

# Building Healthy Communities:

## POLICY ADVOCACY TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH IN WATERLOO REGION



Produced for

Waterloo Region Mental Health Work Group & Region of Waterloo Public Health

Sustainable Societies Consulting Group / Munger Consulting

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The picture on the front page was taken at the Community Consultation at Kitchener City Hall on November 27, 2013.

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## ABOUT THE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP

In May 2009, Region of Waterloo Public Health (Public Health) was asked by the Province to establish a Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership (Partnership) to improve population health outcomes through the development of local healthy public policies in six health promotion priority areas – physical activity, sport and recreation, injury prevention, healthy eating, tobacco use/exposure, substance and alcohol misuse, and mental health promotion. The Partnership was formed in late 2009 and developed a twofold vision: to create a strong voice for health promotion in Waterloo Region, and to reflect the diversity of our community in decision making. In March 2011, a Community Picture was released and identified three priority actions for the Partnership:

1. Implement the *Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region*, which includes food skills and food access. Ensure that the plan addresses issues, which contribute to the viability of local farms and to ensure access to healthy eating options through the implementation of regional and municipal planning, human services, and zoning support.
2. Improve the affordability and availability of physical activity, sports and recreation opportunities, including active transportation, at the neighbourhood level and region wide (including formal and informal).
3. Use social determinants of health approach to address the underlying contributing factors associated with mental health and to advocate for stakeholders to adopt and fund such an approach.

Three existing and nascent networks stepped forward to guide next steps regarding these priority actions. The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable, the Waterloo Region Active Living Network, and the Mental Health Work Group agreed to act as the respective leads for the food system, physical activity and mental health priorities.

Readers with questions regarding the Partnership or this report are welcome to contact Katherine Pigott at [kpigott@regionofwaterloo.ca](mailto:kpigott@regionofwaterloo.ca) or 519-575-4400 ext. 5415.

The perspective and recommendations expressed in this report belong to the consultant and do not necessarily reflect the perspective of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care or Region of Waterloo Public Health.

## 1.0 Executive Summary

### 1.1 Introduction

In order to guide its advocacy work, the Waterloo Region Mental Health Work Group (WRMHWG) sought to review key areas for local policy advocacy to promote mental health through healthy eating and physical activity, and consult with stakeholders in Waterloo Region to develop an action plan for policy advocacy. This report summarizes the policy issues reviewed, the community consultation, the key results of the priority setting process, and the recommended next steps for action for the WRMHWG.

### 1.2 Mental Health Promotion

The scope of the current project was focused on mental health promotion at a population level, targeting policy initiatives and changes that are within the control of local government and that can produce community-level change. The WRMHWG's aim was to prioritize local policy initiatives to promote mental health, working from a social determinants of health perspective. Social determinants of health approaches incorporate an understanding of the broader factors that affect people's wellbeing, and seek to identify and address underlying factors that are barriers to health. There are important links between healthy eating behaviours, physical activity, and mental health, meaning they may influence one another. Access to healthy food and opportunities for recreation are both influenced by social determinants of health. In light of the interconnectedness of these three areas, the focus of promoting mental health for this project took a comprehensive approach to consider the role of healthy eating and physical activity.

Seven key policy areas were identified in the literature as priority areas for advocacy for mental health promotion in Waterloo Region:

- 1) Community gardens,
- 2) Neighbourhood farmers' markets,
- 3) Walkable, affordable food,
- 4) Accessible recreation,
- 5) Active transportation and walkable neighborhoods,
- 6) Inclusive communities, and
- 7) Community mental health promotion.

Policy options within these key areas were reviewed by the WRMHWG, and summarized in an accessible format for the community consultations.

### 1.3 Community Consultations

Potential areas for policy advocacy were presented to community stakeholders at an event in November 2013, and through an online survey in December 2013. Participants were asked to help rank top policy priorities, and identify barriers and facilitators to different types of policy change.

## 1.4 Key Findings

Participants in both the in-person event and the online survey ranked broader community mental health promotion and building inclusive communities as the highest priorities. The actions included in the community mental health promotion policy theme were developing a mental health charter document or policy statement, and a tool for analyzing the mental health impacts of regional policies, such as land use policies that regulate the placement of community gardens, and the inclusivity of development initiatives, including the planning of new housing and neighbourhoods. Inclusive communities have opportunities for social connections, recreation, and meeting spaces that address the needs of people of all ages, incomes, and abilities. Participants in the community event and survey rated actions for promoting healthy eating such as community gardens and neighbourhood farmers markets as lower priorities. This is likely due to the number of existing initiatives promoting healthy eating in Waterloo Region, and participants not making the connection between advocacy for healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health.

## 1.5 Priority Setting

The WRMHWG is committed to promoting the important links between mental health, healthy eating, and physical activity while addressing the broader community concern for mental health promotion and inclusive communities. Through the priority setting process, it was determined that the most effective actions for the WRMHWG would be:

- 1) To connect with existing healthy eating and physical activity initiatives to support their work by adding a mental health perspective, and
- 2) To develop a comprehensive framework for mental health in the form of a mental health charter or mental health policy statement. The format and content of this document will require further research and discussion. Once it is developed, the principles of this charter or policy statement can be adapted to create a tool for analyzing municipal policies and development plans that can be used to examine the inclusivity and mental health impact of policies such as land use for community gardens and plans for housing, social spaces such as parks and recreation facilities, and neighbourhood developments. This tool can also be shared with other initiatives promoting healthy eating and physical activity to ensure that these initiatives are inclusive and incorporate mental health promotion.

