

Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan 2026-2030



WATERLOO REGION

Community Safety & Wellbeing Plan

Land Acknowledgement

Truth and Reconciliation is Central to Community Safety and Wellbeing. The Region of Waterloo acknowledges that we live, work, gather, and learn on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Chonnonton Peoples. This land is part of the Haldimand Tract, granted to the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations in 1784, extending six miles on each side of the Grand River. We honour the deep connections that Indigenous Peoples maintain with this land, water, language, culture, and community—connections that continue despite generations of colonial violence, displacement, and cultural suppression.

This acknowledgement reflects a commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, not merely a symbolic gesture. We recognize that the harms of colonialism are ongoing. Indigenous Peoples continue to face systems failures, inequitable access to health, housing, justice, and community safety, and these inequities are directly linked to historical and contemporary systems of oppression.

In advancing the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, we commit to working alongside Indigenous communities, Elders, Knowledge Holders, and Indigenous-led organizations. This includes supporting Indigenous self-determination; expanding Indigenous-led spaces for ceremony, healing, and community; embedding Indigenous worldviews in our work; and upholding the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

A safe and well Waterloo Region cannot exist without justice, dignity, and self-determination for Indigenous Peoples. This plan is rooted in these principles.

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Acknowledgements

This plan acknowledges the rich historical and ongoing contributions to community safety and wellbeing made by a wide range of community organizations and leaders in the Region of Waterloo before the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWP) framework was created, and March 2026

this plan recognizes the work that continues towards the CSWP and the work that extends beyond the plan itself.

We honour the dedication of countless community leaders and organizations who have worked tirelessly building safer, more inclusive and resilient communities. The list of organizations in this section played active and valuable roles in the specific development of the CSWP framework and initiatives over the last four years. We also acknowledge that there are many organizations and leaders beyond those listed that continue to play a leading role in creating the foundation and strategies to enable community safety and wellbeing, including advancing the four strategic priorities under the CSWP. Additionally, this plan builds upon the foundational work of the Region’s Crime Prevention Council and Wellbeing Waterloo Region.

Community safety and wellbeing is a broad and deep space that takes a systems wide approach, cutting across sectors, including health, Indigenous organizations, grassroots organizations, education, social services, business, and government. This plan acknowledges the breadth and diversity of these historical and continuous contributions.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Adventure4Change | Immigration Partnership | The Working Centre |
| African Women’s Alliance of Kitchener | Indigenous Creatives United, ICU | Thresholds Homes and Supports |
| Cambridge Memorial Hospital | Kinbridge Community Association | Thrive |
| Cambridge North Dumfries Ontario Health Team | KW4 Ontario Health Team | Township of North Dumfries |
| Cambridge Shelter Corporation | Langs | Township of Wellesley |
| Camino Wellbeing & Mental Health | Lyle S. Hallman Foundation | Township of Wilmot |
| Canadian Mental Health Association of Waterloo Wellington | Muslim Social Services Kitchener Waterloo | Township of Woolwich |
| Child Witness Centre | Muslim Women of Cambridge | Traverse Independence |
| Children and Youth Planning Table | Ontario Health at Home | United Way Waterloo Region Communities |
| City of Cambridge | Ontario Health West | University of Waterloo |
| City of Kitchener | Peace for All Canada | Victim Services of Waterloo Region |
| City of Waterloo | Porchlight Counselling and Addiction Services | Waterloo Catholic District School Board |
| Coalition of Muslim Women of K-W | Ray of Hope | Waterloo Region Community Foundation |
| Communitech | Region of Waterloo | Waterloo Region District School Board |
| Community Care Concepts | Region of Waterloo Paramedic Services | Waterloo Region Health Network |
| Community Health Caring / HART Hub | Rhythm and Blues Cambridge | Waterloo Region Jewish Community Council |
| Community Justice Initiatives | Rohingya Centre | Waterloo Regional Council |
| Community Services, Region of Waterloo | Run for Office Waterloo Region | Waterloo Regional Health Network |
| Conestoga College | Sanguen Health Centre | Waterloo Regional Police Service |
| Crow Shield Lodge | Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Centre | Wilfrid Laurier University |
| Engage Rural Collective | Sexual Assault Support Centre Waterloo Region | Wilfrid Laurier University - Social Innovation Research Group |
| Family & Children’s Services of the Waterloo Region | Spectrum | Women’s Crisis Center, Data & Evaluation |
| Family Violence Project Waterloo Region | Sporas | Women’s Crisis Services WR |
| Food Bank of Waterloo Region | Starling Community Services | Woolwich Counselling |
| Grassroots Growth Alliance | Sunbeam Community & Developmental Services | YMCA of Three Rivers |
| Hearts Open for Everyone | Sustainable Waterloo Region | YWCA Cambridge |
| House of Friendship | The Healing of the Seven Generations | YWCA Kitchener |
| | The Ripple Effect Education | Youth Advisory Group |

Community Context

Waterloo Region is experiencing a profound transformation. A vibrant region home to more than

670,000 residents across three cities and four rural townships, it is one of Canada's fastest-growing regions, expected to surpass one million people by 2050. This growth can also fluctuate due to socio-economic influences. Each of the cities, Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo, and the four rural townships of North Dumfries, Woolwich, Wellesley and Wilmot have rich profiles. This diversity and growth bring opportunities for innovation and community vitality, while also shaping evolving community safety and wellbeing needs.

The region's population is increasingly diverse. First Nations, Métis Inuit, African, Black, Caribbean, Newcomers, racialized communities, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, youth, older adults, people with disabilities, and multi-generation rural families all contribute to the region's cultural and social richness. This diversity expands the region's strengths and resilience but also calls for services that are responsive, equitable, and culturally and geographically grounded.

Multiple complex priorities are converging. The rising cost of living, poverty, food insecurity, and affordable housing and homelessness have been identified as priorities. Mental health and addictions challenges have intensified, with more frequent crisis calls and doctor's visits. Communities have identified addressing hate, discrimination, and polarized public dialogue, which impact

These pressures intersect with the broader social determinants of health. Safety and wellbeing are shaped by lived experiences, systems, policies, social identities, infrastructure, and geography. Within this context, residents require accessible and equitable services, support in navigating systems, addressing discrimination and racism, inclusive and safe spaces, and support with addressing the emotional and economic stress of meeting basic needs.

Indigenous communities in the region have diverse profiles, with many living in urban areas, and requiring culturally responsive Indigenous-led services and supports. Indigenous communities also continue to face systemic discrimination and systems failures. According to Statistics Canada, there were 9,960 Indigenous identified people residing in the Region of Waterloo in 2021 and 2,855 children and youth, making up 2.2% of the total population of young people, however, Indigenous communities are over-represented in the area's correctional, justice and child welfare systems. The Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action require overhauling these systems to right the wrongs that have been inflicted on Indigenous peoples historically and continuously.

