

# Regional Yearbook 2025- Accessible Text Version

## Homes for All

A home is more than a building. Good jobs, a strong economy, and vibrant, inclusive communities all help make Waterloo Region a home. In 2025, we worked with community partners to support growth in these areas. We are working to prevent homelessness and create affordable homes. The Region helped build or fund more than 1,000 affordable homes last year. We're investing to provide housing stability, grow the economy, and help people in Waterloo Region belong and thrive.

Here are some highlights from the progress we made in 2025:

### Working to end chronic homelessness:

In 2025, we invested 14.8 million dollars to support The Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. The Plan is working towards functional zero chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region, using an “all-of-community” approach. We've worked to make our systems more equitable; expand our services we offer and strengthen community relationships.

- 398 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness moved into housing over the course of 2025. That is an average of 33 individuals per month.
- 98 households a month on average received support through the Rent Bank to help prevent eviction or to secure housing rapidly.
- Council invested an additional \$600,000 in the Rent Bank in 2025.
- Over 150 new rent supplements were distributed by community partners to help prevent experiences of chronic homelessness.
- A Rural Homelessness Strategy, led by Engage Rural, was launched in 2025 to address the unique challenges of homelessness across the townships.

### Building greener new homes:

We've been busy building 73 affordable homes at 420 Kingscourt in Waterloo. The new units will provide housing for people and families, including some on the Waterloo Region Housing waitlist. The new building consumes no fossil fuels on-site (except the backup system), making it the first Net-Zero Carbon WRH property. We received a 2025 award from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for the energy efficiency features, like ground-

source heat pumps for heating and cooling, high-performance windows, low-flow water fixtures, LED lighting, and rooftop solar panels. Tenants will benefit from the reduced utility bills! We've also built extra accessibility into 19 of the units to support people's different needs.

- \$54,000 in energy costs saved annually thanks to the efficient design.
- 11.9 MWh of estimated green electricity generated per year by roof-mounted solar panels.
- Units range from 1 to 5 bedrooms, to support large families on the waitlist for Waterloo Region Housing.
- The new building is next to another Waterloo Region Housing property at 416 Kingscourt.

### Gaining important work experience for newcomers:

A new training program is now in place to help newcomers gain hands-on work experience. Many workers struggle to find jobs without Canadian work experience. This four-week course offers a solution. It's offered by the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, in partnership with Immigration Partnership and the Region of Waterloo. Newcomers are trained in workplace skills, safety training, food handling, and more. The participants are paid a living wage, thanks in part to Regional funding. After class time, they put their knowledge to work by helping at the food bank. It's a win-win! The program is set to end in May 2026.

- 28 weeks of total training offered by the Food Bank of Waterloo Region.
- 23 people completed the program in 2025.
- 7 cohorts of people will go through this program in 2025 and early 2026.

### Helping the aviation and aerospace industry take flight:

When industry, education and government build together, the sky's the limit for the local aerospace industry. In 2025, we launched AeroWR. It's a way for Waterloo Region to collaborate and accelerate local aviation, aerospace, and defence innovation.

AeroWR brings together industry leaders, researchers, our airport, and regional partners to advance the future of flight, create local job opportunities, and drive innovation within this growing industry. We also launched the Accelerator Centre's [Aerospace Accelerator](#) to produce the next generation of startups to create the hardware to move this industry into the future.

- 85+ companies, centres and institutions in Waterloo Region work in aeronautics and aerospace.

- 4,000 jobs supported by the local aerospace and aviation sector.
- Waterloo Region is Ontario's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest aerospace cluster by workforce size.
- YKF is Canada's 8<sup>th</sup> busiest airport, with commercial and corporate flights and one of the largest flight training schools.
- The world's fastest civil aircraft, the Bombardier Global 8000, successfully completed its inaugural flight at YKF in May.

## Supporting women experiencing homelessness:

In 2025, we responded to urgent community need by adding new shelter spaces and supports for women and gender-diverse people experiencing homelessness. In addition to emergency shelter beds, we work with community partners to offer wraparound support for mental and physical health, and other services.

- 44 new transitional and supportive housing spaces added at 84 Frederick Street in early December 2025.
- 66 women and gender-diverse individuals can now access emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportive housing from our partner SHIP at 84 Frederick Street.
- 20 new emergency shelter beds provided by YWCA Cambridge at Grace Bible Church since February 2025.

## Equitable services and opportunities

We live in a diverse community, with a rich blend of cultures that make us stronger. New partnerships and new perspectives create new opportunities for us to better meet community needs. Working together, we innovate to provide everyone with access to services they need to be healthy, safe, and thrive.

