

# GOOD WORK NEWS

The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

Issue 137

June 2019

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

## Inside This Issue:

- 32nd Mayors' Dinner
- Climate Change on the Political Agenda
- Water Street House Update
- Learning from Service
- Three perspectives that question amalgamation - Why Smaller is Better?
- Remembering Shirly Gutenberg and Gord Crosby
- 4th Annual Summer Institute: July 31st - August 2nd



## Climate Change Rising on the Political Agenda

*"In fact, more than half of the carbon exhaled into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels has been emitted in just the past three decades. Which means we have done as much damage to the fate of the planet and its ability to sustain human life and civilization since Al Gore published his first book on climate than in all the centuries—all the millennia—that came before.*

*The United Nations established its climate change framework in 1992, building a political consensus out of a scientific consensus and advertising it unmistakably to the world; **which means we have now done as much damage to the environment knowingly than we ever managed in ignorance.**"*

David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth, Life After Warming*, Penguin Random House, NY, 2019



## Human Society Under Threat from Loss of Earth's Natural Life

*"Human society is in jeopardy from the accelerating decline of the Earth's natural life-support systems, the world's leading scientists have warned..."*

*From coral reefs flickering out beneath the oceans to rainforests desiccating into savannahs, **nature is being destroyed at a rate tens to hundreds of times higher than the average over the past 10 million years, according to the UN global assessment.***

*The biomass of wild mammals has fallen by 82%, natural ecosystems have lost about half their area and a million species are at risk of extinction – all largely as a result of human actions, said the study, compiled over three years by more than 450 scientists and diplomats."*

The Guardian, International Edition, May 7, 2019

READ MORE ON PAGE 2



## Celebrating Grassroots Health Care

By Kara Peters Unrau

The 32nd Mayors' Dinner was a full evening of community connections at Marshall Hall at Bingemans. Almost 1000 people crowded into the hall to hear stories about three grassroots approaches to health care.

Dr. George Berrigan and Evelyn Gurney RN were recognized as the heart of the St. John's Clinic, the health care clinic located at St. John's Kitchen. (On page 4 of this newspaper, you can read Dr. Berrigan's moving presentation at the Mayors' Dinner.)

Dr. Chris and Michelle Steingart were recognized for their work founding Sanguen as a charitable Hepatitis C clinic which has grown to provide harm reduction and health care services throughout Waterloo Region and in Guelph.

Dr. Michael Stephenson (Dr.

Mike) and Margaret Brockett are the physician and associate director of Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre who have established this integrated medical hub for refugees.

Highlighting these community-based efforts was enlivening for all who attended. The evening demonstrated how dedication and vision are essential for efforts that work from the ground up. Together these three initiatives demonstrate how dedication, compassion, harm reduction, and the ability to support people through complex systems can create real change and new services that put people in the centre.

To start the evening, Margaret Nally offered a blessing, followed by a song of thanksgiving by the Gatako Singers. The four Gatako singers, Patrick, Seth, Deborah and Mika arrived in Canada on September

continued on page 3

## The Restoration of Indigenous Cultural Ways

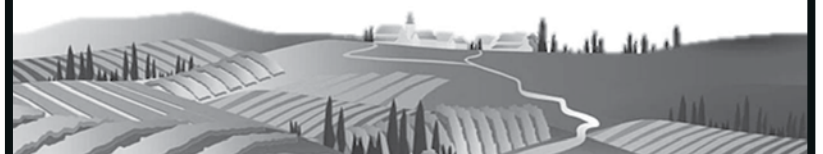
with Hilton King

WEDNESDAY JULY 31ST | 7PM - 9PM

FRESH GROUND | 256 KING STREET EAST | KITCHENER

Join us for a **Fermented Thoughts** discussion with our guest Hilton King, and the opening of the **4th Annual Summer Institute: July 31st - August 2nd**

See back page for more details



## Thirty Fifth Year

Issue 137

June 2019

# Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 12,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

Editors: Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini.

Contributors: Kyle Murphy, Isaiah Ritzmann, JP Smola, Kara Peters Unrau, Kevin Thomson, Dr. George Berrigan, Margaret Nally, Richard Albrecht, Andy Macpherson

Editorial comments, changes of address and new subscriptions should be directed to:

The Working Centre

58 Queen St. S., Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 1V6

Phone: (519) 743-1151 • Fax: (519) 743-3840

E-mail: [kara@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:kara@theworkingcentre.org)

Web: [www.theworkingcentre.org](http://www.theworkingcentre.org)

Canada Post Bulk #05306256

Charitable Registration #13092 9607 RR0001



## Water Street House Update

By Stephanie Mancini

Last spring The Working Centre responded to the community need for a creative response to the growing impact of debilitating drug use, at a time when landlords were unwilling to host a potential Safe Consumption and Treatment (SCT) site location. We purchased an old degrading rooming house on Water Street with the goal of creating a place of welcome for people who are using drugs. This vision could include the SCT, but also includes an 8 bed house to provide interim housing. The house will be a welcoming and supportive environment for drug users (especially those without housing) to help them find rest and space in the midst of their addiction. By focusing on the unique needs of drug users, we hope to create a place of practical, supportive and restful supports.

Our understanding of this issue had grown from the reality of the drug crisis that we see each day at St. John's Kitchen. The Water Street house is a block away from St. John's Kitchen and will build on the work that is already being done at St. John's, the St. John's Clinic and the Hospitality House, adding medical resources, on-the-ground addiction supports along with needed housing and respite space.

