



independent living
waterloo region



2022-2023
**ANNUAL
REPORT**

Live Life. Your Way.

Our Vision

An inclusive community where persons with disabilities are supported to live independently and thrive.

Our Mission

To support and champion Independent Living for persons with disabilities through self-directed services and programs.

A Message from Board Chair and Executive Director



Greg Barratt
ILWR Board Chair



Janet Redman
Executive Director

We are both honoured and proud to govern and lead this organization with its distinct mission *“to support and champion Independent Living for persons with disabilities through self-directed services and programs.”* Armed with the knowledge learned over the past two years, the Board of Directors and Leadership team is looking toward the future with enthusiasm and a shared commitment to creating an inclusive community where our Consumers are supported to live independently and thrive.

During the 2022–2023 fiscal year, Independent Living Waterloo Region (ILWR) achieved a number of key objectives such as: improving communication with staff and Consumers; launching our new website with user-friendly Board, Consumer and Staff portals; developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); further improvements to governance and Board procedures; aligning policies and practices with legislative requirements; and renewed membership on both the KW4 and Cambridge North Dumfries Ontario Health Teams. Also, as part of our ongoing efforts to listen effectively and work with Consumers, we launched our new Consumer and Family Advisory Council. All our accomplishments are highlighted throughout this Annual Report.

We also embarked on a Strategic Planning process. This plan will guide the next chapter in the journey of Independent Living Waterloo Region.

On behalf of ILWR, we extend a heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated employees whose tireless efforts make a difference in the lives of Consumers daily. Whether it is filling last-minute shift vacancies, organizing peer activities or processing payroll; everyone has an important role in our success. We are fortunate to have a skilled Board of Directors, a network of community partners, and the financial contributions of funders and donors. Our deepest thanks to all of these individuals who support ILWR.

And to our Consumers, THANK YOU for your ongoing understanding and flexibility as we moved past the challenges of the pandemic and stabilized our workforce. It is your determination to achieve success and to be independent which drives the work we do.

We are proud of this year’s accomplishments and look forward to the future.

Consumer and Family Advisory Council (CFAC)

2022–2023 Board of Directors

Greg Barratt

Board Chair

Michael Bournon

Vice-Chair + Treasurer,
Performance and Quality
Oversight

Beryl Collingwood

Vice-Chair,
Governance and Nominating

Jenny Rajaballey

Vice-Chair,
Stakeholder Relations
(April–November 2022)

Kelly Steiss

Vice Chair,
Stakeholder Relations
(December 2022–March 2023)

Raagula Sivayoganathan

Brian Swainson

Vivian Zochowski

Senior Leadership

Janet Redman

Executive Director

Amy Hynes

Senior Manager Human
Resources

Leanne Davidson

Senior Manager Attendant
Services

Leanne Schade

Finance Manager

Dan Lajoie

Manager of Independent Living
Resources

Bailey Van Dyk

Quality Assurance Coordinator

Connie Wallbank

Business Intelligence Analyst

One of the organization's goals in 2022–2023 was to launch the new Consumer and Family Advisory Council. The vision of this Council is to strengthen the relationship between Consumers, Board of Directors and Management at ILWR.

The Council's main purpose is to improve the Consumer service experience and quality of life. Serving in an advisory capacity, the CFAC makes recommendations on topics that impact Consumers by:

- Providing ideas and feedback on initiatives and programs
- Working collaboratively and proactively to promote the ILWR vision and mission
- Helping to inform Consumer-centred principles and practices

Since its launch in September 2022, this Council was presented with many opportunities for input. Most notably, they were able to provide input on the 2023 Consumer Satisfaction survey, Operational policies and processes, and the Strategic Planning process including feedback on the importance of self-direction in the new Mission.



