

**Region of Waterloo**  
**Chief Administrative Officer**  
**Chief Communications and Strategy Office**

---

**To:** Administration and Finance Committee  
**Meeting Date:** October 4, 2022  
**Report Title:** Setting the context: Regional Strategy Refresh

---

**Recommendation:**

For information.

**Purpose / Issue:**

To provide Council with ongoing contextual updates on key topics to support decision making as part of 2023 Plan and Budget process, and the new Strategic Planning process. To provide an early update on the timeline to refresh the existing Regional Strategic Plan. This is a companion report to COR-CFN-22-026, which provides more information about the 2023 Plan and Budget context and process.

**Strategic Plan:**

The development of a new Strategic Plan directly contributes to the Responsive and Engaging Public Service focus area and will guide the development of new goals, objectives and priorities beyond 2023.

**Report Highlights:**

- The [Region's Strategic Plan](#) was adopted in 2019 and is entering the final year of implementation (2023). Staff are currently drafting the scope, process and timelines to create a new Regional Strategic Plan and will bring these to Council for deliberation and approval in November.
- The strategic planning process will support Council to identify the key strategic goals and objectives required to meet community need and improve resident and business service experience. The process will involve meaningful community and stakeholder engagement, environmental and futures scanning, and the mapping of existing plans, their performance and their ability to meet rapidly changing local and global realities.
- The region is facing significant local and global opportunities and challenges. These span all areas of community life from a social, environmental and

economic perspective and have a significant impact on the Region's plans, policies and service delivery.

- Council continue to calibrate the Region's strategic efforts through the annual Plan and Budget process, and continue to make progress against strategic priorities in several areas such as housing and homelessness, digital service transformation, Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), economic development, transportation networks and climate change.
- Thanks to strong leadership and solid partnerships, we have achieved policy and service improvement and innovation to support residents and to build our future. As our population continues to grow, services will come under heightened pressure and many critical choices will need to be made. Ongoing meaningful collaboration with partners from many sectors are at the heart of this success.
- As we transition to a new Council, it is important to recognize this as a critical window for strategic thinking, recalibration and revisiting community and organizational priorities.
- On election, new Council will have two immediate opportunities to begin this recalibration. The first will comprise of setting priorities for the 2023 Plan and budget process. This will enable new Council to act immediately on those things the community needs and believes to be important. Following that, new Council will begin the process to create a new Strategic Plan for the organization, which will enable Council to create a far longer-term sustainable plan and vision for change.
- The context for this important strategic planning work is complex and continues to change based on increasing local demands resulting from rapid growth and global trends. To ensure that Council and community remain up to date and have access to current information, Staff have been bringing forward a series of presentations about important topics that set the scene for the decisions to come.
  - The first of this series of contextual staff reports and presentations was in June 2022 [CAO-SPL-22-04/COR-CFN-22-18 2023 Plan and Budget Overview and Timetable]. In September, staff delivered a second presentation and report that highlighted the challenges faced by the region to attract and retain talent both as an organization and as a community [HRC-TOR-22-002 Regional Workforce: Sustaining Growth and Competitiveness].
  - As part of October Committee, staff will provide a third presentation titled [Thinking Globally, Planning Locally: Building an equitable, sustainable and thriving Waterloo Region] that aims to outline the Regional context from a community growth perspective, building on the recent Regional

Official Plan (ROP) extensive vision setting, strategic directions and amendments. The presentation explores how to grow in a sustainable, smart and community centred way.

- These staff presentations will continue throughout November as part of new Council orientation.

### **Background:**

Following extensive engagement and strategic discussion, it is anticipated that the new strategic plan will be created by end of Q2 of 2023 so that it can effectively guide the 2024 Plan and Budget process, ensuring that resources are in place to support the new priorities. Alongside this, staff will work with Council, community and partners to create an evaluation and performance framework to enable consistent and transparent tracking and reporting to stakeholders over the life of the new plan.

New Council will start the transition to a new strategy in November 2022 when they will deliberate their immediate priorities for 2023 as part of the Plan and Budget process. The 2023 Plan and Budget will lay the foundation for the longer-term goal and objective setting as part of the Strategic Plan refresh.

### **Area Municipality Communication and Public/Stakeholder Engagement:**

Extensive engagement and collaboration with area municipalities and our many shared partners will be critical to the success of the strategic planning process. Many area municipalities are also undergoing their own strategic planning processes during this time. This presents a perfect opportunity to identify our shared opportunities and challenges, and find new ways to work together within our respective roles to further the community as a whole.

Staff are currently preparing a comprehensive community engagement plan to support the development of the strategic plan refresh. More details about this plan will be brought forward to Council in November. This engagement will build upon 2023 Plan and Budget [COR-SPL-22-06 2023 Plan and Budget Engagement Update] and other recent engagements. The community engagement plan will involve inclusive opportunities for dialogue with community, partners and across Council and staff.

### **Financial Implications:**

None.

### **Conclusion / Next Steps:**

Council and staff are embarking on an important transition to a new Strategic Plan. This process will begin by laying the foundations with new Council during Councillor Orientation, 2023 Plan and Budget process and aim to create a new Strategic Plan for

2024-2028.

**Attachments / Links:**

[Appendix A](#): Setting the Context: Regional Strategy Refresh Presentation

**Prepared By:** Jenny Smith, Director Corporate Strategy & Performance

**Reviewed By:** Connie MacDonald, Chief Strategy & Communications Officer

**Approved By:** Bruce Lauckner, CAO