## 1.6 Recommendations

Based on this priority setting process, it is recommended that the WRMHWG:

- Connect with other groups promoting healthy eating and physical activity to discuss how to incorporate mental health promotion in existing initiatives.
- Explore the feasibility of creating either a mental health charter or a mental health policy statement document in order to determine which would be most appropriate for Waterloo Region.

- Consider who else could contribute to the development of a mental health charter or policy statement and connect with other groups to expand the scope of the WRMHWG and ensure that key stakeholders are included.
- Build a comprehensive mental health document, in the form of a mental health charter or mental health policy statement for Waterloo Region from a social determinants perspective that incorporates healthy eating, physical activity, and the other various factors that have an impact on mental health.
- Develop a policy assessment tool based on the mental health charter/ policy statement document that can be used to evaluate the impact of regional and municipal policies on mental health in Waterloo Region, and to advocate for policy that promotes mental health for all.
- Ongoing evaluation of the impact of the mental health charter/ policy statement.

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## 2.0 Background

In order to develop a plan for local policy advocacy the WRMHWG contracted the Sustainable Societies Consulting Group to guide a priority setting process. This project included reviewing mental health promotion policy options, organizing and facilitating a community consultation, assessing the feasibility of key policy advocacy options, and facilitating the development of a strategic policy advocacy action plan.

### 2.1 The Waterloo Region Mental Health Working Group

A 2011 report, *Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership Community Picture*, identified mental health as one of the top three priorities for policy advocacy in Waterloo Region. The recommended action related to mental health was to “use social determinants of health approach to address the underlying contributing factors associated with mental health and to advocate for stakeholders to adopt and fund such an approach.”<sup>1</sup> As a result of this finding, a group of local stakeholders, the WRMHWG, came together that same year to develop a plan for advocacy to promote mental health in Waterloo Region. This project aims to take the broader recommendations from *Community Picture* report and develop more specific recommendations for action.

#### 2.1.1 Scope of work for the WRMHWG

The scope of the WRMHWG was focused on mental health promotion at a population level, targeting policy initiatives and changes that are within the control of local government, and that can produce community-level change. In Waterloo Region, local government operates under a two-tier system. The regional government, the Region of Waterloo, offers a range of government services region-wide and the seven municipalities (the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge and the townships of Wellesley, Woolwich, Wilmot, and North Dumfries) provide services and programs specific to their communities.

The 2011 *Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership Community Picture* reported findings from the Canadian Community Health Survey that 24.1 per cent of respondents reported “quite a lot” of stress in their lives that negatively affected their mental health.<sup>1,2</sup> Factors affecting mental health that were consistent across research data, key informant surveys, and stakeholder consultations in the Community Picture process included biological factors, but also social and psychological factors such as lack of support, low income, unemployment, and physical and social isolation. In order to address these concerns, the authors recommended taking a social determinants of health approach (described below in section 2.2) to promoting mental health in Waterloo Region.

### 2.2 Approach to the priority setting process

The WRMHWG’s approach to this project incorporates a social determinants of health perspective into mental health promotion. The **social determinants of health** refers to

both the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, and work, including built environments such as neighbourhoods and homes, education opportunities, and broader social factors such as economics, and the systems put in place to deal with illness such as health care and social support.<sup>3</sup> Social determinants of health approaches incorporate an understanding of these broader factors that affect people's wellbeing, and seek to identify and address underlying factors that are barriers to health.

**Mental health promotion** is one approach to increasing mental health. The World Health Organization defines mental health promotion as "actions to create living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles."<sup>4</sup> Mental health promotion enhances people's capacity to take control of their lives and health, promotes resiliency, and empowers people through its assets-based approach. Assets-based approaches focus on the strengths and resources such as local associations and institutions and the skills and values of residents within communities to build sustainable, stronger, and healthier communities. This is opposed to traditional deficits-based approaches, which are more focused on the problems and weaknesses in communities.<sup>4, 5</sup>

## 3.0 Mental Health Promotion and Policy

There is a growing awareness of the role the social determinants of health have on mental health, and a recognition that alternative approaches that promote mental wellbeing and address the social determinants of health are also needed to promote mental health for the general population.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup> Mental health can be promoted at the local level by developing policy that recognizes the social determinants of health, and supports factors that promote mental health.

### 3.1 Mental Health, Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

A 2014 report, *Shifting Gears: The Need to Address Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Mental Health Together*, identifies mental health, healthy eating, and physical activity as three connected areas for health promotion.<sup>7</sup> This report will help inform the work of the Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership, including the WRMHWG.