Thanks to the following Council members for your contributions and insights:

Kelly Steiss – Board Co-Chair

Sharron Garrah – Consumer Co-Chair

Steven M. – Consumer, Assisted Living

Wendy R. – Consumer, Assisted Living

Carolyn J. – Consumer, Outreach

Todd C. – Consumer, Outreach

Alice H. – Family, Outreach

Phillip R. – Consumer, Community Resource Program

Chris M. – Consumer, Direct Funding

Janet Redman – Executive Director

Dan Lajoie – Manager, Independent Living Resources

Leanne Davidson – Senior Manager, Attendant Services

Ayo Fawolu – Administrative Support



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Independent Living Resources Program

Community Resource Program

The Community Resource Program (CRP) helps people with disabilities in our community to live independently and develop stronger social connections. We do this through one-on-one support, peer-based recreational and social activities, and our Youth in Transition program.

As COVID-19 restrictions began to loosen, program participants were able to occasionally meet face-to-face for activities. However, most of our programs and supports remain virtual. Not only as a carryover from the pandemic, but because most program participants prefer to meet virtually as an accessible and barrier free platform.



Peer Activities

ILWR peer activities continue to thrive, especially through our Virtual Activities and Resource Program (VARP). Consumers are always the driving force behind the types of activities, workshops, and discussions that we facilitate. Feedback has shown us that these regular connections with peers are an important part of socialization and positive mental health. While topics vary throughout the year, the following are some of our regular programs:

Coffee Club

Our online weekly coffee club is always well attended and discussions are robust! We cover topics ranging from nutrition, hobbies and recreational activities to more serious issues like becoming a self-advocate and improving communication within relationships.

Staying Well Together

This weekly get-together allows everyone to focus on physical and mental well-being. We switch weekly between a physical activity, like adapted yoga or aerobics, to one that focuses more on mental wellness. We frequently have community volunteers leading our sessions, and this year these included yoga practices, and a four-part series on food and nutrition with guest speakers and videos. Our friends at T6Talk continue to facilitate bi-weekly sessions covering important topics dealing with life and disability (read more about T6Talk in our Volunteer Spotlight).

Community Resource Program Annual Stats	
Unique Consumers served (one-on-one support): 112	Peer activities/events: 173
Contacts/interactions with Consumers (one-on-one support): 1093	Event participants: 1034

One-On-One Support

Community Resource Program Coordinators kept very busy this year providing one-on-one support to dozens of Consumers. Consumers received support on various subjects from housing to assistive devices to accessing support for homemaking and shopping. Referrals are received from ILWR staff or directly from Consumers to our CRP Coordinators who then connect with the individual in the format that best supports their needs (virtual, email, phone). Providing these vital connections to community supports continues to be an invaluable service for Consumers.

'Let's Hang Out' and 'In This Together'

Consumers meet every other Thursday to have fun playing games and trivia, and chatting about some lighter topics. The opposite week is our "In This Together" peer connection meetup where Consumers talk about disability related topics and how we handle situations given our unique perspectives.



Workshop Series with Canadian Hearing Services

An important part of CRP is being cross-disability, meaning that we strive to be inclusive to individuals living with a variety of challenges. This year, thanks to funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we were able to partner with Canadian Hearing Services (CHS) to provide a series of workshops fully supported with American Sign Language (ASL). This added accommodation made it possible for individuals who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing to participate. Many thanks to CHS for working with ILWR and providing these important services.

Youth in Transition (YIT)

The ILWR YIT program continues to grow. In 2022-2023 we ran two virtual group sessions (one Spring and one Fall). These 10-week sessions are an opportunity for youth with a variety of disabilities to come together to hang out and talk about whatever they have going on in their lives. We play games, watch videos, play musical trivia, and go on virtual tours of places from around the world! This year we were able to partner with Smart Waterloo Region Innovation Lab (SWRIL) and KidsAbility. SWRIL generously donated the use of their space at Communitech for our monthly in-person meetups and kept the youth full of pizza!

