



**independent living**  
waterloo region



2023-2024  
**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.

# Message from Board Chair and Executive Director



**Greg Barratt**  
Board Chair

Independent Living Waterloo Region's distinct mission *"to support and champion Independent Living for persons with disabilities through self-directed services and programs"* is supported by the Board of Directors and Leadership team within the everchanging community health care system.

Our Strategic Plan and five (5) key objective areas guided the organization's work throughout 2023-2024:

- Provider of Choice – Defining Who We Are
- Expanding Consumer Base and Funding
- Employer of Choice
- Service Excellence
- Consumer Engagement



**Janet Redman**  
Executive Director

We are pleased to share our 2023-2024 Annual Report which outlines the organization's achievements made possible through the dedication and hard work of our Administration staff, our Attendants and the Consumer and Family Advisory Council (CFAC).

On behalf of ILWR, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to all our Consumers, employees, and invaluable community partners who work together to help achieve our vision: *"an inclusive community where persons with disabilities are supported to live independently and thrive."*

We also thank the Board of Directors for their commitment to govern, including six new Directors who joined the Board in June 2024. These new members quickly learned about ILWR and its role within the larger healthcare system.

With the current Leadership team and Board, ILWR is ready for the challenges and opportunities of 2024-2025.

***"My co-workers at ILWR are amazing and my experience here is so refreshing! I have learned so much and hope to continue in my role here."***

***"I am happy with ILWR and the services I receive. My attendants are all nice and very helpful."***

***"ILWR hires the best Attendants. They are all great and provide excellent care. I really appreciate the services I receive."***

ILWR is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, comprised of a diverse group of skilled and experienced community leaders who give generously to attend Committee and Board meetings.

The Executive Director and Leadership team are responsible for day-to-day operations and report regularly to the Board.

## 2023–2024 Board of Directors

### **Greg Barratt**

Board Chair

### **Beryl Collingwood**

Vice-Chair, Governance and Nominating

### **Raagula Sivayoganathan**

Vice-Chair + Treasurer, Performance and Quality Oversight

### **Kelly Steiss**

Vice-Chair, Stakeholder Relations

### **Michael Bournon**

(resigned January 2024)

### **Michael Boyd**

### **Sandra Dudziak**

### **Hina Ghaus**

### **Dastiger Khan**

### **Marc Parent**

### **Stephen Swatridge**

## Senior Leadership

### **Janet Redman**

Executive Director

### **Amy Hynes**

Senior Manager, Human Resources

### **Cathy Doerbecker**

Senior Manager, Attendant Services

### **Leanne Schade**

Finance Manager

### **Dan Lajoie**

Manager, Independent Living Resources

### **Bailey Van Dyk**

Quality Assurance Coordinator

### **Connie Wallbank**

Business Intelligence Analyst

# Consumer and Family Advisory Council (CFAC)

The Consumer and Family Advisory Council continued to meet quarterly; discussing topics that align with the Council's vision to strengthen the relationship between Consumers, Board of Directors and Management at ILWR.

Serving in an advisory capacity, the CFAC makes recommendations on topics that impact Consumers with a goal to improve the Consumer service experience and quality of life by:

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

This year, the Council provided input on various topics including communication improvements, the Employee performance evaluation process, emergency information magnets, and Consumer education and townhalls. The Council formed a sub-Committee to look at, and make recommendations about, orientation for new Consumers and Attendants. Additionally, guest speakers were invited to enhance member knowledge, with MP Mike Morrice and Board Director, Stephen Swatridge, attending the March 2024 meeting to speak about the new Canada Disability Benefit.