In addition, communities have called for more community-centric approaches that prioritize prevention and diversion, including approaches such as police-free response to mental health calls and the use of diversion programs through Community Justice Centres to reduce contact with the criminal or mental health systems, while improving outcomes for those with complex needs who require ongoing support.

The Region's Strategic Plan recognizes these socio-economic contexts and priorities, and that community safety and wellbeing require long-term, collaborative action. In line with this vision, the 2026-2030 Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWP) builds upon work over the decades, including organizations and leaders who have laid the groundwork and continue efforts to advance

safety and wellbeing in the Region.

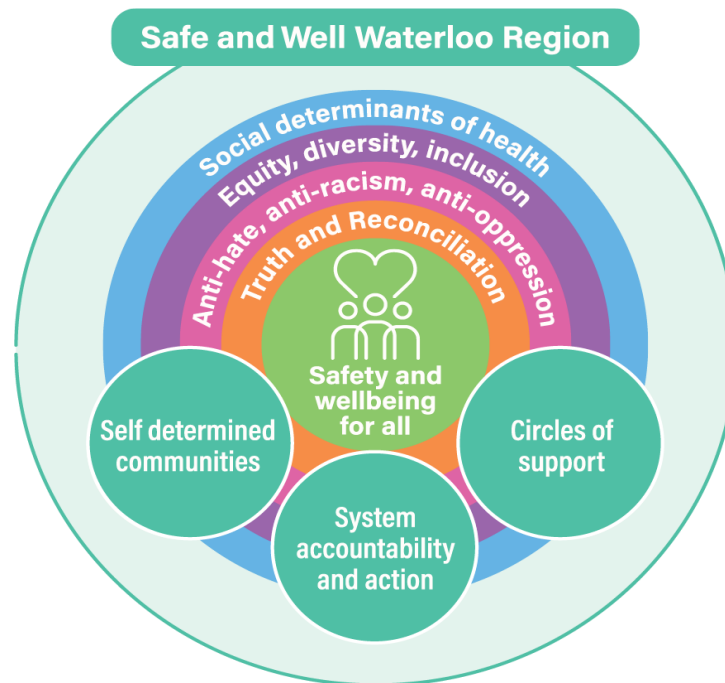
The CSWP incorporates community engagement, lived experiences, community needs, demographic trends, and community risk-based data. It positions the whole region to respond to community needs together with compassion, equity, and shared responsibility.

Going forward, the CSWP will continue to be developed in collaboration with communities in response to evolving needs and build upon this rich foundation. The CSWP will include more focused community data collection, deepen local area engagement and collaboration to respond to this rich rural and urban diversity in the Region, recognizing that rural needs are distinct from urban needs.

Vision and Framework

Together, our goal is for every person who calls Waterloo Region home to feel safe, cared for, and to have the opportunity to thrive. To enable this vision, the CSWP – 2026-2030 will prioritize the following:

- Ensure Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and diverse community-led leadership are embedded in all the work of the CSWP, as anchored in the CSWP Framework.
- Deepen outcomes and progress across the four strategic priorities, including greater collaboration and intersectional work across the priorities:
 - Combatting Hate
 - Addressing Intimate Partner Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ persons
 - Addressing Mental Health and Addictions
 - Creating Safe and Inclusive Spaces
- Be responsive and proactive to community needs, incorporating evolving community safety and wellbeing needs in the CSWP.
- Take a whole community approach – collaborating and engaging with community organizations, systems partners, and area municipalities to ensure community safety and wellbeing priorities are enabled across the region.
- Deepen collaboration with area municipalities to address local priorities, understanding rural needs are distinct from urban needs.
- Take an evidenced-based approach utilizing data, best practices, and community knowledge to ensure meaningful progress is achieved.



This vision recognizes that safety is more than the absence of crime or crisis. It includes having a sense of belonging, equitable access to services, supportive relationships, culturally safe environments, self-determination for diverse communities and identity expression, and reliable pathways to help when needed, based on diverse, intersectional identities.

This vision was shaped by community engagement and grounded in community voice and informed the CSWP framework which includes core principles:

Social Determinants of Health: Social determinants of health refer to the range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that shape people’s lives. The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, have important influences on health.

Equity: Inclusive, respectful, systemic fair treatment of all people, results in equitable outcomes and opportunities.

Diversity: A wide range of national, ethnic, gender or racial or other backgrounds of people. It includes all the ways in which people may differ and recognizes everyone and every group as a part of the grand collective which should be valued.

Inclusion: The effective implementation of diversity. It authentically brings traditionally excluded individuals or groups into activities, processes and decision making in ways that share power.

Anti-Hate: Attitudes, actions, policies, and initiatives designed to address, oppose, prevent, and counter hate speech, discrimination, and hate-motivated crimes targeting individuals based on their

race, religion, sexual orientation, or other identity factors.

Anti-oppression: Seeks to bring awareness of biases and unlearned privileges that exist in society and to disrupt the systems creating these inequities to promote equity for everyone.

Anti-racism: An active approach to identifying, challenging and changing the systems, behaviours and values that uphold racism at all levels of society.

Truth and Reconciliation: Truth and Reconciliation in Canada is a process aimed at addressing the harmful legacy of the Indian Residential School system, focusing on acknowledging the truth of Survivors' experiences and fostering healing. In order for reconciliation to happen, there has to be an awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released a report in 2015 with 94 Calls to Action on how governments of all levels, institutions and individuals can support the process of truth and reconciliation. 11 of the 94 actions are municipal specific. These recommendations address ongoing systemic impacts in child welfare, education, health, and justice, urging all levels of government to enact change.

Self-determined communities: A community that has self-determined power, freedoms and resources to define and achieve safety and wellbeing based on solutions that reflect their own cultural understandings and identities.

Circles of support: A community where relationships hold the power to nurture safety and wellbeing through social connection, practical life help, advice, empowerment, and shared advocacy. Circles of support can include family, chosen family, neighbours, friends, and more.

Accountable systems committed to change: A system that embeds reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion in everything they do, re-define power dynamics between themselves, other organizations and communities, act courageously and try new approaches.

This framework guides the four CSWP priorities:

- Combatting Hate
- Addressing Intimate Partner Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ persons
- Addressing Mental Health and Addictions
- Creating Safe and Inclusive Spaces

It also informs cross-cutting priorities such as youth involvement, data and evidence-based practices, government relations, and community engagement, and evolving priorities under the CSWP.

Provincial Context

The Community Safety and Policing Act (2019) requires every municipality in Ontario to develop a Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan and update and refresh the plan every four years. The Act shifts the focus from reactive responses to proactive prevention and emphasizes collaboration among community agencies, systems partners, police services, and municipalities. The provincial framework highlights the following core expectations:

- Identify local community risk-based needs and priorities
- Engage diverse sectors, systems partners, and communities
- Design integrated strategies and outcomes
- Ensure transparent reporting and accountable implementation

In addition, four approaches to planning are mandated, with greater emphasis placed on the first three approaches to ensure community safety priorities and resources are effectively and efficiently planned:

- **Social Development** - Address root causes of harm and increase wellbeing before risks develop
- **Prevention** - Act early to reduce risks before they escalate
- **Risk Intervention** - Support those who are in immediate or elevated risks that require coordinated help *before* becoming critical incidents or emergencies
- **Incident Response** - Respond to critical incidents and emergencies and ensure public safety

In 2022, the Region of Waterloo developed a CSWP framework and asset map in collaboration with communities across the region and in alignment with the legislation. In 2026, the Region is mandated to develop an updated CSWP in compliance with the four-year cycle under legislation.

