



REPORT TO: Co-Chairs and Members of
Public Health and Social Services Committee

SUBJECT: **Community Services Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011**

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommends to Regional Council that Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011 be approved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report provides a summary of the strategic directions developed for Community Services for 2008-2011 and the process that was undertaken. The Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011 is attached. (Appendix 1)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications associated with the strategic directions will be addressed through the annual budget process.

PURPOSE

This report provides a summary of the process that led to the development of the 2008-2011 Community Services Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND

Strategic planning establishes a context for accomplishing goals, and provides the direction to achieve an organization's desired future. A strategic plan keeps longer-term objectives in view while shorter-term goals are accomplished.

The major reason for failure of a strategic plan is that it is often unlinked to anything else and therefore not implemented. The Community Services' strategic business planning process develops the Plan as a long-range plan that is built from Council's goals. The Plan forms the foundation for setting goals and objectives for each service area's shorter-term divisional and individual objectives. As well, the strategic directions action plans are reviewed, revised and updated annually, thus ensuring implementation and evaluation of the Plan are occurring on an ongoing basis.

After the Strategic Business Plan is concluded, more detailed and meaningful business plans can be conducted for each service area. Strategic planning, when done properly, can help an organization:

- √ widen the scope of discussion;
- √ clarify future directions and set priorities;
- √ think strategically and develop effective strategies;
- √ improve organizational performance
- √ develop a coherent and defensible base for decision-making;
- √ build teamwork and expertise; and
- √ see the organization as a whole in relation to the outside.

REPORT

Strategic Planning Process

Commencing in the spring of 2007, the Community Services Senior Management Team has been engaged in the process of creating a strategic plan for 2008-2011. The process began with a review of the key areas of political, societal, economic, environmental and technological influences on the services offered by Community Services. In addition, two stakeholder planning exercises including staff, were held to obtain information/feedback and ensure that the plan addresses the needs of the Niagara Community. The process was conducted in parallel with the creation of the Council Business Plan to ensure alignment with Councils directions for 2007 – 2011.

Initial sessions with the extended Departmental Senior Management team were held in May and June of 2007. In addition, a facilitated stakeholder session of 49 community partners and a staff session were held in June 2007. Departmental Senior Management then took this information and developed a draft strategic plan over the summer of 2007. In October of 2007 this plan was presented at a session of 56 stakeholders and staff to ensure that the key elements of the initial working session were reflected. Additional feedback was then incorporated by Senior Management and a final review completed in the fall of 2007.

In parallel to the Community Services strategic planning process, Council was undergoing its own business planning work. To ensure that the Community Services Strategic Plan would align with the final Council Business Plan outputs from the Council planning

exercises were incorporated into the Departmental Senior Staff sessions as additional input. The management team validated that the directions that were rising up as the priorities for the Niagara Community were aligned with the key issues facing Niagara Region that were developing during the Council business planning sessions. Community Services is confident that the strategic directions and associated objectives support the work that Council intends to achieve over the life of its Business Plan. An Alignment of Strategic Directions graphic is included in the Strategic Plan. (Appendix 1 Page 8)

In addition to ensuring alignment with Council's key priorities as it moved through its Council Business planning exercise, Community Services' strategic directions were drawn from the fundamental underpinnings of the department – the vision, mission and values, as well as identified community needs. These elements were revisited by the management team, staff and community partners in 2007 and will continue to be reviewed on a four-year cycle to align with Council's plan.

The process that led to the development of the Strategic Plan was comprehensive and inclusive. Participants, including community stakeholders, representatives of the bargaining units associated with Community Services as well as management and front-line staff were invited to join the departmental management team in sessions to explore community needs.

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that the objectives of the department remain relevant to the current environment and stakeholders, and that various staff teams are on track with efforts toward achieving the strategic directions.

The plan is intended for multiple audiences including all staff, Regional Council, stakeholders and the public. Staff will have the opportunity to review the final plan at eight staff forums scheduled for that purpose in March and April of 2008, in addition to posting the plan on the Corporation's intranet. Regional Council and key stakeholders will receive a copy of the plan and the general public will be able to access the plan via the Region's website.

The result of the planning process involving the various stakeholders was the creation of four priority strategic directions. These directions were representative of the four pillars of influence that will determine the success of the Community Services department and can be summarized as external stakeholders, clients, staff and finances. The four directions with associated objectives for 2008-2011, are:

- 1. Increase Collaboration with Stakeholders**
 - 1.1: Enhance Informed Decision Making
 - 1.2: Provide Evidence-Based Advocacy
 - 1.3: Support Community in Developing Human Service Plans

- 2. Enhance Individual and Family Centered Service**
 - 2.1: Improve Alignment of Services to Achieve Shared Outcomes
 - 2.2: Seek Regular Input and Feedback

- 3. Enable Staff to Provide Great Service**
 - 3.1: Foster a Supportive and Responsive Workplace
 - 3.2: Promote Organizational Values Through Actions

- 4. Strengthen Responsible Use of Resources**
 - 4.1: Deliver Effective and Efficient Services
 - 4.2: Create Strategies for Maximization of Resources

In a unified approach to goal setting, the Directors will use the four strategic directions as the basis of performance objectives for all non-union staff for the coming year in a concerted effort aimed at successfully meeting the department's objectives. Through the performance appraisal process, the progress of management and staff, both individually and collectively, in meeting Community Services' strategic directions will be accurately assessed.

Operational Plan

The Operational Plan is a work plan that operationalizes the department's Strategic Plan. The Operational Plan states the actions to be taken to meet each of the strategic directions. Further to this, Children's Services, Seniors Services and Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities will develop operational plans that state what action will be taken within their respective areas of business that will support the effort to achieve each strategic direction. As the approved work plan for the next four years, the document is inextricably linked to the budget process and is a plan for which management is held accountable.

The Operational Plan is for internal staff and management use and will be communicated to staff teams within each program and service area through management teams.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Brian Hutchings
Commissioner, Community Services

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared by Cathy Cousins, Director, Operational Support Services

Appendix 1 – Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011.