Political support for the SCT site went to 150 Duke. In our view this was highly disappointing as it will take many more public dollars to get the new site up and running. There are discussions to develop an interim Safe Consumption site which we hope can be operating soon, as the number of deaths and overdoses continues to skyrocket. Over 40 people have died in our community since December, many from the direct and indirect results of an unsafe drug supply; drugs that rapidly overpower the body.

At Shirley's funeral, one woman raged against the current reality

— where people overdose, are essentially dead, and then are alive again. "We die, we live, we die, we live... I can't bear to live like this anymore." How to escape this deep and tragic cycle of addiction, poverty and homelessness?

We have come to see the shifting role of the Water Street house as a blessing. Safe consumption will happen around the corner on Duke Street, but the Water Street house will focus on wellness, healing, rest and the deep relationship-based care than help people to be as well as they can be.

In early June, renovations will begin. We will be creating 8 rooms for interim housing - 3 beds operated in collaboration with WRPS to ensure people are safe without using important Emergency Department and/or Police resources, 3 beds that align to hospital care for those using injectable drugs requiring prolonged IV antibiotic therapy, and 2 respite/rest beds.

We are excited to continue with our work around access to health care, but to also consider wellness work and alternative therapies. We hope to support conversation circles, drumming circles, cognitive behaviour groups, and links with land-based healing and rest.

In collaboration with our partners in the Inner City Health Alliance, we will expand the ideas of the local village, where we will humbly walk along-side people, listening and learning while providing timely, comprehensive health care that honours the whole person - physical, mental, spiritual and emotional. Together we will work to honour the strength of this collective knowing, creating greater capacity to serve the growing needs in our inner cities.

We have lots to learn as we work together, creating a place of hope and practical supports in response to the devastating realities of these powerful drugs.

## Pushing the Political Will to Act

*"Global emissions could be cut by a third if the richest 10 percent of humanity cut their use of energy to the same level as affluent, comfortable Europe. One prospective technique to scrub carbon from the atmosphere would cost \$3 trillion a year, a colossal amount — but significantly less than the current level of subsidies paid out globally for fossil fuel, estimated at \$5 trillion. Taken all in all, solutions are "obvious" and "available." **The only obstacle to implementing them is political will.**"*

John Lanchester review of *The Uninhabitable Earth, Life After Warming* in *New York Times Review of Books*, May 4, 2019.

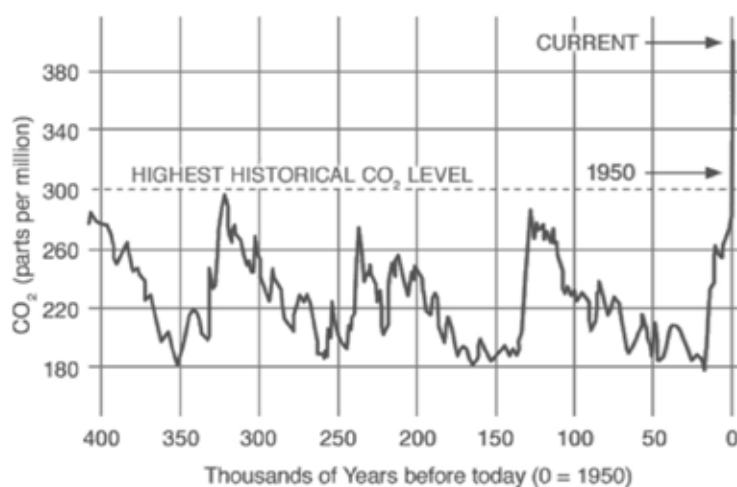
## Climate Change Rising on the Political Agenda

*"On Wednesday, the British House of Commons, led by the Conservative Party, voted to declare that the planet was in a "climate emergency." The day before, a CNN poll found that, in the US, Democratic voters care more about climate change than about any other issue in the upcoming Presidential election: more than health care, more than gun control, more than free college, more than impeaching the President.*

*Having followed the issue closely since I wrote my first book about climate change, thirty years ago, I think I can say that we're in a remarkable moment, when, **after years of languishing, climate concern is suddenly and explosively rising to the top of the political agenda.** Maybe, though not certainly, it is rising fast enough that we'll get real action."*

**Bill McKibbin** author of *Falter: Has the Human Game begun to play itself Out?* (2019), writing in the *New Yorker* May 1, 2019

## A Sharp Rise of Global Carbon Dioxide Levels



source: NASA Vital Signs

***"a carbon tax and the political apparatus to aggressively phase out dirty energy, a new approach to agricultural practices and a shift away from beef and dairy in the global diet; and public investment in green energy and carbon capture"***



# 32<sup>nd</sup> Mayors' Dinner



Chief Bryan Larkin was joined by other member of Waterloo Regional Police Services at the dinner.

continued from page 1

13, 2017 as refugees from Burundi, where their family lived in a large refugee camp for fifteen years. It was there that Patrick led a choir of some 40 young people singing songs that encouraged hope and expressed thanksgiving. Today they are all students at Eastwood Collegiate and it was an honour to receive their song of thanksgiving.

Neil Aitchison was once again our extraordinary Master of Ceremonies providing context on these projects and lots of humour along the way. Neil, as the live auctioneer, helped to raise \$8700 on six auction items. Overall the dinner raised \$60,000 for The Working Centre.

By far, the biggest success was the telling of the stories of Sanctuary, Sanguen, and St. John's Clinic.