This updated 2026-2030 CSWP prioritizes community needs in collaboration with CSWP community and systems partners, enabling continuous community and evidence-informed strategies and outcomes that support community safety and wellbeing.

Community Engagement and Consultation



Community consultation and engagement are the foundation of the CSWP. Between 2021–2025 engagement included consultations with diverse community leaders representing First Nations, Inuit and Métis, African, Black, Caribbean, racialized communities, religious groups, youth, grassroots organizations, faith communities, service providers, educators, frontline workers, and municipal partners.

In 2021-2022, over 100 community and system leaders co-created the CSWP framework and asset map, helping to shape the priorities and values underpinning the plan.

Between 2023-2024, two community symposiums were held. The first symposium, held in 2023, brought together over 100 diverse community and system leaders to collaborate and advance shared priorities for community safety and wellbeing. The identified priorities included combatting hate, safe and inclusive spaces, and addressing mental health and addictions. Participants also emphasized housing and homelessness and belonging as core drivers of community safety. Participants called for deeper collaboration, commitments to reconciliation, and culturally relevant systems of support.

In 2023, the Region declared gender-based violence an epidemic and called upon the provincial government to do the same. This priority was included in the CSWP as addressing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and 2SLGBTQIA+ persons.

In 2024, a second symposium called "Forward Together: Activating Change, Amplifying Belonging" was hosted collaboratively between CSWP, Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT), and Immigration Partnership. Participants focused on meaningful action centering on safety, wellbeing and belonging in Waterloo Region. The symposium featured keynote speakers and featured breakout sessions and panels focused on safety, wellbeing, homelessness, belonging, youth engagement, building belonging in polarizing times and social resilience.

Over 2023-2025, community Action Tables and working groups were implemented in response to the community-identified priorities. Community leaders and partners continued to emphasize the impact of hate incidents and discrimination. Racialized, newcomer, Jewish, Muslim, 2SLGBTQIA+, and Indigenous community members shared experiences of racism and discrimination and wanted more culturally safe community spaces. Gender-based violence was identified as a critical priority and an epidemic. Community members described barriers in accessing services, long wait times, complex legal processes, and the need for trauma-informed supports.

Engagement also surfaced the need for enhanced equitable system supports, especially for newcomers, young people, people with disabilities, and rural residents who cannot easily access centralized services. Communities consistently expressed a desire not just to be consulted but to lead and co-design solutions.

The Region's [Upstream Funding Model](#)—which has invested almost \$15 million to date in community-led initiatives since 2022 reinforced the importance of shifting resources and decision-making power to grassroots organizations that are deeply connected to community. An evaluation report by researchers at Wilfrid Laurier University measured the social impact of the Region of Waterloo's Upstream Funding Model and found the funding helped to create jobs, deliver critical health and social services, and strengthen the local economy.

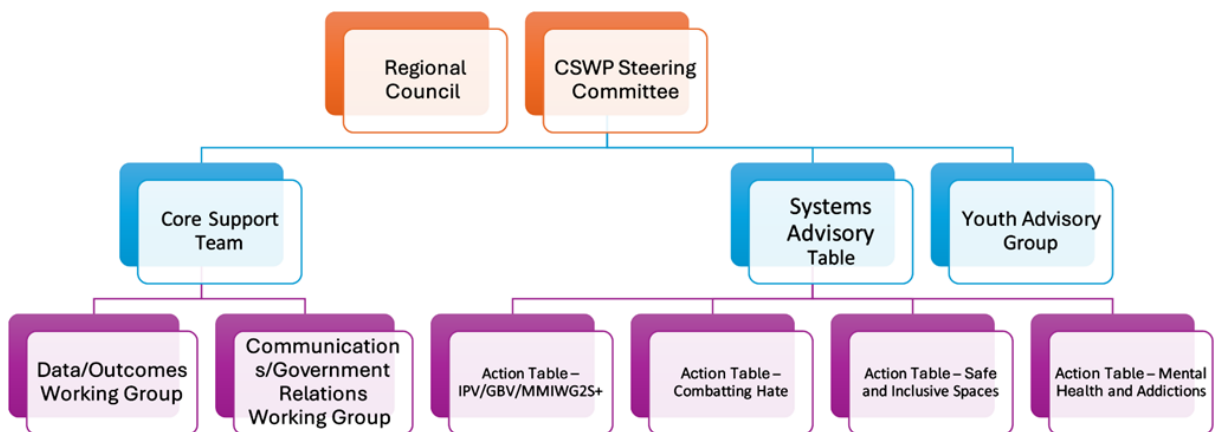
"The refreshingly different approach to this process is helping us to break out of our traditional ways of doing this work, exploring new partners especially encouraging us to listen to hidden voices" - Kristine Allison, Engage Rural, [Upstream Fund Poster](#).

"Another strength of the Upstream model lies in its ability to challenge the status quo. it is about empowering communities to become architects of their own futures" Source: [Upstream Fund Poster](#)

This updated CSWP 2026-2030 was developed in consultation with CSWP community partners and over the next four years, community collaboration and engagement will continue to be central to developing CSWP priorities, strategies, indicators, and initiatives. Engagement is not an event; it is a continuous relationship, and this plan is built to deepen, broaden, and strengthen relationships over time.

Governance

The governance of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan represents a shared leadership approach that integrates collective municipal responsibility with broad-based community ownership. While the Region of Waterloo is legislatively responsible for developing and reporting on the plan under the Community Safety and Policing Act (2019), the CSWP itself is a community-driven initiative that brings together diverse community organizations, municipal partners, organizations, sectors, lived experience partners, and a whole community approach to collectively advance safety and wellbeing.



At the centre of this governance model is the CSWP Steering Committee. Comprised of senior leaders from municipal governments, Indigenous communities, education, health care, mental health and addictions, policing, justice, social services, and grassroots organizations, the Steering Committee provides strategic direction, ensures accountability, and aligns resources across the region.

Supporting the Steering Committee is the advisory committee, made up of systems partners across health care, rural, paramedic services, education, social services, children and youth, settlement and community sectors. This advisory group brings together systems leaders who share deep expertise and experience in various sectors. Their role is to enable integrated approaches by leveraging systems, identify service gaps, illuminate systemic barriers, and propose strategies for coordinated action across systems.