The relationship between healthy eating and mental health is complex, and bi-directional. Consuming a poor quality diet has been linked to high levels of stress, and low levels of social support, depression, and poor mental health outcomes. Conversely, a diet high in fruit and vegetables has been shown to improve mood, and may protect against mental health problems.<sup>7</sup> Depression has been linked with poor self-care suggesting that people who experience depression and other mental health challenges may experience lower levels of energy, interest, motivation, or confidence that are required to maintain self-care activities such as healthy eating. Depression is also linked to changes in eating habits such as over-eating, under-eating, and/or emotional eating, which may further negatively impact mental health. Poor diet due to other causes, such as a lack of access to healthy food, may also lead to poorer health outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

A strong bi-directional relationship has also been found between physical activity and mental health. A lack of physical activity has been associated with increased risk for developing depression, and physical activity has also been found to improve negative mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and distress. Physical activity may distract from mental health symptoms, provide opportunities for social interaction, increase self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self worth, and it may also cause physiological or biochemical changes that increase mental health.<sup>7</sup> Recommendations related to the *Shifting Gears* report included promoting access to green space and community spaces such as community gardens and neighbourhood farmers markets in order to build a strong, place-based, and inclusive sense of community to promote mental health, healthy eating, and physical activity.

Healthy eating and physical activity are both influenced by social determinants of health. Policy development is a health promotion strategy that can be used to increase peoples' ability to make healthier food choices and be physically active. The 2012 report to the Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership titled *Supporting Advocacy on*

*Municipal Official Plans*, identified mental health, healthy eating, and physical activity as three connected priority areas for health promotion, and identified policies that supported each of these priorities.<sup>8</sup> Policies identified in *Supporting Advocacy on Municipal Official Plans* that could be targeted to promote mental health included:

- developing a tool to assess the public mental health impacts of proposed policies or development,
- increasing municipal support for community gardens and neighbourhood farmers' markets,
- increasing access to affordable housing in safe and walkable neighbourhoods, and
- developing a mental health charter that outlines a commitment to various aspects of mental health promotion.

### 3.2 Policy Themes that Promote Mental Health

Key policy initiatives identified from the literature on promoting mental health (i.e., references 4-10) were grouped into seven themes in order to facilitate the introduction of areas for potential policy advocacy during the community consultation process. These key themes were reviewed by the WRMHWC, and summarized in an accessible format for the community consultations. These themes and their policy actions are summarized in the Table 1.

**Table 1. Key Policy Themes and Potential Policy Actions**

Policy Theme	Policy Advocacy Actions
<b>Community Gardens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a regional community garden action plan</li> <li>• Identifying and designating land for community gardens</li> <li>• Facilitating and providing material support for the development of community gardens</li> <li>• Permitting community gardens in all land use designations</li> <li>• Permission and support for community gardens in high-density neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Setting targets and incentives for community garden sites in new developments</li> </ul>
<b>Neighbourhood Farmers' Markets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent zoning and bylaws that allow for farmers' markets across the region</li> <li>• Permitting temporary farmers' markets in all land use zones</li> <li>• Permitting temporary farmers' markets in community centres</li> <li>• Reducing or waiving licensing fees for temporary farmers' markets</li> </ul>
<b>Walkable, Affordable Food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent zoning and bylaws that support local grocery stores in neighbourhoods across the region</li> <li>• Facilitators and incentives for new local grocery stores in high-density neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Facilitators and support for smaller-scale local food businesses such as food cooperatives</li> </ul>

<p><b>Accessible Recreation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and design guidelines that support access to open spaces and facilities for recreation in neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Advocating for more physical activity in schools</li> <li>• Advocating for workplace physical activity</li> <li>• Policies and design guidelines that support sport and recreation with a particular focus on equitable access, affordability, and safety</li> </ul>
<p><b>Active Transportation and Walkable Neighborhoods</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing the policies identified in the Waterloo Region Pedestrian Charter</li> <li>• Giving higher planning priority to compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Supporting the implementation of the Waterloo Active Transportation Plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inclusive Communities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting mixed-use neighbourhoods with housing and commercial spaces for people of all ages, incomes, and abilities</li> <li>• Advocating for policies and guidelines that promote meeting spaces and common areas that address the needs of people of all ages and abilities</li> <li>• Promoting community gardens and markets as meeting spaces and focal points for neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Mental Health Promotion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a tool for analyzing policy to ensure equity and inclusion</li> <li>• Developing a mental health charter or mental health policy statement for Waterloo Region</li> </ul>

## 4.0 Community Consultations

In order to gather input from community stakeholders, and to ensure that the needs of the community are reflected in the WRMHWG's policy advocacy plan, the WRMHWG and the consultants held community consultations through both an in-person event, and an online survey.

### 4.1 Community Consultation Event

The purposes of the community consultation event were:

- 1) To inform stakeholders of the work of the WRMHWG,
- 2) To provide information on the links between mental health, healthy eating, and physical activity and to provide information on mental health promotion, and the social determinants of health,
- 3) To obtain community input on priorities for policy advocacy, and the feasibility of various policy advocacy initiatives.

