

COUNCIL INFORMATION PACKAGE

May 30, 2025

City of Cambridge Correspondence

***includes City of Cambridge memos and meeting minutes**

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Date: 05/01/2025 **Internal Memo #: IM25-011(CRE)**

To: Council

Circulated to: Council

Department: Corporate Enterprise

Division: Economic Development

From: Michael Launslager, Director of Economic Development

Subject: Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy

Comments

The newly completed 2025 Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy (WREDS) is a community-informed, collaborative document that outlines collective economic development priorities shared by all Area Municipalities, the Region, local economic development organizations and businesses, and the community. This memo is intended to bring awareness to Council of this strategy and its connectivity to Cambridge's 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan.

About the WREDS

The WREDS was developed collaboratively by a Working Group comprised of the Region of Waterloo, all seven Area Municipalities, and Waterloo Economic Development Corporation. The intent of the document is to guide economic development activities across the region to increase efficiency, identify opportunities for collaboration and support a coordinated, regional, and strategic approach to economic development. The ongoing and collaborative nature of the WREDS allows all economic development partners to ensure their efforts are aligning with the community's needs. This will increase efficiency, allow further opportunities for collaboration across municipal, community and institutional partners, and ensure that shared priorities are being addressed.

Background

When Working Group staff facilitated conversations with community interest-holders around the need for a refreshed Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy (WREDS), 100% of interest-holders interviewed encouraged the idea. A WREDS Working Group (comprised of staff from the Region, all seven Area Municipalities and Waterloo EDC) was formalized and public engagement for the new strategy began. The Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Workforce

Planning Board and the Immigration Partnership of Waterloo Region also acted as key supports for this body of work.

Staff were also directed to facilitate an accompanying Talent Attraction, Retention and Reskilling Plan, recognizing the importance of talent to regional economic development efforts. A Steering Committee comprised of the Regional and Area Municipal CAOs was also formed to provide leadership and direction on the strategy and Talent Plan, and Deloitte LLP was retained to support public engagement work, summarize recommendations for the WREDS and create a Talent Plan based on community feedback.

Over the course of 2023 and the first half of 2024, the Working Group conducted public engagement with community members, businesses, interest-holders, community organizations, and leaders to learn about the community's economic development priorities. From over 1,800 individuals, staff received feedback that included:

- The importance of wrap-around services to support our workforce, including affordable housing, childcare and healthcare services, cultural events and arts and culture activities, all of which influence talent attraction and retention.
- A misalignment between jobseekers and employers in the community, made evident by high unemployment and labour force participation coupled with steady job growth across many sectors.
- The diversity of Waterloo region's sectoral makeup and the opportunities this diversity presents in improving economic resilience and sustainability, growing local supply chains and bolstering investment attraction.
- The strong investment appetite in the region from local, Canadian and international firms, and the primary barriers to entry for new generational investments and local business retention and expansion, which include a significant shortage of serviced employment lands of various sizes and associated physical and social infrastructure to support investment.
- The importance of business priorities in economic development planning to support growth, including mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, improving access to public transit for employment lands, and supporting the scaling of Waterloo region's innovation ecosystem.

The extensive input gained from community engagement led to the creation of five strategic pillars that represent Waterloo region's shared economic development priorities:

- Talent: Attracting and retaining talent and improving workforce readiness and integration through training and employer support.

- o The talent pillar is supported by a separate Talent Attraction, Retention and Re-Skilling Plan, developed by Deloitte, which includes specific recommendations for supporting and growing Waterloo region's workforce. The Talent Plan is included in the WREDS as an Appendix.
- Land Readiness: Land development projects and associated infrastructure strategies for expedited business development and long-term planning.
- Scaling Local Innovation: Supporting local business retention and expansion and increasing collaboration to support entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Strategic Sector Support: Improving investment readiness in key sectors and coordinating advocacy efforts to grow emerging sectors.
- Quality of Life: Ensuring that talent-focused wrap-around supports, amenities, and other services that support our workforce are adequate for our growing community, fostering a sense of civic pride and belonging.

The establishment of the five strategic pillars as shared economic development priorities allows the Working Group and other key partners to plan, align, and collaborate on economic development activities according to our community's needs.

Implementation – Action Plan alignment

In February 2025, Cambridge's 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan was endorsed by Council. This document identifies a series of recommendations and actions for the next five (5) years that will set the parameters to focus and align the work undertaken by the City of Cambridge and its strategic partners in order to position the community as an attractive destination for investment. Four (4) pillars were created to organize recommendations and provide an overarching theme and direction for the action plan, while also serving as a snapshot to share with stakeholders as a way of summarizing Cambridge's economic development focus areas. Further, recommendations and tactics have been aligned with a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) under each pillar, to provide a baseline for analysis of the effectiveness and impact of the Economic Development Action Plan. To this end, actions identified in Cambridge's 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan may also be communicated to the community through the WREDS Working Group as a way of demonstrating areas of alignment with and collaboration on regional economic development goals.

An important part of the 2025 WREDS is the ongoing monitoring and reporting on activities that fall under each pillar. Beginning in 2025, the WREDS Working Group will meet biannually to report on new and existing economic development activities within each pillar, develop and monitor key metrics, and discuss opportunities for collaboration and synergy. The Working

Group will also assess the ongoing relevance of the pillars to ensure the WREDS continues to reflect the priorities of the community. On an annual basis, the Working Group will report on progress made in each of the pillars, as well as any proposed changes to the strategy based on community feedback, to the Steering Committee.

Attachments

1. 25-011-CRE Appendix A – 2025 Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy

Approvals:

☒ Manager/Supervisor

☒ Deputy City Manager

☒ City Manager

2025



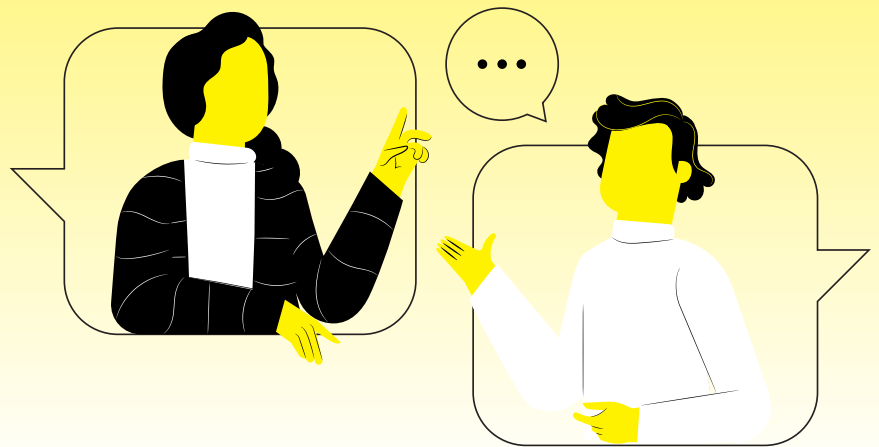
Waterloo
Region

Economic
Development
Strategy

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Executive Summary

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Waterloo Region is the fastest growing CMA in Canada. The local economy is diverse and resilient, with strong foundational roots in manufacturing, technology, education – and based in a community that emits innovation.

To support our projected growth, in 2022, Regional staff facilitated conversations with community interest-holders around the need for a refreshed Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy (WREDS). 100% of interest-holders interviewed supported the development of a new strategy. With support of Regional Council, a WREDS Working Group was formalized and public engagement for the new strategy and an accompanying Talent Attraction, Retention and Reskilling Plan began in 2023. A Steering Committee comprised of the Area Municipal CAOs was also formed to provide leadership and direction on the strategy.

The WREDS Working Group is comprised of all seven area municipalities, the Region of Waterloo, and Waterloo Economic Development Corporation (Waterloo EDC).



The TOWNSHIP of
NORTH DUMFRIES



Each Working Group member contributed to the interest-holder engagement, research, drafting, and execution of this strategy, and will continue to play a critical role in regional economic development beyond 2025. Desktop research included background review of significant plans and strategies that shape economic development in Waterloo region, including recent municipal strategic plans, official plans, area municipal economic development strategies, the Region’s Corporate Climate Action Plan, the TransformWR strategy, and the Job Sites Challenge report, among others.

Additional support and input was provided by the Immigration Partnership and the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (WPBWWD).



Workforce Planning Board
of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

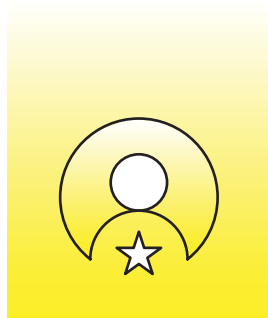
Over the course of 2023 and 2024, extensive research and community engagement was conducted, with more than 1800 members of the community heard.

At a high level, here is what we heard about Waterloo region's economy:

- Waterloo region is a favourable location to enable growth.
- The population is booming, but growth is not uniform across the region.
- Wrap-around supports for talent are critical to economic development.
- There are pathways for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in our economic development efforts to ensure shared prosperity and equitable growth.
- Immigration and diversity are driving development and economic growth, but more supports are needed to improve newcomers' experiences, accelerate economic integration and work towards equity for all members of the community.
- New caps on international student study and work permits will significantly impact post-secondary institutions in the short term and the region's labour market. Talent retention must be prioritized for post-secondary graduates.
- Job growth is steady, but unemployment continues to increase. Alignment is needed between the needs of the labour force and employers, especially in the region's fastest growing sectors.
- Some segments of the population, including women, youth, racialized, and equity-deserving groups, remain excluded from and underutilized in the labour force.
- Residential building permit activity continues to rise, but recent residential developments are yet to have a significant impact on rental housing affordability.
- Non-residential building permits increased over the 10-year average, slowing down after unprecedented growth in 2022.
- A lack of available serviced land and associated infrastructure, including water/wastewater, transportation infrastructure, and hydro, remains a significant barrier to entry for new investments and is preventing local businesses from expanding in Waterloo region.
- Waterloo region benefits from a strong presence of multiple goods-and service-producing sectors. Opportunities exist within these sectors to complement local supply chains.
- Businesses and developers are taking the lead on climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. Net-zero is a priority for all.
- Business and industry priorities, including access to transit, support scaling our innovation ecosystem, need to be addressed to support growth.

Strategic Pillars:

Research and engagement results directly informed the five strategic pillars grounding the 2025 strategy, and its eight themes that span all pillars.



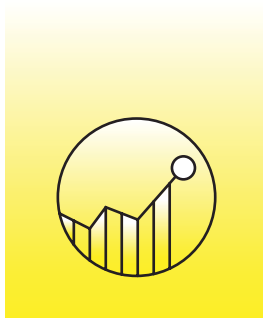
Talent

Attracting and retaining talent and improving talent readiness and integration through training and employer support.



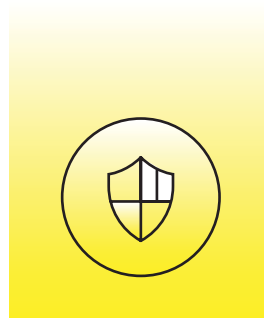
Land Readiness

Land development projects and associated infrastructure strategies for long-term planning.



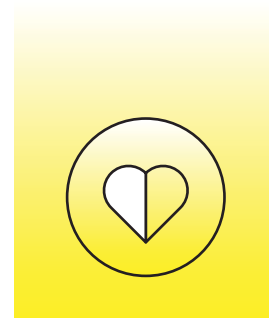
Scaling Local Innovation

Supporting local business retention and expansion and increasing collaboration to support entrepreneurship and innovation.



Strategic Sector Support

Improving investment readiness in key sectors and coordinating advocacy efforts to grow emerging sectors.



Quality of Life

Ensuring that wrap-around supports, amenities, and other services that support our workforce are adequate for our growing community, fostering a sense of civic pride and belonging.

Beyond the pillars, we heard from community and businesses about priorities that spanned the categories defined by the pillars. These themes reflect the concerns, priorities, and values of our community, and are present in & throughout the strategy:

Immigration
Equity & Reconciliation
Housing
Childcare
Transit & Mobility
Family physicians
Climate action
Rural success

During initial stages of community engagement, it became clear that the struggles faced by businesses in securing talent and the difficulties faced by the community in finding employment represented a disconnect that necessitated a dedicated plan of action. To this end, Deloitte LLP was retained to develop the “Waterloo Region Talent Attraction, Retention and Reskilling Plan.” This plan, which can be found in the appendix, consists of a recommended plan of action from the consultant that aims to bridge the gaps and tackle challenges within the region’s talent pool using a coordinated, regional approach.

The 2025 WREDS is structured differently than a traditional economic development strategy. The Action Plan for this strategy recognizes the work already being undertaken by all Working Group members in each of the five strategic pillars.