Here are some highlights from the progress we made in 2025:

### Embedding reconciliation into child care:

As we work towards reconciliation, we partner with Indigenous organizations to support culturally appropriate programs for all children. In 2025, we worked with The Healing of the Seven Generations to open the region's first Indigenous-led child care centre, Ga'nigq̄hi:yo Indigenous Child Care and Family Centre. We also helped facilitate educational opportunities, including a new Registered Early Childhood Educator program delivered by Six Nations Polytechnic, and training for ECEs on allyship, reciprocity and Indigenous foods. We also worked with the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association to share ongoing training for child care and early years professionals.

- 70 child care spaces prioritized for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children at the new Ga'nigohi:yo Indigenous Child Care and Family Centre.

## Rolling out the new museum bike:

A new mobile museum bike brings the museum experience to Waterloo Region residents wherever they are. Our Region of Waterloo Museums team unveiled their new interactive museum bike in May 2025. The tricycle offers hands-on activities and engagement for residents of all ages. It features graphics by local multi-media artist Stephanie Scott. The vibrant artwork incorporates Waterloo Region landmarks, our museum sites, and Indigenous elements like the wampum belt, sacred plants and animals. This museum bike has been in the community already, delivering a little of the museum experience to festivals, community events and education programs. It also helps us provide more inclusive and accessible programming.

- The museum bike attended 4 cultural events in summer 2025.
- 50,470 people used the Region of Waterloo Museums in 2025.
- Region of Waterloo Museums hosted 199 Student Education Programs for 8,719 students in 2025.
- In addition to student education programs, 14,582 visitors attended other public programs across all sites.

## Involving youth in community decision-making:

For the second year in a row, a group of 13 Indigenous and Black youth worked together as a Youth Decision-Making team to direct funds that will improve community safety and wellbeing. These youth, led by a community facilitator, helped support local programs from Indigenous and Black-led organizations. These young people bring an important perspective to help ensure funds have a positive impact on youth in Waterloo Region. This work is part of the Building Safer Communities Initiative. The Region of Waterloo works with community partners to support youth with culturally appropriate mental health and addiction support and crisis response.

- To watch a video about the Youth Decision-Making team, please [click here](#).
- \$700k distributed by the Youth Decision Making team to 11 organizations across Waterloo Region.

## Achieving gold standard for accessibility at YKF:

The Region of Waterloo International Airport (YKF) has proudly celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Since opening in 1950, YKF has grown into a vital hub supporting our community's economic development, tourism, trade, and connecting us to the world.

In 2025, YKF also achieved the highest level of Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility Certification, reflecting our commitment and dedication to accessibility. Changes like these improve the YKF passenger experience for people of all ages and abilities, and include:

- Curbside assistance upon request.
  - Self-serve check-in kiosks accessible when standing or seated.
  - Audible alarm and flashing lights at baggage belts.
  - Tactile Braille signage.
  - Wireless transmission to personal listening devices.
  - Pet relief areas.
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- 4 Canadian airports are Accessibility Certified Gold through the Rick Hansen Foundation, with YKF in that select group.
  - 20% of all commercial pilot licenses in Canada are issued by the Waterloo Wellington Flight Centre.
  - 5,500+ community members came out to explore the airport at its anniversary open house.
  - 765 pounds of food and \$1,600 collected for the Food Bank of Waterloo Region at the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary open house.

## Keeping Waterloo Region kind:

In 2025, a community-wide campaign and website called *We all belong here* launched to raise awareness of and address hate and harm people experience because of who they are. Visit the website here: <https://webelongwr.ca/>. Recent data shows Waterloo Region has a high rate of police-reported hate crimes per capita and belonging is eroding. The [Combatting Hate Action Table](#) launched a campaign that asks people to report hate when they see it or experience it. The table includes more than 30 organizations and grassroots groups, including the Region of Waterloo. It's also part of the [Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan](#). Hate is not OK. Name it. Report it. Take the pledge!

- 38% rise in hate-related cases in Waterloo Region in 2024, according to data collected through the Coalition of Muslim Women.

- 15+ events held or attended across the region to spread awareness with more events in 2026.
- 9,000 unique visitors to the website since it launched in October.

## Protecting health for all:

In 2025, Public Health worked to control outbreaks and investigate health hazard concerns. We also coordinated response to health risks caused by extreme heat, cold and air quality. Public Health inspectors keep the food, water, environment and people of Waterloo Region safe. We are out in the community, promoting safe health practices and working with local businesses and organizations.

(video description): Public Health staff explain how they inspect food services, manage outbreaks and support community health.