#### 4.1.1 Process

Approximately 80 participants attended the community engagement event on November 27, 2013 at Kitchener City Hall (see Appendix A for the event flyer). Attendees ranged from people with lived mental health experiences, mental health professionals, academics, a firefighter, mental health advocates, and family members of people with lived mental health experiences. A member of the WRMHWG presented an overview of the options for mental health promotion. A World Café format was used to facilitate discussions. Participants joined discussion groups each focused on one of the seven identified policy themes, and were invited to identify gaps in policy priorities, and barriers and facilitators to policy action. Participants were also given three stickers with which they were asked to indicate their top three policy priority areas on a central poster listing all policy themes by placing their stickers next to the three areas of their choice.

During the event, a graphic facilitator documented key ideas from the discussions (see appendix B for a picture of the final graphic).

#### 4.1.2 Results

Participants at the community event gave extensive feedback on the options for policy advocacy, which has been summarized in Appendix C, and ranked their interest in and support for policy priority areas as shown in Table 2.

## 4.2 Online Survey

### 4.2.1 Process

Between December 4 and 12, 2013, potential stakeholders were invited to participate in a consultation survey on mental health promotion in Waterloo Region. The survey invitation was emailed to the networks of the WRMHWG members. Thirty-eight individuals participated in the online survey. The survey introduced the seven policy themes and asked the participants to identify three policy themes that they thought would advance mental health promotion the most and they were asked to rank each of the seven policy themes.

### 4.2.2 Results

Participants using the online survey ranked the policy priority in an almost identical fashion to participants rating the areas at the community event.

**Table 2. Results of community consultation surveys**

<b>Policy Area</b>	<b>Event Ranking</b>	<b>Online Ranking</b>
Community Mental Health Promotion	1	1
Accessible Recreation	2	3
Inclusive Communities	3	2
Walkable, Affordable Food	4	4
Active Transportation and Walkable Communities	5	5
Community Gardens	6	6
Neighbourhood Farmers' Markets	7	7

## 5.0 WRMHWG Priority Setting

After the community consultation results (both in person and online) were compiled, the WRMHWG met in order to:

- 1) Reflect on the event,
- 2) Review the results/suggestions from the event and online consultation,
- 3) Prioritize policy advocacy options, and
- 4) Draft action plans for policy advocacy.

### 5.1 Process

After reviewing the results from the online and in-person community consultations, the WRMHWG members used a set of nine key criteria for successful policy campaigns outlined by the Redstone Strategy Group to assess the feasibility of each policy priority and to determine next steps for advocacy to promote mental health.<sup>9</sup>

These criteria are:

- 1) **“Functioning venue(s) for adoption:** The relevant legislative, legal, and regulatory institutions are functioning sufficiently for advocacy to be effective.
- 2) **Open policy window:** External events or trends spur demand for the solution.
- 3) **Feasible solution:** A feasible solution has been developed and shown to produce the intended benefits.
- 4) **Dynamic master plan:** A pragmatic and flexible advocacy strategy and communications plan is ready for execution.
- 5) **Strong campaign leader(s):** Central advocates can assemble and lead the resources to execute the strategy and communications plan.
- 6) **Influential support coalition:** Allies can sway needed decision-makers and help the campaign leader to pursue the solution.
- 7) **Mobilized public:** Relevant public audiences actively support the solution and its underlying social principles.
- 8) **Powerful inside champions:** Decision-makers who can overcome the opposition support the solution and its underlying principles.
- 9) **Clear implementation path:** The implementing institution has the commitment and the ability to execute the solution.”<sup>9</sup>

### 5.2 Outcomes

Results from the community event and survey were analyzed to determine the policies most frequently ranked as most important by community participants. The WRMHWG members then ranked priorities according to the 9 criteria described above. Community mental health promotion, inclusive communities, and accessible recreation were rated as the highest priorities for advocacy action overall, while community gardens and neighbourhood farmers markets were ranked lowest out of the policy advocacy options on both the in-person and online ratings.

Community mental health promotion was rated as the top priority for policy advocacy by participants in both the November 27<sup>th</sup> event and the online survey. Community mental health promotion refers to actions that at a population level can be taken to strengthen mental health for all. It promotes resiliency by building up positive factors that promote wellbeing, and works to reduce inequalities and risk factors. Community mental health promotion encompasses many of the other policy advocacy areas, in that mental health can be promoted in many ways, including through promoting healthy eating and physical activity and building more inclusive communities.

Inclusive communities and accessible recreation were ranked either second or third on the event and online survey ratings, indicating that these are also priority areas for action. The concept of inclusive communities incorporates accessible recreation, as communities that are inclusive have opportunities for social connections, recreation, and meeting spaces that address the needs of people of all ages, incomes, and abilities<sup>10</sup>. The concept of “placemaking” is often used in planning inclusive communities. Placemaking is both a process and a philosophy that aims to create both physical spaces for social connection and stakeholder engagement in the planning, use, and management of these spaces. Social inclusion or connectedness can promote feelings of attachment and companionship, enhancing one’s sense of purpose and self-esteem.

The priorities directly related to food, (community gardens and neighbourhood markets) were ranked the lowest on both the event rankings and the online survey. It is possible that these items were ranked lower because community members did not see the connections between these policy actions and mental health and did not perceive them as priorities for promoting mental health. Furthermore, these lower ranked priorities for policy advocacy are areas where other groups, such as the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable, are already taking action, which may also have contributed to their lower priority ratings. Conversely, the highest ranked policy priority from both community consultations, community mental health promotion, is an area that has less advocacy efforts in Waterloo Region.

