

# ***Are Communities in Waterloo Region in Crisis?***

*For Immediate Release  
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*Hard Hit*, a research report released in October from the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) documents the one-two punch affecting Ontario's nonprofit community services -- an increasing demand for services and lost revenue from funding cuts driven by the economic downturn.

A sub-report suggests Waterloo Region agencies are being affected more by the recession than agencies in other Ontario communities and nonprofit community social service organizations, particularly the small to mid-sized agencies are being put into difficult financial situations that have serious implications for both sustainability and quality of service to the community.

Fifty Waterloo Region agencies of the 413 Ontario agencies responded to the survey done in April and May of 2009. Seventy percent (70%) of the Waterloo Region agencies experienced mostly increased service demands since September 2008 compared to 60% for the Ontario sample overall.

Waterloo Region agencies made up 23% of the total from across Ontario that attributed increased service demand to the economic recession. This is much higher than expected as Waterloo Region agencies comprised only 12% of the total Ontario sample!

A greater percentage of Waterloo Region agencies compared to those across the province report increased service demand as due to increased crisis management.

A somewhat higher percentage of Kitchener-Waterloo organizations report funding cuts and a higher percentage still anticipate further cuts in their next fiscal period.

Agencies are trying a range of strategies to meet the increasing needs of community members in the face of reduced and uncertain funding. The responses seem to vary depending on the size of the organization with larger agencies with budgets of \$1million or more having fewer responses.

Increasing staff workloads and putting more reliance on volunteers are some of the strategies being used to respond to increased service demands. These can't be maintained for long. Overloading staff, reducing supervision and pulling funds from reserves may be leaving agencies stretched and tapped out. This is not sustainable and suggests we have a crisis NOW in Waterloo Region communities, particularly in Kitchener-Waterloo.

How are agencies coping? If the impact of the recession continues, what will agencies have to fall back on? How can they meet the needs of even more people, more complex problems and more crisis with fewer resources?

The Social Planning Council Kitchener-Waterloo is hosting a community discussion of the local survey results, Tuesday December 15, 5 pm, 300-151 Frederick St. Kitchener. Please RSVP to Kim at 519-579-1096 Ext 3005 or email at [kim@waterlooregion.org](mailto:kim@waterlooregion.org).

*Hard Hit: Impact of the Economic Downturn on Nonprofit Community Social Services, A Waterloo Region Story is available at [www.waterlooregion.org](http://www.waterlooregion.org)*

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