Many thanks to the following Council members for their commitment and valuable insight:

**Kelly Steiss** – Board Co-Chair

**Sharron Garrah** – Consumer Co-Chair

**David H** – Consumer, Assisted Living

**Melissa J** – Consumer, Assisted Living

**Carolyn J** – Consumer, Outreach

**Todd C** – Consumer, Outreach

**James H** – Consumer, Outreach

**Phillip R** – Consumer, Community Resource Program

**Chris M** – Consumer, Direct Funding

**Janet Redman** – Executive Director

**Dan Lajoie** – Manager, Independent Living Resources

**Cathy Doerbecker** – Senior Manager, Attendant Services

**Ayo Fawolu** – Administrative Support



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# Independent Living Resources

## 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 Motion program.



We host a variety of online programs multiple times per week and hold periodic in-person events including our annual Balcony Planter activity, Christmas Cookie Decorating, Fall Cooking Workshop and our Summer Youth Retreat.

Community Resource Program Annual Stats	
Consumers served (one-on-one support): <b>203</b>	Peer activities/ events: <b>141</b>
Contacts/interactions with Consumers (one-on-one support): <b>965</b>	Event participants: <b>782</b>

## One-On-One Supports

Community Resource Program Coordinators kept busy providing one-on-one support to Consumers on various subjects from housing to assistive devices, employment, and 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.

## Peer Activities

ILWR peer activities continue to thrive, especially those provided virtually. 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. Peer groups met throughout the year to engage on a variety of topics, including the Canada Disability Benefit, disability and human rights, employment, and education.



In addition to newsworthy topics, seasonal and recreational events, and workshops requested by Consumers, 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 planning for the future.

### Staying Well Together

We meet every other Wednesday afternoon with our friends at T6Talk. Melanie and Wallace, both who identify with lived experience of disability and are active advocates and influencers, continue to facilitate bi-weekly sessions covering important topics dealing with life and disability.

### 'Let's Hang Out'

Consumers meet every other Thursday to have fun playing games and trivia, and chatting about lighter topics. We also host physical wellness group activities like adapted yoga, aerobics, and meditation.

## Book Club

Every quarter, Consumers from our book club help to choose a book to read, then meet virtually for a facilitated discussion with a Community Resource Coordinator. The genres vary and include fiction, biography, disability related topics, inclusion etc. This popular activity is always happy to welcome new members.

## “All In a Day’s Work” Series

We facilitated three comprehensive presentations on a variety of topics related to living safely at home. These included tips on adaptations and supports for housekeeping; how to access, prepare and cook healthy food; spending time in the great outdoors; and pointers for personal care products and devices. The topics are those most regularly raised during one-on-one supports and allowed Consumers to gain more information to live more independent lives.

## Youth in Motion (YIM)

Our youth program received a new name and logo! While “Youth in Transition” had served us well for a long time, a new name and logo could help bring some fresh attention. We made a call-out for submissions and chose the name “Youth in Motion” (YIM); the new logo aligns with our ILWR branding.

YIM continued as primarily virtual sessions for both the spring and fall. In August, we hosted our annual summer retreat in New Hamburg where youth spent two days together having fun and learning. We also had opportunity to meet in-person throughout the year in

collaboration with the team at Smart Waterloo Region Innovation Lab (see the “Volunteer Spotlight” article outlining the work they are doing with youth in the region). We continue to collaborate with other community agencies who provide support for young people with disabilities including KidsAbility and KW-Habilitation. We were excited to have a number of new youth participants join us regularly and look forward to seeing the program grow.

## Fundraising for CRP

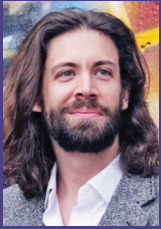
In the past year, the Community Resource Program (CRP) made significant steps towards enhancing community engagement and securing sustainable funding. To strengthen our outreach efforts, we have developed CRP material, including presentation slides and email templates. These resources are instrumental in building relationships with community stakeholders and potential funders, vital for sustaining our programs amid decreasing our reliance on government funding.

Last December we held a holiday raffle for some amazing prizes including an accessible helicopter ride, air fryer, and some amazing tech. The raffle was a huge success raising approximately \$1000. In addition, we continued our relationship with both Upstream Waterloo and the Cowan Foundation, both of which made significant financial contributions to keep the program running. And, despite government funding cuts, we continue to submit funding applications to government and community grants for which we may qualify.