The Working Centre's Commons Studio produced four short videos that described this work. These videos capture grassroots health care in action, showing how this work is not about simply offering a menu of services but rather about following the person by offering the help each person needs in a way that is helpful and connected. The videos, combined with the words of the Guests of Honour are now on our website. Visit the What's New section on our main website for a link – [www.theworkingcentre.org](http://www.theworkingcentre.org).

The Mayors' Dinner was an excellent forum that also served to highlight the spirit behind the Inner City Health Alliance. All three organizations are part of this alliance that sees itself as a responsive local village of health and social supports serving those living in vulnerable

conditions, specifically the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, and refugees. Health issues for these individuals are complicated by lack of housing, experiences of poverty, family support, trauma and care.

Community based health care that can follow the person's journey involves creative problem-solving work, which confronts each challenge as it emerges. This is a new way of offering health care, especially for people who are often left out.

All six Mayors' Dinner honourees saw the issues in front of them and responded in ways that make their community a better, kinder, healthier place. Thank you to the many people who helped to make this a meaningful community celebration.

## Person-Centred Grassroots Healthcare

### Thank You to the Patrons

- Activa
- Bell
- Bob & Judy Shantz
- City of Cambridge
- Erb & Good Family Funeral Home
- Graham A Giddy Funeral Home
- Hallman Construction
- Jones Electric
- Wilfred Laurier University
- Lyle S. Hallman Foundation
- MHBC Planning
- RBJ Schlegel
- Schorn Consultants Inc
- Sorbara Law
- Strassburger Windows and Doors
- St. Jerome's University
- St. Johns the Evangelist Anglican Church

### Thank You to the Community Tables

- Bingemans
- Bob & Margaret Nally
- Brockett Family
- City of Kitchener
- City of Waterloo
- Communitech
- Country Gardens RV Park
- Duncan Linton LLP
- Hospice of Waterloo Region
- House of Friendship
- In Memory of the Hon. Andrew Telegdi
- Kindred Credit Union
- Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre
- Kitchener Fire Department
- Kitchener Rangers Hockey Club
- Len & Brenda Jewitt
- Margaret Motz
- Reception House Waterloo Region
- St. John's Kitchen Pizza Group
- Strassburger Windows and Doors
- Tamarack Institute
- WalterFedy/AEC Developments
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Waterloo Regional Police Services



Our Honorees with Mayors McGarry, Vrbanovic, and Jaworsky



Special thanks to the Gatako Singers and MC Neil Aitchison



Our Honorees shared compelling stories of providing grassroots healthcare to those in our community





## Learning from Service

By Dr. George Berrigan

*Editor's Note: On March 30, 2019 Dr. George Berrigan officially retired from St. John's Clinic after serving 10 years. The Mayors' Dinner was a wonderful opportunity to thank George Berrigan and Evelyn Gurney for their commitment. The following is George's Mayors' Dinner speech*

We were asked to tell you why we decided to work at St John's Kitchen back in 2009. The honest answer is we saw back then there clearly was such a drastic need to improve medical care for the homeless in our city that we felt we should at least make the effort to do something in spite of our total lack of experience in this field. We discovered that the Working Centre and St John's Kitchen (SJK) had already created a functional venue with a staff of nurses, a social worker and a team of 9 outreach workers. We had no bureaucratically designed program or procedural guidelines to work under. In effect, what we did was use the approach of the famous professional tennis player, Arthur Ashe, who tackled his problems using the SUD method: START where you are! USE what you have! DO what you can! Our first barrier was gaining trust. This took a lot of listening, attention, being adaptable, open-minded and especially non-judgmental. We worked hard at keeping our promises. We realized our care had to be backed by consistency, respect and kindness. We accepted that even if we couldn't solve complex addiction, mental health and medical problems, we could lessen the harm, at least enough to keep them alive. At SJK, survival is our most immediate concern; the rest of the work is mostly finding ways to progressively lessen suffering one on one, one day at a time.

I would like to tell you about one of the over 2000 patients I encountered over the last 10 years. I'll call this patient Ray though that's not his real name. Ray is 66 years old and has been a chronic alcoholic for much of his adult life. Early last summer he lost his housing because he failed to pay his rent. He lived on the streets all summer and into mid-October mostly living under an overpass. One year previous to this he suffered a small stroke that

*We at SJK see their broken lives as a consequence of their circumstances rather than of their character! Make no mistake! Marginalized people are marginalized by people! The homeless don't self-marginalize, they don't choose poverty.*

left him with a weak arm and hand. Worse still, he was beginning to show signs of dementia with significant memory loss and confusion. He was frequently picked up by the police wandering aimlessly around the city. One of our staff nurses was assigned to his case. She quickly went to work mostly trying to get an urgent placement in safe housing. After a couple of weeks of many phone calls and numerous forms being completed he had a room in a local senior residence. When the nurse brought him to his new place in late October he walked around his nice clean room with a big smile on his face and sat on his nice comfortable bed. He looked all around his room and then did something very telling: he began crying so hard he was shaking the bed. This lasted many minutes. This sudden release of pent up tension and stress indicates to me just how extremely difficult living on the street really is. Ray couldn't solve his problems by himself, but we could make the difference by reaching out and working together with others to get him into safety. Happily, Ray is now permanently housed and he has his alcohol abuse under control. Sadly, too few of our cases have the same outcome as Ray.

