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Share your thoughts and ideas

Help set the Region of Waterloo's Priorities for 2015 – 2018



**Background Document
Public Input - Phase 2
May 27 – August 29, 2015**

A New Strategic Plan for the Region of Waterloo

The Region of Waterloo provides more than 60 per cent of government services directly and indirectly to the community. Regional Council will be reviewing these services and developing new priorities for their 2015-2018 Council term.

What is a Strategic Plan?

Much has changed and much has been achieved by the Region of Waterloo since the development of the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan. To remain focused and relevant, the Region is developing a new Strategic Plan for the 2015-2018 term of Council. The Strategic Plan provides focus and clarity to guide actions and future decisions for the Region of Waterloo. It is a long-term planning document that guides the Region’s priority setting and is the foundation that supports all other plans, policies and initiatives.

Your input is important

Community members and partner organizations play a significant role in helping to identify where to focus limited human and financial resources on the most pressing priorities of the community. To collect this input, the Region has launched an extensive consultation program that provides multiple opportunities to get involved in order to ensure that the Region’s Strategic Plan reflects the most pressing priorities of our community. In addition, input will inform the current review of Regional services to ensure that the Region provides the best value to the community. The service review will determine whether there are ways to provide current programs and services more efficiently and effectively and/or whether we should consider adjusting the level of service to better reflect changing circumstances in our community.



Information on the public input opportunities can be found on the ‘Public Input’ page on the Region’s website at: <http://bit.ly/regionstratchat>.

Should you have any questions, require an alternative format please contact:

Lorie Fioze, Manager of Strategic Planning and Strategic Initiatives at:

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Thanks in advance for your insights and contributions!



Public Input – Phase 1

In order to ensure that the Region's Strategic Plan reflects the most pressing priorities of our community and to provide input to a number of Regional initiatives, Regional staff collected community input using several methods between January 2015 and April 2015 (Phase 1) and will continue to collect input from May to August 2015 (Phase 2). Phase 1 is more broad-based and focuses on gathering information regarding high level priorities from the public and staff. Phase 2 is to delve deeper and validate and/or refine the themes generated in Phase 1. Phase 2 will also help to identify more specific actions in order to achieve the high level priorities identified in Phase 1.

This input has been termed consultation and engagement as the purpose of the process is two-fold: First, the consultation is specifically designed to gather public input on future priorities and secondly, the consultation process is designed to be interactive and engaging by reaching out and going where the community gathers in order to gather depth and details.

The Region implemented both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to obtain a balance of in-depth as well as quantifiable information. The methods to gather public input included:

Quantitative Method

- A statistically reliable, random telephone survey with 1,200 residents. This survey was conducted by Environics Research Group.

Qualitative Methods

- Focus groups with a variety of stakeholder groups
- Online discussion forum
- Community forums
- On-line/paper surveys

Taken together, the results from the public input process provide the Region a detailed picture of community sentiment and priorities, which allows for the development of strategic initiatives that are informed and aligned with the insights, views and opinions of the community. To see the complete reports on the public input visit:

<http://bit.ly/regionstratchat>

Public Input Results – Phase 1

The public provided a wealth of information which will inform the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan priorities, departmental strategic plans, as well as other key Region of Waterloo initiatives such as the Service Review, the diversity and inclusion strategy, service strategy and communication improvements. It is important to note that the findings from both quantitative and qualitative methods are fairly consistent overall and both provide useful information for various aspects of the planning process. Some of the significant findings and highlights include the following:

Quality of Life

Waterloo Region residents are generally satisfied with life in their community. Most believe they have good quality of life, and they appreciate the access to technology and infrastructure, as well as the close-knit community spirit. Residents feel that Waterloo Region is a good and safe place to live, as well as raise a family. Those who live in the Region also report a strong sense of belonging to the community.

