regional employees be referred to staff to report back with options for a Health &amp; Safety staff training policy.</td>
<td>Public Health/Human Resources</td>
<td>Jun-2013</td>
</tr>
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