

## Appendix A: 2023 Mid-year Annual Business Plan Update

### Thriving Economy:

Waterloo Region continues to experience strong economic indicators, with strong GDP, low unemployment and diverse and growing industries in manufacturing, aerospace and tech. In 2022, a lot was learned as the community recovered from the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuing into 2023, the Region continues to work with community partners and businesses to attract talent and create the foundation for innovation and economic growth. Some highlights of business plan initiatives during the first half of 2023 contributing to a thriving economy include:

- **Rapid and Strategic Airport Growth:** This quarter, to advance rapid strategic growth, the Airport completed phase two of the air terminal building expansion including opening the new outbound baggage system and adding a third pre-board security line to meet increased demand. YKF continues to be one of the top 20 busiest airports in the country. YKF directly connects Waterloo Region to 15 non-stop destinations in Canada, the United States and Mexico through three commercial airlines that operate more than 50 flights each week. To reduce airport emissions, the airport achieved Level 1 – Mapping of the Airport Carbon Accreditation program, enabling the airport to prioritize energy use reductions and energy efficiencies. The airport continues to strengthen relationships with the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Aeronautics and international companies to expand the aerospace sector in Waterloo Region. The Masterplan Update and Sustainability Strategy is in progress.

### Environment and Climate Action:

Protecting the environment, mitigating and adapting to climate change is very important to residents living in Waterloo Region. Solving these complex and profound threats and challenges means a long-term shift in how we live our lives, how we do business and how municipal services operate. Understanding the impact that growth and other factors have on the environment and recognizing that a healthy natural environment is essential to wellbeing has been a significant focus in 2022 and continues into the 2023 Plan. Highlights for the first half of 2023 include:

- **Re-imagining Waste Services:** A review of best practices and consultations with other municipalities and industry experts are underway as the Region prepares the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the next collection contract. A Fairness Monitor has been selected to participate in the procurement process. The new Ontario blue box regulation moves the responsibility for providing recycling services (funding and operation) from municipalities to producers that generate packaging, paper and similar products. The Region of Waterloo will transition in March 2024.

- **Modernizing the SCADA system:** The SCADA System Modernization Project is one of the most ambitious projects for a water system in North America. This modernization project is a full software and hardware upgrade for every drinking water site from groundwater wells to pump houses to treatment plants. The upgrade increases system resilience, improves data management, networking and operations, and strengthens protections from cybersecurity events. As of July 2023, we have completed the upgrades to 114 out of 125 sites and are on track to finish the project by the end of 2024. This program has also delivered improvements to SCADA Standards, commissioning procedures, and virtual dashboards that allow water operators to better understand what is occurring in the region.

### **Sustainable Transportation:**

The physical infrastructure, ease of getting around the community, and providing options for active and safe transportation is critically important to the community.

Transportation investment and improvements were integral parts of the 2022 Plan, continuing into the 2023 Plan. Both plans focused on offering more travel choices to residents and strived to ensure the transportation system is affordable and environmentally sustainable. Public transit services focused on increasing ridership, and regaining the trust of riders on buses and ION in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some highlights include:

- **Grand River Transit (GRT) Recovery and Service Expansion:** GRT is closely monitoring ridership recovery across the network to direct resources to meet the needs of the community, grow a better bus network, and encourage future ridership. Ridership is increasing following declines over COVID-19 and is nearing pre-pandemic levels with 17.78 million riders in 2022. As of May 2023, ridership has continued to increase with **a 63.5% increase in riders** from January-May 2023 compared to January to May 2022. Starting September 4, the Region will expand service in Cambridge, restoring pandemic reductions and adding service to overcrowded routes. This will be achieved with more direct travel options to major destinations including: Ainslie Terminal, South Cambridge Shopping Centre, Cambridge Centre Station, King/Bishop area and Franklin/Saginaw area. Service is also being expanded in southeast Galt, and increased on evenings and weekends across Cambridge.
- **Stage 2 ION:** ION light rail provides a fast, reliable way for people to travel around our urban areas for work, shopping and entertainment. Greater choice about how to move around the Region increases residents ability to travel without always needing a personal vehicle. In April 2023, the Region started a process to re-evaluate the Stage 2 ION south terminal station location. This re-evaluation was initiated because the Region has new information since completion of the