In August, we celebrated getting back together at our YIT Retreat in beautiful New Hamburg. This two-day retreat is a great opportunity for the YIT's to spend time together, do some skill building, work on their independence and just have an awesome time away!



2023 Featured Recipient: Harnoor Sooch

Harnoor is in grade 6, and despite the challenges she faces due to her cerebral palsy, she is motivated and focused on her studies. She is an incredibly intelligent and determined student who is eager to learn. When not at school, she enjoys some of her favourite television shows and can't wait to use her new bike funded through ILWR's 2023 Access Fund to get outside and get some exercise!

Volunteer Spotlight: T6Talk

From the first day they volunteered on the Disability and Sexuality Series in the summer of 2021, Wallace and Melanie from T6Talk have become a staple of the ILWR Community Resource Program. Every other week, they join our “Staying Well Together” peer group to discuss everything and anything! Topics give our group a chance to connect with a mutual understanding of issues that impact persons with disabilities.



The perspectives Wallace and Melanie bring as an inter-abled couple is invaluable. Wallace sustained a complete spinal cord injury at the age of 20, and while this injury completely changed the trajectory of his life, he feels incredibly grateful for the full life he has lived. Since sustaining his injury, Wallace has completed his Master of Social Work and currently works as a clinician with a focus on research and program development.

“Starting with my stay in rehab 35 years ago, I have learned more from my peers than from the clinicians. I feel it is my responsibility to pay this forward as much as I can, and I happily do so.” Wallace shares.

His partner, Melanie, is a lifelong advocate and supporter of social justice. She has an invisible disability allowing her to relate to some of the challenges our Consumers face. Together they are a formidable team working to keep the conversations open and moving us towards true equity.

Wallace and Melanie remark “We believe in the Power of Peer and the importance of sharing as a community. We must show up for one another... be present... listen and support.”

Direct Funding

Direct Funding (DF) is an innovative program that allows adults with physical disabilities to become Self-Managers; managing their own attendants, including recruitment, hiring/firing, and scheduling.

ILWR serves as a Program Administrative and Regional Resource Centre. Our Administrative Centre boundaries are defined as Central-Southwest Ontario and stretch from Windsor to Hamilton to Orangeville, and the Resource Centre comprises Waterloo Region. During the year, the program welcomed four (4) new Self-Managers including three (3) in Waterloo Region. The Direct Funding program is managed provincially through the Centre for Independent Living Toronto (CILT).

In 2022-2023, Self-Managers received a permanent budget increase allowing them to pay their attendants up to \$22 per hour. While this is a welcome improvement, CILT continues to advocate to the Provincial government to ensure wages remain competitive. In addition, Self-Managers continue to receive quarterly allowances to purchase PPE to provide safe working environments.

Locally, our DF Resource Coordinator has been busy recruiting new participants and helping them through the application process. She attended community fairs and trade shows to spread the word about the program. Additionally, we began a new series of virtual coffee hours where Self-Managers can come together and learn through guest speakers, and from each other.

Direct Funding (CWSW - Central West, South West)	
New Self-Managers to the program: 4	Contacts/ interactions with Self-Managers: 6049
Applications received: 16	Self-Managers in the program: 245

Helping Others Get Accessible!

Some members of our team have a lot of experience and knowledge surrounding the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), especially when it comes to the accessibility of websites, documents, and the built environment. For many years, ILWR has provided informal accessibility audits for businesses and facilities within Waterloo Region. In 2022–2023, that tradition continued as we were able to help places meet and exceed their accessibility requirements. Most notably, two team members who are wheelchair users supported St. Mary's Hospital by providing a complete "walk-through" audit of all areas within the hospital. We are hopeful this service helps others more easily access the community.

Access Fund

The ILWR Access Fund helps individuals with disabilities in Waterloo Region purchase assistive devices, adapted technology, and medical equipment to help them live more independent lives.

To date, the Access Fund has helped 300 people purchase equipment totaling approximately \$700,000! In 2023, 13 individuals were supported through the Access Fund with approximately \$70,000 in funding.