Most appealing aspects of life in Waterloo Region

When residents are asked to name the most appealing aspects of life in Waterloo Region (Figure 1), they are most likely to talk about the close-knit community spirit, and that the Region is a good size – meaning that it offers plenty of resources, but maintains a small-town feel.

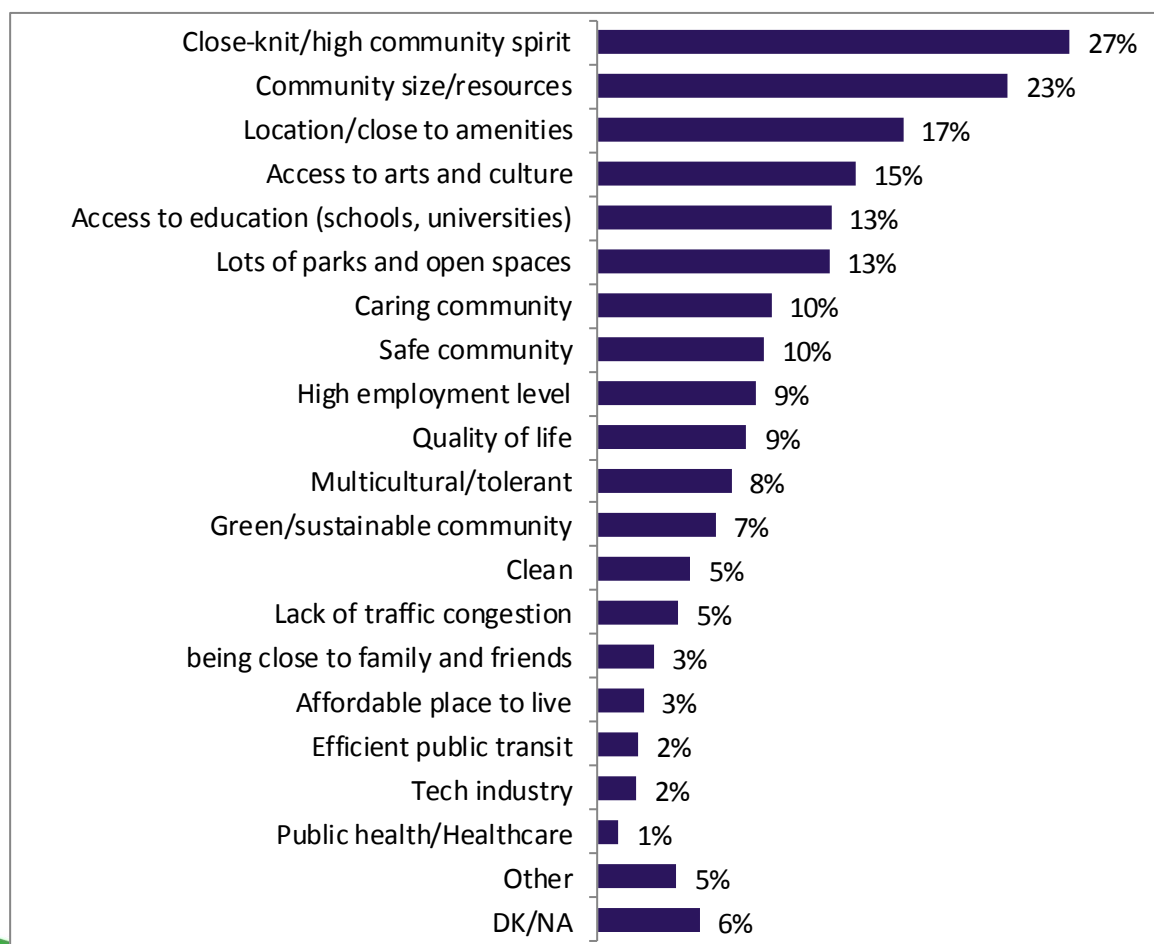
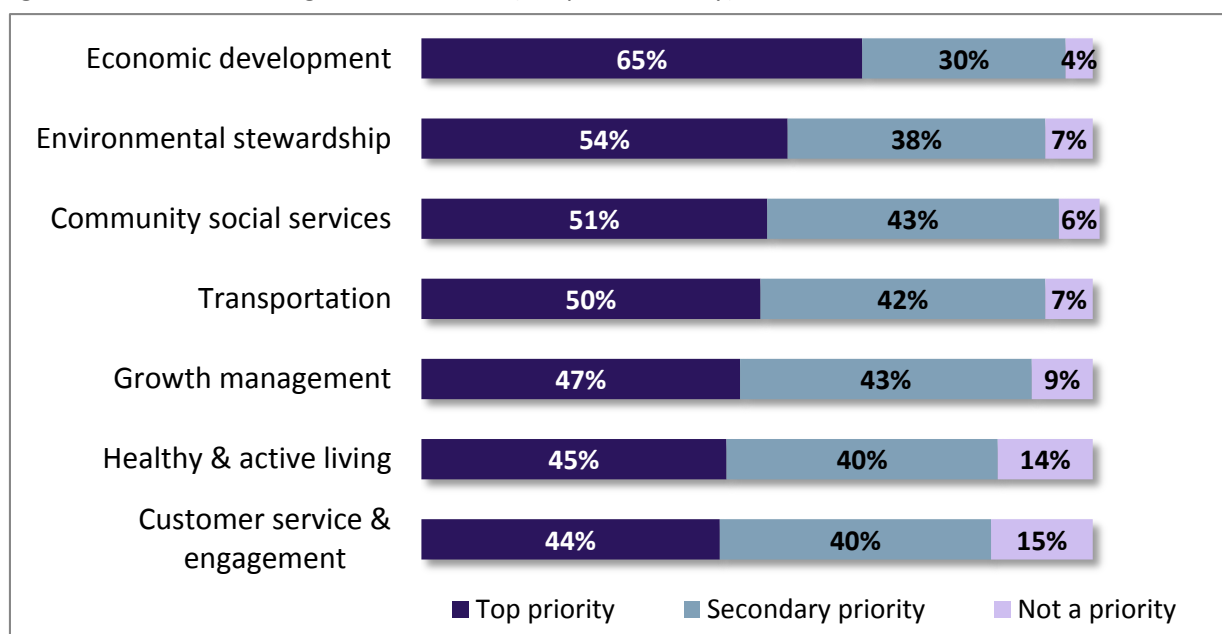