previous evaluation in 2018. In response to Council direction in May, this evaluation will include an alternative T4 located in south-east Cambridge in the vicinity of Dundas Street and Main Street. Council also requested information on the feasibility of adding a route down Dundas Street to the T4 alternative. Region staff have reviewed various potential routes connecting to a T4 alternative and screened out routes that are not direct and/or did not reduce impacts. The only viable route connecting to T4 runs along Dundas Street. The modified evaluation process will consider the feasibility of the Dundas Street route. This feasibility information and the south terminus re-evaluation results will be presented to Council by December 2023. The business case will start in early 2024 after completion of the south terminus re-evaluation, and is anticipated to be completed by mid-2025.

- **Launch of E-scooter and E-bikes:** A new e-scooter and e-bike share program was launched in Waterloo Region, starting April 14. The program provides a new environmentally sustainable travel choice for residents, helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and encourages active transportation in our community with up to 500 e-bikes and 500 e-scooters for community members to rent until the end of October. The first vehicles for community members to use were located at virtual stations in the downtown areas of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, and near transit stations with over 250,000 km traveled since April. Available vehicles are gradually increasing and will be stationed in about 150 different locations.

### **Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities:**

The 2022 Plan recognized that being healthy and safe means having equitable opportunities, economic stability, strong social connections and easy access to quality services and programs. Advancing Truth and Reconciliation is foundational to increasing health and safety in the community. In 2023, the Region continues to improve child and youth wellbeing, population health, and affordable housing to enhance community safety and wellbeing. Some highlights include:

- **Housing/Homelessness - Interim Housing, ending chronic homelessness:** The first half of 2023 saw a **Building Better Futures** dashboard update with 1,825 total new units forecast. Of these, 1,046 are in development (322 are supportive homes). This progress moves the Region closer to the overall target of 2,500 new affordable housing units, and a tenfold increase in new affordable housing delivery from 50 to over 500 units per year, reaching 73 per cent of the overall goal in the first two and half years of the plan. Notable development underway includes:
  - **27 Cambridge Street, KW Urban Native Wigwam Project**
    - 30 new units to serve Indigenous community members, with 16 units of these dedicated specifically to Indigenous women and their children

- Supported with \$3 million from the Region's Equity Investment Fund
- Occupancy anticipated in February 2024
- **420 Kingscourt Drive, Waterloo Region Housing Masterplan**
  - 73 new units
  - Total investment over two years is \$38 million funded by CMHC grants (\$5.5 million) and property tax supported reserves and debt (\$32.5 million).
  - This project is also part of the Region's pilot Community Benefits program, which will provide workforce development opportunities for members of equity-seeking groups to gain experience and employment in the construction trades. The first participants in the program are expected to join the construction team this summer.
  - Occupancy anticipated in spring 2025
- **49 Queen Street North, Indwell project with St. Peter's Lutheran Church**
  - 41 new supportive housing units
  - Supported with \$8.9 million from the Region's Strategic Investment Fund for affordable housing
  - Occupancy anticipated in fall 2024
- **97 Victoria Avenue, The Working Centre**
  - 44 new units
  - Supported with \$9.8 million in the federal government's Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI-3), coordinated by the Region of Waterloo
  - Occupancy is anticipated in fall 2024
- **825 King Street, Indwell project with St. Mark's Lutheran Church**
  - 43 new affordable supportive housing units.
  - The project is supported with \$3.2M from the Region of Waterloo and \$1.4M in Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative funding.
  - Occupancy is expected in fall of 2023.

Additional efforts include:

- Continued public engagement for the **Surplus Land** sites identified at 30 Lauris Avenue (Cambridge), 1388 Highland Road West (Kitchener) and 41 Westhill Drive (Waterloo).
- Supporting nearly 200 individuals or families through the **Portable Rent Assistance Program**, forming part of the Building Better Futures program.
- Continued implementation of **Interim Housing Solutions** initiatives in collaboration with community partners. including:
  - Implementing a new 50-space Outdoor Shelter at the Erb's Road Emergency Shelter.
  - Funding Lutherwood, KW Urban Native Wigwam Project, and Cambridge Shelter Corporation to implement 100 new Scattered-Site Supportive Housing units as part of the **Home-Based Support/Scattered Site Supportive Housing Program**.