In addition to money raised by the Tournament of Hope, the Access Fund also received donations from the Deer Ridge Charity Golf Tournament, Fortinet Cup, and an in-year reallocation of Ministry of Health funding to support several Attendant Services Consumers.

2022 Featured Recipients

Magdalena "Lena" Holdershaw

We were pleased to help Lena achieve more independence by purchasing a special chair that will allow her to sit with her family at the dinner table and complete her schoolwork with better support and less pain. Lena is a creative and inspiring young woman.

Holden Sisak

Holden excels in school and is always looking to be active in sports whenever he can. We were happy to support Holden with the purchase of a laptop with special communication software that will allow him to communicate with friends and pursue his personal interests.

2022 Tournament of Hope

After two years of cancellations due to pandemic restrictions, it was amazing to get back on the golf course in June 2022! Approximately 115 golfers came together at Grand Valley Golf and Country Club to help us celebrate our 25th anniversary of the fundraising event.

It was an amazing day of sunshine, golf, and friendship. Our evening program was hosted by the Chair of our Board of Directors, Greg Barratt. We were also fortunate to have several of our Access Fund recipients join us for dinner.



Consumer Services

Attendant Services 2022–2023

The growth and changes within the Attendant Services program continued this fiscal year.

We started by replacing the After-Hours Remote Supervisor positions with an On-Site Afternoon Supervisor. This role provides support for Consumers as well as afternoon and overnight staff.

Master Schedules for all Attendants, both Assisted Living and Outreach, were revised to provide consistency in maximizing hours for full-time and part-time positions. Schedules were then rolled out across the organization, one geography at a time. This continues to assist with recruitment and hiring of new Attendants as positions became available. The Supervisor team then further adjusted the Outreach schedules to streamline travel between each call, reducing the time and distance staff are driving between Consumers.

In January 2023, ILWR reopened to new referrals, beginning with Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS) and the Outreach program.



The application for our Outreach program services was revised and rolled out when we opened for referrals.

As the COVID pandemic restrictions began to lessen, meeting with Consumers to review and update their Service Plans resumed in September 2022. All Assisted Living Consumer plans were completed by October 31, 2022, and then meetings with Outreach Consumers began.

On the lighter side, we had fun with two friendly competitions, Story-writing and Winter Gingerbread House building, between the different Attendant sites/programs. How creative our employees are!

Program	Number of Consumers	Service Levels
Assisted Living	Individuals Served 71	Resident Days 22,543
Attendant Outreach	Individuals Served 70	Hours of Service 42,694
HCCSS-Contract	Individuals Served 30	Visits 10,882

Supported by 185 Attendants

Assisted Living provides 24-hour attendant services to adults with physical disabilities within integrated, accessible apartment buildings located in Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. The Consumers have access to scheduled and on-call services.

Attendant Outreach provides prescheduled attendant services between the hours of 6 am and 11 pm to adults with physical disabilities living in their own homes throughout Waterloo Region. This program also supports the Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS) contracted Consumers.

Our Employees

THANK YOU to our amazing employees for their commitment and dedication. Despite the challenges of the ongoing pandemic, teamwork and collaboration allows us to provide the quality programs and services we are proud to deliver.

Our employees are the heart of ILWR as they continue to elevate the Consumer experience and champion Independent Living. In recognition of our employees' contributions, the Board approved Retention and Attendance Incentives as a way of acknowledging their efforts.

Leadership and Administration Changes

ILWR welcomed new members to its Senior Leadership and Administration teams, including the launch of a new role to oversee quality improvement.

In the Spring of 2022, the Admin office was painted to match our new logo and signage, and we hired a full-time Evening Supervisor (replacing the after-hours model); currently Nikita Brancati is filling this position. Then in August 2022, we said farewell to Drew Patterson and welcomed Amy Hynes as our new Senior Manager, Human Resources, and Ayo Fawolu was hired as the Executive Assistant. There was also a change in the Human Resources Generalist role, with Arpita Das hired in January 2023.

