

# 2018

ANNUAL  
REPORT



Conservation  
**Halton**



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2020

**COLLABORATION**

We will build strong partnerships and create opportunities for collaboration with our customers and community members.

**INNOVATION**

We will seek out innovative technologies and creative solutions that will allow us to be leaders in natural resource management and environmental planning.

**INTEGRITY**

We will take a proactive approach to accountability, transparency and financial responsibility and make difficult decisions with integrity.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

We will embody sustainability in everything we do, from the facilities we build to the communities we help plan, in an effort to limit our impact on the environment.

INSIDE THE

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MESSAGE FROM THE  
**CAO**

I am happy to report that 2018 was another year of success in our efforts to improve Conservation Halton. We are on track with the business performance and financial commitments that we made two years ago as part of Metamorphosis and we continue to deliver on our commitments to our customers, our employees and our communities.

We made a financial commitment to rework our budgets to ensure our operating expenditures were at or below the rate of inflation and over the past two years, we have been able to do just that. Our capital expenditures were restructured to ensure a disciplined approach to capital allocation towards maintaining our dams, channels and other structures in a state of good repair. Those funding reserves have been established, along with a long-term financing strategy developed in partnership with Halton Region, to ensure we can set funds aside for these critical assets, while limiting the tax impact to around 1 percent increase annually until the capital reserves are fully funded. In 2018, we completed five projects to ensure our dams and channels remain in a state of good repair.

We exceeded our revenue generation targets with 7.7 percent growth in 2018.

We exceeded our revenue generation targets with 7.7 percent growth in 2018. We now have one of the lowest shares of tax revenues in Ontario, with municipal taxes funding 34 percent of our annual budget and provincial tax revenues contributing 4 percent of our total annual budget. We have been able to maintain strong financial performance, while reinvesting in the organization to improve our technology, project management and employee skills.

Here are a few examples that show how our efforts are focused in the right areas and helping us add value.

- **Public Safety:** Our watershed monitoring network has expanded from 16 hydrometric stations to 35 stations, digitally connected using Internet of Things (IOT) devices to collect, analyze and deliver insights from our data to predict weather impacts on watershed conditions and inform the public and our partners through accurate, timely flood status updates and warnings. We also launched a comprehensive update of our floodplain mapping to identify areas susceptible to flooding and help reduce flood risk in our communities through proactive planning and restoration.
- **Recreation and Tourism:** For the second year, we welcomed more than 1 million visitors to our parks and launched several new programs and events. We continue to inspire memorable family-friendly experiences to our growing communities through our network of parks. Our parks brand is strong and we are committed to leading the market when it comes to outdoor recreation, wellness and leisure within our watershed.





• **Education:** We have implemented technology to create online story maps to communicate the results of our long-term environmental monitoring programs and we are aiming for more data and analysis to be available to the public, so they can make informed choices to help us adapt to climate change. We hosted more than 64,000 students at our outdoor education centres, including our new archaeology room in the Wolf Clan Longhouse at Crawford Lake. We partnered with other organizations on more than 140 occasions to help engage residents and students alike around climate change and other environmental issues, because if we can't tell an engaging story to raise awareness, then we can't make the kind of collective impact that is necessary for our communities to remain prosperous and resilient.

• **Permits and Planning:** We have continued to work hard in delivering timely, predictable, cost-effective services. Through ongoing engagement, process re-engineering and a desire to re-write the narrative around customer value, we have exceeded our goal of processing 95 percent of minor permits within 30 days and continue to work with our development review partners to improve service delivery on technical reviews of planning applications.

• **Environmental Restoration:** For our communities to be sustainable, we must balance the impacts of growth and development with green infrastructure, to ensure that our water, land and air can sustain our activities today and in the future. In 2018, we monitored and analyzed data from 176 monitoring stations, engaged 11,000 residents in stewardship activities,



managed close to 10,000 acres of natural area, planted about 100,000 trees and shrubs, carried out 43 environmental improvement projects and leveraged every \$1 invested in Conservation Halton restoration projects to \$15.92 worth of improvement through partnership funds. We are not only good at conducting the science and analysis to determine where improvements are necessary, but we take a lot of pride in acting as project managers to deliver those improvements on the ground.

The reason I am proud to lead this organization is that we have a passionate and talented team, led not only by strategy and structure but by a set of shared core values. We will continue to build on our unwavering commitment to engage with our customers and improve our products and services. We have an ambitious vision and the skills to follow it. That vision is as true today as the day we crafted it. We have had a great year and I am looking forward to a bright future for Conservation Halton.