Action Tables represent the most community-centered component of governance. These tables bring together system leaders, grassroots organizers, community advocates, and leaders with lived experience. They function as engines of implementation, responsible for advancing specific actions within each pillar. The strength of Action Tables lies in their diversity and grassroots and operational experience. Members contribute expertise from across sectors and bring personal lived experience, ensuring that actions are grounded in what truly matters to communities. In 2024, Action Tables were established for Combatting Hate, Mental Health and Addictions, and Intimate Partner Violence/Gender-Based Violence/MMIWG2S+. The Action Table for Safe and Inclusive Spaces is the most recent table to be initiated, and it will focus first on safe and inclusive spaces for Indigenous communities.

The Region of Waterloo Youth Advisory Group (YAG) plays an important role in the CSWP governance structure, ensuring young people have a say in CSWP initiatives and regional projects. This group is made up of over 40 youth, ranging in age from 14 to 25 years, who bring youth leadership and lived experience to the table.

Complementing the Action Tables are two working groups that focus on alignment, coordination, and implementation. These working groups provide the knowledge and experience to move the plan forward. The working groups include the Data and Outcomes Working Group, the Communications and Government Relations Working Group. These groups support the design of shared measurements, public communications, integrated engagement strategies, advocacy efforts, and reporting mechanisms.

The Core Support team, consisting of municipal leaders, Waterloo Regional Police Service, and the Region's Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion division, provides administrative support, facilitates aligned action, ensures progress is documented and communicated, and strengthens relationships across systems and communities. However, as the work of Action Tables expands and more attention is given to dedicated outcomes, it is recognized additional members and resourcing will be required to maintain momentum, coordination, and accountability.

Overall, the governance structure reflects a deliberate shift toward community-driven, equity-centered leadership. It acknowledges that no single organization or sector can address the complex challenges of community safety and wellbeing alone. Governance is therefore both a structure and a philosophy—one that recognizes that transformational change requires shared responsibility and collaboration.

Community Needs

The community risk-based approach underpinning the CSWP ensures that the plan remains responsive to emerging community needs while grounded in evidence, lived experience, and shared accountability. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the CSWP identifies community needs and risks that require cross-sector attention. These risks include police data and broader social, economic, health, environmental, and cultural data and priorities such as the Youth Impact Survey, Immigration Partnerships Waterloo Region Immigrant Survey, Public Health Ontario Marginalization Index, the Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey conducted by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, and other sources.

In addition, community voice, Indigenous knowledge, cultural expertise, and lived experience play a critical role in identifying needs. Communities often name harms long before they are visible in formal data sets. For example, communities named escalating hate incidents, antisemitism, and Islamophobia before cases rose sharply in official police reporting. Similarly, Indigenous communities identified the urgent need for Indigenous-led spaces and systemic inequities for years before the Indigenous Space Needs Assessment formally documented the gap.

Community needs and risks were assessed based on their prevalence, urgency, severity, impacts on equity-deserving communities, the presence of systemic barriers, and the capacity of systems to intervene upstream. The four priority areas—Combatting Hate; IPV/GBV/MMIWG2S+; Mental Health and Addictions; and Safe and Inclusive Spaces—represent community-identified needs that require coordinated, long-term, cross-sector collaboration.

These four priorities are not mutually exclusive and intersect together. They also intersect with broader determinants such as housing affordability, cost of living, access to primary health care, poverty, equity, and community belonging. The risk-based approach acknowledges the interdependence of these conditions and the need for integrated solutions. It is also a living framework that will evolve as the region continues to monitor data, listen to community experiences, and respond to emerging challenges.

Priority 1: Combatting Hate

The Combatting Hate priority reflects a growing and urgent concern identified across the region. Waterloo Region has recorded some of the highest per capita rates of police reported hate-motivated incidents in Canada.

During engagement sessions, community members consistently described experiences of Islamophobia, antisemitism, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia, as well as fears of retaliation if reporting incidents or seeking support. In addition, communities have conveyed that global crises and acts of hate amplify local harms and impacts.

In 2024, more than 30 leaders from education, settlement, policing, justice, mental health, rural communities, youth organizations, area municipalities, faith-based groups and grassroots groups with diverse identities and living experiences joined together to form the Combatting Hate Action Table (CHAT). The group engaged in dialogue to understand the current context and actions needed to combat hate in Waterloo region. Key goals were identified: mapping existing gaps in supports for trauma-informed, culturally safe services for individuals and families who experience hate; building system accountability and action; identifying reporting pathways; increasing a sense of belonging; and developing a broad public education campaign on hate and identity-based harm.

"The slogan itself, the campaign's message - Hate is not OK. Name It. Report It. It means a lot for me, it means it's just not about good intentions, it's about taking action against hate" - Fauzia Mazhar, Executive Director, Coalition of Muslim Women Kitchener-Waterloo

"I'm proud of the resilience and diversity in our community. While challenges remain, I see a growing commitment among individuals and organizations to work together, listen, and act. That collaboration gives me confidence that we can create a community where everyone is safe and feels safe." - Pete Koonsakda, Sergeant, Waterloo Regional Police Service

Actions/Outcomes:

In 2025, the Combatting Hate Action Table developed and launched a community-wide anti-hate awareness campaign and website, [We all belong here](#), aimed at addressing hate, harm and building a community where everyone feels safe, welcomed, and respected with a sense of belonging. The campaign message and design was co-created by CHAT based on diverse community engagement and consultations with CSWP partners and includes multi-media messages, a wrapped Grand River Transit Bus and translation in multiple languages.

A campaign website ([webelongwr.ca](#)) was developed. The purpose of the campaign website is to help visitors find the support they need, including those experiencing hate and seeking support, healing and information about reporting, those wanting to help and wanting to join efforts in combatting hate as an ally and to drive collective systemic change, and those who may have caused harm and are seeking support and opportunities for change.

The campaign and website were launched with over 100+ community leaders and partners. Since the launch, over 25 community activation events have been held across Waterloo Region to promote the campaign with community partners, residents and youth, including 128,000 views on social media and almost 9,000 visits to the website to date.

Going Forward:

In the coming years, work under this priority will continue and respond to ongoing and emerging community needs, including:

- Launch of phase II of the *We all belong here* campaign – which will include community conversations and communications focused on building understanding of identity-based hate and harm, addressing misinformation, reducing polarization, and encouraging shifts in attitudes and behaviours.
- Exploring protocols, policies for responding to hate incidents and training for bystanders and allyship.
- Developing a community inventory of supports and resources for survivors of hate and identity-based harm, and initiatives aimed at building solidarity between communities using restorative justice approaches.

Addressing hate requires consistent commitment across institutions, systems, and community networks, and collaborative across all Action Tables. Through this Action Table, Waterloo Region is strengthening its capacity to respond with compassion, respect, and coordinated action.