Among our fundraising efforts is the planning and coordination of the Talent Show Fundraiser, scheduled for October 17, 2024, at Maxwell’s Concerts and Events. This event reflects our commitment to expanding community awareness and support for CRP, with hopes that it may serve as an annual fundraising opportunity.

The Community Resource Program is a vital support for persons with disabilities. Without continued funding, the program is in jeopardy which is why we continue to seek out every opportunity.





## Volunteer Spotlight: SWRIL

When you enter the space in the Communitech Building in downtown Kitchener, where the Smart Waterloo Region Innovation Lab (SWRIL) is located, you know you are entering a creative space where amazing things are happening. Grayson Bass, Lab Manager, describes the Innovation Lab as “a manifestation of community that will make Waterloo Region the best place for children and youth”.

Born out of the Smart Cities Challenge a few years ago, the lab has become a global benchmark for government innovation work. They have created digital products that have been adopted around the world, including a model for youth engagement that other governments want to replicate.

Two initiatives that are ready to scale up are the Nurture Program and Youth Impact Project (YIP). Both are youth-led programs that work to solve real world problems by supporting youth and harnessing the energy and creativity of our young people. So far, these projects are impacting 15,000 local children each year!

SWRIL supports our Youth in Motion group by hosting and providing pizza for our in-person meet ups. Youth have an opportunity to work on their independence and to develop increased social skills in this inclusive and fun space.

SWRIL is looking to increase their reach to young people with disabilities by working to solve accessibility problems that can impact one’s sense of belonging. They continue to investigate ways to bring the community closer to young people, especially those with disabilities, so they can engage and connect with the community without barriers.

We are excited to continue working alongside SWRIL as they strive to make our community the best one in Canada for all children and youth. For more information please visit:

<https://www.swril.ca/>



## 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, Guelph, Hamilton, Orangeville and Shelburne. During the fiscal year, the Administrative Centre welcomed six (6) new Self Managers to the program and 21 new applicants to the waitlist. The Direct Funding program is managed provincially through the Centre for Independent Living Toronto (CILT).

In 2023-2024, Self-Managers received a permanent budget increase allowing them to pay their Attendants up to \$25 per hour, in addition to funds for a retroactive pay allotment. Self-Managers also received funding to provide an increased fee to their bookkeepers who assist with payroll and program reporting requirements. With all these changes, the hope moving forward is that DF will continue to remain wage-competitive and ease some of the hiring struggles that Self Managers face.

Locally, our DF Resource Coordinator has been busy recruiting new participants and helping them through the application process. She continued to run a monthly virtual applicant training session based on the piloted success in 2022-2023. These sessions allow applicants on the DF waitlist to gather virtually to work through the interview preparation materials, ask questions, and receive both program and peer





feedback. Additionally, ILWR hosted a hybrid “Lunch and Learn” presentation to promote and educate about what the Direct Funding program offers for Consumers, staff and community partners.

<b>Direct Funding</b> (CWSW - Central West, South West)	
<b>New Self-Managers to the program:</b> <b>6</b>	<b>Contacts/interactions with Self-Managers:</b> <b>5368</b>
<b>Applications received:</b> <b>21</b>	<b>Self-Managers in the program:</b> <b>240</b>

## 2024 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 320 people purchase equipment totaling approximately \$730,000! In 2024, 19 individuals were supported through the Access Fund with approximately \$40,000 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 and generous community donations.

## 2024 Featured Recipients

### Sylvia

We were pleased to help Sylvia with the purchase of a specialized bed allowing her to sleep with comfort and safety. This new bed helps her to be more independent, allowing her to change her positioning and avoid discomfort.

### Marisol

This four-year-old girl is determined and a delight to be around. We were able to help her by purchasing a special seat which allows her to sit more independently and focus on physiotherapy and playtime activities.