An inventory of the programs, services and strategies currently underway or in the pipeline has been conducted and catalogued according to the identified strategic pillars. This process has enabled the WREDS Working Group to identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration that align with the community’s economic development priorities. For a full list of the programs, services and strategies that have been catalogued and assessed, please view the 2025 WREDS Action Tracker.

To support progressing work in the strategic pillars, the WREDS Working Group has developed a Terms of Reference, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Working Group members and sets expectations around how information will be updated and made publicly available.

To ensure the evolving state of economic development in the region is regularly reflected in the strategy, the WREDS Working Group members have elected to assess the alignment of the strategic pillars with the needs of the community on an annual basis through reports to the Regional and Area Municipal CAOs, who comprise the WREDS Steering Committee. The strategy will be updated as needed, to ensure the region’s economic development community are aligned in our efforts to make Waterloo region the best community in Canada.

Since 2016, the Region, Area Municipalities, and Waterloo EDC have operated within a framework that clearly defined roles and responsibilities between partners to provide effective services to the community. The 2025 WREDS Action Plan is built within the existing partnership framework to ensure continuous success.

Waterloo EDC Partnership Agreement		
Waterloo EDC	Municipal Partners	Community Partners
Investment promotion / attraction	Sector/Cluster/Capability	Tourism
International promotion of Waterloo region	Development Retention/Aftercare	Events
Outbound business missions	Data	Arts & Culture
Inbound business missions	Infrastructure	Education/Training
Government navigation	Lifestyle/Community Profile	Trade Promotion
Business-friendly service/SPOC	Employment Lands	VC Supports and Funding
		Start-ups

Regional Context

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Spanning over 1,300 square kilometres across three cities and four townships, Waterloo region is a fast-growing, diverse, and resilient community of over 670,000 people. For decades, economic and social resiliency allowed Waterloo region to remain on the forefront of technological change, innovation, and competition. The 2025 Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy (WREDS) is grounded by economic strength in the face of unprecedented population growth and both the challenges and opportunities this growth presents.

Waterloo region is on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and Chonnonton People. We acknowledge the enduring presence of the Indigenous people with whom we share this land today, their achievements and their contributions to our community. We offer this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada.

For more data on Waterloo region's current and forecasted economic indicators, please refer to the Waterloo Region Economic Overview in the Appendix.

670K People

1370 KM²

3 Cities

4 Townships

3 World Class Post-Secondary Institutions

4% Population Growth [SOURCE](#)

#1 Small Tech Talent Market in NA [SOURCE](#)

#1 Fastest Growing Region in Canada [SOURCE](#)

Thinking Big: Global Context

— *A favourable location to enable growth*

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The region is strategically situated on Highway 401, approximately 100 km west of Toronto, and enjoys the advantage of direct access to one of Canada's most crucial transportation corridors. This prime location provides exceptional transportation connectivity to the largest concentration of people in the country and facilitates connections to international markets through the Ontario-New York border and the Ontario-Michigan border.

Waterloo region enjoys the benefits of having many world-class post-secondary educational institutions located within a 100 km radius. These institutions include the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, Conestoga College, McMaster University, Western University, University of Guelph, University of Toronto, Fanshawe College, Mohawk College, Seneca College, Humber College, George Brown College, and York University, among others. These regional institutions provide local businesses with access to more than 19,000 annual graduates from a broad range of educational programs.

Businesses in the region can also tap into a diverse and skilled workforce, thanks to the extensive transportation networks that extend to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This includes GO Transit services to Guelph, Acton, Georgetown, Mississauga, Brampton, and Toronto, as well as passenger rail services to Sarnia and Toronto through VIA Rail.

The region provides businesses with enhanced opportunities for growth and expansion. The transportation infrastructure allows for seamless movement of goods and services, while the proximity to major urban centers ensures access to a wide customer base. Moreover, the accessibility to international markets opens avenues for global trade and economic partnerships.

The development of the 2025 WREDS involved over a year of extensive community engagement and research. In collaboration with several key community partners, over 1,800 community members were heard across a range of context-specific approaches.

Engagement on the strategy was led by a Working Group that consists of representation from each of the region's seven Area Municipalities, the Region of Waterloo and the Waterloo Economic Development Corporation. Additional support was provided by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin and Immigration Partnership Waterloo Region.

18 Interviews
4 Surveys
13 Workshops
**1800 Engaged
Community Members**

**Key focus groups
engaged:** 348 businesses;
205 attendees across
4 newcomer-focused
workshops; 230 children
and youth.

Community engagement was carried out in many different forms to ensure the opportunity to present feedback and ideas was as accessible and adaptable as possible. Input was actively sought at each stage of the development process, and hearing the voices of equity-deserving groups was prioritized, making great effort to “meet people where they were at” to ensure equitable collaboration and to maximize the potential for feedback.¹

Engagement findings not only informed the strategic pillars grounding the 2025 strategy, but also revealed key themes that transcend the boundaries of the pillars. These themes reflect the concerns, priorities, and values of our community, and are present throughout the strategy: immigration, equity and reconciliation, housing, childcare, transit, family physicians, climate action, and rural success.

In combination with research undertaken by Deloitte LLP, Ethic Talent, and Kerr + Milton Consulting, the findings from the engagement process were used to develop a deep, community-informed understanding of the regional context that frames the challenges and opportunities addressed by the 2025 WREDS.

Population growth is critical to economic development and presents many opportunities for development – but plans and programs must be in place to support our growing population.

The region’s population is booming, but growth is not uniform across the region.

Waterloo region is experiencing rapid and unprecedented growth. Driven by interprovincial and international immigration, the region’s population grew by over 4% from 2022 to 2023 alone, and experienced growth well above Ontario and Canada from 2019-2023.

[SOURCE](#)

	Waterloo Region	Ontario	Canada
Population Growth Rate: 2022-2023	4.4%	3.1%	3.2%
Population Growth Rate: 2019-2023	13.9%	7.1%	6.6%

This growth was primarily fueled by interprovincial and international immigration and non-permanent residents, such as international students.

Importantly, growth was not uniform across the region. The cities of Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo and the townships of Woolwich and North Dumfries all experienced growth above 11% from 2019-2023, but the townships of Wilmot and Wellesley grew by only 5.09% and 5.81% respectively over the same period.

[SOURCE](#)

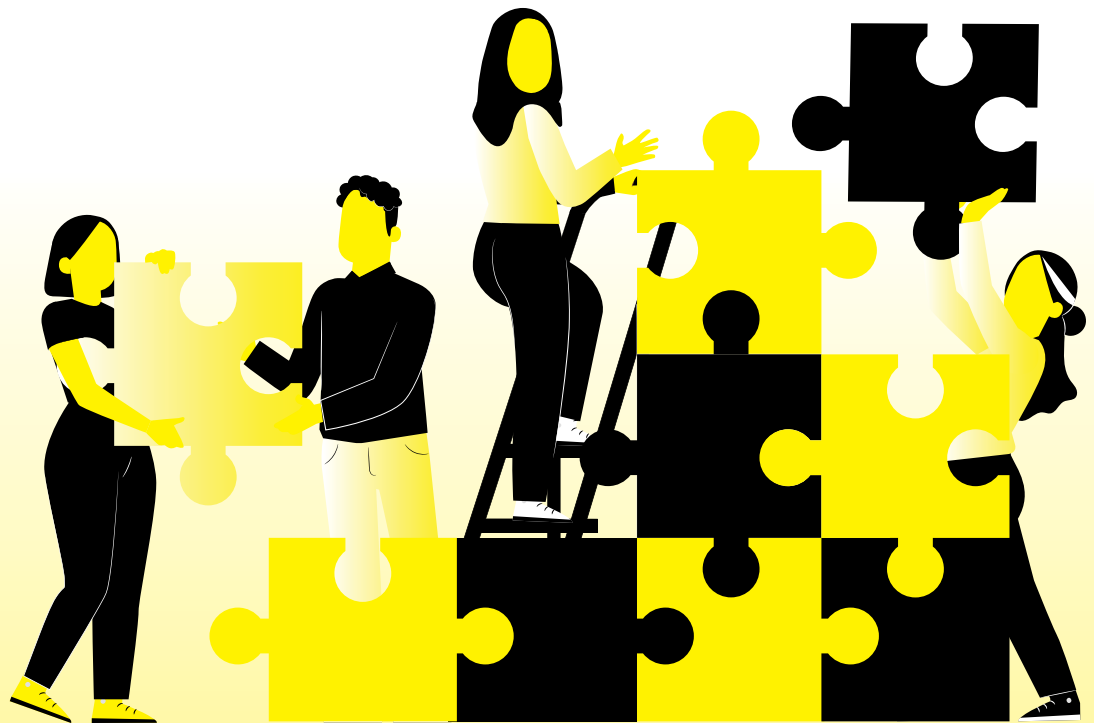
The importance of continuing to support and grow our rural areas was evident throughout the engagement process.

Rural communities are economic, social, and environmental areas of focus of Waterloo region, and should be given ample attention in collaborative economic development efforts.

Wrap-around supports for talent are critical to economic development.

Through consultations with individuals, businesses, and representative groups, wrap-around services and supports – the critical and complementary services that enable a thriving talent ecosystem – emerged as a clear priority for all interest-holders.

In particular, we heard that wrap-around services including adequate and affordable housing, access to childcare and family physicians, and public transportation are critical to supporting talent growth and a sustainable economic development across the region.

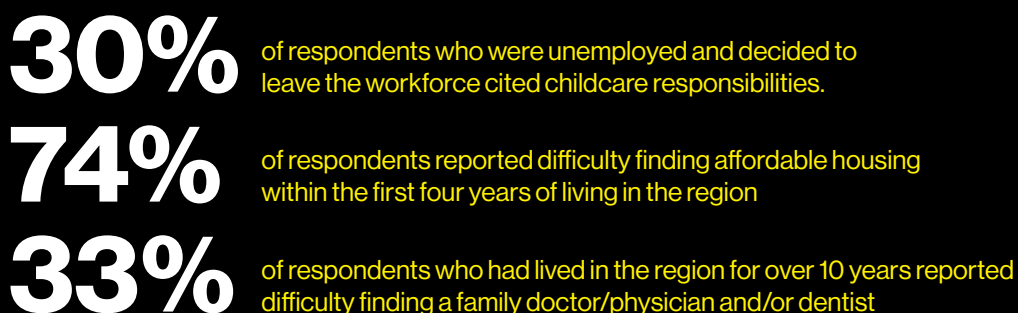
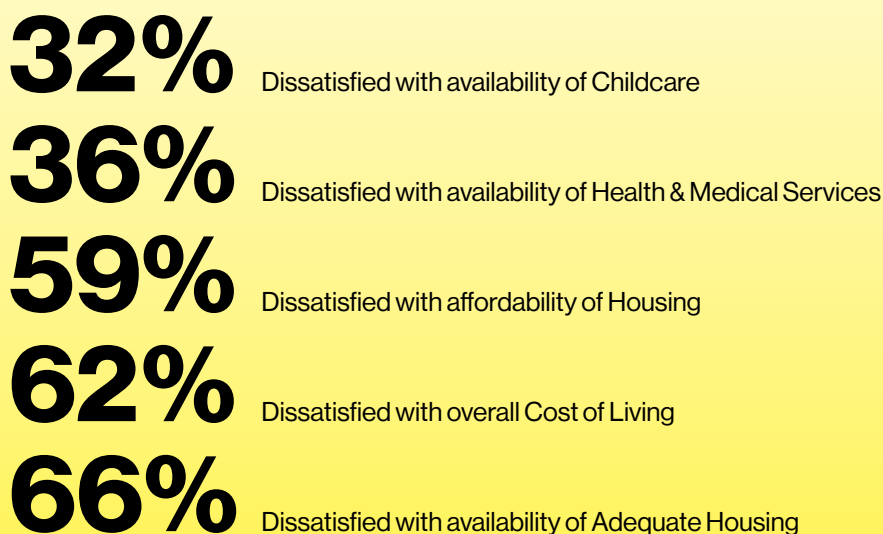


In absence of adequate wrap around supports for talent, engagement data showed that labour force participation declines, relocation to the region becomes less attractive, employers are unable to hire the talent they need, post-secondary students choose to leave after graduating, residents' quality of life suffers, and investment goes elsewhere.

While Waterloo region has a robust network of wrap-around services and integrated organizations to support the community's needs, the availability and accessibility of these wrap-around supports in the region is not adequate for our growing workforce. In particular, housing affordability, public transportation access, the ability to find a family physician, and childcare availability were themes that came up consistently across research and engagement.

