

**Regional Municipality of Waterloo
Strategic Planning and Budget Committee
Addendum Agenda**



Date: Wednesday, January 18, 2023
Closed Session: 6:30 p.m.
Location: Council Chambers/Electronic

Should you require an alternative format please contact the Regional Clerk at Tel.: 519-575-4400,
TTY: 519-575-4605, or regionalclerk@regionofwaterloo.ca

Pages

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Land Acknowledgement**
3. **Motion to Reconvene into Open Session**
Recommended Motion:
That the Strategic Planning and Budget Committee reconvene into Open Session for the public input meeting.
4. **Declarations of Pecuniary Interest under the “Municipal Conflict of Interest Act”**
5. **Delegations**
 - 5.1 **Donald Bourgeois, Kitchener**
re: 2023 Budget
 - 5.2 **Jessica Hutchison, ReallocateWR**
re: the Police Budget
 - 5.3 **Geoff Bardwell, Co-Chair, Drug Action Team** 3
re: Police budget and de facto decriminalization of drug possession

* Presentation available
 - 5.4 **Eden Philip Kubassek, Kitchener**
re: the 2023 Budget
 - 5.5 **Michael Doroshenko, Ukrainian Canadian Congress: Region of Waterloo - Wellington**
re: the Needs of Ukrainian Newcomers in the Region of Waterloo in 2023
 - 5.6 **Josh Orita, President, and Emily Slofstra, CycleWR** 12
re: Active Transportation Strategy and the Budget

* Presentation available
 - *5.7 **Brooklin Wallis, Kitchener**
re: Budget Allocation

***5.8 Lynn Charlton, Kitchener**
re: Funding for emergency shelters and supportive housing

***5.9 Yasin Mohamed**
re: Budget line items

***5.10 Jeff Willmer, Board Chair, A Better Tent City**
re: Request for funding

6. Call for Delegations

7. Communications

8. Other Business

9. Adjourn

Recommended Motion:

That the meeting adjourn at x:xx x.m.



December 15, 2022

To members of Region of Waterloo Council and the Waterloo Region Police Services Board:

Waterloo Region continues to experience a drug poisoning crisis of historical proportions, with preventable harms, including death, affecting both individual and community health, safety and well-being. The Coroner data, among other key indicators, reflect the absence of an urgent, proportional and coordinated response at the municipal level to address this crisis affecting everyone across our communities. I write this letter to support the implementation of *de facto* decriminalization measures for the possession of illicit drugs. This will not only save lives, but it will also save money which is essential in an era of financial vulnerability.

Local governments have a key role in accelerating novel policy and programmatic interventions that prevent and reduce harms locally, including decriminalization measures. As you are likely well aware, the province of BC is decriminalizing the possession of illicit drugs, commencing January 2023. This policy directive is based on scientific evidence that demonstrates the health and societal harms associated with drug criminalization.¹ The previous Council, following a recommendation by their Advisory Committee - the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (WRPC) - and a subsequent staff report, endorsed decriminalization. While a formal application to Health Canada for a s. 56 exemption from the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* remains an unused local option, *de facto* decriminalization is a more immediate opportunity within local jurisdiction, and consistent with broad support from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, among many other organizations.²

Aside from the health and social harms of criminalization, there are substantial policing and legal costs associated with criminalization. According to StatsCan 2020 data, Waterloo Region was identified as the jurisdiction with the **6th highest rate** of opioid-related offences in Canada, with the majority of police-reported incidents related to drug possession.³ A WRPC study⁴ among people who use illicit drugs reported that 42 participants had cycled in and out of prison 12 times each, at an estimated cost of more than \$1,000,000 per person, with no evidence of effectiveness.

Locally, status quo approaches are placing significant and undesirable financial strains on local taxpayers, municipal services, policing services, public health providers, and other systems of care. Rather than doing nothing, *de facto* decriminalization via a directive from the Chief of Police for officers not to arrest individuals for drug possession nor confiscate their drugs offers immediate benefits.⁵ While neither the Police Services Board nor Regional Council can direct police operations, this is also a budget issue, and we therefore encourage leadership to embrace a novel, world class approach that is respectful of health and equity considerations and serves the interest of the community as a whole.

As the Co-Chair of the Drug Action Team of the WRPC Transition Group, we look forward to putting the Regional values into practice, advancing community health, safety and well-being, and serving the public interests via *de facto* decriminalization. Given the scale of death and other harms in the Region, and the significant policing costs, we look forward to assisting in advancing evidence-based and life-saving drug policy and practice immediately.