## The Growing Need

Each year, the Access Fund is only able to meet approximately 1/3 of all requests and that need continues to grow. Many of the people who come to us for financial support are not otherwise covered by government funding or insurance. Often, we represent one of their last options to purchase much-needed equipment. That is why we continue to look for new and innovative ways to raise money for this important cause. Our hope and dream for the future is to continue to support people with disabilities in our community and help bridge the gap between applications received and funded.

## 2023 Tournament of Hope

In June 2023, we were fortunate again to be joined by a great group of golfers who came together at Grand Valley Golf Club to help us celebrate our 26th Anniversary of this fundraising event.

It was another amazing day of sunshine, golf, and friendship. Our evening program was hosted by the Chair of the ILWR Board of Directors, Greg Barratt. We were pleased to have our featured recipient join us for dinner and share special words of thanks alongside her family.

The Tournament of Hope continues to be a major contributor to the Access Fund. It is only made possible by many hard-working hands behind the scenes, a fantastic group of volunteers, loyal golfers, and our many generous event sponsors. Please reach out if you would like to participate in this annual event.



# Consumer Services

## Attendant Services 2023–2024



It was an eventful year for the Attendant Services program.

Through our longstanding partnership with Satellite Homes, ILWR added two Mobile Assisted Living (MAL) units at a new building at 195 Hespeler Road in Cambridge.

Supervisors continued to assess applications and complete service plans to initiate service for new Consumers in all program areas. Then our amazing Attendants were instrumental in welcoming and making new Consumers comfortable with ILWR services.

Our 2023 summer students created videos which featured various Consumers; they spoke about what Independent Living means to them and acted as subject experts for Attendants to demonstrate transfer techniques, medication assistance and how to make a bed. Another video featured one of our seasoned Attendants sharing why he feels fortunate to have chosen this line of work over 30 years ago.

Efforts to improve communication between employees were ongoing and included using additional tools in AlayaCare such as Progress Notes and Secure Messaging.

Consumer Town Halls resumed in the fall of 2023. In-person Town Halls were held in Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, offering Consumers the opportunity to dialogue with the Senior Manager, Attendant Services and Executive Director. There are plans to offer a virtual attendance option in the future.

Supervisors and Attendants actively engaged in numerous training sessions throughout the fiscal year such as Consumer Handling (transfers and positioning techniques), Acquired Brain Injury, and Active Offer for French Language Services.

Our employees demonstrated their creativity through team challenges including office decorating, Halloween costumes and Christmas ornament/tree decorations.

Finally, we received approval from Ontario Health to realign Assisted Living and Attendant Outreach targets based on our 2023-24 Community Planning Submission (CAPS). This change had no impact on Consumers or their service levels, but rather realigns our program with traditional Attendant Service definitions.

Program	Number of Consumers	Service Levels
Assisted Living	Individuals Served <b>36</b>	Resident Days <b>11,375</b>
Attendant Outreach	Individuals Served <b>96</b>	Hours of Service <b>58,171</b>
HCCSS-Contract	Individuals Served <b>26</b>	Visits <b>9,493</b>

### Supported by 172 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 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

## Human Resources Overview 2023–2024

*THANK YOU to all our employees for their hard work, creativity, and commitment to Consumers. Each one brings incredible skills, abilities, and energy to the team; making us better as a collective.*

Here are highlights of our accomplishments:

- ▶ **Permanent wage increases** for all employees made possible through base funding from Ontario Health
- ▶ **Policy revisions** to ensure compliance with the Employment Standards Act and best practices. Updates were made to Bereavement, Vacation, and Sick and Emergency Entitlements policies
- ▶ **Pension plan** was transitioned to Manulife; providing an opportunity to support employees with their financial planning and retirement goals.
- ▶ **Change to the Senior Leadership team** when we welcomed Cathy Doerbecker as our new Senior Manager, Attendant Services. Cathy was previously an ILWR Attendant Services Supervisor.
- ▶ **Retirement** of three long-term Attendants: Jadranka Mocevic, Alice Horst, and Diane Hibbs who collectively provided over 65 years of dedicated service to ILWR Consumers
- ▶ **Three summer students** were hired through the Canada Summer Jobs Program. They created new orientation and training materials including videos featuring ILWR Consumers and Attendants
- ▶ **Ongoing training and development** including Mental Health First Aid, CPR and First Aid, Food Safety training and annual online modules to ensure all employees

understand their rights and responsibilities within the Occupational Health and Safety Act and how to protect confidential Consumer and organizational information.