- To watch a video about the Region of Waterloo Public Health, please [click here](#).
- 15,236 inspections and service requests were handled by Region of Waterloo Public Health inspectors in 2025.
- 338 respiratory and gastrointestinal outbreaks managed during the 2024-2025 surveillance period.
- 57 warming, cooling, and air spaces provided by 42 community partners across the region, where people can find relief.
- 9 extreme temperature and air quality events in Waterloo Region in 2025, lasting 27 total days.

## Building up our libraries:

Our libraries are busy places. We have a new plan to keep them growing as innovative, accessible places. The 2026-2029 Service Delivery Plan is a strategic guide for how Region of Waterloo Libraries will continue to serve people across the region. Along the way, we heard from nearly 1,000 community members. The key focus areas are:

- Welcoming spaces that ensure libraries remain inclusive and inviting for all.
- Service excellence that upholds high standards.
- Diverse collections that represent the community's languages, cultures, and interests.
- Dynamic programs that foster engagement and social connection.
- Evolving technology that provides equitable access to digital tools, internet, and online resources.
- 131,729 total branch visits in 2025, 2,476 new members and 17,974 active cardholders.
- 1,437 library programs offered in 2025, attended by 23,457 people.

- Library visitors borrowed 273,112 print items, 174,405 digital items and 5,013 unique collection items in 2025.

## Climate aligned growth:

Our health and wellbeing depends on the natural world that sustains us. Together with our partners, we work to protect the environment. This means responding to climate change, building up resilience for extreme weather, managing our community's resources, and generating more green energy.

Here are some highlights from the progress we made in 2025:

### Setting our path to net zero:

Our climate is changing and at the Region of Waterloo we're doing our part to reach the community's long-term climate goals. Regional Council approved the new Corporate Climate Action Plan to help the Region of Waterloo buildings, vehicles and operations reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

We're putting the CorpCAP into action, starting with:

- Establishing net-zero standards for new buildings and retrofits.
- Launching a Green Fleet Policy.
- Increasing renewable energy use and reducing resource waste.
- Ensuring a climate change lens is applied to Regional decision-making.

Investments now will help mitigate climate change, support sustainable growth, protect people's health and wellbeing, and build economic resilience for today and future generations.

- The Region of Waterloo's new CorpCAP aims to achieve net-zero energy emissions in Region-owned facilities by 2050.
- Estimated carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) from Region of Waterloo operations is down 25% from 2010.
- 52% of overall greenhouse gas emissions from Region of Waterloo operations comes from methane released from our landfills.
- 50% GHG emissions reduction (from 2010 levels) by 2030 is the TransformWR target set by this community.

## Building better ways to travel:

In 2025, we invested in construction projects that make it easier and safer for you to get around the region-whether walking, cycling, taking transit, or driving. These improvements focus on connecting people safely and keeping roads and infrastructure in good condition every day.

- 30+ projects completed across all seven area municipalities to improve Region of Waterloo roads, bridges, transit access, and expand the walking and cycling network.
- 7 new roundabouts opened, plus pedestrian safety improvements added at key intersections to improve traffic flow and reduce collisions.
- 11 walking and cycling projects completed, including new multi-use paths, safer crossings, a trail extension, new pedestrian bridge, and upgrades to Grand River Transit stations.
- 4 major bridges repaired or rehabilitated, 3 roads widened, and 90 asphalt repairs as part of our many road and bridge improvements.

## Making roundabout crossings safer:

We began a new Roundabout Pedestrian Safety Pilot in 2025 to help anyone walking or rolling feel more safe using the crosswalk. Three roundabouts have been reconstructed with raised crossings, button-activated flashing lights, or both, as well as better lighting and new signage. In 2026, we'll gather information, then share the findings with Regional Council to inform how we build new roundabouts and whether to retrofit existing ones. The pilot project locations are Homer Watson Boulevard and Block Line Road, Franklin Boulevard and Bishop Street North, and Erb Street West and Ira Needles Boulevard.

- About 6,000 pedestrians and 750 cyclists cross Region roundabouts during a typical workday.
- 42 roundabouts exist across Waterloo Region.
- Injuries from roundabout collisions are 68 percent less likely compared to signalized intersections.

## Getting you there on GRT:

Our new GRT Business Plan will guide public transit into the future and meet the needs of our growing population. This plan will help us expand Grand River Transit's conventional bus, MobilityPLUS and train services. The goal? To make transit an easy transportation choice for all residents. We're working towards a bigger, faster transit network that will connect riders to about 38,000 more people and 15,000 more jobs within a one-hour trip

compared to today. We are also working to improve and modernize MobilityPLUS service, including growing the fleet so that everyone can get where they need to go.

