



#### For all children and families

- Think about your attitudes about children and youth. See young people as resources rather than problems
- Elect members of government who understand the importance of supporting children and families
- Participate in community events in your neighbourhood
- Join a neighbourhood association or attend meetings
- Advocate for child and family-friendly policies in your community and in the workplace
- Advocate for safe places for youth to spend time with their friends
- Support organizations that offer services to children – and support efforts that expand opportunities for learning and recreation to *all* children and youth
- Include organizations that make a positive impact on children and families in your charitable donations



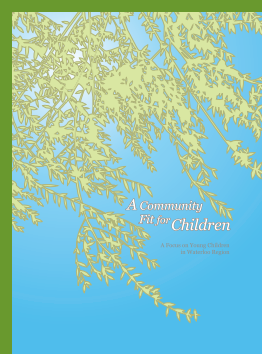
## Community Members / Leaders

### A Perspective Report

*This bulletin was developed for and by community members and leaders in Waterloo Region. It contains reflections and suggested actions to support the healthy development of young children.*

**Alliance**  
for Children and Youth  
of Waterloo Region

This is one of five bulletins developed for specific audiences to help connect people to the importance of the early years of life. We have provided *Highlights of the Full Report* to accompany these bulletins. The full report is available at: [www.earlyyearsinfo.ca](http://www.earlyyearsinfo.ca)



For more information about this project, contact the Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region by phone at 885-9562 or by email at [forkidssake@united-way-kw.org](mailto:forkidssake@united-way-kw.org)

**Alliance**  
for Children and Youth  
of Waterloo Region

**United Way**  
SERVING KITCHENER-WATERLOO  
And the Townships of Wellesley, Wilket and Woodstock

**FOR KIDS' SAKE**  
*When we take care of our kids,  
we take care of our future.*

# Community Members/Leaders: A Perspective Report

## Introduction

The Community Fit for Children report was produced by the Ontario Early Years Centres in partnership with the Provincial Government, the Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region, the YMCA, the Region of Waterloo, and various community partners. This report shares baseline measurements for child development in this region with particular attention to individual neighbourhoods.

**There is growing evidence that strong, supportive communities help nurture healthy child development. Friends, neighbours, community organizations, institutions, businesses, and other members of the community are powerful influences. Together they can provide children with the early foundations that lead to success in school and throughout their lives.**

## What we know

We are doing better than most communities in Canada in supporting healthy child development; yet, by breaking down the data by neighbourhoods, we can see consistent differences in terms of child outcomes.

There are significant numbers of children falling behind before they even enter grade one. We have hundreds of programs that are supporting young children and families through the region, however, there may be problems for some families in knowing about and accessing them because of such things as cost, travel distance and cultural appropriateness.

## What the Experts Say

Ron Dowhaniuk, Executive Director of the United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries and member of the Alliance for Children and Youth, says the report “reflects a wealth of information and a good example of

collaboration,” and points out that, “it appears that the neighbourhoods with families that are not as well off economically are the same neighbourhoods where children are more likely to struggle when they enter school.”

Barb Hill, community leader, volunteer and member of the Alliance for Children and Youth, calls the report “very user-friendly and versatile.” She says “the relationships between education, income and housing, mapped by neighbourhoods, are stunning,” and that “the inequities or gaps between accessible neighbourhood services provide a road map for implementing or enhancing support systems and services.”

**“More Newcomer Youth Support programs are required—over 20% of our population are immigrants. Supports would help to ensure a healthy transition into a new culture (another prevention strategy). Individuals can volunteer to assist with these programs.”**

—Barb Hill



**“We need to find some structures, processes that would allow for using the information in the Community Fit for Children report in effective community planning. We don’t have that now.”**

—Ron Dowhaniuk

## Suggested Actions for Community Members/Leaders

### For Young Children (birth to five)

- Help support the new parents in your life
- Read to a child. Start early. Young children benefit from being read to every day
- Learn about child development and positive parenting: talk to other parents, read books and magazines, talk to early childhood educators
- Contact or visit an Ontario Early Years Centre near you for parenting information about links to other community services for parents and children

### For School Age Children (ages 6-11)

- Encourage children to read to you
- Help them use their words rather than actions to express their needs, worries, and fears
- Play with children and help them explore the world (i.e. attend community events, festivals, explore museums, visit a local community centre)
- Model positive behaviour—don’t just tell them what not to do
- Volunteer with a child or youth serving organization
- Encourage children to volunteer at school and in community

### For Teens (ages 12-18)

- Learn the names of children and teens in your neighbourhood; greet them and ask them how they are
- Praise and celebrate accomplishments
- Ask them what they think...and listen
- Support and encourage teens to volunteer in areas they are interested in
- Encourage teens to write letters to the media and to politicians about issues they care about
- Spend time with them