In the quality of life survey, respondents reported the highest dissatisfaction with the availability of wrap-around supports that support talent:

Making progress on positive change to address long-standing inequities for First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples is also impacted when there are not enough culturally relevant and responsive holistic programs in the region. Working with Urban Indigenous organizations to identify service gaps and generate opportunities for cultural competency training for non-Indigenous service providers is critical.



Wrap-around supports for talent are the backbone that allows our community to function, grow, and thrive; they are critical to all aspects of the future of economic development in our community, including investment attraction, talent retention and attraction, business development, retention and expansion, and economic growth and prosperity.

[SOURCE](#)

There are pathways for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in our economic development efforts to ensure shared prosperity and equitable growth.

The 2025 WREDS recognizes the need to adopt economic reconciliation principles within our community, and to work toward better representation and systemic inclusion of Indigenous Peoples.

The National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada: Pathways to Socioeconomic Parity for Indigenous Peoples (NIES) provides Indigenous-led guidance to drive positive change, address long-standing inequities, and achieve inclusive growth for and with Indigenous communities. The NIES is grounded by four Strategic Pathways:

1. People: Strengthen the capacity of Indigenous Peoples in the labour market, leadership, and governance;
2. Lands: Resolution of Indigenous jurisdiction and environmental stewardship;
3. Infrastructure: Leading edge physical and institutional infrastructure and services;
4. Finance: Financial capital through revenue, stimulus funds, procurement and trade to achieve economic and social prosperity.

In addition to this guidance from NIES, initial engagement findings showed that economic inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in local economies must be advanced through supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship, offering financial resources, tailored training, and mentorship programs.

Initial feedback also showed that land and resource stewardship partnerships play a vital role, through opportunities to involve Indigenous communities as partners in projects, which supports both revenue sharing and environmental protection. Education and skill development programs aligned with local economic needs, especially in technology, trades, and entrepreneurship, can empower Indigenous communities to access and lead in emerging markets.

Additionally, considering public and private sector procurement policies that prioritize Indigenous-owned businesses fosters economic participation, especially when paired with cooperative and equity models allowing Indigenous communities to hold stakes in large projects like infrastructure or renewable energy. To remove financial barriers, offering tailored financial products through government and private institutions improves access

to loans, credit, and investment capital. Finally, promoting Indigenous cultural and eco-tourism taps into the demand for cultural experiences and sustainable tourism, creating local jobs while supporting cultural preservation.

Many of the goals and areas identified for action that underpin the four NIES Strategic Pathways align with the action areas identified in the WREDS research and engagement process. For more information regarding the actions and collective goals for economic reconciliation in Waterloo region, as well as how they align with the outcomes of the WREDS, please refer to the appendix.

The region has the opportunity to be a leader in upholding Indigenous rights and continues to uphold purposeful engagement as work is undertaken. The WREDS is a living document; as trust is built and relationships continue to form and grow, we will ensure that this document, and the actions stemming from it, reflect findings from these relationships that continue to support Indigenous economic prosperity.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)'s Calls to Action are foundational in nature and provide direction for government, businesses and individuals to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. Call to Action 92, under Business and Reconciliation, ***calls upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.*** While its language specifically addresses businesses, Call to Action 92 is highly relevant for local governments as well for their role as major local employers, corporations having economic and social responsibility, partnerships with private business, influence on community development, and leadership in Reconciliation. Local governments, like businesses, have a significant role in advancing reconciliation by aligning their policies, practices, and partnerships with the principles outlined in Call to Action 92.

SOURCE

From 2023-2030, the region expects to welcome over 84,000 newcomers to the community, doubling the same number over the previous 7-year period.

Immigration and ethnocultural diversity are driving development and economic prosperity, but better supports are needed to improve newcomers' experiences, accelerate economic integration and work towards equity for all members of the community.

Waterloo region's proximity to, and traditional affordability compared to, Toronto, as well as its job availability, education opportunities, and diverse community make it an attractive place to land for national and international immigrants. Despite having a lower share of immigrants (25%) compared to the overall province (30%), Waterloo region continues to experience significant growth in immigration: from 2023-2030, the region expects to welcome over 84,000 newcomers to the community, doubling the same number over the previous 7-year period². This includes welcoming over 60,000 new study permit holders and 20,000 new work permit holders. Additionally, Waterloo region expects to welcome over 10,000 new permanent residents each year from 2023-2030. This projection sees our population approach 850,000 people in the next seven years.

[SOURCE](#)

Research consistently shows that ethnocultural diversity and shared economic prosperity are strongly correlated with positive outcomes such as increased innovation, heightened creativity, greater labour force participation and productivity, and economic growth. By harnessing the strength of diversity, we tap into a wide range of perspectives, ideas, and talents, leading to enhanced problem-solving capabilities and a competitive edge in the market.

Waterloo region is well positioned to benefit from a high degree of ethnocultural diversity: in 2021, 27.5% of residents identified as a visible minority. However, through interest-holder engagement, individuals and community organizations representing ethnocultural groups shared experiences of racism and xenophobia, leading to difficulty finding employment and housing and leaving a lasting negative impact on their health and quality of life in the region. To harness the strength of our diversity, especially in the face of increased international immigration, Waterloo region needs to bolster the supports, systems, and opportunities that are available to our diverse communities as we strive to elevate everyone.

[SOURCE](#)



²

These figures, developed by the Immigration Partnership, include newcomers on study permits and were projected prior to the recent restrictions placed on post-secondary institutions regarding international student enrolment.

[SOURCE](#)

New caps on international student study and work permits will significantly impact post-secondary institutions in the short term and the region's labour market. Talent retention must be prioritized for post-secondary graduates, especially those who have completed high-demand programs.

Waterloo region is known in part for its concentration of world-class post-secondary institutions. The University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Conestoga College collectively enroll over 200,000 students, with international students accounting for approximately 37% of all post-secondary students in the region. Beyond serving as a source of heightened revenue for local institutions, international students have a significant, positive impact on the local, provincial, and national economies by joining the labour force and settling in the community.

The recently introduced cap on international student permits in Canada is expected to have significant implications for Waterloo region's post-secondary institutions and their ability to attract international students and retain robust program offerings and staff sizes, as well as the regional economy as international student numbers decline.

Analysis of the policy to date is mixed, with differing interpretations and projections of its impact on the local economy and labour market. In the wake of the rollout over the coming years, policies and projects surrounding talent attraction, immigration policy, and student supports must be flexible and ready to respond to the needs of students, institutions, and the labour market.

Regardless of the impact of the permit cap, talent retention efforts for graduates of the region's post-secondary institutions are insufficient. In a survey of post-secondary students, 58% of respondents indicated that they intended to leave the region immediately following graduation, with the top two reasons being an inability to afford housing in the region and the availability of post-graduation employment opportunities elsewhere. Opportunities exist for area municipalities, the Region of Waterloo, and its key partners to engage with post-secondary institutions to attract students to high-demand program areas and develop collaborative talent retention programs for new graduates.

In a survey of post-secondary students, **58%** of respondents indicated that they intended to leave the region immediately following graduation.



Job growth is steady, but unemployment continues to increase. Alignment is needed between the needs of the labour force and employers, especially in the region's fastest growing sectors.

Waterloo Region enjoys a robust, diverse labour force that supports growth in a variety of sectors. Employment reached approximately 343,000 in 2023, with major areas of employment spread across a number of sectors including:



By 2031, employment in key sectors will grow by:



[SOURCE](#)

The Region has the fourth highest participating labour force in Canada and the second highest in Ontario, with an overall labour force participation rate (LFPR) of 69.1%. [SOURCE](#)

Census Metropolitan Area (Ontario)	Labour Force Participation Rate (Q3 2024)
Ottawa-Gatineau, Ontario Part	69.6%
Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo	69.1%
Barrie	68.2%
Guelph	67.7%
Oshawa	66.8%

High participation coupled with high unemployment indicates that there is misalignment between employers and jobseekers in our community.

However, recent employment growth is slow. Employment growth over last year decreased to only 0.9%, the lowest since 2018, and unemployment rate responded accordingly, hitting an 11-year high³ of 7.1% in the first half of 2024.

Through interest-holder engagement with newcomer communities and workforce support agencies in the region, we heard about the discrepancy between newcomers’ skills, education, and experiences, and the jobs they were able to secure upon arriving in Waterloo region. Newcomers described primary barriers to finding employment as a lack of Canadian work experience, a lack of employment or character references, the preference given to jobseekers with relationships in the field, discriminatory hiring practices, and limited transportation to places of employment. Newcomers also experience difficulty finding employment due to difficulties transferring and/or using their credentials in the Canadian job market, leaving them no choice but to take lower-paying jobs in new sectors to make a living.

Beyond the newcomer community, employers and interest-holders representing workforce and employment support agencies expressed incongruity between employer skills needs and what jobseekers are bringing to the table. Throughout the engagement process, interest-holders repeatedly expressed the need for targeted training, upskilling, or reskilling programs that address skills shortages in the labour force. Similarly, manufacturing employers expressed the importance of basic language and communication skills for jobseekers in order to participate in health and safety training and protocols.

Similarly, jobseekers benefit from training programs that improve skills, communication and understanding. Where there is a misalignment of skills, jobseekers need the knowledge and ability to refine their resume, cover letter, and interview skills to align with employers’ needs and requirements. These services are offered by employment agencies and other social service organizations, but capacity and reach can be improved with additional support from government and collaboration with local educational institutions and employers.

³ Excluding 2020 highs during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Young people reported being open-minded about job opportunities and neutral towards many industries.

Some segments of the population remain excluded from the labour force.

Despite relatively high labour force participation rates (LFPR) across most gender and age segments of the population, some groups continue to experience low LFPR.

There is a historic gender divide in LFPR beginning at the 29-year-old mark which continues to appear in our current labour force. In many families, women remain the default “stay-at-home” parent, resulting in dropping participation rates around child-bearing years. In the face of a childcare shortage, this gap becomes more severe, as families either cannot afford or cannot find childcare and choose instead to have a parent leave the labour force to take care of their children. There is a critical need to rapidly increase the availability of childcare in Waterloo region, which will benefit labour force participation, as well as talent retention and attraction efforts.

Youth ages 15-24 experience low LFPR due to both secondary and post-secondary education. There are opportunities for employers and industry representatives to engage youth early in employment areas in need of talent. Research done by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (WPBWWD) found that young people are open minded about opportunities and employers and reported being neutral

towards many industries. Opportunities therefore exist at this stage to shape and direct the future labour force into jobs and industries that are struggling to find talent, while benefiting young people by giving them a sense of direction and increasing their ability to secure employment in high-demand fields.

Many racialized and equity-deserving groups experience disproportionately low LFPR, which reduces quality of life, lowers earning potential and independence, and increases alienation for impacted groups. Arab women, Indigenous people, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and persons with disabilities are among several groups who experience low levels of labour force participation for reasons including workplace discrimination, lack of transportation, childcare needs, inaccessible job postings and hiring processes, mental health barriers, and a lack of part-time employment opportunities in the labour force.

Diversity in the local labour force is one of Waterloo region's competitive advantages as a site for investment and growth. Targeted supports and programs to address root causes of low LFPR in equity-deserving groups will allow more people to participate in the labour force and will unlock new pools of capable talent for employers.

In 2012, 67 permits were issued for accessory dwelling units, while in 2023, this number had reached 1,115 permits or 19% of all residential building permits.



Residential building permit activity continues to rise, but recent residential developments are yet to have a significant impact on rental housing affordability.

2023 brought significant increases in residential building permit activity, with 23% growth over 2022 for a total of 6,158 permits issued for residential units. Residential building permits were concentrated in the cities, with North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich encompassing 355 units or about 6% of all permits issued. The majority of permits (72%) were for apartments, followed by townhouses (16%), indicating a continued emphasis on medium- and high-density development in Waterloo Region brought on by zoning by-laws, transportation improvements, and development charge reductions and incentives for higher density residential developments.

Type	2023 Units	YOY Change
Single Detached	603	-34%
Semi-Detached	102	84%
Townhouse	1,016	-22%
Apartment	4,437	57%
Total	6,150	29%

[SOURCE](#)

Concentrating housing in major transit station areas (MTSAs) is critical in official planning to achieve a healthy balance between the competing priorities of lands for employment and lands for housing.

Permits for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), such as garden suites or duplex conversions, have become increasingly common. In 2012, 67 permits were issued for accessory dwelling units, while in 2023, this number had reached 1,115 permits or 19% of all residential building permits. This indicates a massive shift in the types and forms of new housing being built in the region: ADUs provide cost-saving benefits for both property owners and tenants and are quickly becoming a popular option for diversifying and increasing the housing stock.