Considering these results, the WRMHWG members discussed how the group could most effectively work to promote policies that support mental health in Waterloo Region. Through the process of evaluating the feasibility of the various initiatives for promoting mental health through healthy eating and physical activity, the WRMHWG found that the lowest ranked priorities, community gardens and neighbourhood markets, had high feasibility scores because they already met most of the key criteria for success through the work of existing groups and initiatives. Based on the feedback from the community event and online survey, and discussions throughout the prioritization process, the WRMHWG identified community mental health promotion and building inclusive communities as their top priorities for advocacy. Both of these issues are of key importance to the community, and are also areas in which the WRMHWG may have the greatest potential impact. The WRMHWG continues to believe in the importance of linking mental health promotion with the promotion of physical activity and healthy eating.

In order to support linking these health promotion initiatives, the WRMHWG determined that the most effective role the group could play in promoting healthy eating and physical activity would be to support the work of other community groups already advocating for policy change in these areas and providing an additional mental health lens for collaborative action in these areas. Building connections with group promoting healthy eating and physical activity can not only promote these activities that support wellbeing, but can also promote inclusivity by including a mental health perspective in these initiatives, and ensuring that they are accessible and welcoming for all.

In addition to supporting the inclusion of mental health perspectives in existing healthy eating and physical activity initiatives, two key recommendations for action emerged from the prioritization process:

- 1) Developing a mental health charter or mental health policy statement for Waterloo Region, and
- 2) Developing a tool for analyzing the impact of proposed policies and development plans on mental health.

These recommendations are discussed in further detail in the following section. These resources will help the WRMHWG advocate for policy that promotes mental health and inclusive communities, and can also be used to provide a mental health perspective to further projects promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the WRMHWG's collaborations with other organizations and initiatives.

### **5.2.1 Developing a Mental Health Charter or Policy Statement for Waterloo Region**

The potential policy that emerged from the consultations and priority setting process was to develop a document outlining the WRMHWG's plan for mental health promotion in Waterloo Region. This document could take the form of either a mental health charter or a mental health policy statement.

A policy statement is a formal document that outlines the ways in which an organization such as a working group or a government intends to act on specific issues. A policy statement usually involves a definition of the areas the policy intends to address, and often includes a longer-term vision for action with guidelines for how this will be implemented. For example, the Canadian Mental Health Association's policy statement on mental health promotion defines its mental health promotion approach and provides five key areas for the application of mental health promotion policies.<sup>3</sup> The five key areas are: creating supportive environments, building individual skills, developing healthy public policy, reorienting mental health services, and strengthening community action.<sup>3</sup>

A charter, on the other hand, is a document that outlines a set of principles and commitments that guide the work of the organizations and individuals that sign it, and that is intended to guide further policy development. Charters are generally developed by stakeholder groups such as community members and service providers. An example of a mental health charter is the Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Charter developed the Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative. This charter was created and endorsed by

twelve national mental health organizations, and incorporates a mental health promotion framework.<sup>11</sup>

The form of this guiding mental health document for Waterloo Region as well as its content will require further research and discussion, as well as the involvement of other stakeholders in mental health promotion. This initiative to develop and adopt a mental health charter could also help start broader dialogues on mental health in Waterloo Region. Involving broader stakeholders in its development or as signatories could also guide other organizations in incorporating mental health promotion in their healthy eating and physical activity initiatives, and further promote mental health by reducing stigma and isolation.

### **5.2.2 Developing a Tool for Analyzing the Mental Health Impact of Policy in Waterloo Region**

Once the mental health charter/policy statement has been developed, it could be used to develop a tool for analyzing the impact of policies and development plans on mental health in Waterloo Region. This tool could be applied to existing or proposed policies to ensure that they support the guidelines and goals of the charter/policy statement, and address the key areas for change identified in the community consultations, such as walkable, affordable food and inclusive communities. For instance, walkable communities and access to affordable food are components of the built environment that promote mental health, and should be considered in new housing and neighbourhood developments, land use planning, and other regional and municipal policies. Using this tool, the WRMHWG could work with policy developers and planners to ensure that land use policies facilitate or increase walkable access to food, and new housing developments and neighbourhood plans incorporate features such as meeting spaces and mixed-use commercial and housing neighbourhoods that enhance inclusivity and promote mental health. This tool could also be shared with other organizations promoting healthy eating and physical activity to help them incorporate an understanding of mental health promotion in their work.

## 6.0 Recommendations

Based on the results of the community consultations and priority setting process, it is recommended that, rather than undertaking new policy initiatives to promote mental health through healthy eating and physical activity, the role of the WRMHWG should be to connect with other groups to discuss including mental health promotion in existing healthy eating and physical activity initiatives, and to develop a comprehensive document defining a vision for mental health promotion, such as a mental health charter that can be used to advocate for mental health promotion. This mental health document can be presented for municipal governments and organizations across the region to adopt. This document can also be used to develop guidelines for assessing regional and municipal policies to determine their impacts on the mental health of community members in Waterloo Region.