Figure 1: Most appealing aspect of Waterloo Region

Priorities

Participants were asked about the priorities they felt the Region should focus on over this term of Council through several questions. In the telephone survey residents were given an explanation of seven broad priority areas – the economy, the environment, transportation, growth management, community and social services, public health and customer service and engagement – and asked to rank each one as either a top priority, secondary priority or not a priority. To ensure no major areas of focus were missed, residents were asked a follow-up question about priorities not included in the list; most were unable to name one. Overall Residents believe economic development and the environment should be the top priorities for the Region of Waterloo (Figure 2). Younger residents are most likely to see the economy as a top priority, including three in four (76%) of those aged 18 to 29. Small majorities see environmental stewardship (54%) and community social services (51%) as top priorities, both of which are more likely to be seen as so by women than men. Women are also more like to see healthy and active living as a top priority, while men place greater importance on growth management. Following this exercise, residents were then given a series of potential initiatives within each of the larger priority buckets, and again asked to rank them as top, secondary or non-priorities. The results of this exercise are found in the larger report.

Figure 2: Priorities for Region of Waterloo (telephone survey)



Throughout all qualitative methods participants also identified priorities through open ended questions. Seven priority areas were identified with several sub themes within these priority areas:

1. Economic development
2. Growth management and vitality
3. Transportation
4. Environment
5. Healthy, safe and inclusive communities
6. Poverty reduction
7. Responsive and engaging government services

The following summary provides an overview of the findings within each priority area.