According to CMHC's 2023 Rental Market Survey, the average private apartment rent in Waterloo region increased by 12% over 2022 to \$1,561, the fifth highest of all Ontario CMAs and marking the largest percent change behind Toronto.

[SOURCE](#)



Despite positive permitting trends, the rental market in the region continues to face challenges. Construction and development have not kept up with the rate of permitting due to high interest rates and low investment interest. According to CMHC's 2023 Rental Market Survey, the average private apartment rent increased by 12% over 2022 to \$1,561, the fifth highest of all Ontario CMAs and marking the largest percent change behind Toronto. Notably, however, the vacancy rate in the region nearly doubled and was estimated to be 2.1%, compared to 1.2% in 2022, as new units were brought to market. This growth is positive, but the vacancy rate still falls below the minimum of 3-5% for a healthy rental market, resulting in inflationary rent prices.

Throughout the engagement process, all interest-holders – businesses, chambers of commerce, post-secondary students, youth, local businesses, service agencies, new immigrants, and Indigenous communities – repeatedly expressed the importance of affordable and attainable housing as a top priority in improving quality of life and attracting and retaining talent. New construction and high vacancy rates will be necessary to drive average rent down across the region and ensure that the rental market is accessible to everyone.

Non-residential building permits increased over the 10-year average, slowing down after unprecedented growth in 2022.

In 2022, non-residential building permits more than doubled over 2021, reflecting a post-pandemic surge in industrial investment fuelled by low interest rates. In 2023, the total value of all non-residential building permits decreased by 38% from 2022 but increased by 33% over 2021 and 7% over the 10-year average. Non-residential building permit value was primarily seen in industrial (\$177 million) and commercial (\$175 million) permits. These trends generally reflect a consistent pace of investment over the last 10 years in Waterloo region, but construction investment has not kept up with the growth of non-residential building permits, which may be impacted by high interest rates, construction costs, and supply chain issues.

[SOURCE](#)

Waterloo region benefits from a strong presence of multiple goods- and service-producing sectors. Opportunities exist within these sectors to compliment local supply chains.

An estimated 63,543 businesses are located in the Region. Close to 84% of these businesses are in the three cities and 16% are located in the townships. The vast majority of businesses (94%) have 9 or less employees. Most businesses in the Region are sole proprietorships with at least \$30,000 in annual sales (70% of all businesses). A total of 10,184 businesses employed between 1 to 4 employees, while 3,455 businesses employed between 5 to 9 employees. The Region is also home to large business establishments, with approximately 488 businesses employing at least 100 people.

[SOURCE: LIGHTCAST 2024.1 DATARUN](#)

Waterloo region benefits from high concentrations in manufacturing, information and cultural industries, educational services, professional, scientific and technical services, and wholesale trade.

Industry	Jobs (2023)	% of total jobs (2023)	Businesses (2023)
Manufacturing (31-33)	59,300	17.2%	1,014
Professional, scientific and technical services (54)	39,000	11.3%	2,358
Health care and social assistance (62)	35,100	10.2%	1,837
Retail trade (44-45)	32,200	9.4%	2,007
Educational services (61)	29,900	8.7%	217

Businesses and occupations within these industries comprise much of Waterloo region's economic backbone. The region is well known for its longstanding strength in several key clusters,⁴ including manufacturing, technology, agri-food, and automotive. With a concentration of manufacturing jobs unlike any other region in Canada, a talent base from specialized training programs across multiple post-secondary institutions, a longstanding culture of technological entrepreneurship and innovation, and as the home of Canada's largest automotive manufacturer, Waterloo region's key clusters are diverse and have massive influence over the growth and future of the region.

⁴ "Cluster" is used in this strategy to refer to a collection of industries operating within the same greater market and sharing resources, including talent, goods, services, and technology. For example, the automotive cluster is comprised of businesses across industries including manufacturing, professional, scientific, and technical services, wholesale trade, and others. Within the cluster, resources are purchased, sold, exchanged, and developed to the benefit of the cluster and the broader economic ecosystem.



Waterloo region's businesses spend over \$33 billion to produce goods or provide services, creating a multiplier effect that can stimulate economic growth.

Purchases from manufacturing alone amounts to over \$14 billion annually, seven times the amount purchased by the next highest sector. 49% of manufacturing purchases are imported, but for many sub-industries (e.g., transportation equipment manufacturing), that figure is even higher. **Overall, imported purchases in manufacturing result in over \$7 billion leaving the region annually.**

Incentivizing growth in the supply chains and supportive physical and social infrastructure for these clusters will help to ensure that Waterloo region is maximizing the benefits of having foundational clusters across different industries.

Waterloo region's rural communities are critical to economic growth. The upcoming Rural Investment Readiness Strategy, led jointly by Waterloo EDC and the four townships, will improve investment readiness and create supply chain and business investment opportunities in key sectors.

Waterloo region is a uniquely urban and rural community. With three urban cities and four rural townships, we benefit from the diversity in employment, population, and businesses that the blend of rural and urban brings. However, this blend also brings challenges as our community grows. With the majority of the region's designated employment lands residing in the townships, more support is needed to ensure that these lands are serviced and the communities are ready for new investments in key sectors such as automotive, cleantech, and agri-food.

Investment in the agri-food sector will be critical as our community grows. Waterloo region has longstanding strength in the agri-food sector, with businesses and operations along the entire food supply chain. Primary producers, processors and manufacturers, and distributors in Waterloo region's agri-food sector employs over 4,800 people. Ontario represents the second largest food cluster in North America, and Waterloo region's 1,400+ farms and 130+ food manufacturers play a critical role in the provincial agri-food ecosystem.

The Federal Economic Development Agency of Southern Ontario (FedDev)'s investment of almost \$3 million to support Waterloo EDC in the development of a Rural Investment Readiness Strategy (RIRS) signifies the importance of our rural communities and the prioritization of rural investment attraction in economic development.



A lack of available serviced land and associated infrastructure remains a significant barrier to entry for new investments and is preventing local businesses from expanding in Waterloo region.

Land Inquiries 2021 - 2024 Q1	Quantity & Type	Lost Opportunities
1 - 10 Acres	23 (5 Greenfield, 18 Brownfield)	\$6.15B — 9000+ Jobs
11 - 50 Acres	25 (21 Greenfield, 4 Brownfield)	
51 - 100 Acres	5 (All greenfield)	
101 - 300 Acres	3	\$4.1B — 5000+ Jobs
300+ Acres	9	

SOURCE - NEWMARK / WATERLOO EDC

Waterloo region is experiencing a significant shortage of serviced industrial land. This scarcity is directly impacting economic growth as businesses struggle to find suitable locations for expansion or new operations. The region's industrial real estate market is characterized by low vacancy rates, rising land costs, and intense competition for available properties.

Since 2021, Waterloo EDC has received 65 land inquiries from local, domestic, and international firms seeking sites for industrial development. Of the 65 inquiries:

- 14 were not submitted due to lack of suitable land
- 8 were lost due to the lack of a megasite in the region
- 33 others were lost with the reason uncertain due to lack of feedback, or specific barriers to executing an industrial project in the region, especially:
 - Site planning process is too long
 - Inability to meet servicing requirements
 - Lack of sites zones for industrial / heavy industrial
 - Absence of sites available for sale instead of lease
 - Development land is too expensive

This poses challenges for businesses. The scarcity of serviced land has driven up land prices and rental rates, making it more challenging for businesses to operate profitably. Additionally, the lengthy planning and approval processes associated with industrial development can significantly delay project timelines, hindering economic growth.

In addition to impacting local and prospective businesses, a lack of serviced industrial land impacts economic growth. The lack of available land is limiting our ability to attract new businesses and expand existing operations, which hinders job creation and economic development. The region's limited land supply is making it less attractive to potential investors compared to other regions with more abundant land resources, giving us a competitive disadvantage. We are losing talent when businesses want to expand in the region but have no space to do so, and we are missing out on investment opportunities from firms looking for land in Waterloo Region to move or expand their operations.

Climate change presents significant challenges and opportunities for Waterloo region. Achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the impacts of extreme weather are priorities for all.

Climate change is predicted to have significant economic impacts across Canada and globally. These impacts will result in lost income, job losses, and cut GDP growth, which will significantly impact economic development in Waterloo region. A 2022 report by the Canadian Climate Institute found that by 2025, climate impacts will be slowing Canada's economic growth by \$25 billion annually, which is equal to 50% of projected GDP growth. The study also found that reducing greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and preparing for the impacts of extreme weather (adaptation) will reduce economic losses by 75%. For example, the report found that for every \$1 spent on climate adaptation measures, \$13-15 is saved, and these savings are reflected in local and global economic systems. [SOURCE](#)

Climate change mitigation and adaptation are priorities shared by the Region, area municipalities, key interest-holders, businesses, and the public. TransformWR is a community climate change action plan that outlines a pathway to achieve a 30% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050 (below 2010 levels). This plan was endorsed by all municipal Councils within the region in 2021 and is currently being implemented by Climate Action Waterloo Region. Across all types of development, climate-related measures are a crucial aspect of sustainable economic growth by mitigating physical and financial risks to businesses, government, and the public.

Throughout engagement, business owners, industry leaders and global real estate investment trusts expressed that stringent climate-related development standards and best practices, such as the Region's High Performance Development Standards (in development) or the City of Waterloo's Generation Park, are an asset to investment attraction and put the region on the forefront of innovative building construction and operation. Standards are used by industry leaders to market best practices and report positively on their commitments to climate action; when these standards are put in place by regulatory authorities, they become a selling feature to developers.



Across all types of development, climate-related measures are a crucial aspect of sustainable economic growth by mitigating physical and financial risks to businesses, government, and the public.

In housing development, climate change mitigation and adaptation measures must also be prioritized. These measures make housing more affordable and resilient long-term and have a positive impact on the natural environment. In publicly funded developments, we can take the lead on building to high performance development standards. In private residential developments, whether new builds or retrofits, standards and incentives at the federal, provincial, and local levels must be leveraged to ensure developers are also adhering to best practices.

There are significant local economic opportunities associated with the low-carbon transition. By 2030, 3.1 million Canadian jobs will change in some way due to the climate transition and 400,000 new jobs will be added across many sectors. Canada is currently facing a shortage of employees to fill green collar jobs¹ and is predicted to face a 27,000-employee deficit across all sectors in 2025. Economic changes brought on by climate change represent generational opportunities to fill talent gaps and strengthen the local economy while contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

[SOURCE](#)

Recognizing the importance of mitigation and adaptation in economic development, Sustainable Waterloo Region and Climate Action WR have endorsed key climate-related recommendations under each Strategic Pillar for capitalizing on climate-related opportunities through our collective regional economic development actions. These recommendations include partnering with post-secondary institutions to accelerate green skills training to address the demand for green collar jobs, introducing a core focus on supporting and scaling technology and automation solutions to support the climate transition, and prioritizing reliability of critical services by partnering with WR Community Energy and local utilities to create decentralized local energy systems. For the full list of recommendations, please refer to the appendix.

¹ Green collar jobs refer to jobs requiring specialized skills relating to the climate transition. There is demand for green collar jobs in every sector. Green collar jobs in manufacturing and utilities, trades, transportation and equipment, and sales and service are already facing surging demand.



Business and industry priorities need to be addressed to support growth.

In addition to climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, several other priorities were made clear across engagement with businesses, industry interest-holders, and the community.

Transportation – Access to public transportation is now a pre-requisite for investment attraction. Businesses frequently inquire about access to public transit when considering sites for future development. Transportation infrastructure planning must be linked with economic development strategies to ensure that there are ample transportation options for current and future employment lands across the region.

Scaling Entrepreneurship – Waterloo region is well known globally for providing an innovation ecosystem that attracts entrepreneurs and provides the support they need to get off the ground. However, entrepreneurs and their startups need space and support to grow in Waterloo region. Through engagement with entrepreneurship interest-holders, startups and the broader business community, it was made clear that the Waterloo region needs to improve the scale-up ecosystem in order to keep talent, innovation and investment associated with startups.

Strategic Pillars

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Talent



Land
Readiness



Scaling
Local
Innovation



Strategic
Sector
Support



Quality
of Life

The strategic pillars outlined in the following section are derived from key trends, interest-holder priorities, regional characteristics, and future projections, and are validated by the findings of the interest-holder engagement process and the regional context review. These pillars represent shared priorities with common goals for all Waterloo Region Economic Development partners.