It is also recommended that the WRMHWG develop an assessment tool based on the mental health charter. The assessment tool can be used to evaluate policy based on the degree to which it meets the goals of the mental health promotion charter, and to incorporate a mental health lens into policy and planning work across various sectors.

Finally, it is recommended that the WRMHWG engage in ongoing evaluation of the impact of the mental health charter.

## 7.0 Next Steps

This section outlines the proposed next steps for implementing the findings of this priority setting process, from short-term actions to a long-term vision for the role of the WRMHWG.

### 7.1 Short-Term Action

- Connect with other groups promoting healthy eating and physical activity to discuss how to incorporate mental health promotion in existing initiatives.
- Explore the feasibility of creating either a mental health charter or a mental health policy statement document in order to determine which would be most appropriate for Waterloo Region.
- Consider who else could contribute to the development of a mental health charter/policy statement, and connect with other groups to expand the scope of the WRMHWG and ensure that key stakeholders are included.
- Research mental health charters in other municipalities and at the national and international level, and how they have been developed and implemented.

### 7.2 Medium-Term Action

- Build a comprehensive policy statement/ mental health charter for Waterloo Region from a social determinants perspective that incorporates healthy eating, physical activity, and the other various factors that have an influence on mental health.
- Develop a policy assessment tool based on the mental health charter/policy statement document that can be used to evaluate the influence of regional and municipal policies on mental health in Waterloo Region, and to advocate for policy that promotes mental health for all.

### 7.3 Long-Term Vision

- Use the mental health charter and policy assessment tool to analyze existing policies in Waterloo region to determine where advocacy and change are needed, and to contribute to the development of new policies across various areas that incorporate a mental health promotion perspective.
- Ongoing evaluation of the impact of the mental health charter.

## 8.0 References

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## 9.0 Appendix A: Community consultation event poster



*The Waterloo Region Mental Health Work Group presents:*

# **Building Healthy Communities: Mental Health Promotion in Waterloo Region**

Wednesday, November 27, 2013

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Kitchener City Hall, Rotunda

200 King Street West, Kitchener

**ALL ARE  
WELCOME!**

- Discuss actions and policies to promote mental health for all
- Discuss how healthy eating and physical activity influence mental health
- Hear from mental health advocates