In the Fall, Bailey Van Dyk was hired into the new role of Quality Assurance Coordinator. She began by reviewing Health and Safety policies, organizing Employee and Consumer Engagement surveys, and launching the accreditation process with Accreditation Canada.



Human Resources Initiatives

- ✓ COVID protocols, including screening before and after work, wearing Personal Protective Equipment, and regular testing with Rapid Antigen tests, helped ensure a workplace free from COVID-19 and maintained employee wellness.
- ✓ Exit interviews were re-established to help understand why employees resign and to make further improvements to employee satisfaction.
- ✓ Employee Engagement survey was completed to gather information on what we are doing well and where we can continue to improve.
- ✓ The Orientation process was restructured; adding checklists to track task observation and hands-on training during onboarding.
- ✓ Consumer Handling and Transfer training was held for all Attendant Service Workers during September and October. This training will be held annually to ensure Attendants are knowledgeable and confident in their skills and abilities.
- ✓ CPR and First Aid training resumed for frontline employees after a pause due to the pandemic.
- ✓ Additional training included Responding to Mental Health Concerns, Positive Consumer Relations (in partnership with Spinal Cord Injury Ontario) and Essential HR Training for Supervisors and Managers.
- ✓ Joint Health and Safety Committees were updated. Worker and Management representatives completed their Ministry of Labour Health and Safety certification training as required.
- ✓ Our Return-to-Work processes were reviewed, with updates made to ensure Supervisors are equipped to complete injury reporting and employees understand ILWR's commitment to safe work practices and their responsibilities in reporting an injury immediately.

- ✓ We undertook a full review of our Group Benefit plan, implementing coverage enhancements and transitioning to an Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) which offers confidential supports and voluntary wellness services to all employees and their family members.
- ✓ A review of our Learning Management System (LMS) was completed, with employees completing any outstanding training via HR Downloads.

Human Resources is dedicated to ongoing improvements and support for all employees. We look forward to working together to achieve much success in 2023-2024.

Thank you for all that you do to make ILWR a fantastic place to work!



Information Technology

Business Intelligence Analyst

The Business Intelligence Analyst (BIA) role oversees the Consumer Service Coordinators (CSC); and maintains and improves our use of AlayaCare, our Client Record Management and Scheduling system. The BIA also oversees Information Technology (IT) and acts as ILWR's Privacy Officer.

During the past year, we have been working on policies and procedures to minimize the organization's risk to the ever-increasing threat of cybersecurity breaches to businesses and not-for-profits. ILWR has implemented several new security rules including multi-factor authentication for any employee accessing computer files while working from home. We also had all Administrative employees complete cybersecurity training modules offered by Saegis Solutions through our KW4 Ontario Health Team membership.

The Consumer Service Coordinator (CSC) team was busy in 2022 working with the Supervisors to implement new master schedules to ensure that Consumers receive consistent care and employees have a better work-life balance. Then we started the roll out of Electronic Visit Offers in January 2023; beginning with the Waterloo area to work out any kinks. This mechanism has streamlined the scheduling process by allowing the CSCs to send a vacant shift or visit directly to trained Attendants through AlayaCare. Attendants respond if they wish to pick up the shift; it is then awarded based on established criteria.

There were additional changes to how we use the AlayaCare system; refining it for both efficiency and accuracy. Communicating with employees on how to set up and use strong passwords to log into AlayaCare is one key process for ILWR to protect our internal systems and our Consumers.

We look forward to what the upcoming year brings!

Quality Assurance 2022-2023

The Quality Assurance Coordinator was hired in October 2022 to lead our accreditation process and oversee quality improvement. They quickly got to work reviewing Health and Safety policies, and gathering feedback through the Employee and Attendant Services Consumer surveys.

