

To the Regional Councillors of Waterloo Region,

I am adding my name to the Community Calls to Action put forward by ReallocateWR. As you make decisions on the Regional Budget for 2022, implementing these calls to action and reallocating the Waterloo Region Police Service Budget to police-free community supports should be your top priority.

Please include my letter in both the next Regional Council budget public consultation meeting package and in the next Council as a Whole meeting to be included in the official record.

You can read the full Community Call to Action here:

Whereas, thousands of graves of Indigenous children are being discovered at former 'residential schools' across Northern Turtle Island (Canada);

Whereas, members of O:se Kenhionhata:tie Land Back Camp were subjected to anti-Indigenous racist harassment and violence for occupying their lands;

Whereas, food bank use is at an all-time high;

Whereas, the rate of homelessness in Waterloo Region has quadrupled with nearly 1100 people currently homeless;

Whereas, the House of Friendship is being forced to close their shelter;

Whereas, incidences of mental health issues are on the rise;

Whereas, the severity and complexity of domestic violence is increasing;

The urgency of investing in community has never been greater.

Whereas, the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) shot a young black man experiencing mental health distress;

Whereas, use of force is used against Black people at a rate 6 times higher than white people;

Whereas, Black people are carded by WRPS at a rate 14 times higher than white people;

Whereas, WRPS has admitted they do not prevent or reduce domestic violence;

The WRPS continues to demand an increase in their budget. And if the police are not provided with the increase they demand, Chief Bryan Larkin has threatened to cease collecting race-based data.

Whereas, this increase is the equivalent of the entire annual budget of the House of Friendship who must tirelessly fundraise year after year. Yet, each year, the police are handed millions of extra dollars despite the fact they cannot and do not prevent harm and violence.

Whereas, in 2021, the police operational budget was \$185.3 million which is 32% of Regional property taxes. In addition, \$45 million was allocated to their police headquarters renovation.

A community's values are demonstrated by what they choose to invest in. If Waterloo Region wants to be a "world class region", we should not be investing more in policing, which is a system designated to react to harm after it has already happened. Rather, investments should be reallocated towards approaches that prevent social issues and social harms from occurring in the first place.

As Regional Councillor, and former Chair of the Police Services Board recently wrote, "We pour more money into fixing people's health and criminal justice issues and into enforcement activities rather than preventing the issues in the first place. We must find a way to reverse this and find new or redirected funding."

Therefore I add my voice to the growing call for the Region of Waterloo to:

1. Develop an Indigenous Community Hub at the Charles Street Terminal in relationship with Indigenous community.
2. Reject the WRPS budget increase proposal and demand a 0% increase in the WRPS budget.
3. Immediately fulfill its commitment of \$250,000 to facilitate community conversations and subsequent action plans for a police-free community care model.
4. Allot the equivalent of the maximum WRPS budget increase request (\$10-\$12 million) to a community-led homelessness and housing affordability strategy including the immediate development and/or procurement of housing stock and shelter space.

5. Commit \$1 million towards funding mental health and neurodevelopmental resources & services for IBPOC, 2SLGBTQIA, persons living with disabilities and other communities impacted by the trauma of police violence.

Regional Council cannot simply say “we don’t make this decision”. You have the authority to send the police budget back to the Police Services Board and request a 0% increase. We hold individual Regional councillors accountable for how you vote on the police budget; your vote demonstrates your values and priorities for our community.

Signed: _____ on _____ (date)

Print Name: _____ Address: _____
_____, ON _____