- ▶ New **Performance Management** templates were developed and used to resume probationary and/or annual evaluations for all employees.
- ▶ In-person **Employee Townhalls** returned in November 2023 featuring a guest speaker from Regional Diversity Roundtable who presented on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA).
- ▶ A **Job Demands Description (JDD)** was completed. This tool supports ILWR to accommodate employees experiencing physical or cognitive restrictions by appropriately matching the job task demands to the individual’s functional abilities.

ILWR is dedicated to ongoing improvements and support for all our employees. We look forward to working together to achieve much success in 2024–2025.

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



# 2024 Service Awards



## 5 Years

Saturday Okoukoni  
Djene Diawara  
Tara Somerton  
Paula Swartz  
Darlene Brown  
Sandra Walker  
Allison Mann

## 10 Years

Linda Carrigan  
Nancy Schwarz  
Abner Echavarria  
Xigda Castro

## 15 Years

Tina Higgins  
Katerina Hinnerova  
Kari Butcher  
Karen Rowland

## 20 Years

Petula Boyce



Petula Boyce 20-years.

## Congratulations to **Dan Lajoie** Winner of the 2023 "Paula Saunders Award for Independent Living"



The Paula Saunders Award was created to acknowledge and commemorate those who have committed 20 plus years of dedication to the Independent Living Movement and Independent Living Canada.

ILWR was thrilled that Dan Lajoie was chosen to receive this award. He has spent his life representing and advocating for persons with disabilities. He is a fixture in the Waterloo Region; working on countless initiatives, supporting community organizations, and serving on accessibility advisory groups.



Cathy, Darlene B. 5-years, Janet.



Cathy, Paula 5-years, Janet.



Linda 10-years, Dan, Janet.



Janet, Cathy, Kari 15-years.

# Privacy, Security and Quality

## Information Technology

The Business Intelligence Analyst (BIA) role is responsible for AlayaCare, our Client Record Management and scheduling system; Information Technology (IT) and everything technology-related; enhancing ILWR's Cybersecurity best practices and acts as ILWR's Privacy Officer.

During the past year we have continued to optimize the use of our scheduling platform AlayaCare. We have fully introduced and streamlined visit offers, an electronic method of offering vacant shifts to our attendants; implemented Progress notes, a tool allowing Attendants to document information about Consumer care, so the next Attendant is aware of any changes; created reports to provide better data for both Services and Human Resources; and streamlined various processes to increase efficiency and productivity.

The Consumer Service Coordinators (CSCs) scheduled Consumer visits through AlayaCare based on the master schedules created and updated by Attendant Service Supervisors. The CSCs learned and implemented the new Visit Offer process in AlayaCare and set up training for new Attendants with Consumers. The CSCs completed the Mental Health First Aid course and learned new techniques about dealing with conflict, a valuable skill for their position.

Privacy and Technology agreements were created and signed by all employees, a chance to educate every one of their role in keeping Consumer information safe. These agreements are signed upon hire and then yearly at our annual training sessions. Bi-weekly Cybersecurity/Privacy "tips" are sent to all Admin staff to improve tech safety compliance.

Policies on Privacy and Cybersecurity are posted on the Staff Portal and a comprehensive training module is being developed for our annual Employee training.

We look forward to ongoing improvements in 2024-25!

## Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance Coordinator oversees quality improvement at ILWR including our work with Accreditation Canada, our Health and Safety program, and the annual Employee and Consumer surveys.