**Alicia Raimundo**  
"Mental health superhero"  
with lived mental health  
experience



**Mark Henick**  
Mental health professional  
and advocate with lived  
mental health experience



**Hosted by:  
Gary Doyle**  
570 News radio  
talk show host

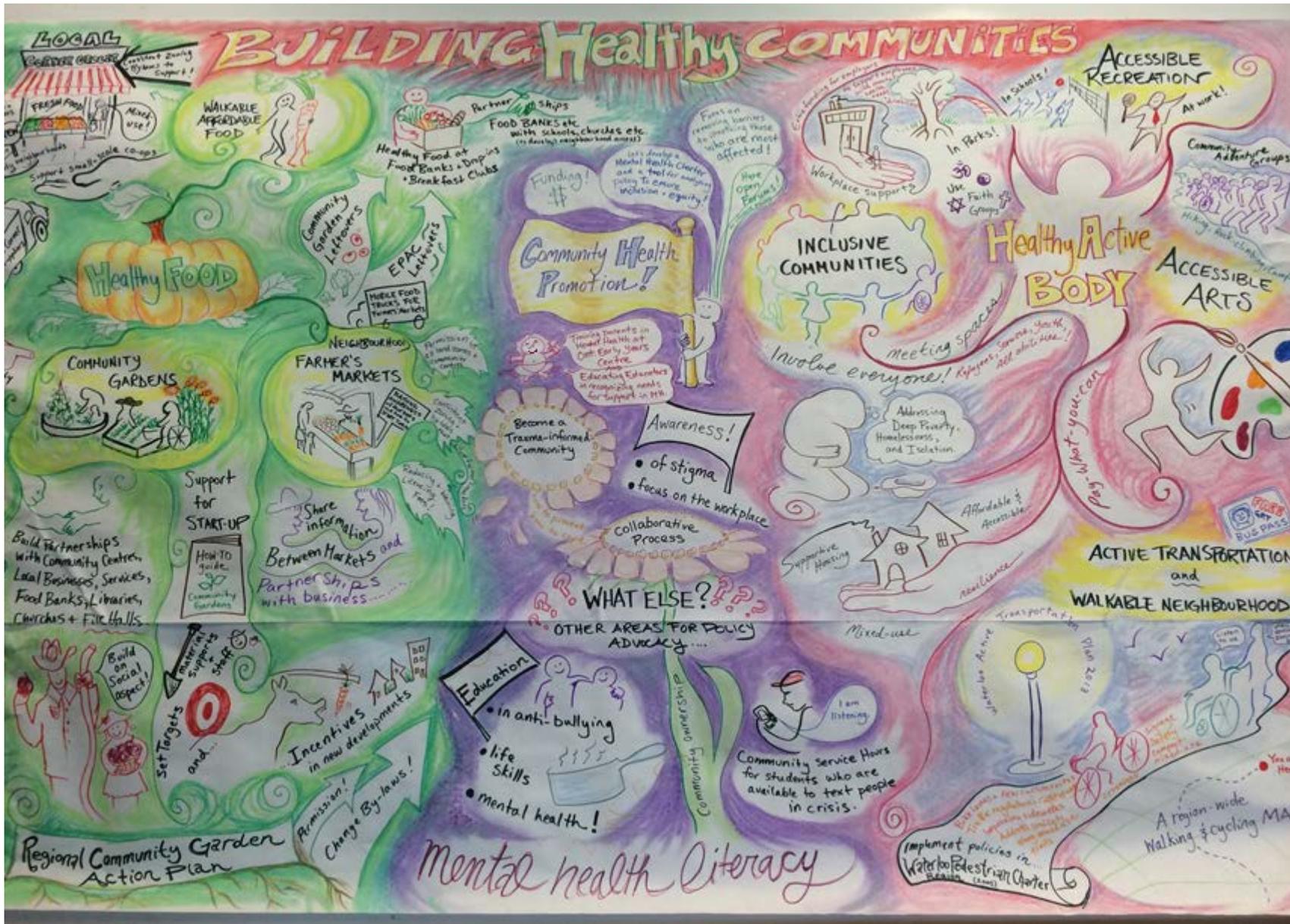
**For information or to register:**

- Go to <https://mentalhealthpromotionwr.eventbrite.com>
- Email [jstoneman@regionofwaterloo.ca](mailto:jstoneman@regionofwaterloo.ca)
- Call Julie at 519 575 4400 ext. 5432



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH

# 10.0 Appendix B: Graphic Facilitation



## 11.0 Appendix C: Policy Priority Results Summary

This table summarizes the results of the World Café discussions at the November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013 community consultation event. The final two columns list the rank of the policy area at the event at in the online consultation survey.

Missing	Enablers	Barriers	Advocates and Champions	Rank at Event	Rank Online
<b>Community Mental Health Promotion</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off-hours community support for mental health maintenance (more places with open-door, free access services, a “warm line’ for people to call someone when feeling down, but not in crisis)</li> <li>• Mental health charter focused on inclusion</li> <li>• School system promotion for children and youth, parent awareness and support groups</li> <li>• Youth-focus for mental health promotion</li> <li>• Increase in media attention focused on mental health issues</li> <li>• Community mental health awareness and education for all               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How to get help</li> <li>○ Contact-based education (have speakers in)</li> <li>○ Focus on reducing stigma resilience &amp; success stories around struggles with mental health</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mental health literacy for community professionals               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ First-responders (police, firefighters, paramedics); Teachers; Nurses; Clergy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities – taking collaborative ownership for mental health promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stigma</li> <li>• Lack of housing options</li> <li>• Funding for mental health promotion (as opposed to focus only on crisis)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canadian Mental Health Association</li> <li>• Fred Wagner</li> <li>• KW counselling</li> <li>• Kidslink</li> <li>• Lutherwood</li> <li>• CMHA</li> <li>• Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health</li> <li>• Crisis Respite</li> <li>• Waterloo Wellington self-management program</li> </ul>	1	1

Missing	Enablers	Barriers	Advocates and Champions	Rank at Event	Rank Online
<b>Inclusive Communities</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness and info sharing about what exists in the community               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inclusive communities means individuals are interdependent on each other – not about independence</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Better accessibility to affordable services</li> <li>• More mental health groups organized by the community</li> <li>• More variety in activities – not everyone will want to garden</li> <li>• Youth-focused activities geared to their interests and encouraging them</li> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Focus on the immigrant and refugee population – engage and find out needs</li> <li>• General focus on being more diverse</li> <li>• Connection needs to be made between stigma/prejudice and violence</li> <li>• Incentives for participation events</li> <li>• Community cooking events for diverse groups</li> <li>• Have activities go to people rather than having people have to come out to programs/events</li> <li>• Better outreach needed – people who are lonely don't respond mailed information</li> <li>• Outreach to people who have challenges</li> <li>• Promote and community where <u>everybody matters</u> &amp; has something to offer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools/educators – outreach through schools, speakers in schools</li> <li>• Politicians</li> <li>• Club groups</li> <li>• Faith-based groups, churches</li> <li>• Community centres</li> <li>• Neighbourhood associations</li> <li>• Media (traditional) and social media</li> <li>• People with mental health issues</li> <li>• Neighbourhood watch</li> <li>• Libraries – promote and do outreach</li> <li>• Region of Waterloo website</li> <li>• Fundraising – hosting a community walk</li> <li>• Flyers being delivered to every neighbourhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Transportation inaccessibility</li> <li>• Lack of trust of authority</li> <li>• Cultural differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House of Friendship</li> <li>• Santiago Grande: Carizon</li> <li>• Center for Community based research and the working Center</li> <li>• CMHL mosaic counselling</li> <li>• Engineering Science Quest, University of Waterloo</li> <li>• Neighbourhood associations</li> </ul>	2	3