We partnered with Flex Surveys to complete this year's Employee Engagement survey. A total of 93 employees complete the survey; a 55% completion rate compared with 43% in 2021.

With the endorsement of the Consumer and Family Advisory Council (CFAC), this year's Consumer Experience-of-Care survey was completed internally using Survey Monkey. We had 55 Consumers complete the survey for a completion rate of 45% compared with 41% in 2022.

Results from both surveys were reviewed by Leadership, who created action plans and implemented changes to improve the experience of both groups.

The Quality Coordinator took the lead on Health and Safety; in addition to updating the policies, they now attend all quarterly Joint Health and Safety Committee meetings (JHSC) and complete the monthly inspections at the Administrative Office.

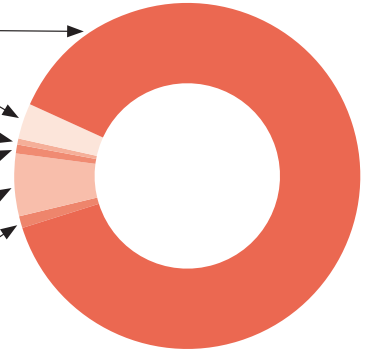
Another project ILWR is tackling is the accreditation process with Accreditation Canada. This process evaluates our organization against best-practice standards established by Accreditation Canada for community health-care organizations. We are required to meet the Primer standard, with topics covering mission/vision/values, Consumer safety, employee health and wellness, and how Consumer services are delivered.

Our first step in preparation for our on-site survey in June 2024, was to complete a self-assessment survey to determine where improvements are needed. From there, internal teams started work on updating/ creating internal policies and processes to meet the Accreditation standards.

Financial Stats 2022–2023

Revenue

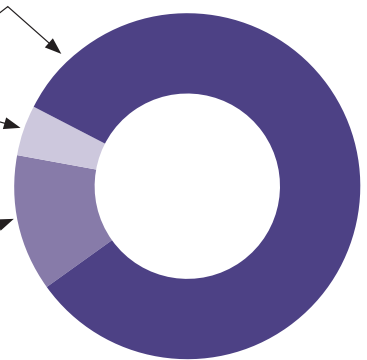
Ontario Health	7,020,145	88.49%
CILT	271,702	3.42%
IL Canada	39,863	0.50%
Ontario Trillium Foundation	55,810	0.70%
Fees For Service — HCCSS & Individual Contract	464,240	5.85%
Donations, Interest, Miscellaneous & Other Grants	81,732	1.03%
Total Revenue	7,933,492	



Expenditures

Attendant Services	6,441,534	82.62%
IL Programs	378,031	4.85%
Admin, Capital Expenditures & Depreciation	977,241	12.53%
Total Expenditures	7,796,806	100.00%