While working with the homeless you start to appreciate that the most common factor in their background is a traumatic childhood of abuse and neglect. During their childhood development they often lacked a reliable stable adult to love them and provide them with the basic needs of acceptance, belonging and caring. This deprivation consistently has disastrous life-long consequences for their mental health and predisposes them to addictions. Moreover, they continually have to contend with the marginalization and stigma their mental health and addictions bring them. We at SJK see their broken lives as a consequence of their circumstances rather than of their character! Make no mistake! Marginalized people are marginalized by people! The homeless don't self-marginalize, they don't choose poverty. Marginalization requires "marginalizers" who actually have their own vulnerabilities one being their tunnel vision preventing them from seeing the whole picture. The homeless are no less human than the rest of us. They have the same hopes, worries and needs as any other segment of society. Their personalities and talents vary just as much as any other social class. Prolonged stress harms them just like it harms us. Their very survival depends on their human rights being treated absolutely equal to everyone else.

## 32<sup>nd</sup> Mayors' Dinner



*Members of Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre*



*Thank you to all those who attended and donated this year in support of The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen*



*Thank you to Working Centre staff and volunteer ushers*

Here are three lessons I have learned working at SJK:

### Lesson 1

One of the great rewards of working with the homeless is acquiring all the wonderful friends you work with and work for. We work not just for the love of it, but for the love that's in it. If we give the marginalized attention, caring and love when they desperately need it, we will get it back eventually, not tit for tat, but exponentially.

### Lesson 2

Those who work with the poor are frequently amazed by the depth of character and personal strength of spirit many homeless people have. I believe this spirit is a product of the intensity and duration of their own personal suffering. Resilience isn't just a gift; resilience is a tough hard-earned skill.

### Lesson 3

The homeless population need

more than just sufficient funds to survive, they also need to keep their hope alive. The good example and humane behaviour of the SJK staff helps the homeless stay hopeful. The staff and volunteers at SJK share a special gift that doesn't cost any money and indeed is worth far more than money. It is more essential and accessible than cleverness, creativity or courage. It's the basic human gift of COMPASSION. Compassion is at the heart and core of every healthy functioning family and every proficient healthy community. Compassion is also at the heart and core of all that is good, effective and meaningful at SJK. If we are to solve our marginalization problem we need to stop focussing solely on the homeless and also deal with what causes our society to marginalize. SJK is living proof that the primary answer to poverty is not just money, but sharing more of our compassion and our humanity.

# Bigger is Sometimes Worse

## Why is the cost of bigger bureaucratic structures not taken into account?

By Isaiah Ritzmann

The amalgamation debate in Waterloo Region has sparked passionate arguments for and against combining our communities into one, big city. Despite the strength of both arguments no one is addressing a vital, underlying assumption: that bigger is better. The amalgamation side builds their case on the idea that bigger, more centralized government will be more efficient. Those against amalgamation question whether local democracy is a worthwhile price. The problem is that the shared, underlying assumption is an unwarranted one: bigger is only sometimes better. Sometimes bigger is actually worse. If combining cities leads to efficiencies and economies of scale, it can also result in increased cost, reduced efficiency and less democracy. Bigger is sometimes worse for cities because bigger is sometimes worse for all aspects of human society. The challenge, for cities as well as other human institutions, is looking not for the biggest but for the best size.

### A Right Size for Everything

In the middle of the 20th century a group of decentralist thinkers felt alarmed at the inability of our culture to distinguish between sometimes and always when it comes to bigness. They began to promote the idea that to every aspect of human society there is an appropriate size or scale. One of these thinkers, Leopold Kohr, wrote in point-making exaggeration that “whenever something is wrong, something is too big.” Technically this wasn’t true; there are other sources of dysfunction including being too small. The point, however, stands: there is a right size to everything and in a world that exaggerates the value of big there must be prophets that announce that small is beautiful and too big can exact a steep price.

Many of these decentralists were inspired by the essay “*On Being the Right Size*” (1926) by the biologist J.B.S. Haldane. Haldane observed that in the natural world size was a critical factor in the systems organisms needed for survival. Flies, for example, have no need for lungs because they are small enough to absorb the oxygen they need from the atmosphere around them. Human beings, on the other hand, can’t get their oxygen by osmosis. Instead their size requires more complicated equipment to get oxygen to each cell. They are too big not to have lungs. Haldane, after citing additional examples of the importance of size in the natural world, argues the law of right size applies equally to the human world. “Just as their best size for every animal,” he writes, “so the same is true for every human

---

*They become chaotic and incompetent not by accident or intention but by necessity of size. The extra costs of unnecessary overhead coordination can reach the point of absurdity.*

---

institution.”

The amalgamators argue that consolidating services will lead to more savings. They suggest that bringing together the various services in Waterloo Region under one government roof will save money by reducing duplication, creating a more efficient economy of scale. The flaw in this argument is that economies of scale are not about bigness per se but about optimum size. Costs actually start rising when things get too big.

### Why Costs Go Up with Size

Take the textbook example of a bakery. As more loaves of bread are sold the more a bakery can buy in bulk. Buying in bulk means less in invested per loaf sold, meaning profits rise. This is the bakery’s economy of scale. At a certain point the bakery needs to hire another baker to keep up with the demand. Some of the previous profits from each loaf of bread are now used for the new hire. This is the bakery’s diseconomy of scale. The simple truth is that as businesses increase production, costs only decline to a point. Beyond that costs rise again. *To apply the economic scale argument to city governments and service efficiency is important. It is necessary. However in all these public discussions diseconomies of scale are conspicuously absent. Why?*

A few decades ago the Urban Institute did a comprehensive study correlating data from a variety of American cities tracking per capita service costs based on city population. Their findings followed a classic economy of scale U curve. They found that optimal population for cities ranged between 50-100,000. They had the least expensive per capita service costs. Beyond that they discovered that costs began to rise. Here are their findings:

Population & Average Annual Service Costs Per Person:	
100,000 - 200,000:	\$280
500,000 - 1 million:	\$426
Over 1 million:	\$681

There are various reasons why costs go up with size and the costs are not all measurable in monetary terms. In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Jane Jacobs proposes inventively decentralizing the bulky bureaucracies of American cities.