Missing	Enablers	Barriers	Advocates and Champions	Rank at Event	Rank Online
<b>Accessible Recreation</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible buildings for community programs</li> <li>• Information free/low cost programs &amp; facilities</li> <li>• Walking groups – physical activity and support group role &amp; create friendships</li> <li>• Raising awareness of trails – e.g., accessible map on GRT maps</li> <li>• Improved safety for trails – night-time safety</li> <li>• Emergency buttons on public trails for access to emergency response</li> <li>• Public events for physical activity</li> <li>• “Pay what you can” system for existing recreation and arts facilities (could be specific days/times)</li> <li>• Awareness of the benefits of physical activity for mental health</li> <li>• More informal art classes/drop-ins</li> <li>• Mentoring programs</li> <li>• Outdoor recreation options in central locations available for free (basketball, tennis courts)</li> <li>• YMCA in downtown Kitchener</li> <li>• Diverse, accessible programming, meeting places, social connectedness</li> <li>• Evening options for downtown residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation can provide identity (e.g., I am a runner...)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue of safety on trails (refugees have concerns due to past experiences in home country)</li> <li>• Accessibility for immigrants – filling out forms to access recreation facilities (ESL, literacy)</li> <li>• Joining gyms is expensive you need to be on social assistance to get discounted price</li> <li>• Sidewalks feel safer because of vehicles nearby (personal safety)</li> <li>• Space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Centers</li> <li>• France Tolhurst: specifically on accessibility</li> <li>• Engineering Science Quest, University of Waterloo</li> <li>• YMCA of Kitchener/Waterloo Cambridge</li> <li>• Shannon Knutson</li> </ul>	3	2

Missing	Enablers	Barriers	Advocates and Champions	Rank at Event	Rank Online
<b>Walkable, Affordable Food</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small grocery store with regular hours in downtown core</li> <li>• Endorsing and encouraging food trucks, e.g. fresh, mobile farm market for those who work irregular hours in downtown core</li> <li>• Corner produce shops (why Tim Horton's &amp; not produce outlets? City planning can enable this)</li> <li>• Community Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Partner with churches, schools, and other institutions to have outlet/access points so those with mental health issues can connect to access food</li> <li>○ For the immigrant community use public health/community nutrition workers to visit homes of newcomers and teach cooking</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with existing CSA to learn from their experiences and drop off points</li> <li>• Regional/city partnerships could help overcome liability issues</li> <li>• Partner at Regional and Municipal level to enable local food access</li> <li>• Region of Waterloo Public Health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance</li> <li>• Weather – ice/snow removal in winter</li> <li>• Practical space to carry/cart groceries (i.e., – curb issues)</li> <li>• Markets do not cater to those who don't work regular 9-5 hours</li> <li>• Lack of public education</li> <li>• The expense is a challenge</li> <li>• Food skills and what to do with the food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City planners</li> <li>• Farmers Market</li> <li>• Food Basics</li> </ul>	4	4
<b>Active Transportation and Walkable Neighborhoods</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free bus passes for those over 65</li> <li>• Trails need signage</li> <li>• Enforce slower traffic on roads</li> <li>• Safety/education on biking</li> <li>• More coordination between cities and Region</li> <li>• Develop infrastructure and culture to support cycling/pedestrian community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bike lanes, bike racks, lighting, crossings at streets (iron horse trail)</li> <li>○ Prioritizing businesses in downtown</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Commitment of council and city planners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group that represents seniors</li> <li>• School boards</li> <li>• Public health</li> <li>• Ontario early years</li> <li>• Social Planning Council</li> <li>• Disability/Human rights action group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roundabouts - not pedestrian friendly</li> <li>• Financial barriers for transportation</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Current generation are not walkers, they are driven everywhere, need to help families change habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nicci Holzapfel-Mantin: community person</li> <li>• Grand River Transit</li> <li>• City planners</li> <li>• Downtown Kitchener</li> </ul>	5	5

Missing	Enablers	Barriers	Advocates and Champions	Rank at Event	Rank Online
<b>Community Gardens</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable on public and private land, where practical and safe (churches, municipal-owned residences, outdoor community centres, libraries)</li> <li>• Need more synergy with community partners (local fire hall, network with local people)</li> <li>• Support for start-up tools (water supply, storage, fencing)</li> <li>• How-to guide for community groups to get these started (gardening 101 websites, local video to promote new community gardens)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vandalism and theft</li> <li>• Liability issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House of Friendship</li> <li>• ACCKWA</li> <li>• St. Paul's University College Green House</li> <li>• City</li> <li>• Neighbourhood associations</li> <li>• Little City Farms</li> <li>• The Working Centre</li> <li>• Region of Waterloo Public Health</li> </ul>	6	6
<b>Neighbourhood Farmers' Markets</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness about zoning and permissions</li> <li>• Cooperation with GRT to get people to markets</li> <li>• School markets</li> <li>• Building partnerships – find niches for partnerships in community</li> <li>• Positive competition between municipalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire halls next to Chicopee &amp; Forest Heights are potential partners</li> <li>• Langs' Farm could have a market or garden</li> <li>• Build on the success of the Mill Courtland Market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permission from businesses &amp; landowners</li> <li>• Liability insurance</li> <li>• Lack of awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbourhood associations</li> </ul>	7	7