The 2025 Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy seeks to build on its predecessor's collaborative spirit by taking inventory of the current economic development activities and future plans being carried out by economic development partners across the region. In an ongoing process, the Waterloo Region Economic Development Working Group will identify opportunities for collaboration and synergy within the five community-defined pillars to support a coordinated, regional, and strategic approach to economic development.

Under each pillar, sample projects exemplify the collaborative nature of the strategy, with the Strategic Pillars representing shared priorities for the entire Working Group and its partners.

Talent



Immigration Partnership is collaborating with World Education Services to create a digital Employer Playbook that will assist employers with recruiting, hiring, and retraining immigrant talent.

The Township of Woolwich, in collaboration with the **Workforce Planning Board**, is planning a job fair to promote new immigrant employment in the healthcare sector.

Land Readiness



The Region of Waterloo is developing a Shovel-Ready Strategy which outlines an approach for accelerating sites for employment lands, affordable housing or future community needs like community centres or schools across Waterloo region.

The City of Waterloo is servicing and selling parcels of land in Generation Park, a new greenfield park with Sustainability Standards targeting growth and scaling businesses in robotics, automation, light manufacturing, and technology.

Scaling Local Innovation



The City of Kitchener's SDG Idea Factory is a first-of-its-kind collaborative incubator helping entrepreneurs tackle social and environmental innovation challenges.

The City of Cambridge is implementing the Core Area Transformation Fund which will be used to stimulate transformative investment to support city-building and increasing market-ready spaces in Cambridge's three urban cores.

Strategic Sector Support



Waterloo EDC is supporting the growth of the EV cluster within our automotive sector by creating an ecosystem cluster map, hosting industry events and developing an investment attraction strategy.

The Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich are collaborating with **Waterloo EDC** to develop a Rural Investment Readiness Strategy and action plan to prepare for investment in key sectors such as automotive, cleantech and agri-food.

The Region of Waterloo and the Township of Woolwich are collaborating to develop a Community Improvement Plan to support the growth and development of the Aviation & Aerospace sector.

Quality of Life



The City of Cambridge is engaging in various projects, including asset mapping, downtown business support and other programming to boost tourism in the city.

The City of Kitchener, through its Downtown Kitchener (DTK) brand and the **City of Waterloo**, through its CreateWaterloo brand are engaging in place-making activities such as cultural events, festivals, and equity-based initiatives to increase vibrancy and quality of life in the urban core.

The Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich are working in collaboration with the **Region of Waterloo** and **Grand River Transit** to improve transit service in rural areas.



IMMIGRATION
EQUITY & RECONCILIATION
HOUSING
CHILDCARE

TRANSIT & MOBILITY
CLIMATE ACTION
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
RURAL SUCCESS

During initial stages of community engagement, it became clear that the struggles faced by businesses in securing talent and the difficulties faced by community in finding employment represented a disconnect that necessitated a dedicated plan of action.

To this end, Deloitte LLP was retained to develop the “Waterloo Region Talent Attraction, Retention and Reskilling Plan”. This plan consists of a recommended plan of action from the consultant that aims to bridge the gaps and tackle challenges within the region's talent pool in a coordinated, regional approach.

These recommendations recognize that talent attraction, retention, reskilling, and integration are the responsibility of all economic development partners, such as area municipalities, who provide critical recreational, cultural and business services; not-for-profit organizations, who provide direct services to newcomers; agencies such as Waterloo EDC, that market the region and secure talent; post-secondary institutions; business associations, including Explore Waterloo Region, BIAs and Chambers of Commerce; and, the private sector.

Recommendations developed by the consultant through the Talent Plan include:

- **Attraction:** Defining the region's value proposition to attract talent, grow and diversify the job pool, improving labour force participation for equity-deserving groups, and improving wrap around supports that potential incoming talent will value.
- **Retention:** Focusing on retaining secondary and post-secondary graduates, supporting local businesses in retaining their workforce, and improving wrap-around supports to keep talent in the region.
- **Reskilling:** Increasing alignment of education and training with employer needs, strengthening partnerships to promote continuous experiential learning, and supporting employees in declining occupations with transitioning to high-growth industries.
- **Integration:** Supporting the integration of equity-deserving groups in the workforce through partnerships with representative parties and advocacy groups and promoting reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives in workplaces.

These key actions areas aim to empower talent and drive long-term economic growth in the region. For the full Talent Plan, please refer to the Appendix.





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In ongoing conversations with interest-holders in the business community, investors, and leaders, the critical need for shovel-ready employment lands continues to be a top priority in economic development and investment readiness. Waterloo Region urgently needs shovel-ready land for employment and residential development uses to ensure job growth and housing availability keep up with our rapidly growing population. A critical part of increasing the supply of shovel-ready land is protecting existing employment lands to allow for future investment in high-demand areas.

The land readiness strategic area of focus recognizes this urgent need by outlining priority areas to streamline regional policy and processes surrounding strategic infrastructure servicing and land development, increasing transparency in land readiness processes, and aligning with market demand for employment and residential lands.

Most opportunities for employment lands servicing across Waterloo region are concentrated in the townships. While Area Municipalities take the lead on creating new and preserving existing employment lands in urban areas, the Region is positioned to support larger scale land readiness activities for employment lands in the townships, as well as land development-related projects for affordable housing and other strategic initiatives across the region.

Across partners, Waterloo region's proactive response to land readiness includes:

- Taking inventory of existing and planned servicing infrastructure to predict future needs, costs, and service capacity requirements.
- Developing strategies to expedite shovel-ready status for priority parcels by streamlining planning and approval processes.
- Partnering with and supporting key interest holders in the public and private sectors that accelerate the development of affordable housing across the region, with a focus on density and mobility integration.
- Using a regional perspective to lead and support key strategic projects for the benefit of the entire community.





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CLIMATE ACTION
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RURAL SUCCESS

Waterloo Region is well established as one of Canada's top innovation hubs, drawing and producing entrepreneurs and innovators across an array of industry sectors supported by world-renowned incubators and post-secondary education institutions.

While the strength of our innovation ecosystem was validated in research and engagement, interest-holders and industry leaders expressed the need to shift to scaling entrepreneurship in the tech ecosystem. Waterloo Region has no shortage of entrepreneurs and start-ups, but a greater focus must be placed on ensuring they have the capital, mentorship support, services, and land resources necessary to place roots and continue growth in the region.

Waterloo region can benefit from increased collaboration between a wide range of regional partners, including Area Municipalities, post-secondary institutions, incubators and accelerators, Waterloo EDC, Chambers of Commerce, funding partners, and small business support centres, to scale local innovation.

Proactive responses to scaling local innovation by the Region, Area Municipalities and Waterloo EDC include:

- Identifying critical service gaps and leveraging these opportunities to support local business retention, with a focus on small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Developing a long-term regional planning vision for market-ready industrial, office and commercial spaces that offer local businesses expansion opportunities.
- Fostering a collaborative workforce ecosystem to bridge gaps between interest-holders and create connections and working relationships within and across industries.
- Collaborating with partners, including the Chambers of Commerce, post-secondary institutions, and local incubators and accelerators, to ensure firms exiting the start-up phase have the support and resources they need to grow in Waterloo region.





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RURAL SUCCESS

Waterloo Region is home to several dominant industry sectors that are anchored by generational investments, Waterloo-born international firms and post-secondary institutions offering specialized training. Our strengths include advanced manufacturing, automotive, food processing, fintech, and technology and digital media. The region's status as a global tech leader attracts innovation and growth across all industry sectors with the rise of artificial intelligence, robotics and automation.

In investment attraction, business retention and expansion, workforce development, and other sector support activities, interest-holders and industry representatives expressed the need to take a regional approach in considering the impacts of emerging sectors and the role they will play in future economic growth. Firms within sectors such as aviation and aerospace, health technology, and clean technology, among others, are considering Waterloo Region for expansion. While industries often function region-wide, Area Municipalities may focus on growing and supporting existing sectors prioritized for their communities, while the Region may support sectors that align with Regional assets and region-wide priorities, such as aerospace and aviation. Growth strategies for emerging sectors will help to increase economic diversification and build clusters and local supply chains across industries.

Taking a regional approach to strategic sector support looks like:

- In collaboration with government, industry leaders and interest-holders, jointly identifying strategic sector focuses for development activities through interest-holder workshops, forecasting, data-driven market analysis and benchmarking.
- Municipalities assessing investment readiness in key sectors and providing support to improve readiness where gaps exist.
- Coordinating advocacy efforts through the work of Waterloo EDC with support from municipalities to align and strengthen sector support activities across partners.





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The effectiveness of region-wide economic development activities – including investment attraction, business retention and expansion, workforce development, and entrepreneurship – is dependent on maintaining a high quality of life for residents and businesses. When quality of life is high, wellbeing increases, talent and investment come to the region, and our community grows.

Quality of life in the region is high: in a survey developed to inform the 2025 WREDS, 84% of respondents reported being either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with their overall quality of life in the region. We heard about the impact of our community partners on increasing vitality and prosperity in the region through community-building efforts and how these efforts make the region a great place to live. However, we also heard about the critical need for improvement in essential services and amenities that have a strong impact on quality of life. Wrap-around services that support talent, including lowering cost of living, access to housing, family physicians, childcare, public transportation, and community connectedness, are all critical to improving quality of life in the region, and we heard from interest-holders and community that many of these factors are deficient or under supported.

By prioritizing quality of life as a strategic area of focus alongside other economic development priorities, Waterloo region is recognizing the need for a coordinated, region-wide response to enhancing quality of life, which will support and improve other areas of economic development. In partnership with the community, we will work to ensure that Waterloo region remains a great place to live, work and play for everyone.

Priorities within the quality of life area of focus include:

- Implementing initiatives that respond to gaps in amenities and services that impact quality of life, including enhancing public and active transportation networks, improving community safety, providing cultural enrichment, and increasing green spaces and recreational facilities.
- Collaborating across all economic development partners to ensure that basic needs are met by actively expanding and improving talent-focused wrap-around services, and the organizations and staff who provide them, including affordable, attainable and adequate housing, family physician recruitment, newcomer integration programs, improving integrated mobility, expanding childcare availability, senior support services, and mental health and wellness resources.
- Expand tourism and events to support local businesses including in main street areas, increase community engagement and vibrancy, celebrate quality of life in the region, showcase regional strengths, and influence talent retention.

Action Plan

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The 2025 Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy (WREDS) is structured differently than a traditional economic development strategy. The 2015 strategy included 43 actions for WREDS Working Group members to adopt on top of their existing economic development activities and strategies. While many actions were adopted and had success, many others were never realized.

The 2025 WREDS Action Plan recognizes the work that is already being undertaken by all WREDS Working Group members in each of the five strategic pillars. By taking inventory of the programs, services and strategies currently underway or in the pipeline and cataloguing the work according to these pillars, we're better able to identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration that align with the community's economic development priorities. Adopting this strategy allows economic development activities to be carried out in a coordinated, strategic and transparent manner across the region.

Since 2016, the Region, Area Municipalities, and Waterloo EDC have operated within a framework that clearly defined roles and responsibilities between partners to provide effective services to the community. The 2025 WREDS Action Plan is built within the existing partnership framework to ensure continuous success. More information on the framework can be found in the Terms of Reference.

The following consists of an overview of the projects underway or in the pipeline by WREDS Working Group members across all strategic pillars, including notable gaps in activities and opportunities for next steps and collaboration. For the full list of projects, programs, and services reported by the Working Group, please refer to the **Appendix**.



Talent

Across the Working Group, the largest number of actions being taken fall into the Talent category, with the majority of activities focusing on talent attraction and retention. At least one project in these categories was listed for each member of the Working Group, with the majority of activities consisting of strategic plans and investment strategies, job fairs and hiring supports, programs extending and improving wrap-around supports, and arts and culture activities.

Gaps in Talent currently centre around talent readiness and talent integration, especially for municipal partners. Opportunities exist to bolster the work of organizations such as the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin and the Immigration Partnership, who currently offer the bulk of talent integration services for newcomers in the region. In partnership with local educational institutions, a region-wide talent readiness and reskilling effort will address the need for employer-employee synergy by preparing the workforce for the current and future job market.



Land Readiness

The fewest projects were reported under the Land Readiness area. The Cities of Waterloo and Kitchener are engaging in Land Readiness through parcel/ geography-specific projects and associated servicing strategies. There is a major gap in Land Readiness with respect to a regional approach to land development that supports the broader economic goals of the WREDS Working Group, which would coordinate Land Readiness initiatives across the region and provide all partners with the support and guidance needed to take a strategic approach to growth and development.