- Expanding the **Transitional Housing Program** with the KW Urban Native Wigwam Project (KWUNWP), an Indigenous-Led Transitional Housing Site.
- Following a Housing First strategy, staff continue to collaborate with partners to connect people **experiencing homelessness** with social, community, and housing services to meet their current needs and support transitions to permanent housing. With the opening of the **House of Friendship's ShelterCare** on Weber Street, the **Outdoor Shelter on Erb's Road** and the **expansion of home-based supports** program, there was a reduction the number of individuals living in encampments.
- Broad community engagement for the **Plan to End Chronic Homelessness** began with in-person and virtual opportunities to provide feedback. Outreach included an online survey, virtual engagement labs, pop-up booths, discussions guides, translated materials and an interactive Engage WR site. The Social Development Centre Waterloo Region is facilitating pilot projects led by people with lived experience.
- **Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Growth:** High-quality, affordable childcare helps support our workforce and economy, supports the wellbeing of all children, and helps address the impacts of poverty. In June 2023, the Ministry of Education provided an updated notional growth target and funding for 3,725 new licensed child care spaces (including licensed home and centre-based child care) for ages 0 to 5 years from 2022 to 2026. This is an additional 1,854 spaces than were initially allocated.
- **Indigenous Space Needs Assessment:** In collaboration with area municipalities, an Indigenous space needs assessment was completed to address the need for safe, culturally relevant spaces for Indigenous Peoples and other racialized groups in Waterloo Region. It is understood that the vision of a safe cultural space must be reflective of today's community needs and priorities, and stay forward thinking. Engagement is continuing to center the voices and lived experiences of Indigenous people living in the Region, and develop meaningful relationships throughout the engagement on space needs.
- **Upstream Fund:** In 2022, the Region of Waterloo launched the inaugural Upstream Fund, a \$2.1 million annual fund to support community-led initiatives in Waterloo Region that align with the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWP). Announcements of recipients have been rolling out, supporting 76 upstream initiatives led by and serving Indigenous, Black, racialized and other communities facing discrimination and systemic barriers. Call out for Upstream fund in 2023 was completed, with applications due May 1st.

- **Immunization Rates:** The Provincial Immunization Coverage Report for Routine Infant and Childhood Programs released on July 7, 2023 outlined immunization coverage rates (proportion of children/youth immunized against specific diseases) for the 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 school years. Local coverage rates **were at or above** the provincial average for most diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant decline in coverage among school-aged children due to the deferral of non-essential medical care and the use of virtual care, school closures and public health resources being diverted to the pandemic response. Region of Waterloo Public Health has been offering catch-up clinics at both Public health offices, in schools and using the Vaccine Bus to increase coverage rates. As a result **coverage rates are increasing locally:**
  - Elementary ISPA coverage rates (all antigens) rose from 52% in August 2022 to 64% in June 2023
  - Secondary coverage rates (all antigens) rose from 56.5% in August 2022 to 71.6% in June 2023

Public Health will continue to offer catch-up clinics over the summer and into the fall of 2023.

- **Expansion of Paramedic Services to Match Growth:** As a result of the Council supported Paramedic Services Masterplan and Enhancement strategy, in July 2023 Region of Waterloo Paramedic Services (ROWPS) added 48 hours of ambulance coverage to our deployment plan in the form of two 24hr units. These enhancements included 15 Primary Care Paramedics (PCPs) and 5 Advanced Care Paramedics (ACPs). In addition to the above, ROWPS will be engaging in a fall paramedic recruitment to bring on both PCPs and ACPs. Our enhancements and staffing stabilization plans have resulted in a slight decrease (-36%) in the number of Code Red events in 2023 (Jan 10, to June 30, 2023: 38) compared to 2022 (Jan 1, to Jun 30, 2022: 59), although the total time in Code Red has increased slightly (+11%).