In her observations these institutions are both too big to be meaningfully coordinated and too big to understand the detail necessary to do their work. They become chaotic and incompetent not by accident or intention but by necessity of size. The extra costs of unnecessary overhead coordination can reach the point of absurdity. In his book *Human Scale* (1980) Kirkpatrick Sale cites a curious statistic that in large cities in the US for every five officers added to a police force eight less officers are out past the 10pm shift, probably resulting from added layers of oversight responsibilities. Increased police officers resulted in more management, more missed shifts, and new bureaucratic responsibilities. The result is more police but less police doing street work. One cannot simply nickel and dime all these extra costs of being super-sized but they remain costs nonetheless, costs are often ignored, and misunderstood.

### Size Matters for Democracy

Those who favour our current two-tiered system suggest that democracy is threatened by amalgamation. This is usually presented as a moral argument, and it is that too. But I want to argue that democracy is also cost-effective long-term even when it seems more expensive short-term. Size matters in terms of democracy. If the geographical reach and population are too large democracy becomes less meaningful. Last year researchers from the University of Toronto did a series of studies on the amalgamation of Toronto twenty years after that fact. In these studies researchers concluded that “the Toronto experience pre- and post-amalgamation conclude that the quality of civic engagement and democratic participation has declined” and Toronto has simply become “too big to be locally responsive in the same way lower tiers had been in the past.” There seems to be a ‘in name only’ critical threshold for representative democracies; a scale exists in which meaningful representation is no longer possible.

Meaningful representation is a necessary part of good governance. In their study *Size and Democracy* (1973) Robert Dahl and Edward Tufte found that smaller units of government, all things considered, generally yield higher levels of political participation: more people get involved, understand the issues, and believe they can make a difference. Earlier this year Doug Craig pointed out this sense of political efficacy leads to observable efficiencies in Canadian municipalities relative to their more wasteful provincial and federal counterparts. Municipalities are “accountable and transparent and they have yearly balanced budgets” because “they are closest to the people.” In his estimation democratic representation is more meaningful, and more effective, at a smaller, more localized scale.

In his books *Making Democracy Work* (1993) and *Bowling Alone*

---

*“...the Toronto experience pre- and post-amalgamation conclude that the quality of civic engagement and democratic participation has declined” and Toronto has simply become “too big to be locally responsive in the same way lower tiers had been in the past.”*

---

(2000) the political scientist Robert Putman argues persuasively that good government requires a strong, engaged citizenry. In his studies of democracy in both Italy and the United States he showed that what mattered most was not the state of the economy, the ruling party, or other common factors usually blamed or praised for the performance of government institutions. What mattered most, surprisingly, was things like membership in choral societies or soccer leagues. Putman theorized that as people become involved in community organizations they develop the relationships, skill, and civic culture that then spill over into their relationship with government, with beneficial long-term results. Similar effects can be imagined with the type of civic engagement smaller municipal governments encourage and support by virtue of their size. The higher rates of political participation and sense of political efficacy that Dahl and Tufte point to in their study have similar effects to the choral societies and soccer clubs, but with proportionately greater effect.

### Not All Upfront Costs are Wasteful

With all this in mind what if the extra costs of smaller municipalities, of duplication and inefficiencies, were looked at not as waste but as investment? After all in other political matters, let alone personal life, not all upfront costs are seen as wasteful. Whether the upfront cost is building a bridge or paying tuition we all recognize that short-term costs can yield long-term benefits. If democracy is viewed as wasteful it is only because we have fallen into the habit of seeing it simply as a moral matter and have ignored its potential benefits to good government. It is time to take seriously what both intuition and research demonstrate: that smaller democracies make good fiscal sense.

The amalgamation debate misses an important point - there is such a thing as being too big. Those for consolidating the region do not acknowledge limits to economies of scale and their opponents marshal a variety of arguments none of which, while valuable in themselves, question the dangers of big per se.

What we need are cities and governments and economies that are neither too big nor too small but just right. What we need is to remember Haldane’s counsel: “Just as their best size for every animal so the same is true for every human institution.”

# Why Smaller is Better

## Presentation to Regional Government Review

By Joe Mancini

The success of Waterloo Region demonstrates its unique model of seamlessly integrating cities, towns and villages. Waterloo Region's model of decentralized but integrated political entities should be celebrated as a highpoint in democratic culture.

The opposite of Waterloo Region's political model is that of centralization, the stringing together of municipalities and towns into one emasculated entity which by its nature dismantles identity, history and culture.

What lies behind the centralization trend in government and in business? Why the misguided passion for short-term cost cutting without regard for long-term consequences?

Why does this myth persist against all evidence? "Centralization of power estranges citizens from their society, fuels apathy and cynicism, diminishes citizen participation, and tears at the threads that bind us into a democratic society."

Ken Westhues said it best: Amalgamation is the idea "that if a medium sized bureaucracy has become distant from ordinary citizens, unresponsive to their needs, wasteful and ineffective, the solution is to amalgamate it with similar organizations and create a bigger bureaucracy."