1. Economic Development

Themes within the Economic Development priority area include:



- Work with the new Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation to balance business prosperity with social equity, labour and environmental responsibility.
- Work with community partners to help existing businesses stay, grow and thrive.
- Attract new, high quality organizations, businesses, jobs, investments (domestic and foreign) and people (e.g. youth, immigrants) to Waterloo Region.
- Work with community partners to develop jobs and training to address changing workforce composition, e.g., youth, people living with disabilities and those needing retraining after downsizing.
- Enhance marketing efforts to increase awareness about the Region of Waterloo International Airport.
- Collaboratively work towards building and maintaining the Region's cultural vitality.
- Create vibrant places and spaces that support arts and culture.
- Provide access and promote inclusion in the Region's cultural life e.g. places for youth.
- Promote Waterloo Region as a world class community locally and globally.
- Preserve heritage and history to contribute to our Region's cultural and economic well-being.

2. Growth Management and Vitality

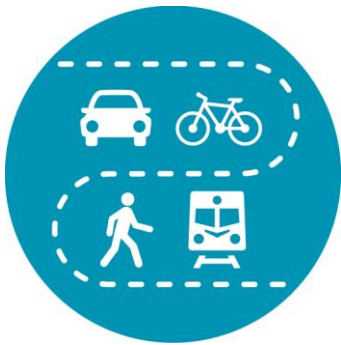
Themes within the Growth Management and Vitality priority area include:



- Continue intensification efforts in urban areas to support growth while ensuring a mix of housing types (affordability), availability of green spaces, trails and public common spaces.
- Preserve, protect and enhance environmentally sensitive lands and farm lands.
- Support arts and culture venues and provide places to display expressions of visual arts.
- Advocate and support activities and spaces for young adults in order to attract and retain talent.

3. Transportation

Themes within the Transportation priority area include:



- Implement a Light Rail Transit System (ION) fully integrated with an expanded conventional transit system.
 - Encourage improvements to inter-city transportation services to and from Waterloo Region.
 - Develop, promote and integrate active and safe forms of active transportation (cycling, walking, trails).
 - Optimize road safety and awareness to safely manage all forms of traffic on roads and roundabouts.
 - Work with area municipalities to reduce traffic congestion.
- Improve infrastructure and safety for cyclists and pedestrians.
 - Work with area municipalities to improve levels of winter road and sidewalk snow removal in environmentally sustainable ways (less salt).

4. Environment

Themes within the Environment priority area include:



- Reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill. E.g., enhance access to landfill for those who do not have cars (1 – 2 times per year have a place to dispose of toxic, e waste etc).
 - Enhance water conservation and protection efforts.
 - Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and deal with impacts of climate change (improve air quality).
 - Preserve, protect and enhance environmentally sensitive lands, forests, farm lands and our rivers.
 - Continue intensification efforts in urban areas to support growth while ensuring a mix of housing types (affordability), availability of green spaces, trails and public common spaces.
- Improve the *green bin program* by creating awareness and expanding service to multi-unit developments, community housing.
 - Support the use of green energy sources in regional facilities and in the community.
 - Prepare for critical weather and emergencies.
 - Develop a Regional park along the Grand River.

5. Healthy and Inclusive Communities

Themes within the Healthy, Safe and Inclusive priority area include:



- Promote active lifestyle and healthy local eating initiatives (e.g., walking cycling, bike paths etc.).
- Collaborate with the community to support services and promote early learning and child development.
- Work with community partners to increase availability and accessibility of treatment and supports for people using substances.

6. Poverty Reduction

Themes within the Poverty Reduction priority area include:



- Work in collaboration with community partners and other levels of government to reduce poverty.
- Develop a Waterloo Region poverty strategy in collaboration with community partners to reduce poverty.
- Make the transit system affordable and accessible for people living on a low income and post secondary students.
- Deliver new affordable and supportive housing opportunities.
- Take action to reduce homelessness in Waterloo Region.
- Work with the Province to extend access to oral health care.
- Prevent the displacement of affordable housing in the downtown cores –

impact of intensification.