**Hassaan Basit**  
Chief Administrative Officer



# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

As outlined in the strategic plan, Metamorphosis, this year has been one of process improvement, asset management, digital transformation and financial overhaul. The Board of Directors has worked with the Chief Administrative Officer and other leadership from Conservation Halton throughout this process and could not be more proud of the progress that has been made.

We have also seen improvements in the governance of the organization this year. Just as the strategic plan provided Conservation Halton with a clear understanding of their measures and targets, it has provided the Board of Directors with a renewed focus on their priorities, including finance, policy and risk. With a work plan, key performance indicators and dedicated strategy sessions, there has been an increased emphasis on performance, which has resulted in more effective flow of information, concise documentation and productive discussions and efficient meetings.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank everyone at Conservation Halton for their hard work this year. We are proud of all that Conservation Halton has accomplished in the last year and we are honoured to be part of your success.



**Gerry Smallegange**  
Chair, Board of Directors



**THE STRATEGIC PLAN HAS  
FOUR MAIN THEMES:**









- Taking care of our growing communities
- Protecting our natural, cultural and scenic assets
- Preparing for the effects of climate change
- Creating opportunities to connect with nature



HIGH LEVEL OVERVIEW

# OUR PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

Conservation Halton is reporting on nine objectives as identified by the Senior Leadership Team. Within each objective there are measures which have their progress tracked based on the 2018 Outcome and what the Target is for 2020. You will find these results on the following pages.

-  Positive upward trend
-  Positive downward trend
-  Negative upward trend
-  Negative downward trend
-  Neutral trend
-  On track
-  On track with minor issues
-  Off track

## OBJECTIVES

- 01 PUBLIC SAFETY

02 SUSTAINABILITY

03 EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION

04 RECREATION & TOURISM

05 PARTNERSHIPS
- 06 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

07 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

08 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

09 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



### METAMORPHOSIS

An extensive public consultation was conducted throughout the summer and fall of 2016 on the draft version of the Metamorphosis strategic plan, with stakeholder meetings, public open houses, an online survey and interaction through Conservation Halton’s social media platforms. This input was helpful and is reflected in the final version of the plan. The final version of the Metamorphosis strategic plan can be viewed at [conservationhalton.ca/metamorphosis](http://conservationhalton.ca/metamorphosis).

OBJECTIVE

01

PUBLIC SAFETY

Why is this objective important?

We depend on floodplain mapping, flood models, dams and channels to protect our communities, coordinate emergency response and support smart, safe land use planning. This has always been an important function of Conservation Halton but, as climate change continues to impact weather patterns, it has become more important than ever.



This hydrometric station was recently installed in Bronte Creek at Lowville Park. The intake pipe in the creek transfers the water level into the stilling well pipe, where a measurement is taken. This data is then accessible in real time through the use of a cellular modem. In the past, Lowville has been a known flood damage centre, so this station will assist us in monitoring conditions there. Video surveillance through a fixed-dome camera will further enhance monitoring efforts in the coming year.

Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	Trend	Status
Number of real-time hydrometric stations	35	50	↗	●
Percentage of dams and channels assessed as being in a State of Good Repair	14%	50%	↗	●
Modernized models that provide clearly defined and defensible floodplain hazard limits with information that is quickly accessible for faster decision making	0%	40%	↗	●

What progress has been made?

This year, we expanded our watershed monitoring network from 16 hydrometric stations in 2016 to 35 stations in 2018. This will enable us to better predict surface water runoff response and provide more accurate messages to residents about watershed conditions. We also managed eight capital projects (\$3,732,000) to support the State of Good Repair of our dams and channels, so that we can more confidently protect the safety of our communities. Conservation Halton has also begun to update floodplain mapping for the Grindstone Creek watershed, which has not been completed since 1985. Updated mapping will identify areas that may be susceptible to flooding and reduce flood risk in our communities.

OBJECTIVE

02

SUSTAINABILITY

Why is this objective important?

With more people building homes in our watershed, starting families in our communities and spending time in our conservation areas each year, it is important that we protect our natural areas. The only way we can do this is through social, financial and environmental sustainability.

What progress has been made?

This year, visitor impact management was expanded to include all 110 kilometres of managed trails within the Conservation Halton Parks, with particular efforts made to improve the distinction between the trail and the forest to discourage walking off the trails at Hilton Falls. There was also a focus on financial sustainability this year. Program-based budgets and performance metrics have provided us with more insightful financial analysis and enabled us

to develop a more sustainable budget strategy. There are still challenges to overcome in responsibly funding our critical assets and other capital projects but we have made progress on these issues with our funding partners.