Scaling Local Innovation

Under Scaling Local Innovation, all Working Group members recorded multiple projects currently underway that support business retention efforts. Supporting projects include transit strategies, strategic plans, Community Improvement Plans, direct supports for local businesses, and collaborations with the Chambers of Commerce. Despite these projects, gaps exist in business expansion support and the creation and maintenance of collaborative spaces for businesses and other interest-holders to connect. There are opportunities to engage in a more focused, regional discussion on how to best align the planning and development of market-ready industrial and commercial spaces with local business needs. Forums for collaboration, such as industry roundtables, would also help to bridge the gap between industries and interest-holders.



Strategic Sector Support

Most projects in Strategic Sector Support currently focus on supporting growth and development activity in key sectors. Many of these projects centre around ensuring that the region's largest and most productive sectors, such as automotive, manufacturing, and tech, are able to thrive and expand in the region. Several other projects aim to support emerging sectors where there are opportunities for new investment and rapid growth, such as health innovation, clean/green tech and arts and creative industries.

There is room for growth in the assessment and preparation of investment readiness for key sectors in the region. Opportunities exist to bolster supply chains, infrastructure, and workforce availability in a targeted and coordinated way to increase the investment readiness of key sectors.



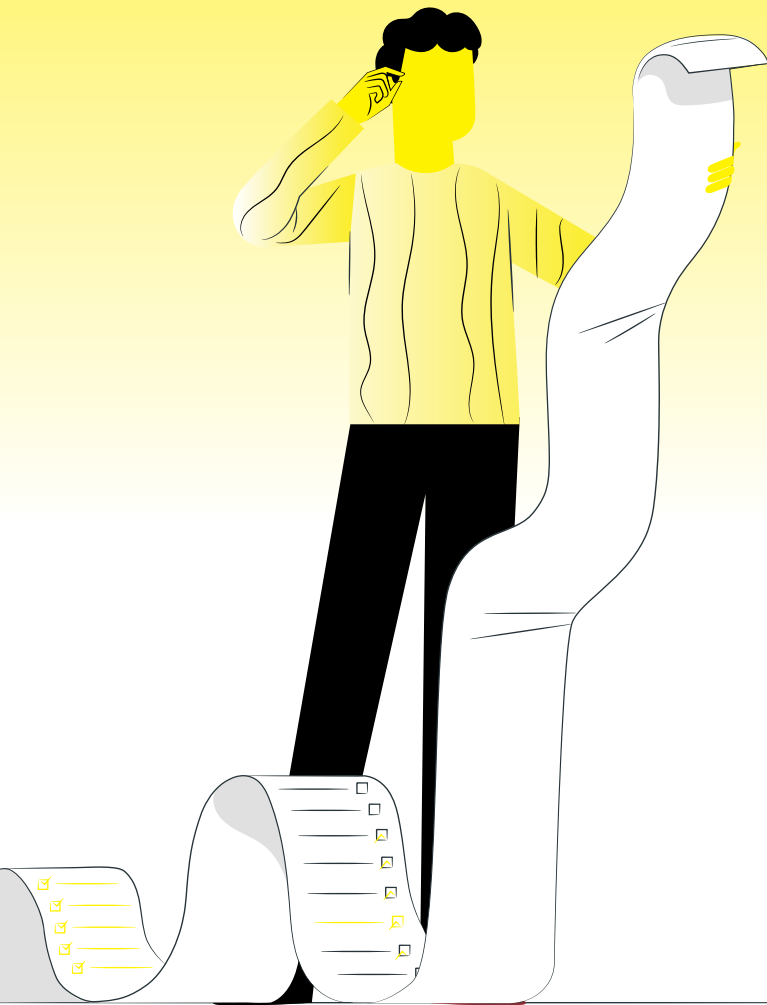
Quality of Life

Quality of life initiatives across the WREDS Working Group tend to focus on improving availability of, and access to, amenities and activities that, when coupled with basic necessities and wrap around supports, improve quality of life and sense of belonging in the region. These initiatives include active transportation-related projects, cultural and heritage programming, public art installations, and supporting recreational and sports programs.

Many quality of life initiatives focus on increasing the availability of affordable housing and working to eliminate chronic homelessness across the region with the support of non-profit housing providers, community support organizations, and provincial and federal funding programs. However, in some areas, gaps exist between housing-related projects and other critical talent-related wrap-around supports, such as childcare. To ensure that our community is able to increase its quality of life, wrap-around supports must be integrated into other initiatives across quality of life and other strategic pillars, such as Talent and Land Readiness. Doing so will ensure that everyone in our community is able to live, work, grow, and thrive in the region.

Beyond 2025

/41



To support progressing the work in the strategic pillars identified through the WREDS development process, the Working Group has developed a Terms of Reference. This document outlines the roles and responsibilities of the WREDS Working Group members and sets expectations around how information will be updated, and made publicly available.

The Terms of Reference, which can be found in the Appendix, outlines quarterly updates, including a quarterly meeting, to share current activities and updates according to the agreed upon reporting framework. Sharing updates on a quarterly basis will allow members to discuss gaps and opportunities for collaboration to work towards the five strategic pillars.

Additionally, on an annual basis, WREDS Working Group members will assess the alignment of the strategic pillars with the evolving state of economic development in the region. If the Working Group determines that the 2025 WREDS framework, or a particular pillar, is no longer aligned with the needs of the community, the group will revisit the strategy and make changes as needed. The performance of the strategy and the Working Group will also be reviewed on an annual basis by the municipal CAOs. (Steering Committee)

For more details on the Working Group's membership, roles and responsibilities, reporting framework, and decision-making structure, please refer to the Terms of Reference in the **appendix**.



MINUTES
Corporation of the City of Cambridge
Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee

April 28, 2025

Committee Members in Attendance: Gary Racine, Alison Fitzpatrick, Shannon Adshade, Tara Small, Sarah Dodds, CJ Janzen, Barry Green, Heather DeYoe, and Councillor Helen Shwery

Regrets: None

Staff Members in Attendance: Michael Oliveri, Council Committee Services Coordinator; Stephen Aboagye, Supervisor of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility; Jennifer Shaw, Deputy City Clerk; Farshid Sadatsharifi, Accessibility Coordinator; Matt Cuthbert, Manager of Special Events; Steven Ruffini, Senior Architectural Technologist; Stephen Lavigne, Supervisor of Recreation – Arts and Culture

Meeting Called to Order

The meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee of the Corporation of the City of Cambridge was held via zoom. The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. and the meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest

None

Election of Chair

Gary Racine was acclaimed as committee Chair.

Approval of March 24, 2025, Accessibility Advisory Committee Minutes

Moved by: CJ Janzen
Seconded by: Barry Green

THAT the minutes of the March 24, 2025, Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee be approved.

CARRIED

Agenda items:

8.1 Winter Special Events

- Matt Cuthbert, Manager of Special Events, provided updates on recent City-led events and addressed feedback received from UnSilent Night. He acknowledged concerns raised and outlined specific improvements to enhance accessibility at future events. Matt emphasized that accessibility continues to be a priority in event planning across the City.
- He noted that ongoing site visits are taking place to assess and improve accessibility, and shared that a new mobility mat has been installed at the Soccer Complex. The City is also conducting an inventory to expand its supply of accessibility tools, such as portable ramps, noise-cancelling headphones, and accessible seating options, and will be working with Technical Services on accessible signage and the use of QR codes for event information. These proactive measures aim to make all City events as inclusive as possible.
- Looking ahead to National AccessAbility Awareness Week on May 24, Matt's team is happy to conduct a walk-through with the Accessibility Coordinator to ensure the event route is fully accessible.

8.2 Region of Waterloo Taxi By-Law

- Nora Emtesali provided an update on the review of the Region's Taxi Bylaw, last revised in 2016. The review aims to improve accessibility standards and ensure the bylaw reflects the needs of the community. Engagement with accessibility advisory committees, including GRAAC and CAAC, is underway to gather feedback.
- It was shared that the current bylaw requires 7% of a taxi broker's fleet to be accessible. Of the 331 active taxi licenses, only 25 vehicles are accessible.
- Key Issues and Committee Feedback:
 - Definition of "Accessible": Committee members asked for clarity and recommended updating the language to reflect current best practices and inclusive terminology.
 - Service Coverage: Members asked for a breakdown of where the 25 accessible taxis operate and suggested tracking service distribution and wait times by municipality.
 - Passenger Assistance: Concerns were raised about the lack of standardized assistance for riders with disabilities. A suggestion was made to include a requirement in the bylaw to ensure support is provided when needed.
 - Licensing Fees: Questions were raised about whether accessible taxi licenses cost more than standard ones. Nora will follow up with the committee on this issue.
 - Safety: Members emphasized the importance of mandatory vulnerable sector checks and proper training for operators. Nora confirmed that these updates will be prioritized.
 - Accessibility Surcharge: A recommendation was made to increase the accessibility surcharge from \$0.05 to \$0.10 to support accessible service improvements.
- Nora committed to returning to the committee with updates and incorporating the suggestions provided during the meeting.

8.3 19 Cambridge St Renovation

- Steve Lavigne and Steven Ruffini introduced themselves and shared updates on the renovations at 19 Cambridge, a City-owned building formerly used by a law firm. They walked through the existing layout and discussed planned accessibility improvements as part of the site enhancements.
- The accessibility coordinator conducted an Accessibility walk-through prior to the start of the project. Planned upgrades include more accessible washrooms, including universal washrooms with appropriate turning radius and design features.
- The building will serve multiple functions, including studio space and general work areas.
- A question was raised about the sink placement relative to the toilet, particularly for wheelchair users. Staff confirmed that the sink could be repositioned while still meeting clearance requirements.
- It was suggested that someone with lived experience, such as Councillor Roberts, be invited to participate in a walk-through to provide input on the proposed layout and accessibility features.

8.4 Region of Waterloo GRAAC 2024 in Review

- Jenny introduced her role at the Region and shared that her team is leading accessibility efforts. She mentioned that a new Accessibility Lead position has been approved to bring a subject matter expert to help spearhead these initiatives and help provide updates on the Region's Accessibility Status Report.
- Accessible Housing Standards: The Region prioritizes affordability, accessibility, and energy efficiency in its housing revitalization plan. Accessible units are being built beyond Ontario Building Code (OBC) requirements, with a variety of unit sizes (1–5 bedrooms), such as the 1-bedroom accessible unit at Langs Drive. The term "enhanced accessibility" was used to recognize that accessibility needs vary individually.
- Grand River Transit Updates: The Mobility Plus Business Plan is scheduled for release in Spring 2025, shaped by over 2,000 community responses. Updates include new bus stop standards, 42 accessible landing pads, and changes to vehicle layouts.
- 2025 Transit Initiatives: Plans include piloting Neuron's adaptive micromobility vehicles for people with disabilities and introducing tactile transit signage for riders with low or no vision.
- PAL Cards: The Region has launched PAL Cards, which serve as proof of eligibility for a support person on GRT services.
- Mobility Plus Improvements: The application process has been simplified, and new software was launched to manage eligibility and customer profiles more efficiently.
- Looking Ahead to 2025: The Region plans to act on findings from the 2024 Ipsos community survey, begin construction of accessible, all-gender washrooms, and redesign the external front entrance for improved access.
- Ongoing Improvements: The Region continues to advance accessibility across all departments and services.

Subcommittee Update: Gary Racine, CAAC Chair, City of Cambridge

- None

Staff Liaison Update: Stephen Aboagye, Supervisor of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility and Farshid Sadatsharifi, Accessibility Coordinator

- The Accessibility Coordinator provided an update on the Mapping Initiative and encouraged committee members to participate in the AccessNow project, which aims to map and share accessibility information about locations in the community.
- Planning for National AccessAbility Awareness Week (NAAW) is underway, and activities and engagement opportunities are being developed.

Council Representative Update: Councillor Helen Shwery, City of Cambridge

- None

Chair's Report: Gary Racine, Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair

- None

Other Business

- None

Adjournment

Moved by: Alison Fitzpatrick

Seconded by: CJ Janzen

THAT The Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of April 28, 2025, be adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

CARRIED

Next Meeting:

Monday, May 26th, 2025, 1:30 p.m.- 3:30 p.m. via Zoom

If any accommodations are required to participate in this meeting, please email accessibility@cambridge.ca

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

HELD
May 13th, 2025

2025-132

Moved by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Trahan

THAT Council of the Municipality of East Ferris supports the resolution passed by the City of Cambridge formally requesting the Provincial Government to consider redistributing a portion of the Land Transfer Tax collected on property transactions to municipalities and calling on the Federal Government to allocate a percentage of the GST collected on property sales to municipalities;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Right Honourable Prime Minister Mark Carney, the Right Honourable Premier Doug Ford, the Ontario Minister of Finance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, MP Pauline Rochefort and MPP Vic Fedeli.