- 22.1 million rides taken on GRT in 2025, moving passengers over 148 million kilometres.
- 3.7 million kgs of greenhouse gas emissions prevented thanks to GRT bus ridership.
- 16% drop in GRT ridership from our record high in 2024, due to reductions in local student population.
- 9% GRT ridership growth since 2015.
- 199,500 MobilityPLUS trips delivered in 2025, up to 16%.
- 300 hours spent in community, working with our partners, stakeholders and customers on GRT's new plan.

## Expanding township transit:

GRT is making progress on expanding transit to every township, so that people across Waterloo Region have access to our network. The plan we developed will add new service, improve frequency and could begin as soon as fall 2026. We're working to add new fixed bus routes for North Dumfries and Wellesley, plus improve our service to Woolwich and Wilmot. This work will help unite our region and connect people with ease to key destinations, giving them increased options for work and housing.

- The Township Transit Strategy is working towards public transit access for every resident of Waterloo Region.
- Township service continues to grow with ridership up to 117% since 2019.
- We offer two types of bus service in the townships: fixed routes and on-demand transit.
- We engaged residents and stakeholders to create our GRT Business Plan, gaining support from township councils.

## Moving ahead with ION:

Onward to Cambridge! We are moving forward with our next transformative public transit project, extending the ION to Cambridge. The initial business case was completed in 2025 and Regional Council endorsed moving ahead and exploring funding options to build more light rail that connects Waterloo Region.

- \$5.25 billion in development along the Central Transit Corridor from Stage 1 ION, and more than 22,000 new homes built along the corridor between 2011 and 2024.
- 78% of respondents chose extending the LRT from Fairway Station to downtown Cambridge as their preferred Rapid Transit option.

## Rolling out new waste carts:

In 2025, the Region prepared for cart-based garbage and organics collection across Waterloo Region. Starting in October, we delivered nearly 350,000 black and green carts to residents. Cart-based collection starts in March 2026. This change will help keep waste crews safer, make collection more efficient, and cut down on litter.

- 20,200 people reached by the Region's outreach team with carts education at over 270 community events, gatherings and information booths.
- Nearly 170,000 homes receive waste collection services from the Region, which includes single-family homes, duplexes, multi-family units and townhouse complexes.
- Over 270 social media posts issued by the Region about the cart transition, reaching over 5.6 million impressions.
- Over 16,500 people selected a smaller garbage cart during the window from June 30 to September 5, 2025.

## Resilient and future ready organization:

At the Region of Waterloo, we're working in new ways and testing creative new approaches to serve this community. Staff listen to residents and work with partners to build solutions that work today and into the future. We are expanding digital services and using data in new ways to help us make the most impact. Across our organization, putting residents' needs first and being innovative is helping us prepare for the future.

Here are some highlights from the progress we made in 2025:

### Building up community through upstream:

Our Upstream Funding continues to invest in community by putting resources in the hands of those who have historically faced systemic barriers. In September, we celebrated 25 new Upstream recipients who will offer services like land-based healing and education, trauma-informed mental health and wellness programs, anti-hate and restorative justice, youth-led leadership, and more. These investments are helping build a stronger, more resilient Waterloo Region. Wilfrid Laurier University research found that our Upstream Funds helped create jobs, stronger economies, and deliver critical services to nearly 40,000 people in need. Our first \$4.1 million delivered through Upstream resulted in a 240% return on investment.

- 25 new Upstream recipients in 2025.
- \$14 million invested in our Community Capacity Building and Upstream Funds since 2022.

- 2.4 times the return on investment on our first \$4.1M invested in Upstream.
- 150+ jobs and 1.6 million in annual household income created in year one alone.
- 40,000 people in need served from just our first 4.1M in Upstream funding.

## Preparing for Public Health emergencies:

Being ready to support the community through outbreaks and infectious disease threats, is a cornerstone of Public Health's work. During the 2025 measles outbreak, we put those preparations into practice. Our dedicated Public Health teams helped Waterloo Region residents stay safe and limited the spread of measles through intensive case and contact management. We also created a new Measles Information Line. Our Public Health programs are continually preparing for emergency management situations. We learn from past experiences, make plans and policies, and provide ongoing training to staff.

Public Health management participated in a tabletop exercise to strengthen how we'd respond to serious emergencies or cybersecurity threats. The exercise helped us plan strategically for how we'd protect the Region operations and continue to offer vital services.

- 111 measles cases reported by Region of Waterloo Public Health during the 2025 outbreak, with the last case reported in June 2025. This was just under 5% of the total cases in Ontario.
- 1,722 doses of measles vaccine administered by Public Health staff at 59 clinics.
- 1,100 calls from residents received and responded to through our newly launched Measles Information Line.