The trend of bundling together ever bigger bureaucracies' follows the trajectory of multinational corporations that buy out their competition to stimulate their growth. Even if this strategy often fails, it is the dominant model of business development. But our democracies are not businesses and centralizing public service distances responsibility and loyalty. While businesses are not concerned for loyalty, the main role for cities is to nurture civic responsibility. It is not logical to model our cities after the structure of transnational corporations.

The success of Waterloo Region is its micro cultures of separate but integrated municipalities and towns. It is in the small democratic communities where real debate happens, where innovations incubate. Subsidiarity is the development of a structure that is decentralized but integrated. This means that the best decision making happens at the local level. This is the best public policy that reinforces democratic culture.

The Guests of Honour at this year's Mayors' Dinner are a case in point. The three grassroots health care projects - Sanguen Health Centre, Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre, and the St. John's Kitchen Clinic each found traction in Waterloo Region because small initiatives are supported. There is recognition for the small because small projects

---

*Ken Westhues said it best: Amalgamation is the idea "that if a medium sized bureaucracy has become distant from ordinary citizens, unresponsive to their needs, wasteful and ineffective, the solution is to amalgamate it with similar organizations and create a bigger bureaucracy."*

---

are more efficient, productive, and humanizing. These are key factors for incubating new ideas. When the form of the small is modeled in our democratic institutions, then it is more likely for small productive initiatives to take root in the community. This is what creates a virtuous cycle.

A virtuous cycle has little room to get started when large dominant organizations are able to push aside the energy of emerging groups that are trying to start projects from the bottom up. This process is subtle but the fact of the matter is that bigger organizations are not very good at sharing or cooperating. Big organizations get first access to the resources because of their power and size, not because of efficiency or creativity. The culture of bigness stifles creativity.

In contrast to the model of one big Region, Waterloo Region has evolved as a model of decentralized government and this model is in turn replicated at the grassroots where startup businesses are celebrated and provide jolts of innovation. The Mayors' Dinner celebrated the same kind of grassroots development in the health care sector. Whether in business, health or social services, Waterloo Region has high creativity and that is a direct result of our model of government and governance.

The success of Waterloo Region is because its decentralized political bodies are easily accessible for its citizens to get involved and solve community problems. When small groups succeed, they inspire others; their success builds community connectedness, a belief in the democratic work of being rooted in place, sharing resources, networking communities and inspiring personal responsibility.

The Working Centre (TWC) is known throughout the province as a thriving organization that started small and models a decentralized and integrated approach. It is not a coincidence that TWC's model of operation reflects the structure of Waterloo Region.

When TWC started we were fortunate to inherit and extend the values we found around us in downtown Kitchener. The virtues of sharing were paramount, and this ethic became rooted in the fabric of

TWC. It is an ethic which inspired our wide network of informal and formal cooperative supports. We inherited this ethic because it was taught to us by the people of Waterloo Region.

It is paramount to preserve the decentralized political institutions of Waterloo Region. Amalgamation would severely hurt and limit those institutions built up over 200 years.

The Working Centre is a thriving organization that deals with every level of government and all levels

of institutions. It is easy to complain about inconsistencies, bad decisions, misguided efforts to grab power, red tape, and over-bureaucratization but I would rather do that in a context where there are real levers of democratic power, up and down the political spectrum. The opposite is to embed power in large overbearing structures at the top. This is a recipe for political and democratic stagnation. It would be a shame for our beautiful Region to fall into the trap of the illusions of bigness.

## Why Amalgamations Don't Work

By Kevin Thomason

Quite simply, most amalgamations don't work and have been shown, time and time again to result in significantly higher costs, less representation and bloated, less responsive bureaucracies. They seldom achieve the expected efficiencies or cost savings, and many amalgamated municipalities end up investigating ways to de-amalgamate after learning that bigger isn't always better.

### Unique Communities

The reason why amalgamation has been consistently rejected is that we are unique communities – separate cities with different neighbourhoods, ambitions, priorities and approaches. Each Official Plan demonstrates the differences in our goals, challenges, budgeting and decision-making approaches. Sit through a Wellesley Township Council Meeting and contrast it to a City of Waterloo or Cambridge Council Meeting. In one community rural Mennonite issues are important, in others it is rapid transit, or high-tech issues. We already have successful custom governance solutions tailored to the needs of each community.

### Consistently Rejected

The City of Waterloo and Kitchener have consistently rejected amalgamation discussions. It was recently rejected resoundingly by a two to one ratio by the citizens of Waterloo in 2010, and has been rejected by every other municipality in Waterloo Region at various times. Don't even talk to anyone in Cambridge about amalgamation - they are still reeling from 1973....

### Most Corporate Mergers Fail

The Harvard Business Review estimates that 70 to 90 percent of all corporate mergers and acquisitions fail. Any CEO knows that alignment is essential and the companies need to share common strategies, goals, and ambitions for a merger to be successful. Our communities have different goals and ambitions – some want to grow others want to stay the way they are. The City of Waterloo has an official "Environment First" motto and has taken

extraordinary steps to protect vast tracts of natural areas - even re-pealing their urban boundary, while other municipalities have prioritized development.

If leading companies run by highly compensated experts, can't be successful 70 to 90 percent of the time, how can a rushed review with far fewer resources have any chance of making our communities better?