- Increase public awareness of poverty issues and promote local actions to reduce poverty.
- Consider the health implications of all policies/decisions that the Region makes (not just in Community Services Committee), especially noting the impact on those groups who experience socially determined inequities e.g. people living in low income, the unemployed, visible minorities, newcomers/refugees, children, youth, women, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, First Nations, etc.

7. Responsive and engaging Government Services

Themes within the Responsive and Engaging Government and Services priority area include:



- Enhance opportunities for public engagement, input and involvement in Regional programs and decisions.
- Enhance communication and improve awareness of Regional services using plain language.
- Improve the delivery and accessibility of Regional services and facilities to address the diverse and changing community population and needs (e.g., seniors, immigrants, LGBTQ, people living with disabilities, people living in poverty etc.).
- Ensure regional programs and services are efficient, effective and provide value for money (tax dollars).

- Work with community partners to develop a "hub" model of service delivery for the rural communities.
- Enhance a culture of transparency, accountability and openness.
- Train and support staff to effectively engage the public in decision making and how communicate the results of the engagement.
- Optimize regional programs and work with area municipalities and community partners to deliver age friendly and coordinated services for seniors.

Next Steps

Phase 2 of the community input process will be implemented from the end of May – August 29, 2015 in order to review the priorities identified by Council and to seek input on proposed actions in order to achieve the strategic objectives. These mechanisms will include a community leader forum, a web-based survey for the public to provide feedback, the online discussion forum, attendance at community events and focus group sessions with the public and staff. The feedback collected from Phase 2 of the community and staff input process will be compiled and presented to Council, in order for Council to refine the strategic objectives and actions before finalizing the Strategic Plan which will take place in September 2015.

The telephone survey results and the qualitative public input identified the importance of community engagement and providing opportunities for the public to get involved in decisions that impact them. By asking, listening and considering the responses gathered from the public through the Strategic Planning process, the Region is already making progress towards improving public engagement in and being in touch with the needs of the community.

To see the input obtained from the public in phase 1 of the process go to <http://bit.ly/regionstratchat>.

Draft Focus Areas and Strategic Objectives

The following pages (pages 14 - 18) are Regional Council's draft focus areas and strategic objectives. Council would like feedback on their draft priorities. Please review the following draft focus areas, strategic objectives and provide your feedback on the last two pages. You can also go online to provide this input through an online survey or through the online discussion forum at: <http://bit.ly/regionstratchat>

If you require an alternative format of this document or wish to submit your responses please contact or send the completed last two pages to:

Lorie Fioze, Manager of Strategic Planning and Strategic Initiatives at:

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Thanks in advance for your insights and contributions!

Economic Development



New Strategic Objectives New strategic objectives the Region will try to accomplish. “What” the Region is trying to accomplish.	Potential actions Actions to achieve the strategic objectives. “How” the Region will achieve the objectives.	Region’s Role Lead Support Advocate
1.1 Actively support the new Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation (WREDC), area municipalities and other economic development partners to attract and retain businesses to create a value added diverse economy.	1.1.1 Work with WREDC to help existing businesses stay, grow, thrive and prosper in Waterloo Region. 1.1.2 Work with WREDC to attract new, high quality organizations, businesses, jobs and investments (domestic and foreign) to Waterloo Region. 1.1.3 Promote Waterloo Region as a world class community with an excellent quality of life locally/provincially/globally (branding).	Support
1.2 Work with community partners to promote skills development and job creation to address changing workforce composition.		Support & Advocate
1.3 Work with community partners to develop continuous and immediately available supply of employment land.		Support & Lead
Commitment to existing strategic objectives: Through work completed to date; 1. identifying the trends and issues facing our community; 2. priorities identified through the public input process, there are several issues identified that the Region is already working on. In order to demonstrate the Region heard the input, the Region is committed to the following initiatives and will report back to the public on these initiatives through the strategic plan monitoring and reporting process.		
1.4 Grow air service and aviation-related activities at and around the Region of Waterloo International Airport.	1.4.1 Market the assets of the Region of Waterloo International Airport.	Lead