At Hilton Falls, trees were planted at the edge of the trails and trails were lined with logs to keep visitors on the path.

Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	Trend	Status
Percentage of Conservation Halton Lands under a current Master Plan	49%	95%	↔	●
Percentage of km of trails under a visitor impact management program	100%	100%	↗	●
Limit increase in annual tax supported Municipal Levy before State of Good Repair Levy to regional budget guidelines	1.4%	3.2%	↘	●
Increase self-generated revenue by 2 to 5 percent annually	7.7%	2%–5%	↗	●



OBJECTIVE  
03

EDUCATION &  
COMMUNICATION

Why is this objective important?

It’s often said that you can’t save what you don’t love and you can’t love what you don’t know. Conservation Halton has made it a priority to teach both children and adults about the importance of nature and the benefits of conservation, so that the community will support our programs and projects.



What progress has been made?

Conservation Halton has started using a web-based platform that combines maps, images, text and other media in an interactive way that is more engaging than print media or even conventional webpages. This year, we used these story maps to communicate the results of our monitoring program and restoration projects, such as Courtcliffe Park. The parks have also expanded their use of interactive education with improvements to the Longhouses at Crawford Lake, including a new archeology room in the Wolf Clan Longhouse. This year, Conservation Halton also launched a brand new program, From the Ground Up, which teaches students about the importance of trees to the watershed and provides them with an opportunity to plant trees near their school.

Left: The new Archaeology Room in the Wolf Clan Longhouse at Crawford Lake features a number of learning stations, including a simulated excavation site and clay pot reconstruction activity, as well as a stratigraphy wall to illustrate sediment layers and a painted mural that shows the locations of the longhouses that we are aware of at Crawford Lake.

Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	2018 Trend	Status
Number of people attending parks educational programming	64,453	75,000	↔	●
Number of stewardship and outreach public engagements	108	60	↗	●
Number of watershed residents who participate in conservation outreach and stewardship activities	11,662	10,660	↗	●



Children learn about the creeks, streams, lakes and ponds within our watershed, as well as the plants and animals that live in them, through games, activities and other forms of interactive education at the Halton Children’s Water Festival at Kelso Conservation Area.



OBJECTIVE

04

RECREATION  
& TOURISM

Why is this objective important?

Our parks provide opportunities to spend time outdoors, connect with nature and maintain a healthy lifestyle, as well as employment and other economic benefits to the community. It is important that we invest in the parks, so that they can be enjoyable, accessible and safe for generations to come.

What progress has been made?

For the second year in a row, more than 1 million visitors came to Conservation Halton Parks. This year, visitors enjoyed a number of new offerings, such as a brand new Challenge Course, including an aerial ropes course and a climbing tower, which attracted more than 4,000 participants to Kelso Conservation Area. Hops and Harvest, which was our first annual festival of this kind, brought close to 8,000 people to Kelso over one weekend in October to sample beer and cider from craft breweries, enjoy seasonal eats from local food vendors and celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the Niagara Escarpment.

Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	2018 Trend	Status
Number of annual memberships to Conservation Halton Parks	9,353	10,000	↗	●
Number of visitors to Conservation Halton Parks	1,076,670	1,160,000	↗	●



Far Left: The Challenge Course at Kelso Conservation Area has provided day trippers, summer campers, festival goers and other park visitors with an opportunity to test their strength, push their limits and admire the Niagara Escarpment from an entirely new perspective.

Above: Hops and Harvest brought food, such as arepas from Venezuelan food truck, The Arepa Republic (pictured), and craft beer from vendors such as Orange Snail, Good Lot and Shawn & Ed, together in the beautiful, autumn setting of Kelso Conservation Area.



OBJECTIVE

05

PARTNERSHIPS

Why is this objective important?

As the challenges, changes and pressures on our watershed increase, it has become increasingly important for us to work together. On our own, we are limited, but in working with our community partners, we can develop more effective projects, innovative programs and compelling research opportunities.

What progress has been made?

Conservation Halton is on the leadership team of the Halton Climate Collective and a member of the Bay Area Climate Change Council. With many projects that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, we have been an important member of these groups. There has also been an increased interest in partnership with Crawford Lake. This year, we partnered with Ojibiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network in support of the Three Sisters Garden and with Brock, Carleton and McMaster Universities on the sampling of Crawford Lake sediment. These partnerships, and others, have helped to increase our capacity and position us as a community partner.

Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	2018 Trend	Status
Ratio of partnership dollars leveraged for every dollar invested in stewardship and restoration work by Conservation Halton	\$15.97	\$15	↗	●
Number of environmental partnership initiatives	144	140	↗	●



### Halton Climate Collective

Conservation Halton is an important member of the Halton Climate Collective, which began branding, marketing, communications and community engagement efforts this year. We were responsible for developing the visual identity.



The Three Sisters Garden, consisting of beans, squash and corn, was planted by members of the Ojibiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network, in partnership with Conservation Halton, at Crawford Lake.

OBJECTIVE

06

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Why is this objective important?

As climate change puts an increasing amount of pressure on our infrastructure, a responsible and progressive approach to planning is needed to protect the people, properties and nature in our communities from flooding and erosion.

What progress has been made?

Last year, Conservation Halton conducted an internal review of the planning and permit application process, with teams established for each of the municipalities within our jurisdiction to allow for better communication among agencies and applicants. As a result of the review, Conservation Halton has continued to make changes, including a reorganization of staff resources, and we are positioned to bring about major improvements to customer service. The Memorandum of Understanding for environmental reviews in Halton Region was also updated, with specific roles and responsibilities being identified in 2019 to avoid duplication of effort.

Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	2018 Trend	Status
Deliver comments on 95 percent of technical review of permit applications within six weeks	94%	95%	↗	●
Deliver comments on 95 percent of technical review of planning applications within six weeks	65%	95%	↔	●
Process 95 percent of minor permit applications within 30 days	96%	95%	↗	●



Conservation Halton regulates development adjacent to creeks, streams, rivers, wetlands and shorelines, such as this neighbourhood in North Oakville, pictured during construction.



# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

## Why is this objective important?

We depend on our natural resources and areas for environmental sustainability, community health and economic prosperity. It is our responsibility to manage these resources, through restoration projects, water protection programs and other conservation efforts, so that generations to come can enjoy the same quality of life.

## What progress has been made?

In an effort to protect the forest resources in our watershed, we planted more than 90,300 trees and 4,450 shrubs and removed more than 8,700 trees affected by emerald ash borer. Conservation

Halton also acquired 45.6 acres (18.5 ha) of land on Canyon Road, adjacent to Rattlesnake Point, which will be incorporated into the park. As of this year, 95 percent of the source drinking water source protection policies have been implemented and 84 percent of the identified drinking water threats have been addressed by Conservation Halton and partners. There was also a large group of mudpuppies, which are a salamander species, found in Sixteen Mile Creek, after having not been recorded in the creek for more than 30 years, which indicates that our restoration efforts have been effective.

Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	Trend	Status
Number of hectares of protected terrestrial and aquatic area	9,515.6 ha	9,658.2 ha	↗	●
Maintain a consistent or improving trend in key water quality indicators across the watershed	<b>Chlorides</b> exceedence of provincial guidelines at 45% of stations	Exceedences at fewer than 37% of stations	↔	●
	<b>Phosphorus</b> exceedance of provincial guidelines at 64% of stations	Exceedences at fewer than 28% of stations	↘	●
Number of floodplain, wetland and watercourse restoration activities	43	21	↗	●
Number of aquatic and terrestrial stations monitored each year	176	100	↔	●



Top: Emerald Ash Borer is an invasive species of beetle (pictured) that feeds under the bark of ash trees, which does irreparable damage to the health of the tree.

Bottom: This year, more than 8,700 ash trees that had been damaged by emerald ash borer were removed to prevent the trees from being hazardous and allow for other trees to be planted in these areas.



An ecologist from Conservation Halton holds one of the many mudpuppies that were found in Sixteen Mile Creek during a fish rescue as part of a restoration project.



# OBJECTIVE 08 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

## Why is this objective important?

Conservation Halton provides a variety of services to a wide range of audiences, from teachers to landscapers to politicians. It is our responsibility to provide the best customer service possible, so that our programs and services can have the greatest impact in our community.

## What progress has been made?

Conservation Halton installed customer service terminals at four of our parks in order to measure the happiness of our visitors and quality of the experience at our parks. This year, there were more than 27,000 responses on the terminals and the overall happiness score was 80. Conservation Halton also conducted public consultation for the Kelso Master Plan, which included an extensive online component. The online campaign received outstanding engagement, with more than 2,700 responses to the question polls on social media. In 2019, we will implement additional customer feedback tools to ensure we are addressing specific customer pain-points.