### **Responsive and Engaging Public Service:**

Residents expect responsive and engaging public service to meet the needs of the growing community. The Region strives to inspire public trust and confidence by engaging citizens and collaborating with community partners to foster open conversations about regional programs and services. The initiatives in this part of the Plan leverage new technology, creative new service delivery models, and utilize advanced analytics and artificial intelligence. These efforts will add value to service delivery to the community whilst also enabling us to work smarter and more efficiently. Some highlights include:

- **Corporate Strategy Development:** Growing in a sustainable, equitable and inclusive way requires ambition, vital partnerships, and a shared vision for the future. With this in mind, Council embarked upon a strategic planning process in April 2023 that centred the voices of communities across the region, considered vital data, and explored the social, environmental and economic trends impacting the region. As a result of this thorough review, a draft vision, mission, set of values, strategic priorities, and objectives are being presented to Council on August 15<sup>th</sup>. Following which, our performance measurement process will be evolved to support the Region in executing our strategy and evaluating its impact.
- **Digital Transformation Strategy:** The Digital Service Transformation Strategy guides the Region of Waterloo in using digital transformation to improve services based on human centered and equity-based principles. The strategy supports the Region to:
  - Scale services to match our growing community.
  - Meet resident expectations by providing services in more convenient and easy to access methods.
  - Adopt fiscally sustainable service delivery models.

Investing in Digital Service Transformation results in long-term efficiencies and an improved service experience. Recent achievements across the portfolio of transformation projects include:

- the launch of a digital HR transformation initiative, as well as the Automated Speed Enforcement program planning, which will see existing technologies being leveraged and the Service First Contact Centre playing a role in the transformation of this resident facing service.
- Developing a strategy on how to adopt, incorporate and support new technologies, such as generative AI to support evolving business needs. This strategy will include balancing the use of AI to support service delivery while protecting the privacy and security of the Regions' assets and interests.

## Our People

The Region is committed to offering exceptional public service to every resident and business in Waterloo Region. A highly skilled, engaged and healthy workforce is essential to delivering the critical services that our growing community relies on. Over the course of 2022 and into 2023, the Region advanced a number of initiatives to promote employees' wellness and ensure the continued attraction and retention of talent needed to deliver on the Region's goals. Growing existing and attracting new talent continues to be a challenge for municipalities across Canada and ensuring strategies are in place to counter these pressures remains a priority. Highlights from the first half of 2023 include:

- **Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing:** The Region is implementing a comprehensive **Contractor Safety Management Program** to equip Regional contract administrators with proper guidance and promote the safe execution of

contracted work. In conjunction with our existing health and wellbeing initiatives, we are introducing "**Perkopolis**" - an exclusive Canadian discount program offering employees a wide array of deals, discounts, and special offers spanning various sectors, including health and wellness, travel, entertainment and more. Additionally, we have undertaken a comprehensive revitalization of our **Work Accommodation Program** to provide enhanced support to employees navigating through an injury or illness. The renewed program now emphasizes regular and continued communication with staff during their recovery period, facilitating a smooth and safe reintegration process into the workplace as required.

- **Attraction and Retention Plan:** The talent market remains competitive, with a slight improvement observed since 2022. Our robust talent acquisition and retention strategies include maximizing our presence at career fairs, targeted social media advertising, and emphasizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging principles to attract and retain diverse candidates. Additionally, we are reviewing compensation and benefits packages to ensure we remain competitive in the talent market, to both attract and retain top talent. Career development opportunities, such as Mentorship programs, Leadership development, and enhanced performance planning, have proven pivotal in employee retention.
- **Inclusive Workplace:** To continue building an inclusive and welcoming workplace, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) team has built upon initiatives started in 2022 including:
  - Continuation of the DEIB five part foundational courses, which as of June 2023, over 2,000 staff have completed.
  - Staff training on Neurodiversity, Disabilities & Accessibility Learning.
  - Two new educational series in June; a four part series on Indigenous Awareness and two sessions on Workplace Inclusion for Gender and Sexual Diversity.
  - Applying a DEIB lens on Policies and Programs, and consultation with the Employee Equity Advisory Group regarding DEIB Work.
  - Launching the Regions first demographic census, with a completion rate of 52%. This data serves as a valuable insight into our work together to make our organization more representative of the population we serve, and as we support one another, in creating that great place to work.
  - Prioritizing applications to the Mentor Me Program from the Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) community to include diverse talent while creating an inclusive workplace. As of June 2023, it is currently full, with all mentees matched up with a mentor.