Transportation



New Strategic Objectives New strategic objectives the Region will try to accomplish. “What” the Region is trying to accomplish.	Potential actions Actions to achieve the strategic objectives. “How” the Region will achieve the objectives.	Region’s Role Lead Support Advocate
2.1 Implement a Light Rail Transit System (ION) fully integrated with an expanded, accessible, affordable and easy to use conventional transit system.	2.1.1 Develop and implement programs and tools to improve access to and awareness of public transit e.g., education, fare cards, in time, apps etc.	Lead
Commitment to existing strategic objectives: Through work completed to date; 1. identifying the trends and issues facing our community; 2. priorities identified through the public input process, there are several issues identified that the Region is already working on. In order to demonstrate the Region heard the input, the Region is committed to the following initiatives and will report back to the public on these initiatives through the strategic plan monitoring and reporting process.		
2.2 Advocate for improvements to inter-city rail transportation services to and from Waterloo Region.		Advocate
2.3 Develop, promote and integrate active and safe forms of transportation in both rural and urban areas (cycling, walking, trails).	2.3.1 Develop and implement programs to educate and create awareness for children and adults on cycling safety.	Lead
	2.3.2 Integrate regional and city trails.	Lead and support
2.4 Optimize road capacity to safely manage traffic throughout Waterloo Region.	2.4.1 Implement traffic signals, adaptive signal technology and other technologies to optimize and manage road safety.	Lead
	2.4.2 Enhance and implement roundabout awareness and education programs.	Lead
	2.4.3 Work with Regional Police to enhance road safety for cyclists.	Advocate and support
	2.4.4 Update and complete an analysis of taxi type services.	Lead

Environment



New Strategic Objectives New strategic objectives the Region will try to accomplish. “What” the Region is trying to accomplish.	Potential actions Actions to achieve the strategic objectives. “How” the Region will achieve the objectives.	Region’s Role Lead Support Advocate
3.1 Develop alternative waste disposal technologies (e.g. energy from waste, incineration).	3.1.1 Investigate potential alternative energy systems.	Lead and advocate
3.2 Work with community partners (e.g., RARE, GRCA) to investigate the development of a park along the Grand River.		Support
Commitment to existing strategic objectives: Through work completed to date; 1. identifying the trends and issues facing our community; 2. priorities identified through the public input process, there are several issues identified that the Region is already working on. In order to demonstrate the Region heard the input, the Region is committed to the following initiatives and will report back to the public on these initiatives through the strategic plan monitoring and reporting process.		
3.3 Reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill.	3.3.1 Strengthen the green bin program.	Lead
	3.3.2 Develop special disposal programs for those unable to go to landfill.	Lead
	3.3.3 Advocate and lobby Provincial and Federal governments to improve recycling markets.	Advocate
3.4 Provide community leadership and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from Regional operations.		Lead
3.5 Develop an adaptation strategy to deal with the impact of climate change/ severe weather events on Regional operations (e.g., infrastructure design standards).		Lead
3.6 Promote water efficiency, protection and conservation.		Lead
3.7 Preserve, protect and enhance environmentally sensitive lands and farm lands “Farmers feed cities”.		Lead



Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities



New Strategic Objectives New strategic objectives the Region will try to accomplish. “What” the Region is trying to accomplish.	Potential actions Actions to achieve the strategic objectives. “How” the Region will achieve the objectives.	Region’s Role Lead Support Advocate
4.1 Collaborate with the community to support services and promote early learning and child development.		Support and advocate
Commitment to existing strategic objectives: Through work completed to date; 1. identifying the trends and issues facing our community; 2. priorities identified through the public input process, there are several issues identified that the Region is already working on. In order to demonstrate the Region heard the input, the Region is committed to the following initiatives and will report back to the public on these initiatives through the strategic plan monitoring and reporting process.		
4.2 Work collaboratively with the community and the Province to mobilize efforts to reduce poverty.	4.2.1 Work with community partners to advocate for education and training to match vacant jobs.	Support
4.3 Increase the supply and range of supportive and affordable housing options that reflects the needs of current and future residents.	4.3.1 Increase the use of rent supplements.	Lead & Advocate
	4.3.2 Leverage development to include affordable housing (e.g., density incentives).	Lead and support
	4.3.3 Encourage intensification and ensure a mix of housing types and affordability.	Lead and support
4.4 Take action to end homelessness in Waterloo Region.		Support
4.5 Optimize Paramedic Services to address population growth and demographic changes.	4.5.1 Improve service standards and response times.	Lead
4.6 Encourage healthy, local eating and active living through trails, education, active transportation and active lifestyle initiatives.	4.6.1 Reduce diabetes and obesity rates.	Lead
	4.6.2 Create and monitor a community wellness plan.	Support

Responsive and Engaging Government Services



New Strategic Objectives New strategic objectives the Region will try to accomplish. “What” the Region is trying to accomplish.	Potential actions Actions to achieve the strategic objectives. “How” the Region will achieve the objectives.	Region’s Role Lead Support Advocate
5.1 Improve long-term infrastructure and asset management program.		Lead
Commitment to existing strategic objectives: Through work completed to date; 1. identifying the trends and issues facing our community; 2. priorities identified through the public input process, there are several issues identified that the Region is already working on. In order to demonstrate the Region heard the input, the Region is committed to the following initiatives and will report back to the public on these initiatives through the strategic plan monitoring and reporting process.		
5.2 Continue to develop a culture of service excellence.		Lead
5.3 Adapt Regional services to address changing community demographics (e.g., aging, rural, immigrants/refugees, diversity, most disadvantaged etc.).	5.3.1 Work with community partners to investigate a "hub" model of service delivery for the rural and other identified communities.	Lead and support
	5.3.2 Explore the use of technology for the delivery of hub model services.	Lead and support
5.4 Attract, support and retain a skilled, talented and diverse workforce	5.4.1 Implement actions designed to build leadership capacity.	Lead
	5.4.2 Enhance mentoring programs.	Lead
5.5 Enhance opportunities for public engagement, input and involvement with Regional Council and in Regional programs and decisions including marginalized groups.	5.5.1 Continue the online Strat Chat forum.	Lead
	5.5.2 Explore other techniques for public involvement e.g. E-democracy, town halls, virtual town halls, kiosks etc.	Lead
	5.5.3 Enhance communication and improve awareness of Regional services within the community.	Lead
5.6 Demonstrate that regional programs and services are efficient, effective and provide value for money.	5.6.1 Research best practices, develop comparison metrics, and measure programs and services over time.	Lead
	5.6.2 Develop a 3-year budget cycle with fixed and achievable targets.	Lead



Please complete the following questions and cut off the last page and return to the contact found at the end of this document.

Where do you live? (please check 1)	How long have you lived in Waterloo Region?
Cambridge _____	Less than 1 year _____
Kitchener _____	1 to 5 years _____
Waterloo _____	6 to 10 years _____
North Dumfries _____	11 to 20 years _____
Wellesley _____	More than 20 years _____
Wilmot _____	Do not live in WR _____
Woolwich _____	
Do not live in WR _____	

1. What revisions or enhancements do you feel are needed to the focus areas and strategic objectives?
For example, was anything missed or need to be revised? (Please indicate relevant number).

2. What are some potential actions in order to achieve the strategic objectives?



Region of Waterloo

3. How can the Region improve efforts to engage the public in conversations and in decision-making?



4. What actions can the Region take to become more inclusive and welcoming of our diverse population?

5. Do you have any additional feedback on the priorities that were summarized in this document?

Return to:
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