Surplus	136,686
Employees	205



2023 Service Awards



5 Years

Dan Lajoie
Margareta Sisu
Jordan Perko

20 Years

Carol Schmidt
Maria Muntean

10 Years

Yeni Fountain
Sue Rivard
Crystal Frey
Lorraine MacInnis
Kevin Court

35 Years

Ronda Betcher

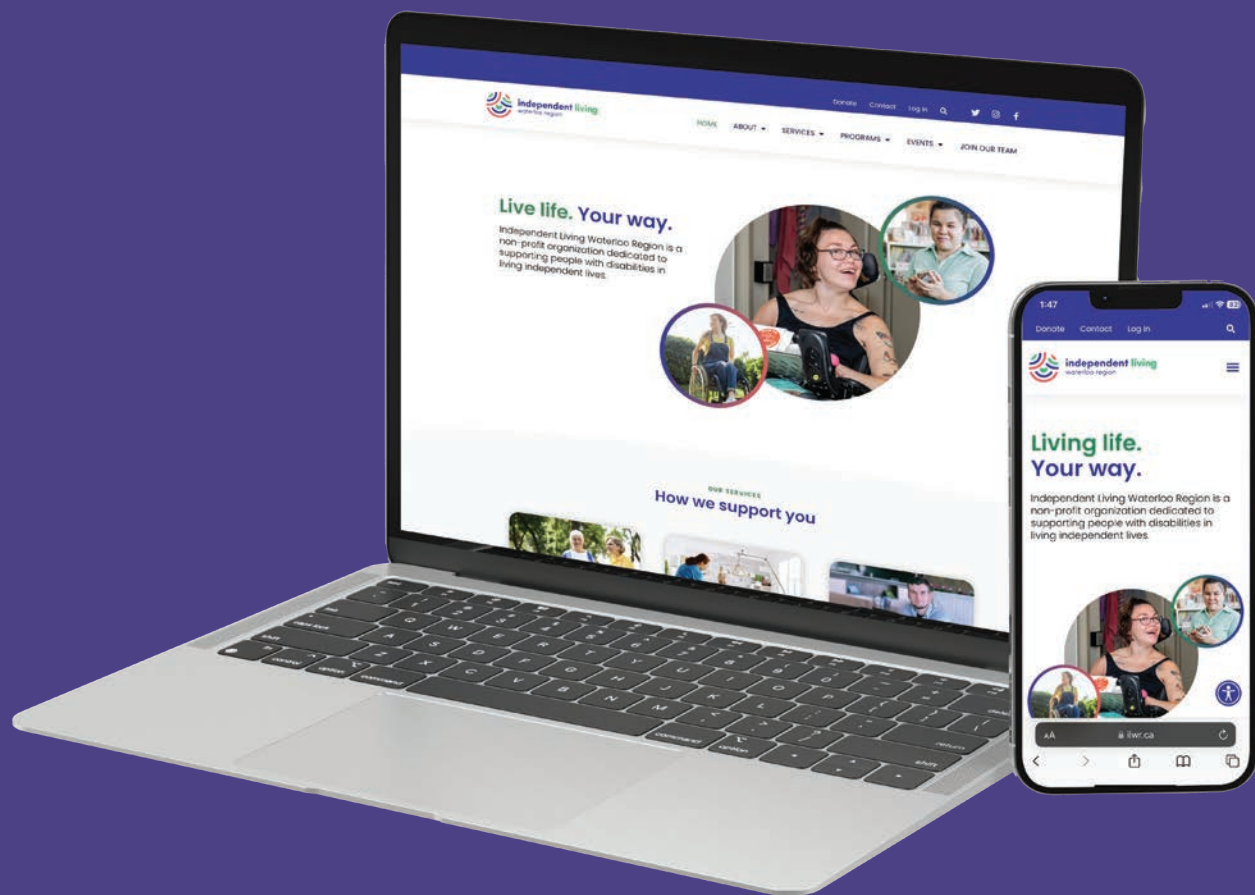
15 Years

Surojeni (Amanda) Ram
Donna Quangvan

Dan Lajoie, 5 Years



ILWR launches our new Website



We were delighted to launch our new website at www.ilwr.ca in October. Using our new logo colours as the basis, this website provides information about ILWR's history, current programs and services, and our accountability to funders and other stakeholders. The Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles demonstrate our commitment to the Independent Living philosophy and our Consumers living life their way.

The site features three separate portals where the Board, Consumers and staff can login to access helpful information and resources related to their roles at ILWR.

The UserWay accessibility feature provides individuals with the ability to adjust the site's characteristics including font, contrast, text spacing, and text to speech. The feature aligns with ILWR's commitment to accessibility, inclusivity, and our effort to adhere to important legislation, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).



Funders and Partners



**HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE
SUPPORT SERVICES**
Waterloo Wellington



Find us

127 Victoria Street South
Suite 201
Kitchener, ON
N2G 2B4

Connect with us

(519) 571-6788
Fax: (519) 571-6388
info@ilwr.ca
www.ilwr.ca



@AccessILWR

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