Indicators:

- Police-reported hate crime data (StatsCan & Waterloo Region Police Service)
- Coalition of Muslim Women Snapshot of Hate report: *Hate is not Okay. Name it Report It.*
- Immigration Partnership Waterloo Region data
- Children & Youth Planning Table – Youth Impact Survey
- By-Law data for Region of Waterloo and for area municipalities
- Waterloo Region District School Board bullying reporting tool
- Victim Services of Waterloo Region (Hate crime referrals)
- Implementation and Outcome evaluation of the *We All Belong Here* campaign led by researchers at the University of Waterloo School of Public Health

Priority 2: Intimate Partner Violence, Gender-based Violence, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ Persons

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and the ongoing national tragedy of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and 2SLGBTQIA+ persons remain critical concerns throughout the region. Across Waterloo Region, police reported incidents of these forms of violence continue to rise year on year, as does the demand for services and supports. Survivors have identified increases in coercive control, economic abuse, sexual violence, criminal harassment, human trafficking, and digital violence. Service providers note that the complexity and severity of cases have increased significantly, with many survivors facing additional barriers related to housing, shelters, income, combined with the challenge of navigating legal systems, child welfare, immigration status, and cultural stigma.

In recognition of the urgent need for coordinated action, the Region of Waterloo and all area municipalities declared IPV, GBV, and MMIWG2S+ an epidemic in 2023.

"This declaration has already moved from symbolism to action by including Intimate Partner Violence and Gender Based Violence as a stand-alone pillar in the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan" - Jennifer Hutton, CEO, Women's Crisis Services - (Source :All Councils Meeting, December 2023).

"As a survivor of gender-based violence, I'm grateful to see a plan that brings together such a broad and committed network of agencies and resources. This kind of coordinated action is exactly what we need to address the urgent, systemic issues we're facing and to create real pathways to safety and healing." - Robin Heald, Executive Director, Child Witness Centre

"IPV/GBV are issues which strike at the very heart of how we engage as community. Non-violence and respect in our intimate relationships serves as the organizing story for all relationships we perform as partners, parents, friends and neighbours. This principle is upheld by the inclusion of IPV/GBV as a pillar of the Community Safety and Wellbeing plan. "
- Christine Taylor, Manager, Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Care Centre

Actions/Outcomes:

The Family Violence Project (FVP), a collaborative of nine co-located agencies providing industry leading wrap-around services to support victims and survivors. In 2024, the CSWP team provided strategic planning support to the FVP to help re-envision its approach to meet increased community needs, plan for sustainable growth, and center survivors in care. This process included Indigenous partners and members of the Waterloo Region Gender-Based Violence Leadership Strategy, strengthening alignment between Indigenous-led responses and mainstream service systems. Additionally, key funding advocacy on behalf of the FVP was carried out by the Region of Waterloo and CSWP Government Relations to the Provincial Government on several occasions.

Several innovative programs have recently been cited as models of best practice:

- Early Intervention Program: an evidence-based program offering timely, trauma-informed support and education in the early stages of abusive behaviour.
- Engaging Men Program: focusing on prevention through counselling and challenging norms.
- Sexual Violence Legal Support Program: provides survivors with specialized legal guidance.

In 2025, the Action Table also conducted an IPV/GBV service provider survey to better understand the landscape of regional services, funding streams, and resource allocation. Various provider data was analyzed by the CSWP Data and Outcomes working group to inform strategy and identify where need/vulnerability exists in the region. Action Table members also developed a training module outlining the importance and understanding of femicide.

Going Forward:

Moving forward, the priorities include:

- Working with GBV/IPV/MMIWG/2SLGBTQIA+ organizations and activists to identify priorities that meaningfully respond to GBV as an epidemic.
- Integrating the Waterloo Region's Gender-Based Violence Strategy in consultation and collaboration with sector leaders.
- Continuing to develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of IPV/GBV/MMIWG2S+ supports in the Region.
- Prioritizing a response to human trafficking and the intersection with unhoused and precariously housed women.
- Reviewing membership for the Action Table's membership with CSWP partners.
- Enhancing collaboration with Indigenous-led organizations, grassroots newcomer and cultural groups, including integrating information, programs and messaging for newcomers.
- Linking culturally safe housing and healing spaces for a continuum of care.

Indicators:

- Shelter occupancy rates and demographics
- Program access and delivery
- Police data (occurrences/charges)
- Survivor/Victim data
- Non-police reported (community and system agencies)
- Population growth / geography
- Perpetrator data
- StatsCan data as baseline comparator
- Rates of early intervention call prevention / engaging men statistics
- Overall community served versus unmet demand

Priority 3: Mental Health and Addictions

Addressing Mental Health and Addictions needs together represents major intersecting issues which have significant influence over individual and community wellbeing. The CSWP recognizes that mental health and addictions services must remain equitable, accessible and trauma-informed, and are also designed to allow for the most innovative and efficient use of healthcare and community resources; ensuring that individuals in need are connected to the right supports at the right time and experience improved mental health outcomes.

Hospital emergency departments, paramedic services, community services, and police services continue to experience service capacity issues due to high-frequency use and recontact of these combined resources.

In 2024, the Mental Health and Addictions System Transformation Team (MHA STT) was

established, a collaborative initiative bringing together over 40 community leaders and people with lived experience. The goal of the Team is to align mental health and addictions cross-sectoral work happening across Waterloo Region to prevent duplication of tables, optimize resources and improve impact through integrated and coordinated mental health, addictions and acquired brain injury care. Applying an equity-driven, data-informed approach, the Team addresses gaps, removes harmful practices and prioritizes improvements, so care is accessible, connected, and responsive.

“Mental health and addiction needs in Waterloo Region are escalating and addressing them requires coordinated system leadership. The Mental Health and Addictions System Transformation Team brings organizations and people with lived experience together to close service gaps, strengthen prevention, and build a more connected and responsive system of care for our community.” Tracy Elop, Co-Chair of STT - CEO Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health

“From a family and caregiver perspective, it is so important to bring the members of the STT together from across the region to work to identify and fill gaps in mental health and addiction services. These are encountered by families each and every day as we work to navigate and find help for our loved ones. The STT has proven that it can identify these gaps, bring a team together to focus on one of them, and put “fixes” in place that will improve that part of the system for the next family coming into it.” - Steve Keczem, Co-Chair of STT – family member with lived experience

Actions/Outcomes:

- Developed and implemented a policy to compensate grassroots organizations and individuals with lived experience to support their meaningful participation in system transformation activities. Their voices are critical to developing a coordinated and seamless mental health and addictions system that works for our entire community.
- Developed and strengthened relationships and connections between community leaders and people with lived experience to better align work and uncover gaps and new opportunities.
- Developed and widely distributed referral tools to better connect individuals to the right mental health and addictions supports across the region.
- Launched a cross-sector committee to advance system responses for people with complex and high-use needs through work focused on frequent Emergency Department visitors.
- Developed a cross-sectoral transitional housing pilot providing follow-up health care to unhoused individuals who have been discharged from hospital. This is similar to a hospital-to-home model but supports unhoused individuals and reduces repeat emergency room visits.
- Embedded Acquired Brain Injury screening and services across multiple organizations including outreach workers and hospital staff.
- Piloted a free youth recreation project in partnership with the YMCA.
- Explored the creation of a Mental Health and Addictions Data Hub with support from the University of Waterloo and applied for a grant to support this work. We also conducted a scan of the current data practices and needs in the system.