### Loss of Representation and Control

We currently have an incredible array of dozens of Councillors from all walks of life representing communities and neighbourhoods. We only have four full-time municipal politicians in the entire Region, while many Councillors put in almost full-time hours, for low compensation. We are going to be hard-pressed to find a more effective, economical solution. If hard working community representatives are replaced with staff, this lessens democracy and makes government more expensive.

### Lower Involvement and Engagement

Amalgamated cities have discovered that people tend to participate less in larger cities – volunteer rates decline, there are fewer neighbourhood initiatives such as local arts and cultural events, fewer sporting activities and teams, as well as often the loss of local newspapers when there is no longer a local municipal government to report on. A single Regional large bureaucratic government could undermine civic participation.

### Amalgamation Isn't Necessary

Amalgamation isn't necessary. Many of the most successful cities in the world are actually clusters of communities. Silicon Valley is comprised of 40 different municipalities, London England is made up of 33 different boroughs, and Boston is a staggering 282 municipalities.

Do we need amalgamation to make a bigger impact globally? In fact, many highly successful cities are like Waterloo Region, diverse clusters of communities working together.



Shirley (right), with friend Ellie at the 2019 Mayors' Dinner

## Remembering Shirley Gutenberg

1944 - 2019

By Margaret Nally

*Editor's Note: The memorial for Shirley Gutenberg was held at St. John's Kitchen on May 10th after her sudden and unexpected death on April 22, 2019. Memorials are a way to reflect on those in the St. John's Kitchen community who have died. Since November, over 30 people have been remembered at three different memorials.*

*At the start of Shirley's memorial, a gathering of about 40 people, Sara came into the dining hall where the memorial was taking place and whispered to Rhonda, one of the nurses, and then Amanda an outreach worker left, and soon after Gayle the Nurse Practitioner was motioned to, and Nikki seeing the commotion left along with Tom and*

*Andrew. They were all doing what the outreach and medical team have been doing at St. John's Kitchen all winter, responding to two overdoses. These ones involved some heavy drugs and the two individuals were in and out of consciousness with EMS coming and leaving.*

*As the memorial continued, Tom came back and offered his remembrance adding that Shirley was a master at handling such commotion and would have seen the beauty and necessity of supporting those with drug addictions. Patrons and fellow workers paid tribute to Shirley as a foundation of the St. John's Clinic work.*

*Shirley will be greatly missed in all the community spaces, like hospital,*

*prison, outreach places, in fact, everywhere her unending kindness and generosity of spirit was shared as she moved, and worked with people in places of pain, bringing healing and wholeness to situations.*

*We have known Shirley and we honour that she was a woman unique and mysterious. As the late Jean Vanier reminds us we cannot work in an inclusive way with people without acknowledging a power beyond ourselves. And Shirley lived and modeled a life with a deep resonance and understanding that for her there was a deeper reality where hope and beauty resides and where human life lived in dignity and respect when honoured.*

*Shirley's Catholic heritage speaks to that reality and these words from the Book of Wisdom (4:7-14) were spoken at her funeral Mass:*

*The virtuous woman, though she dies before her time, will find rest  
Length of days is not what makes age honorable.*

*Or the number of years the true measure of life.*

*She has sought to please God, so God has loved her.*

*Red-haired Shirley was wife to Fritz, mother to Gillian and Gareth and their spouses, grandmother, stepmother, sister, friend and was a bright spirit to all. Shirley was born 75 years ago in Saskatchewan, received her nursing training in Alberta and lived life on a broad scale*

*both here and in Florida.*

*Shirley was one of those special beings that transcend boundaries of many definitions such as age – she was ageless. She was able to show deep love and connection across generations and circumstances. A bright red car carried her on her many jaunts around town and people smiled as she passed by – a busy, focused woman on her journey. And she was never, never too busy to stop and spend time with anyone who needed her time and attention.*

*Her bright red nails and hair showing her determination to be her own person and to be a force to be dealt with. Backpack toting, Shirley is remembered as someone with a forthright manner. Shirley called a spade A SPADE. She told you when she felt enough was enough. Who could challenge her when her words were soaked with a deep love and connection to people?*

*There is a landscape to our city and everyone who moves through the streets adds colour, warmth and vibrancy. We notice the bold, bright, the beautiful and the broken and Shirley tended to all...Shirley taught us about community and how to walk with focus and intentionality together and urged us to be a better community, to honour each other's participation, to see meaning, purpose and gift as we create ways of respectful engagement on the sidewalks and all spaces in the city.*



Gord Crosby at The Working Centre's 25th anniversary in 2007

## Remembering Gord Crosby

1928 - 2019

By Joe Mancini

*During the first week of January 2019, we learned of the death of Gord Crosby, our long time Board member who retired from the Board after a stroke in 2015.*

*Gord Crosby joined The Working Centre Board in 1989 at a time when The Working Centre was learning what it could become. Gord joined with other new key Board members including Ken Westhues, Maurita McCrystal, Mike D'Silva and Arleen Macpherson who joined as coordinator of St. John's Kitchen. This group became core to The Working Centre over 30 years. During this time, The Working Centre*

*went from owning few assets and struggling year to year, to purchasing buildings and developing over 30 projects, while rooting itself in downtown Kitchener.*

*Gord Crosby made an extraordinarily long-term commitment. He originally came to us to support the work of St. John's Kitchen, because he recognized the importance of feeding the hungry as a Christian call. The longer Gord walked with The Working Centre, the deeper he connected with our work. As a small business owner, Gord was our teacher, explaining how to justify a real estate investment while having the vision to see how the building could be used to strengthen community.*