Carried Deputy Mayor Rooyakkers

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of
Resolution No. 2025-132 passed by the
Council of the Municipality of East Ferris
on the 13th day of May, 2025.



Kim Rose, Dipl. M.A.
Clerk

May 28, 2025

Please be advised that during the regular Council meeting of May 27, 2025 the following resolution regarding "Strong Mayor" powers was carried.

RESOLUTION NO. 205-316

DATE: May 27, 2025

MOVED BY: Councillor Engelsdorfer

SECONDED BY: Councillor MacNaughton

WHEREAS on May 1st, 2025, the Province of Ontario designated Prince Edward County as a "Strong Mayor" community along with 168 other Ontario communities, granting enhanced powers to the Mayor; and

WHEREAS Strong Mayor powers significantly alter the balance of governance at the municipal level, undermining the role of Council in decision-making and weakening the fundamental democratic principle of majority rule; and

WHEREAS "Strong Mayor" legislation violates the principles and meaning of democracy, and local governance has, for generations, been built upon a foundation of shared, democratic decision-making; and

WHEREAS elected representatives and citizens from many municipalities throughout Ontario including several close neighbours such as Quinte West have expressed significant concern regarding the imposition and appropriateness of these powers; many councils have called for their repeal; and many mayors throughout the province have publicly recommitted to democracy by refusing to adopt "Strong Mayor" powers; and

WHEREAS Prince Edward County did not formally request or express a desire to be designated under the Strong Mayor framework; and

WHEREAS the government justified the expansion as a tool to build more housing, AMTCO has indicated there is no evidence that the legislation has impacted housing starts in municipalities that have previously been granted strong mayor powers; and

WHEREAS strong mayor powers create significant risks for municipal integrity increased division in local discourse, the blurring of roles threatening the neutrality of the unelected public service, and greater risk of improper influence (or the appearance thereof) particularly regarding local planning and development matters;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the County of Prince Edward formally request that the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing recommit to the meaning and spirit of democracy and rescind the Strong Mayor legislation;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Bay of Quinte MPP Tyler Allsopp, AMO, ROMA, and all other Ontario Municipalities.

CARRIED

Yours truly,



Victoria Leskie, **CLERK**

cc: Mayor Steve Ferguson, Councillor Engelsdorfer



Council Meeting

Motion # 05/14/2025 - 14
Title: Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act
Date: Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Moved by: Jennifer Prenger
Seconded by: Beth Blackwell

Whereas the Ontario government has fast-tracked Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025 (Bill 5), such that it was referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior on May 6, 2025, after being first read on April 17, 2025, and

Whereas the written submission deadline for participation on Bill 5 is May 26, 2025, at 6:00 PM (EDT), and

Whereas Bill 5 would enact the Special Economic Zones Act, 2025; amend/repeal the Endangered Species Act, 2007 and replace it by enacting the Species Conservation Act, 2025; and amend various Acts including the Ontario Heritage Act, the Mining Act, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, and the Electricity Act, 1998 and to revoke various regulations in relation to development and procurement, and

Whereas Bill 5 will allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to create zones anywhere in Ontario where municipal and provincial laws will not apply, and where projects or proponents can be exempted from requirements under provisions of an Act or of a regulation, including environmental and heritage laws, and

Whereas the provisions of Bill 5 as written include anti-democratic principles and risks undermining civil liberties, Indigenous rights, the environment and local government oversight, and

Whereas the Municipality of Kincardine believes that the provincial priorities of housing, resource development and economic development can be achieved without subverting existing laws, undermining municipal authority, threatening the environment, restricting industry growth, or undermining informed consent with Indigenous communities; now therefore be it

Resolved that the Council of the Municipality of Kincardine hereby opposes Bill 5; and
That Council formally express its opposition to Bill 5 in favour of preserving democracy, transparency, accountability, the environment, civil liberties, and Indigenous rights; and

That Council encourage the province to prioritize democratic principles and governance systems that support responsible development, environmental preservation, and acknowledge our responsibility to future generations; and

That Council formally request that the Ontario government reject Bill 5; and

That a copy of this motion be forwarded to the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, ; the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines; MPP Lisa Thompson; all Ontario municipalities; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; and the Standing Committee on the Interior.

Carried.

Jennifer Lawrie

Clerk



Premier of Ontario, The Honorable Doug Ford (sent by email, premier@ontario.ca)

Provincial Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. MPP, Todd McCarthy (sent by email, todd.mccarthy@pc.ola.org)

Provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, MPP, Rob Flack (sent by email, rob.flack@pc.ola.org)

Sarnia Lambton Bkejwanong Provincial MPP, Bob Bailey (sent by email, bob.baileyco@pc.ola.org)

Sarnia Lambton Bkejwanong Federal MP, Marilyn Gladu (sent by email, marilyn.gladu@parl.gc.ca)

AMO (sent by email, amo@amo.on.ca)

All Municipalities (sent by email)

May 27th, 2025

Please be advised that the Council of the Town of Plympton-Wyoming, at its Planning Council meeting on May 26h, 2025, passed the following motion calling for a pause of the enactment of BILL 5 PROTECT ONTARIO BY UNLEASHING OUR ECONOMY ACT 2025:

MOTION TO PAUSE BILL 5 PROTECT ONTARIO BY UNLEASHING OUR ECONOMY ACT 2025

Whereas the province has introduced Bill 5, Protect Ontario by unleashing our Economy 2025 which is intended to speed up housing and economic development in Ontario.

And whereas the proposed legislation will include the repeal of the Endangered Species Act of 2007 and replace it with the Conservation Species Act of 2025.

And whereas the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks primarily manages the Act, The Committee on the Status of Species in Ontario (COSSARO) is responsible for assessing and classifying species.

And whereas COSSARO is comprised of experts with scientific and traditional knowledge and operates independently from the government ensuring impartial assessments of species at risk, the provincial cabinet will now decide what species will remain or be removed from endangered, concerned or at-risk status.

And whereas the current law considers the habitat to be all the areas that the species relies on for living, gathering food, migrating, hibernating and reproducing. The new law however, narrows that definition to "a dwelling place, such as a den, nest or other similar place, that is occupied or habitually occupied by one or more members of a species for the purposes of breeding, rearing, staging, wintering or hibernating"

And whereas the legislation would gut environmental assessment processes, speed mining and infrastructure development and take a "register-first, ask-questions-later" approach that would allow developers to begin projects before their environmental implications are fully known and allow for economic zones which will eliminate any environmental mitigation measures or protections.

And whereas the legislation would eliminate provincial responsibility for federally listed migratory birds and aquatic species because it says such birds and species are under federal jurisdiction, even though the province has historically administered such duties.

And whereas the government will enhance funding for the Species Conservation Program, which will see contributions more than quadruple to \$20 million each year for on the ground projects that directly support efforts to conserve and protect listed species, the funding will only go to projects in regions that would otherwise not be considered viable for housing priorities, essentially allowing for the extirpation of local ecoregions in Ontario.

And whereas while development is necessary for human progress, Bill 5 will pose significant challenges to mitigating water, soil and air pollution; will overexploit natural resources, and increase invasive species in each uniquely identified ecoregion in Ontario.

Now therefore be it resolved that the Council of Plympton-Wyoming urges the government to pause the proposed legislation and maintain strong environmental laws that prevent extinction of species and protect local ecoregions.

And furthermore, the Council of Plympton-Wyoming asks that the government recognize and give meaningful consideration to ecoregions in Ontario through their unique perspectives and preserve Ontario's natural heritage systems in the application of any proposed updated provincial legislation for the long-term growth, sustainability and well-being of our communities.

If you have any questions regarding the above motion, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email.



Mackenzie Baird
mbaird@plympton-wyoming.ca
Planning Technician
Town of Plympton-Wyoming

The Town Of PLYMPTON-WYOMING



Date:

26 May 2025

1

Moved By:

K. Rodrigues

Seconded By:

[Signature] UASB

Whereas the province has introduced Bill 5, Protect Ontario by unleashing our Economy 2025 which is intended to speed up housing and economic development in Ontario.

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And whereas the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks primarily manages the Act, The Committee on the Status of Species in Ontario (COSSARO) is responsible for assessing and classifying species.

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And whereas the current law considers the habitat to be all the areas that the species relies on for living, gathering food, migrating, hibernating and reproducing. The new law however, narrows that definition to "a dwelling place, such as a den, nest or other similar place, that is occupied or habitually

Con't... →

[Signature]
Carried

Defeated

Deferred

Yay Nay

Gary L. Atkinson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Netty McEwen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alex Boughen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kristen Rodrigues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
John van Klaveren	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mike Vasey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bob Woolvett	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5:00pm Planning Council 5.1

occupied by one or more members of a species for the purposes of breeding, rearing, staging, wintering or hibernating".

And whereas the legislation would gut environmental assessment processes, speed mining and infrastructure development and take a "register-first, ask-questions-later" approach that would allow developers to begin projects before their environmental implications are fully known and allow for economic zones which will eliminate any environmental mitigation measures or protections.

And whereas the legislation would eliminate provincial responsibility for federally listed migratory birds and aquatic species because it says such birds and species are under federal jurisdiction, even though the province has historically administered such duties.

And whereas the government will enhance funding for the Species Conservation Program, which will see contributions more than quadruple to \$20 million each year for on the ground projects that directly support efforts to conserve and protect listed species, the funding will only go to projects in regions that would otherwise not be considered viable for housing priorities, essentially allowing for the extirpation of local ecoregions in Ontario.

And whereas while development is necessary for human progress, Bill 5 will pose significant challenges to mitigating water, soil and air pollution; will overexploit natural resources, and increase invasive species in each uniquely identified ecoregion in Ontario.

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And furthermore, the Council of Plympton-Wyoming asks that the government recognize and give meaningful consideration to ecoregions in Ontario through their unique perspectives and preserve Ontario's natural heritage systems in the application of any proposed updated provincial legislation for the long-term growth, sustainability and well-being of our communities.



Carried

Defeated

Deferred

Yay Nay

Gary L. Atkinson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Netty McEwen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alex Boughen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kristen Rodrigues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
John van Klaveren	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mike Vasey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bob Woolvett	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

May 28, 2025

Please be advised that during the regular Council meeting of May 27, 2025 the following resolution regarding Bill 5: Protecting Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, 2025 was carried.

RESOLUTION NO. 205-317

DATE: May 27, 2025

MOVED BY: Councillor MacNaughton

SECONDED BY: Councillor Hirsch

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario has introduced Bill 5: Protecting Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, 2025, which proposes substantial changes to many Acts within one bill which undermine environmental protections in order to "unleash the economy"; and

WHEREAS multiple inclusions will impact habitat, biodiversity protections and environmental integrity without proper process including but not limited to:

- **the repeal and replacement of the Endangered Species Act with a weaker act;**
- **the creation of a Special Economic Zones Act which will permit exemptions from legislated environmental protections;**
- **changes to provisions to the Mining Act which provide sweeping powers to the Minister of Energy and Mines that are poorly defined, subject to caprice, or possibly designed to enable exemption from environment protection; and**

WHEREAS proposed changes will override local planning authority, provincial legislation, and bylaw enforcement for the benefit of specific preferred proponents over the rights of Ontarians; and

WHEREAS First Nations citizens have an enshrined right to access their own archeology and Canadians have an enshrined responsibility to seek free, prior and informed consent from First Nation neighbours regarding land use; and

WHEREAS several proposed changes could imperil the health of lands and water for which First Nations have traditional and treaty rights; and

WHEREAS the provisions of the Special Economic Zones Act are not clear enough to ensure that there are adequate legal and environmental protections to offset risks to Ontarians and First Nations members, to provide adequate safeguards against bad faith environmental practice; and protect against unsafe labour practice as identified by labour sector organizations; and

WHEREAS fairness is enshrined in both Canada's and Ontario's laws yet proposed changes seem to permit prejudicial regulatory practice (e.g. codifying permissions for "trusted proponents" over others); and

WHEREAS the wording of the changes to the Electricity Act seem to support Canadian ownership of energy suppliers but appear to potentially restrict development of specific types of energy and could impact local renewable energy development; and

WHEREAS there is no evidence that undermining of environmental protections, local legal frameworks, and the rights of First Nations communities in Ontario are a necessary step to "unleash the economy"; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the County of Prince Edward supports any regulation that could encourage energy providers to Buy Canadian but urges the province to clarify the proposed provisions of the Energy Act and ensure they foster local green energy development; and

THAT the province remove the elements in Bill 5 that would reduce current environmental protections, reduce protections for species at risk, and reduce legal protection from bad faith actors in special economic zones; and

THAT the Council of the County of Prince Edward urges the Province to further define Special Economic Zones and their purpose with more clarity and ensure that activities within such zones are equally subject to the local and provincial laws that support all of Ontario and First Nations people and foster our social, cultural and environmental prosperity;

AND FURTHERMORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the County of Prince Edward expresses solidarity with the concerns of our neighbouring community, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and members of the Haudenosaunee Nation and support Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and their letter to the province of May 16th 2025, attached; and **THAT** this resolution be shared with the Honourable Doug Ford, Premiere of Ontario; Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines; Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and

Housing; Todd McCarthy Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health; Tyler Allsopp, Member of Provincial Parliament for Bay of Quinte; Chief Don Maracle, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte; AMO; ROMA; and the Municipalities of Ontario.

