



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

SUBJECT: Update to Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommends to Regional Council that this report be received for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Community Services through significant community engagement with community partners, staff and senior management teams developed the Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011.
- The Strategic Plan 2008-2011 was reported on and approved by Committee as COM 01-2008, on January 29, 2008.
- Community Services conducted a forum with our community partners in November 2008 to provide progress on the plan and re-affirm the direction.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee and Council on the progress of the work of Community Services to achieve the strategic directions outlined in the Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011. In addition, the report will provide information on the outcomes of the community partners session on November 21, 2008 where an update to the strategic directions was provided to the community as well as work to re-affirm the strategic direction.

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 direction action plans are reviewed, revised and updated annually, thus ensuring implementation and evaluation of the Plan is occurring on an ongoing basis.

Commencing in the spring of 2007, the Community Services Senior Management Team 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.

The final Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011 was presented and approved at Committee and Council as COM 01-2008 on January 29, 2008.

REPORT

The result of the planning process involving the various stakeholders was the creation of four priority strategic directions that made up the Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011. 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

Highlights of accomplishments towards these strategic directions are presented below:

- 1. Increase Collaboration with Stakeholders**
 - Living in Niagara report released November 28, 2008
 - Investing \$1.5 million in prosperity for neighbourhoods to address poverty
 - Aging at Home submissions, based on local seniors datae, to the LHIN for program enhancements
 - Child Care services and support partnership with Sitel
 - Job Bus evaluation report confirming benefits of the service for riders

- 2. Enhance Individual and Family Centered Service**
 - SAEO working with Niagara Workforce Planning Board, the MTCU and MCSS to create an integrated labour market plan
 - E-registration for Children's Services intake
 - Location of Children's Services subsidy working in community
 - Launch of Fort Erie Youth without Secure Housing and transitional support housing pilot for young women
 - Work with City of Welland regarding "Build a Rock Star"
 - Bursaries support for 107 youth living in low income households

- 3. Enable Staff to Provide Great Service**
 - Quality of work life survey follow up program
 - Mentoring program formalized for new staff in Seniors and Children's Services
 - Improvements in recruitment practices including co-op student programs, year round part time student centered job postings, incentives for recruitment and retention for market sensitive positions
 - Launch of the Newcomer's portal
 - Strategic plan roll out sessions for all staff (Get the Scoop)

4. Strengthen Responsible Use of Resources

- Automation of care planning process in long-term care homes to improve service and show acuity increases
- Quarterly reporting performance including variance analysis and program updates to Regional Council
- Analysis of vacancies in Ontario Works due to staff turnover to create additional positions to ensure services targets met or exceeded
- Energy initiatives including re-lamping in three seniors homes and the child care centres, use of motion sensors and timers as appropriate
- Inclusion in the 2009 budget submission funding for organics and recycling in the long term care homes

The Community Services Strategic Plan update session held on November 21, 2008 was attended by 61 stakeholders as a result of invitations sent to community partner agencies, bargaining unit representatives and councillors. Participants were asked three questions at the conclusion of the update presentation, and a summary of the responses follow:

What should Community Services keep doing?

- Supporting the need for a Regional transit system
- Poverty/prosperity plans
- Reporting back to the community and holding annual forums
- Partnering with agencies in the community
- Community consultation, integration and information sharing
- Onsite meetings with clients/co-locating of resources
- Staff training
- Use of technology to enhance service delivery

What should Community Services stop doing?

- Less surveys, more action
- Region not always the lead, more of a partner

How well are we doing and how could we do better?

- Improve communication at all levels - partners, community, staff
- Expand the length of the annual partners forum
- Higher level of integration with other services – Niagara Regional Housing and other agencies
- Desire to learn more about new Integrated Community Planning Department

The responses to the questions and the feedback received from the event support the work completed to date on the goals and directions of Community Services identified during the strategic planning process. The overall feedback from the community partners' forum can be themed as a job well done and the need for more time to allocated to this event. The average rating based on the evaluations of the session was 3.6 out of 4. However, Community Services needs to continue to enhance communication and partnerships with stakeholders based on the comments submitted on the session evaluations.

This annual event creates an opportunity for Community Services to re-affirm the strategic directions and underlying goals and objectives to ensure the department and partner agencies are all moving in alignment towards making Niagara a better place to live. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate successes to date and leverage conversation on next steps. The forum did confirm that the Community Services Strategic Plan 2008-2011 remains valid and continues to chart the course for the department for the next three years.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

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