An interpreter from Conservation Halton teaches a crowd of visitors how maple syrup is made during Maple Town at Mountsberg Conservation Area.

Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	2018 Trend	Status
Reach an average customer satisfaction rate of 90 percent across all service areas	80%	90%	↗	●

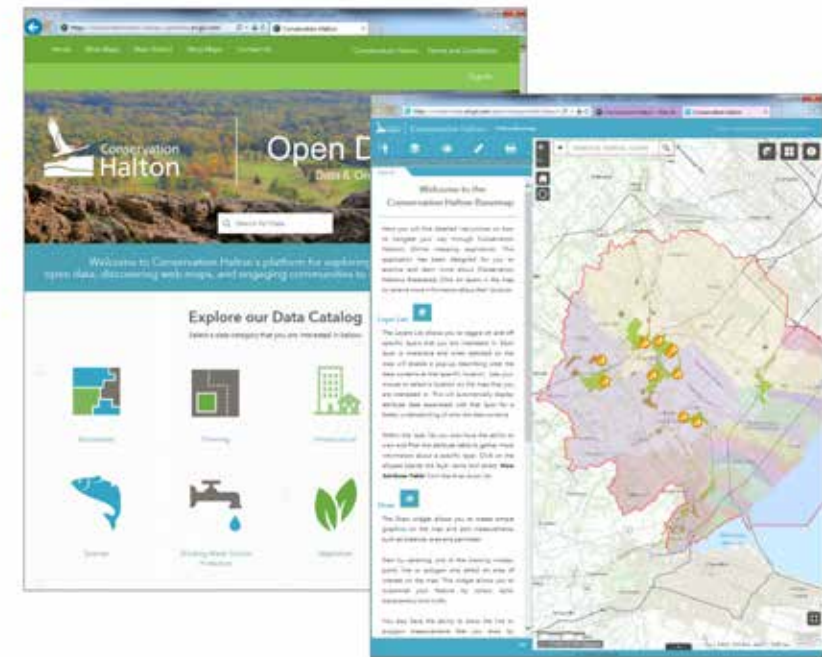
# OBJECTIVE 09 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

## Why is this objective important?

Data-driven decision-making is the way forward for Conservation Halton and digital transformation is how we get there. With planning and monitoring data at our fingertips, we can make more informed decisions, share more knowledge with our partners and provide more efficient customer service.

## What progress has been made?

This year, Conservation Halton launched a number of new GIS tools that allow staff to collect and input data digitally, which improves quality and analysis, and makes this data accessible from anywhere. We are also developing a platform that provides mapping and other data on regulatory limits, physical geography, ecological monitoring and source water protection for our partners and members of the public in order to increase access to information. Conservation Halton has also launched a new intranet that allows staff to access project management tools, asset management data and human resources information. An extranet is being developed for more secure storage, sharing and collaboration with our external partners.



This platform provides mapping and other data on regulatory limits, physical geography, ecological monitoring and source water protection for our partners and members of the public in order to solve important local issues.