CARRIED

Yours truly,



Victoria Leskie, **CLERK**

cc: Mayor Steve Ferguson, Councillor MacNaughton



2025 Special Events Schedule

Approved Events

Date	Time	Event Name	Estimated Attendance	Confirmed Location	Event Type	Event Organizer
2/15/2025	11am – 2pm	Mayor's Winter Levee	800 – 1,000	Bowman Room, Civic Square – City Hall	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
4/12/2025	10am – 1pm	Egg Drop	2,000	Fountain Street Soccer Complex	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
4/12/2025	10am – 12pm	West Galt Easter Egg Hunt	150	Victoria Park	Public, Free	Community Group
4/19/2025	12pm – 3pm	Easter Egg Hunt in the Village	400 – 500	22 Queen Street West to 40 Queen Street East	Public, Free	BIA
4/27/2025	12pm – 8pm	Cambridge United League 1 Gameday	500	Fountain Street Soccer Complex	Public, Paid	Community Group
5/3/2025	8am – 2pm	Flames of Change	800 – 1,000	Civic Square, Bowman Room	Public, Free	Community Group
5/4/2025	1pm – 2pm	Battle of the Atlantic Memorial Service	50	Churchill Park	Private	Community Group
5/10/2025	9am – 3:30pm	Cambridge Moves for Mental Health 2025	150	Civic Square	Public, Free	Community Group
5/13/2025	12:30pm – 2:30pm	FaLun DaFa Day Flag Raise Event	25	Civic Square	Public, Free	Community Group
5/21/2025	6:30pm – 7:30pm	Polish Flag Raising Ceremony	100	Civic Square	Public, Free	Independent
5/24/2025	10am – 2pm	Public Works Open House 2025	950	City of Cambridge Public Works Building, 1310 Bishop St N	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
5/24/2025	10am – 3pm	National AccessAbility Week	100	Bowman Room, Civic Square	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
5/24/2025	8am -3pm	2025 Walk for Alzheimer's	30	Churchill Park	Awareness Campaign	Community Group
5/25/2025 – 9/28/2025	Afternoons	Galt Jazz Street Party	200 (per day)	Main St between Walter St and Ainslie St	Public, Free	BIA

5/29/2025 – 6/1/2025	Thurs 5pm–10pm Fri 5pm–11pm Sat 11am–11pm Sun 11am–5pm	Kin Carnival	50,000 (per day)	Riverside Park	Public, Free	Community Group
5/30/2025 – 10/3/2025	Fridays 1pm – 9pm	Hespeler Farmer's Market	400 (per event)	Hespeler Town Hall – 11 Tannery Street East	Public, Free	Community Group
5/31/2025	11am – 3pm	Annual Neighbourhood Day	250	Hespeler Arena – Gallery and Rink 1	Public, Free	Neighbourhood Association
5/31/2025	9am – 11am	The Conflux	100	Linear Park	Public, Cost	Community Group
5/31/2025	10am – 4pm	Main Street Kick Off Event	100+	Lower Main Street	Public, Free	BIA
6/3/2025	3:30pm – 4:30pm	Pride Event	200	Civic Square	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
6/8/2025	9am – 1pm	Cambridge Mill Race	300	Riverbluffs Park	Race	Community Group
6/12/2025	11:30am – 1:30pm	Starling Community Services Staff Appreciation Event	60-80	Civic Square	Private	Community Group
6/13/2025	5pm – 1pm	Cambridge Celebration of the Arts	4,000 – 5,000	City Hall, Civic Square	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
6/14/2025	12pm – 2pm	Pet Portraits in the Park	100	Forbes Park	Public, Free	Community Group
6/28/2025	10am – 4pm	Aire One's Fun Fair & Food Drive	400	290 Pinebush Road	Public, Free	Community Group
7/1/2025	12pm – 11pm	Cambridge Canada Day	40,000 – 50,000	Riverside Park	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
7/16/2025	6:30pm – 7:30pm	Cambridge Summer Live – Ultimutts Dog Show	100+	Forbes Park	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
7/23/2025	6:30pm – 7:30pm	Cambridge Summer Live – Tex Rexman	100+	Central Park	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
7/30/2025	6:30pm – 7:30pm	Cambridge Summer Live – Isabella Hoops Show with Fire	100+	Civic Square	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
8/6/2025	6:30pm – 7:30pm	Cambridge Summer Live – Kiki Totally Outrageous with LED	100+	Forbes Park	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
8/13/2025	6:30pm – 7:30pm	Cambridge Summer Live – Ultimutts Dog Show	100+	Central Park	Public, Free	City of Cambridge

New events

8/20/2025	6:30pm – 7:30pm	Cambridge Summer Live – Ultimutts Dog Show	100+	Civic Square	Public, Free	City of Cambridge
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Events in Approval Process

Date	Time	Event Name	Estimated Attendance	Confirmed Location	Event Type	Event Organizer
5/31/2025 – 9/20/2025	11am – 2pm	Family Fun Days	100+	Lower Main Street	Public, Free	BIA
6/1/2025	10am – 12pm	CCTAC Bike Month Kickoff	Event Cancelled			
6/6/2025 – 6/8/2025	Friday 1pm-4pm & 6pm-9pm Saturday 9am-9pm	Big Bounce Canada	Event Cancelled			
6/7/2025	9am – 4:30pm	Kinbridge Community Association & Greenway-Chaplin Community Centre Neighborhood Day	1,500	Churchill Park (right side, by basketball court)	Public, Free	Neighbourhood Association
6/7/2025	3pm – 7pm	Fiddlesticks Neighbourhood Day	550	71 Cowan Boulevard	Public, Free	Neighbourhood Association
6/7/2025 – 9/13/2025	6pm – 10:30pm	Latin on Main	100+	Lower Main Street	Public, Free	BIA
6/8/2025 – 9/14/2025	12pm – 4pm	Sunday Day Markets	100+	Lower Main Street, Civic Square, Imperial Lane, Water Street Parking Lot #2 Event Pad	Public, Free	BIA
6/14/2025	3pm – 6pm	Neighbourhood Day	650 – 700	Soper Park	Public, Free	Neighbourhood Association
6/14/2025	8am – 1pm	Push For Your Tush	50 – 70	Riverside Park – Dolph Picnic Shelter	Fundraiser	Community Group
6/14/2025	8am – 6pm	District C Track and Field Meet	200	Jacob Hespeler Secondary School	Public, Free	Community Group
6/14/2025	7am–11:59pm	Grand River Pride Street Party	500+	Main Street road closure, Water Street	Public, Free	BIA

New events

6/14/2025	1am – 12pm	Open Hands, Open Hearts Community Care Day: Aid for Homelessness	50	Central Park	Public, Free	Community Group
6/20/2025 – 9/26/2025	6pm – 10pm	Friday Night Markets	100+	Lower Main Street, Civic Square, Imperial Lane, Water Street Parking Lot #2 Event Pad	Public, Free	BIA
6/21/2025	8:30am – 7:30pm	Walk-a-Then 2025	Event Cancelled			
6/21/2025 – 9/20/2025	11am – 2pm	Family Fun Days	100+	Lower Main Street	Public, Free	BIA
6/22/2025	11am-4:30pm	NLF Church Picnic	50-100	Central Park	Private	Community Group
6/28/2025	9:30am – 8:30pm	Summer Punch	80	Soper Park	Private	Community Group
6/28/2025 – 9/27/2025	9am – 9pm	Sidewalk Sale	100+	Downtown Cambridge Core	Public, Free	BIA
6/29/2025	9am – 1pm	Whole Health Anniversary	100+	Main Street Road Closure	Public, Free	BIA
7/5/2025	10:30am – 5:30pm	Alyssa strong car meet	150-200	Galt Community Centre	Public, Fee	Community Group
7/5/2025 – 7/6/2025	4pm – 2am Request for Noise Exemption 11pm–2am Denied by Council 5/27/2025	Rising Tide Music & Arts Festival	5,000 total	Gaslight District, Tapestry Hall	Public, Cost	Neighbourhood Association
7/5/2025	10am – 10pm	Hespeler Village Music Festival	4,000	Forbes Park	Public, Free	Community Group
7/14/2025	5pm – 8pm	The ENDURrun Sport	50	Riverbluffs Park	Public, Free	Community Group
7/18/2025 – 7/19/2025	Friday 4pm – 11pm Saturday 6am–7pm	Cambridge Scottish Festival	3,000 – 5,000 (per day)	Churchill Park, Duncan McIntosh Arena	Public, Cost	Community Group
7/19/2025	8am – 4pm	Summer in the Park Vendor Market	150-200	Victoria Park, Hespeler	Public, Free	Community Group
7/26/2025	12pm – 7pm	Cambridge Multicultural Festival	7,500	Forbes Park	Public, Free	Community Group

7/26/2025 – 7/27/2025	10am – 4pm	The Long Dash Festival	100	Grand Trunk Trail	Public Cost	Community Group
7/26/2025	3pm – 8pm	Emancipation Day Celebration	1,000	Soper Park (Bandshell area) or Galt Arena parking space	Public, Free	Community Group
7/26/2025	10am–7:30pm	Family Picnic	100 – 110	Dolph Picnic Area	Private	Community Group
8/2/2025 – 8/3/2025	8am – 9pm	SGSS Khed Mela	1,000 – 2,000	Riverside Park (back soccer fields)	Public, Free	Community Group
8/5/2025 – 8/6/2025	5pm – 9pm	The Voice of the River: the Grand River Community Play	200	along Grand River, ending at Amphitheatre on Grand River	Public, Free	Community Group
8/8/2025 – 8/10/2025	Fri/Sat 12pm – 10pm Sunday 12pm – 6pm	Cambridge Ribfest & Craft Beer Show	7,000 – 10,000 (per day)	Riverside Park	Public, Free	Community Group
8/9/2025	12pm – 4pm	Praise-Fest	100	Forbes Park	Public, Free	Community Group
8/15/2025 – 8/16/2025	9am – 11pm	Multi-Fest	Event Cancelled			
8/16/2025	10:30am – 5:30pm	Praises in the Park	60	Forbes Park	Private	Community Group
8/16/2025	10am – 1pm	Church In the Square	25	Civic Square	Public, Free	Community Group
8/23/2025	5:30pm – 10pm	Vhalem Navrati 2025	2,500	Riverside Park	Religious/Cultural	Community Group
8/23/2025	2pm – 8pm	Oddfest – Market	600	Civic Square	Public, Free	Community Group
8/30/2025	10am – 10pm	KW Carnival	1,800	Riverside Park	Public, Free	Community Group
8/30/2025	6pm – 10:30pm	Rhythm Ratri 2025	Event Cancelled			
8/30/2025	11am – 2pm	Block Party	300-350	Forward Church	Public, Free	Community Group
9/2/2025 – 9/8/2025	8am – 10pm	Cambridge Fall Fair	2,500 (per day)	Dickson Park	Public, Free	Community Group
9/13/2025	11am – 3pm	Cambridge Fire Department Fire Prevention Week Open House	5,000	1625 Bishop Street North (Cambridge Fire Station 1)	Public, Free	City of Cambridge

New events

9/14/2025	9am – 3pm	Walk to Remember	200	Riverside Park	Fundraiser	Community Group
9/14/2025	9am – 3:30pm	Cambridge Terry Fox Run	150	Riverside Park (Mickler Field/Grandstand)	Fundraiser	Community Group
9/19/2025 – 9/20/2025	Friday 4pm – 11pm Saturday 3pm – 11pm	Fest2Fall	5,000 (per day)	Dickson Park	Public, Cost	Community Group
9/27/2025	6pm – 11pm	Navratri 2025	Event Cancelled			
9/30/2025	7pm – 11pm	Vhalam Navratri	Event Cancelled			

**All events are subject to change*