- Implemented HART Hub Waterloo Region offering integrated health, social and addictions support across the region. Service access has grown through mobile clinics, extended hours, outreach teams, crisis response, employment support and addictions care. A 12-bed transitional housing program was also recently launched. More than 40 agencies are engaged through in-kind support or referral pathways in the Hart Hub model.

Going Forward:

Moving forward, next steps include:

- Continuing to develop and strengthen relationships and connections between community leaders and people with lived experience to better align work and uncover new opportunities.
- Working collaboratively to advance youth-focused targeted prevention strategies to reduce challenges with mental health and addiction concerns. Priorities for action include:
- Advancing culturally centered mental health education so that access to mental health services is improved for youth in diverse communities, and
- Expanding Youth Wellness Hubs into KW4 (Kitchener, Waterloo, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich) where youth can access integrated care related to mental health, substance use counselling, health care and social support.
- Improving support for people who are frequently accessing episodic emergency/acute services related to Mental Health and Addictions.
- Working collaboratively to ensure equity deserving groups have access to Mental Health and Addiction supports including crisis response supports.
- Increasing availability of long-acting injections for people who are unhoused, supporting stabilization and improved system navigation.
- Improving communication between primary care and community mental health and addictions organizations.
- Strengthening system planning and improved service models through progress towards shared data capacity.
- Pursuing a phased expansion of the HART Hub model to additional providers and exploring the development of formal pathways with paramedic services, emergency departments, and other first responders to strengthen crisis response.

Indicators:

- # of police mental health and addictions apprehensions
- # of diversions done by community service organizations away from episodic emergency/acute services for Mental Health & Addictions Supports (to be developed)
- # of High Frequency Systems Users for Mental Health and Addictions
- % of youth in Waterloo Region who report their mental health as positive

Priority 4: Safe and Inclusive Spaces

Safe and Inclusive Spaces emerged as a priority consistently during community consultations, particularly among Indigenous communities, racialized residents, newcomers, youth, and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Communities emphasized the absence of culturally safe, welcoming, accessible places to gather, learn, heal, celebrate identity, and build community. Many individuals described feeling unsafe in public spaces such as transit terminals, parks, recreation centres, and downtown cores. Others described experiences of racism, discrimination, or harassment in institutional settings.

It was also recognized that when systems partners and community groups work continuously together across sectors to support diverse communities, these efforts collectively contribute to safer and more inclusive spaces.

At the Waterloo Region District School Board, we believe that safe and inclusive learning environments and community spaces are foundational to a healthy and thriving community. The WRDSB embraces our role as a partner in building and contributing to a Waterloo Region where everyone feels they belong.” - Scott Miller, Director of Education, Waterloo Region District School Board

Safe and Inclusive Spaces for Indigenous Communities:

One of the key gaps identified was the lack of safe and inclusive spaces for Indigenous communities. While this priority will focus on diverse communities over the next few years, safe spaces for Indigenous communities was prioritized first, with a new Safe and Inclusive Spaces Table established focused on Indigenous-leadership and identification and development of safe and inclusive spaces for ceremony, healing, culturally appropriate services and community gathering. . Another gap identified was the systemic inequities and barriers Indigenous communities face in understanding and accessing the systems, policies, processes and resources to advance safe and inclusive spaces.

“The two basic elements are infrastructure and land. When you bring community together to use the space, the culture and history will come to life.” - Indigenous Spaces Needs Report Consultations, 2022-2023

“Gathering is an important aspect of our culture. I think there is a real opportunity for our community to do some restorative healing in a space that is neutral and used by all community members living in ROW. We have a number of Knowledge Keepers, Traditional Healers, and Elders in our urban community that can really bring our culture to life if we had the space. In this space there will be opportunity to practice and learn our language, culture, and ceremony.” - Indigenous Space Needs Report Consultations, 2022-2023

Actions/Outcomes:

An important development in 2024 was the completion of the Indigenous Space Needs Assessment, commissioned on behalf of all area municipalities. This report identified a profound lack of Indigenous-led spaces for ceremony, youth and family programming, land-based learning, healing, and community gatherings.

To date, actions include the following:

- The Safe and Inclusive Spaces Action Table has prioritized working on the need for an Indigenous service hub and a healing lodge. Building on the work of many community leaders, the Action Table will work alongside community to support community-driven initiatives to advance these priorities.
- The municipal led Reconciliation Action Partnership (RAP) has advanced several initiatives, including smudging policies in municipal buildings, free space for Indigenous groups, creation of sacred fire sites, increased Indigenous art, and the addition of Indigenous languages in public signage.
- Upstream Fund investments have supported grassroots initiatives that strengthen belonging, cultural expression, and community care. Many of these projects focus on Indigenous arts, newcomer integration, 2SLGBTQIA+ programming, Black community leadership, and interfaith belonging.

Going Forward:

The next phase of work under this priority includes working with Indigenous leaders and communities to develop the following:

- Ensuring greater representation of Indigenous organizations and leaders at CSWP Action Tables and in the work, recognizing that this representation was insufficient in the past to fully reflect Indigenous voices and experiences in the CSWP and towards the work of this priority.
- Supporting business case development for the Indigenous Community Hub, including supporting Indigenous communities in accessing the systems and resources to enable business planning.
- Mapping available spaces across the region for Indigenous space needs.
- Designing Indigenous-led spaces led by Indigenous leaders.
- Investing in outdoor spaces for ceremony and cultural events.

This work will be guided by Indigenous leadership, equity and human rights principles, and community-led design practices.

Indicators/Outcomes:

- The Safe and Inclusive Spaces table is in the early stages of development, and the indicators will be developed by Indigenous leaders and organizations.

Youth Advisory Group

The Region of Waterloo Youth Advisory Group (YAG) is a cross-cutting priority central to the CSWP. Youth across Waterloo Region have consistently expressed a desire for meaningful leadership roles in shaping decisions affecting housing, community safety, public space, education, climate, and inclusion.

Young people bring insight, innovation, and lived experience that are essential for effective action. The Region of Waterloo Youth Advisory Group is structured as a youth-led body (ages 14-25) with representation from diverse youth, including secondary and post-secondary institutions, Indigenous youth, newcomer youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, and youth with disabilities. Members provide input in regional government projects, develop advocacy skills, and develop relationships with each other and regional government staff. The Region of Waterloo Youth Advisory Group participates directly in CSWP decision-making, provides input to Action Tables and regional projects related to safety and wellbeing.

Actions/Outcomes:

The Region of Waterloo Youth Advisory Group has provided input into regional and CSWP projects that contribute to community safety and wellbeing including the development of the *We all belong here* campaign.