## Celebrating Indigenous culture at YKF:

YKF collaborated with Six Nations of the Grand River, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and Indigenous artists on exhibits and art that honour the cultural heritage and contributions of Indigenous peoples:

- Indigenous Greetings Wall: YKF's domestic arrivals building now features greetings in the languages of Indigenous peoples within the Region.
- *"Honouring These Lands and Waterways"*. Created by three artists, these murals bring the cultural reflections and resilience of Indigenous communities to life in YKF's domestic arrivals building.
- Ohontsà:ke nitioné:non onkwakara'shón:'a- *Our Stories from the Land*: This departures lounge exhibit shares stories and histories of the lands where the airport sits (valid boarding pass required).
- 380,000+ people per year will see the art and exhibits as they fly out of YKF.

- 8 artists and 2 storytellers partnered with us to create these features.
- 14 different greetings in Indigenous languages on our Greetings Wall.

## Improving our digital services:

We are using new technology and platforms to help people access information and services they need. In 2025, we began work to develop a new website shaped by user experience. That website will launch in 2026 to give people an easier, more accessible online experience. In 2025 we launched an upgraded EngageWR site, with more engaging features to gather resident input and communicate about Region projects. We also launched the new GRT Pay app, giving riders another easy way to pay for public transit. Digital services like these boost efficiency and help save resources that we can then redirect where they are needed most.

A higher proportion of residents' desire online communications from the Region.

- 30% increase from 2022 to 2024 of people who want to reach the Region through our website.
- 26,039 subscribers to our EngageWR platform in 2025, where people give input and get updates on municipal projects.
- 400,000 fare products purchased by GRT Pay users since the app launched in April.

## Launching the new Living Classroom:

In 2025, we began an exciting new Living Classroom program at Sunnyside Home. Students training to be Personal Support Workers can now put their lessons into practice and learn what it's like to work in long-term care. This partnership also improves quality of life and experience for Sunnyside residents. The first group of students started in February 2025 in a hybrid learning model. In late 2025, a dedicated portable classroom was delivered and will allow future cohorts a full-time learning experience on the Sunnyside Campus.

- The Living Classroom is a partnership with the Waterloo Catholic District School Board through the St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education.
- Students can be a part of life at Sunnyside by being partnered with a resident to visit and care for throughout their time in the program.
- Funding comes from the Centre for Learning and Research Institute, St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education, the Sunnyside Foundation and Fabulous Finds Gift Shop.
- The Living Classroom model was established in Ontario by a partnership of Conestoga College, the Schlegel-University of Waterloo Institute for Aging, and Schlegel Villages.

## Taking care of the assets you rely on:

We completed a comprehensive infrastructure Asset Management Plan in 2025, which helps us track the replacement value of all our assets, understand their condition, and plan the maintenance they need across their lifecycles. The Region of Waterloo stewards \$11.3 billion worth of assets that benefit people across the community: roads, traffic signals, buses, water and wastewater treatment plants and pumping stations, watermains and sewers, waste management facilities, an airport, administrative and cultural buildings, community housing, and a fleet of vehicles. Our staff continue to monitor all these assets, prioritize maintenance and update our plans to keep them operating well for years to come.

- \$11.3 billion is the replacement value of all the Region's infrastructure assets.
- 84% of our infrastructure assets are in a state of good repair (fair or better condition).
- \$1.8 billion worth of infrastructure assets are nearing end of life.
- \$82.8 million per year is our infrastructure funding gap over the next 10 years.
- Municipalities are required to have an Asset Management Plan and update it regularly.

## Delivering critical paramedic services:

Region of Waterloo Paramedic Services responded to more than 66,500 calls in 2025, providing emergency medical services and community paramedicine programs across the region. Implementation of the current Paramedic Services Master Plan has resulted in system performance improvement across many key indicators. Regional Council approved an updated Master Plan for 2026-2035 that will guide our service for the next 10 years. The plan is based on data evidence to support a sustainable and fiscally responsible service delivery model.

- In June, Region of Waterloo Paramedic Services welcomed its largest graduating class of new recruits. More than 47 new paramedics were recognized in a ceremony attended by more than 350 friends, family and colleagues.
- Region of Waterloo Paramedic Services responded to 66,591 calls in 2025, a 4.7% increase compared to 2024.
- Even though paramedics handled almost 5% more calls, the number of times no ambulances were available (Code Zero events) dropped by 88% in 2025 compared to 2024.
- In 2025, the time it took to transfer patients from paramedics to hospital staff improved greatly. On average, it dropped to 38 minutes, down from 83 minutes in 2024.