*Gord cared deeply about The Working Centre and was an integral part of our story. His contributions from 1989 - 2015 were immense because he participated fully in all discussions, and his insights were part of every decision. Gord served proudly as President from 2006 - 2015. Ken Westhues noted that, "The thing about Gord, in my view, was that he wasn't hungry for power. He had had enough successes in his life that it was no skin off his back to let other people succeed."*

*Gord Crosby started life as an orphan, only remembering the blue dress of his mother who left him at the orphanage door at a young age. After Gord met Mrs. C, his wife Gerry, who attended the same school, Gord channeled his steady but strong energy into being a police officer, into selling cars, and soon enough, he was the owner of a Volkswagen dealership in Kitchener.*

*While training for the Toronto Police Service he started in track and field and became Canada's 200m Hurdle Champion, competing in the 1950 Commonwealth Games in New Zealand and then at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland. Gord was a friend of Lloyd Percival whose Fitness Institute revolutionized training in the 1950's. Gord used that knowledge coaching youth to hockey championships, and helping both his sons Gary and Cameron compete at the highest levels. Before Gary died in a tragic car accident, he had been drafted in the fifth round in the NHL draft. In later years Gord was a nationally ranked Senior Tennis Player who represented Canada at various International Senior Team Tennis Tournaments. Well into his eighties, Gord maintained a rigorous workout schedule.*

*As a board member for 26 years, Gord's style as President was to have wide open discussions which served our goal of having each voice heard while coming to consensus. Gord*

*was always proud of the good decision-making we had and worked to preserve the culture of dialogue that we had created together.*

*We loved Gord's constant curiosity about church, religion, God and leadership. Gord would ensure these issues would feed into every discussion in a way that reflected who he was and how these ideas could shape our culture. Gord had a unique way of bringing his whole person into a discussion and the result was that he helped us build the common unity that became The Working Centre. We were blessed by his long journey with us.*

## Amalgamations Don't Work

continued from page 6

### Conclusion

*In conclusion, why would anyone want to pay more for fewer services, less representation, diminished democracy, and reduced control, while facing a significant loss of community and identity, along with staggering odds that things aren't going to work out nearly as well expected?*

*We are already the envy of the world. Our current community structure isn't a problem to be solved, our diverse community of communities working together are a large part of the reason for our success.*

*Kevin is a Waterloo/Wilmot Township Resident, E-mail: kevinthomas@mac.com*



THE 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
**SUMMER**  
**INSTITUTE**  
 IN GRASSROOTS SUSTAINABILITY

**July 31st - August 2nd 2019**

**Fresh Ground | 256 King Street East  
 Kitchener, Ontario**

The **Summer Institute** is a set of workshops designed by The Working Centre that are geared to describing the philosophy and skills that enable The Working Centre to walk the fine line of rooting in community while remaining responsive, reflective, and guided by virtues.



**Cost for the Summer Institute is \$250 per person, and includes Fermented Thoughts. You can register separately for Fermented Thoughts or/and The Daily Circus. For more information, connect with us at:**

**[waterlooschool@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:waterlooschool@theworkingcentre.org)**

**[www.theworkingcentre.org/summer-institute/725](http://www.theworkingcentre.org/summer-institute/725)**

■ **THE DAILY CIRCUS | JULY 31ST | 9AM - 5PM**

Participate in the third Daily Circus; a workshop-based gathering to explore what strengthens us in the work of reweaving our relationship with the Earth. Refreshments will be available - suggested payment is \$10. Space is limited, please RSVP.

■ **FERMENTED THOUGHTS | JULY 31ST | 7PM - 9PM**

Join us on Wednesday evening for Fermented Thoughts with our guest Hilton King for a discussion about the restoration of Indigenous cultural ways. Cost is \$25 per person and includes food and drink.

**Hilton King will tell stories from his journey through the Child Welfare system, to his work today as a social worker/mental health worker and lecturer at Renison University College, reflecting on the importance of restoring indigenous cultural ways.**

■ **THURSDAY AND FRIDAY WORKSHOPS**

Workshops include: The Working Centre as an Eco-system, Nurturing Local Culture through Community Tools, Addressing Bureaucratic Barriers, a Philosophy in the Pub Night focusing on emergence, effectuation and placemaking, Tour of St. John's Kitchen Hub, and the Nuts and Bolts of an Alternative Organization.

**Emergent Thinking • Personalist Practices • Local Democracy**

## **Fresh Ground for Plant Based Whole Foods**

Join us at Fresh Ground as we explore the growing momentum around the ideas of plant based whole foods. In the last year, there has been a significant increase in public awareness and research around the possibilities of plant based eating:

- *The EAT-Lancet commission released their report recommending a mainly plant based diet for planetary and human health*
- *The Canadian Food Guide was revised to increase focus on plants and decrease focus on animal proteins*
- *Project Drawdown has named eating a plant rich diet the #4 solution for impacting (changing) climate change*
- *Oxford University has released some intensive research*
- *Alongside of this climate change research, there is a deeper understanding growing about the human microbiome and how it changes our understanding of our place in the world*

This fall we will be exploring these ideas through various learning and practical workshop series.

For more information or to share ideas, please connect with us at: **[freshground@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:freshground@theworkingcentre.org)**



**Explore the Working Centre community with our new interactive virtual tour!**

**Learn about our projects, locations, and community building initiatives.**

**Available online at:  
[www.theworkingcentre.org](http://www.theworkingcentre.org)**

**Click the banner on the homepage**