In addition, the Region of Waterloo Youth Advisory Group has contributed to the following initiatives:

- Reimagine Door Initiative
- Regional Plan and Budget
- Reconciliation Action Partnership Strategic Plan
- Long-Term Waste Management Strategy
- Data sense-making with the Children and Youth Planning Table using CYTP Wellbeing Survey data
- Charles Street Terminal visioning

The Region of Waterloo Youth Advisory Group members also participated in a data sense-making session to discuss the Children and Youth Planning Table 2023 Youth Impact Survey Data and considered the 2022 Data in Action Report, which included multiple actions desired by youth related to reducing hate and building belonging.

Going Forward:

- Members of the Youth Advisory Group will continue to play a vital role in the CSWP priorities and engagement will continue with the CSWP Action Tables and Regional initiatives related to community safety and wellbeing to ensure alignment on other cross-cutting priorities for the Region and area municipalities (e.g. Safe public transportation, digital safety, youth-centered mental health and addictions supports).

- Update the membership of the Youth Advisory Group, including recruiting 30-40 youth to participate on the Youth Advisory Group that continue to reflect the diversity of the Region, with intentional outreach to Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, racialized, rural and urban and youth with disabilities.
- Focused integration of rural youth meaningfully into the Youth Advisory Group structure.
- Connecting with CSWP Action Table conveners to continue to plan opportunities for the Youth Advisory Group to provide input into each of the CSWP priority areas.

Additionally, collaboration will continue with the Children and Youth Table (CYPT) on youth priorities. The CYPT plays a central and leading role in the Region, coordinating youth focused priorities. The CYPT will continue to be engaged to identify points of collaboration and intersection on youth priorities and issues.

The CYPT engaged over 2,500+ youth who were consulted to create actions that youth want to see in Waterloo Region. The top six priorities include:

- Public transportation
- Family physicians
- More accountability for bullying
- Long-term housing solutions
- Youth in decision-making
- Resources for newcomers

Communications and Government Relations

Effective communication is essential to building awareness, strengthening public trust, encouraging community participation, and maintaining transparency.

Integrated government relations into the CSWP governance ensures that the CSWP is shared across the Region and locally, a community of continuous learning and practice is established, and that important community safety and wellbeing priorities and related resource needs continue to be advocated for.

Actions/Outcomes:

In 2024, the CSWP launched a refreshed brand and visual identity designed by Indigenous artist and designer Katie Wilhelm. The brand incorporates regional landmarks, the Grand River, and symbols reflecting the Two Row Wampum and local Indigenous worldviews. It visually represents the Plan's commitment to belonging, shared responsibility, and reconciliation.

Engagement with area municipalities has been a core priority of the CSWP, with municipal staff represented on Action Tables and in the development and implementation of critical priorities such as the *We all belong here* campaign. Local area municipalities were instrumental in supporting the campaign with resources and amplifying the message. In addition, municipalities have played a

critical role in several other CSWP initiatives.

In addition, broader engagement with other municipalities and cross-sectoral groups supports a CSWP municipal community of practice and efforts to coordinate and secure resources. These efforts have focused on advocacy with other levels of government to advance funding needs to address CSWP priorities. The CSWP priorities rely almost entirely on public funding, and resources are limited to meet community needs. Continuous advocacy is required to support and sustain CSWP priorities.

Delegations at both the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conferences emphasized the need for provincial investment in crisis response, culturally safe services, mental health supports, and IPV/GBV/MMIWG2S+ initiatives.

Going Forward:

- Developing a robust communications and engagement plan to engage local communities and organizations in the CSWP.
- Deepening engagement with area municipalities to identify local needs that can be supported by the CSWP.
- Developing a community of practice with other municipalities to share learning and benchmark best practices.
- Continuous efforts to support resourcing and funding for CSWP initiatives and community organizations.

Data And Outcomes Working Group

The Data and Outcomes Working Group plays a crucial role in creating shared indicators and reviewing progress across systems. This group brings together analysts, researchers, and community partners to identify data sources, support Action Tables, and develop indicators for tracking progress.

Actions/Outcomes:

In 2024, the CSWP hosted a data and outcomes conversation with representatives from the Action Tables focused on working together to identify opportunities for CSWP data and outcomes needs. The sessions helped surface key questions and ideated possibilities to determine how best to support the Action Tables and CSWP as a whole.

In 2024, the group contributed analysis to the Family Violence Project, supported the Combatting Hate Table in understanding reporting pathways, and began establishing a framework for a public-facing CSWP dashboard.

Going Forward:

The Group will develop the following priorities:

- Identifying regional and local data to help inform a public-facing CSWP dashboard, including community risks and indicators and collaborating with the Youth Impact Survey, Immigrant Survey, Wellbeing Survey, rural data and other data sources.
- Identify the indicators and infrastructure required to support long-term impact assessment.
- Developing a data dashboard for each Action Table and align regular outcome reporting cycles with Action Tables.
- Benchmarking with other municipalities.
- Developing a four-year evaluation and impact assessment plan.

2026 -2030 CSWP Consultation Process and Feedback

The updated 2026-2030 CSWP was developed in consultation with CSWP community partners to reflect on the work to date, review current commitments, and identify evolving themes and priorities and future actions. Over 90 CSWP community partners contributed to the consultation process, representing community organizations, systems partners, and area municipalities from across the region who have been engaged with the development and implementation of the CSWP.

Summary of Community Consultation Feedback:

CSWP community partners affirmed that the four existing CSWP strategic priorities remain essential and require continued action, long-term commitment, collaborative work across the priorities, and performance measurement and reporting. They identified forward-looking actions under these priorities, emphasized the need for clearer governance processes, enhanced communication and engagement strategies, and more robust use of evidence-based objectives and integrated data across the CSWP structure. They also supported the strong community-centric approach, collaboration, and overall direction of the CSWP.

Looking ahead, the community asked to incorporate evolving needs such as housing and homelessness, food insecurity, cost of living, access to primary health care, supporting populations at high-risk of recidivism and preventing human trafficking. They noted that there are some existing tables working on these priorities, and while the CSWP may not lead these efforts, we can work together on intersecting needs and gaps. They also stressed embedding Truth and Reconciliation and equity, diversity, and inclusion more deeply across all areas of work, strengthening prevention-focused community safety interventions and ensuring a systems-level, whole-community approach that avoids duplication and maximizes collective impact.

During the consultations, it was noted that the action items are complex and will require time and effort to develop meaningful progress, working with communities to collaborate, map systems, and

build relationships. The CSWP partners also engaged in conversations about the CSWP itself, learning and sharing across Action Tables throughout the consultations. They discussed accountability and meaningful progress, and requested more opportunities to learn and share strategically and synergistically together.

Key Themes Identified Through Consultation:

- Continued focus on the four CSWP priorities with emphasis on measurement, dashboards, and progress reporting.
- Clearer governance, administrative processes, shared learning and collaboration, and robust communication and engagement across the region.
- Integration of evidence-based objectives, clear roles for partners, and shared data systems.
- Responsiveness to wellbeing issues, including housing and homelessness, food insecurity, cost of living, and access to health care.
- Deeper embedding of Truth and Reconciliation and equity, diversity and inclusion across the Action Tables, CSWP governance and memberships.
- Deepening work with area municipalities, with distinct approaches to rural versus urban communities.
- Strengthened prevention-focused interventions, including human trafficking response, diversion programs for those at-risk, and non-police mental health response.
- A whole-community systems approach addressing rural and urban needs while avoiding duplication and addressing gaps.