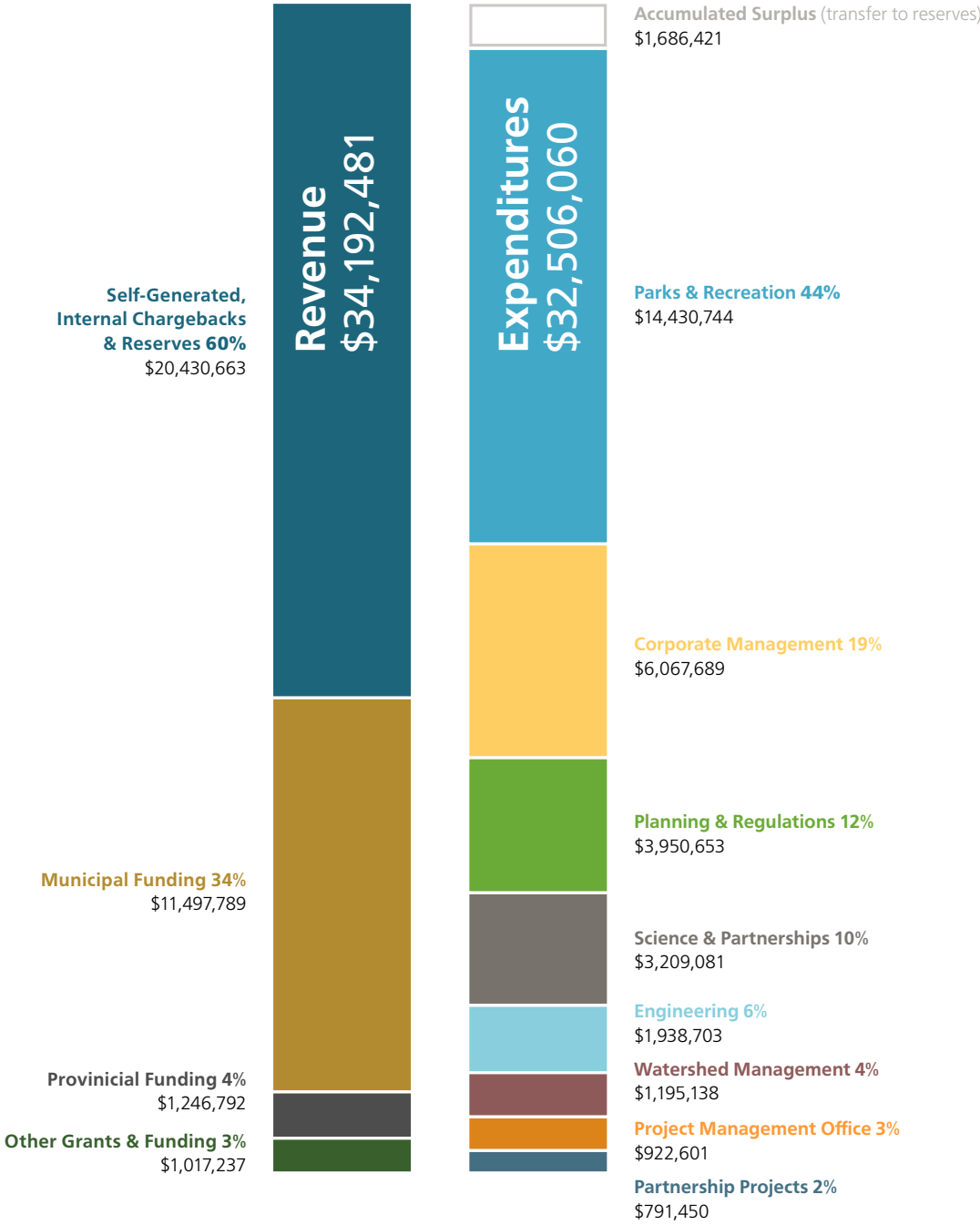
Measures	2018 Outcome	2020 Target	2018 Trend	Status
Number of online e-commerce transactions	92%	30,000	↗	●



2018

# FINANCIAL REPORT

Projected 2018 Surplus will be transferred to Reserves as approved by the Board of Directors. The financial information presented in the Annual Report has not yet been audited and is therefore subject to change.



2018 CONSERVATION HALTON

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF HALTON

**BURLINGTON**  
Councillor Marianne Meed Ward  
Mr. Gerry Smallegange, *Chair*  
Mr. Jim Sweetlove  
Mr. John Vice

**HALTON HILLS**  
Councillor Moya Johnson, *Vice-Chair*  
Councillor Bryan Lewis

**MILTON**  
Councillor Mike Cluett  
Councillor Robert Duvall  
Mayor Gordon Krantz

**OAKVILLE**  
Mayor Rob Burton  
Councillor Cathy Duddeck  
Councillor Allan Elgar  
Councillor Dave Gittings

## REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL

**MISSISSAUGA**  
Councillor Sue McFadden  
Mrs. Jean Williams

**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
Ms. Joanne Di Maio  
Mr. Ed Wells

**TOWNSHIP OF PUSLINCH**  
Mr. Stephen Gilmour



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Chief Administrative Officer  
Hassaan Basit



Senior Manager,  
Human Resources  
Plezzie Ramirez



Director,  
Parks & Operations  
Gene Matthews



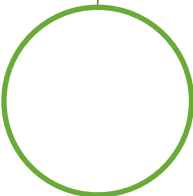
Director,  
Corporate Compliance  
Jill Ramseyer



Director, Planning  
& Watershed  
Management  
Barb Veale



Director, Foundation  
Garner Beckett



Senior Director,  
Corporate Services  
Vacant



Associate Director,  
Engineering  
Janelle Weppler



Associate Director,  
Science & Partnerships  
Kim Barrett

The above organizational structure is as of April 2019







905.336.1158  
info@hrca.on.ca  
2596 Britannia Road West  
Burlington, Ontario L7P 0G3  
**conservationhalton.ca**

Printed April 2019