Over the past year, ILWR continued to prepare for our on-site Primer accreditation survey in June 2024. This process evaluates ILWR against best-practice standards established by Accreditation Canada for community health-care organizations. Accreditation requires us to meet the Primer standards, with topics covering mission, vision, values; Consumer safety; employee health and wellness; and how Consumer services are delivered. We completed a self-assessment, then updated and developed internal policies and processes to meet all the Primer standards.

The organization's Health and Safety program continued to focus on employee wellbeing by reviewing incident and injury trends, conducting monthly site inspections and holding quarterly Joint Health and Safety Committee meetings in each geography and at the Administration office.

We partnered with Flex Surveys again to complete this year's Employee Engagement survey. A total of 103 employees completed the survey; a 60% completion rate compared with 55% in 2023. The overall satisfaction rate remained consistent at 72%.

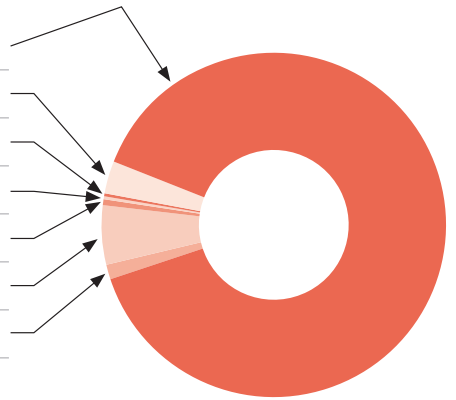
With the endorsement of the Consumer and Family Advisory Council (CFAC), the annual Consumer Experience-of-Care survey was completed internally using Survey Monkey. We had 42 consumers complete the survey for a completion rate of 36% compared with 45% in 2023. Unfortunately, we saw the satisfaction rate drop slightly.

Results from both surveys were reviewed by Leadership to create action plans. The following improvements were implemented during 2023-2024: ongoing communication, resumption of in-person Employee and Consumer Townhalls (separate events), wage and benefit improvements for employees, an electronic suggestion box, and ILWR events including the Summer Picnic and Holiday Open House.

# Financial Stats 2023–2024

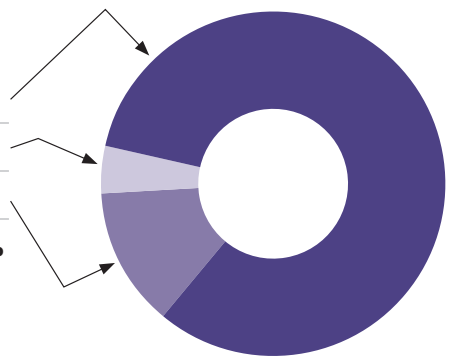
## Revenue

Ontario Health	7,778,971	88.90%
CILT	273,852	3.13%
IL Canada	37,480	0.43%
Ontario Trillium Foundation	22,690	0.26%
UpStream	39,769	0.45%
Fees For Service — HCCSS & Individual Contract	492,197	5.62%
Donations, Interest, Miscellaneous & Other Grants	105,316	1.20%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>8,750,275</b>	



## Expenditures

Attendant Services	7,095,566	82.62%
IL Programs	382,053	4.45%
Admin, Capital Expenditures & Depreciation	1,110,150	12.93%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>8,587,769</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Surplus	162,506	
Employees	197	



***“The staff are welcoming, knowledgeable and friendly. The Consumers are interesting and appreciative. You will never be bored, as no two days are the same.”***

***“The Consumers are amazing and make you really love the work you’re doing!”***

***“Working at ILWR is a rewarding and purposeful job. ILWR provides Consumer centered care; it is a supportive and close-knit work environment.”***

# Employee Appreciation



**ILWR shirts and lunch bags**  
**Employee-of-the-Week nominations**  
**Admin Professionals Day – April 26**  
**Attendant Services Day – October 24**  
**Contests and draws**  
**Years-of-Service anniversaries**

## Funders and Partners



HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE  
SUPPORT SERVICES  
Waterloo Wellington



Region of Waterloo

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