Over the next four years, the community Action Tables, working groups and committees will develop core objectives, indicators and action plans rooted in evidence-based practices and community knowledge, Truth and Reconciliation and equity, diversity and inclusion.

Engagement planning will include utilization of data and community-informed priorities, rural engagement strategies, Indigenous-led processes, and deeper engagement with diverse community organizations, systems partners, and area municipalities. Engagement will focus on building long-term relationships, supporting a whole community ownership approach, and ensuring the plan continues to evolve in response to emerging evidence-based community needs, integrating the diversity of cities and townships.

The following planning principles will guide the next four years:

- **Responsive and Transparent**– Develop the CSWP with integrity and inclusion, responding to existing and emerging priorities through transparent engagement, communications and reporting.
- **Build Upon and Evolve**- Center the Framework for Community Safety and Wellbeing and

build upon the foundation created while responding to evolving needs.

- Inclusive and Equity-Focused - Community-driven and -centered using anti-racist, decolonization and EDI-focused approaches with shared leadership and community champions.
- Alignment – Build a shared strategy and plan for Community Safety and Wellbeing that links priorities, indicators and outcomes across Action Tables.
- Evidence-based – Ensure key priorities are evidence and outcomes-informed and shaped by storytelling.
- Focused and Achievable – Focus on core objectives and outcomes and develop sustainable and achievable targeted actions, including identifying shared responsibility and resources.

Forward-looking Priorities and Themes

Four Priorities – Continuing to Make an Impact:

The CSWP community partners affirmed that the current four priorities require continuous action and commitment to achieve meaningful long-term impact. Over the next four years, focus will be on identifying baseline indicators, creating service maps, dashboards, achieving outcomes, and regularly reporting progress on the action items identified by the tables.

The consultations also identified other gaps, priorities and emerging themes, as outlined below:

Administration and Governance:

As the CSWP is evolving, governance and administration needs are also evolving. CSWP partners asked for enhanced clarity and processes to ensure the plan continues to achieve meaningful progress, and communities are engaged across the region.

- Review the governance and membership of the CSWP Action Tables, committees and working groups to ensure effective and representative collaboration and planning, including developing an onboarding program for new members.
- Implement a robust CSWP communications and engagement strategy across the region and locally in area municipalities.
- Develop evidence-based actions with clear objectives, outcomes, and indicators, including mapping roles of systems partners to understand gaps and intersections.
- Integrate data and communications across the CSWP governance structure and ensure implementation of dashboards for each Action Table.
- Review the Upstream funding model. The Upstream funding model and impact is independently evaluated by the Social Research and Innovation Group at Wilfred Laurier. Recommendations from ongoing community input and feedback will be incorporated into each funding cycle, including eligibility, criteria, and supports offered as part of the funding model.

Responsiveness and Foresight - Evolving Needs and Themes:

While there is consensus to continue to focus on the four strategic priorities, communities also asked for inclusion of additional priorities in the CSWP, particularly housing and homelessness, food insecurity, the cost of living, human trafficking, and access to health care. Additionally, it was noted that planning should include data-informed planning and forecasting to respond to evolving community needs.

- Work with the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (PECH), Poverty Roundtable, Gender-based Violence Leadership Group, Immigration Partnership, Engage Rural, local municipalities, and other community tables and partners to identify ways to intersect with priorities without duplicating efforts and addressing gaps.
- Work with the Children and Youth Planning Table Place on youth-defined priorities and identify how to best support these priorities through collaborative work.

Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

The CSWP is anchored in a social justice framework, and CSWP partners asked that this framework be embedded more deeply across the work and membership, using an intersectional lens.

- Embed Truth and Reconciliation in the four Action Tables, including priorities, membership and outcomes, ensuring its central role in the CSWP and prioritizing education and cultural awareness training for CSWP Action Table members and systems partners
- Embed the CSWP framework, including equity, diversity and inclusion more deeply across the four CSWP priorities, membership, and Action Tables.
- Review and refresh membership for CSWP advisory committee and Action Tables, ensuring inclusive and diverse representation, including Indigenous representation, rural and urban, diverse sectors, community and private sector representatives.
- Share knowledge and work collaboratively across the Action Tables, using an intersectional approach.

Preventative Community Safety Risk Interventions:

Community safety interventions should ideally prevent and divert communities from the criminal justice, child-welfare and justice systems. Community groups noted that the CSWP should focus on communities who may be at higher risk to enter the criminal justice system and who may be at risk for human trafficking, and who can benefit from community-based interventions and prevention programs.

- Collaborate with community leaders and partners to respond more effectively to increased human trafficking risks, including gender-based trafficking.
- Work with area municipalities, Waterloo Regional Police Service, and community partners on identifying local risks and needs and implementing targeted initiatives.
- Commitment to explore developing a Community Justice Centre, alongside the Ministry of the Attorney General, Waterloo Region Courthouse, Waterloo Regional Police Service and other key community stakeholders that connects individuals experiencing complex needs and who are involved in the criminal justice system, with dedicated supports and resources to prevent recidivism and improve overall outcomes.

- Explore police-free mental health response pilot. Individuals experiencing mental health issues or crises must be connected with the right provider at the right time. The Waterloo Regional Police Service is committed to collaboration with key community and system partners to develop a police-free front-line response pilot designed to meet the needs of diverse communities using a cohesive continuum of care which includes intervention, stabilization, referral, and treatment.

Collaboration and Systems Approaches:

The CSWP requires a whole community approach. CSWP partners emphasized the importance of taking a systems approach to adopting the plan across the region.

- Deepen engagement with area municipalities, ensuring focus on the distinct needs of rural versus urban regions.
- Work with community tables to identify gaps and targeted priorities without duplicating efforts and where high impact can be leveraged by working together.
- Hold forums to bring together Actions Tables for collaboration and learning.

These themes intersect with all four CSWP pillars and shape the social conditions that underpin community safety and wellbeing. They will be integrated across all Action Tables and included in the CSWP’s four-year Action Plan.

Four-Year Action Plan

A four-year action plan will be developed with Action Tables and Working Groups made up of measurable commitments, collaboration with community partners, and cross-cutting priorities. It will outline actions, leads and partners, and indicators focused on prevention, equity, reconciliation, and community leadership. The action plan will emphasize community needs, accountability, and long-term systems of change.

Conclusion

The 2026-2030 Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan represents a shared, community-led effort to build a safer, more equitable, more inclusive Waterloo Region. It reflects the historical and ongoing community contributions and experiences, honours Indigenous leadership and knowledge, and commits to long-term systems transformation through collaboration, prevention, and collective community ownership.