Sincerely,

Geoff Bardwell, PhD

Assistant Professor, School of Public Health Sciences, University of Waterloo
Co-Chair, Drug Action Team



¹ <https://bit.ly/3PwSLOv>

² <https://bit.ly/3GXf2Tu>

³ <https://bit.ly/3H0xeeZ>

⁴ <https://bit.ly/3j8g6K2>

⁵ <https://bit.ly/3Uhp1Ru>

DE FACTO DECRIMINALIZATION OF DRUG POSSESSION: A COST-SAVINGS POLICY CHANGE FOR THE REGION OF WATERLOO

19/JAN/2023

Geoff Bardwell, PhD

**Assistant Professor, School of Public Health Sciences,
Faculty of Health, University of Waterloo**

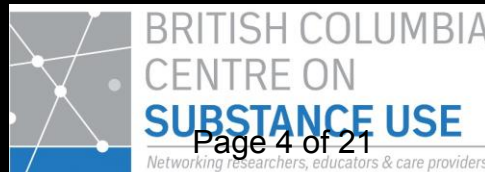
Research Scientist, BC Centre on Substance Use

Co-Chair, Drug Action Team (Waterloo Region)



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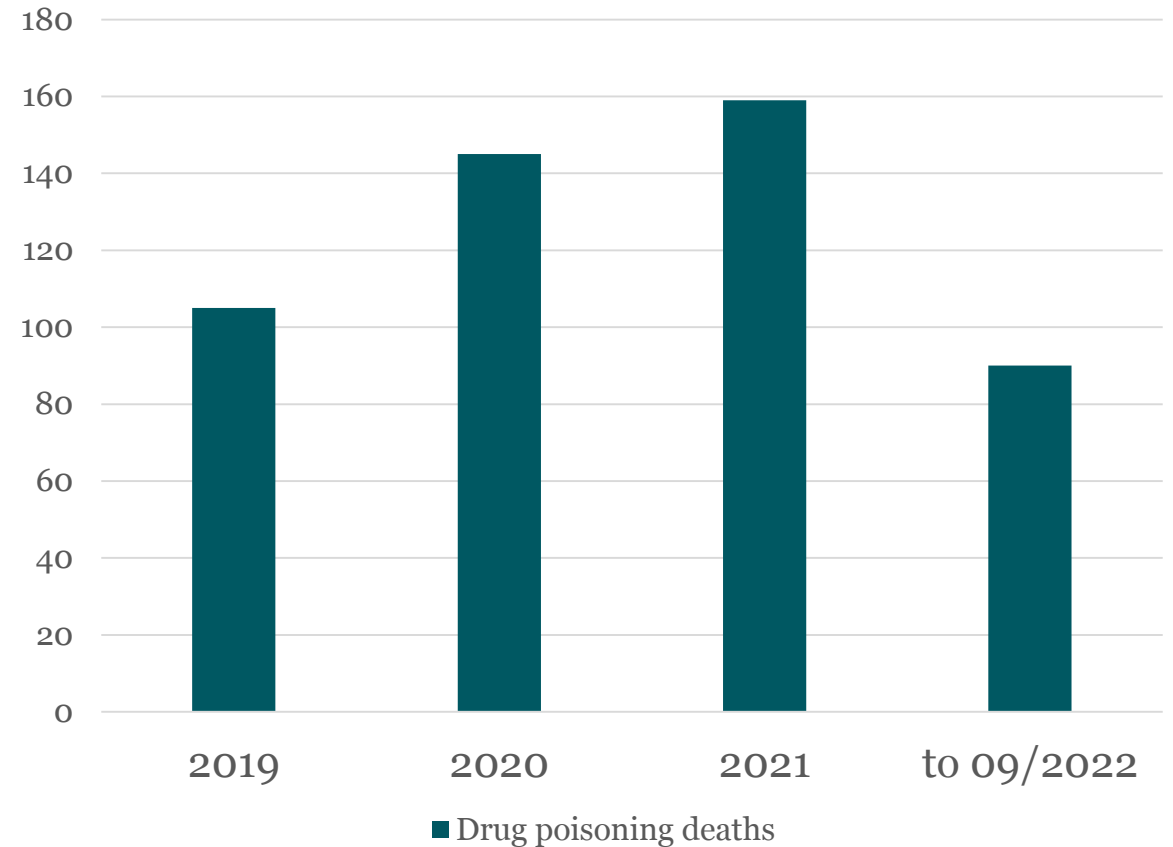
Financial Disclosures

- Region of Waterloo Public Health & Emergency Services
- Health Canada
- BC Ministry of Health
- Vancouver Foundation
- First Nations Health Authority

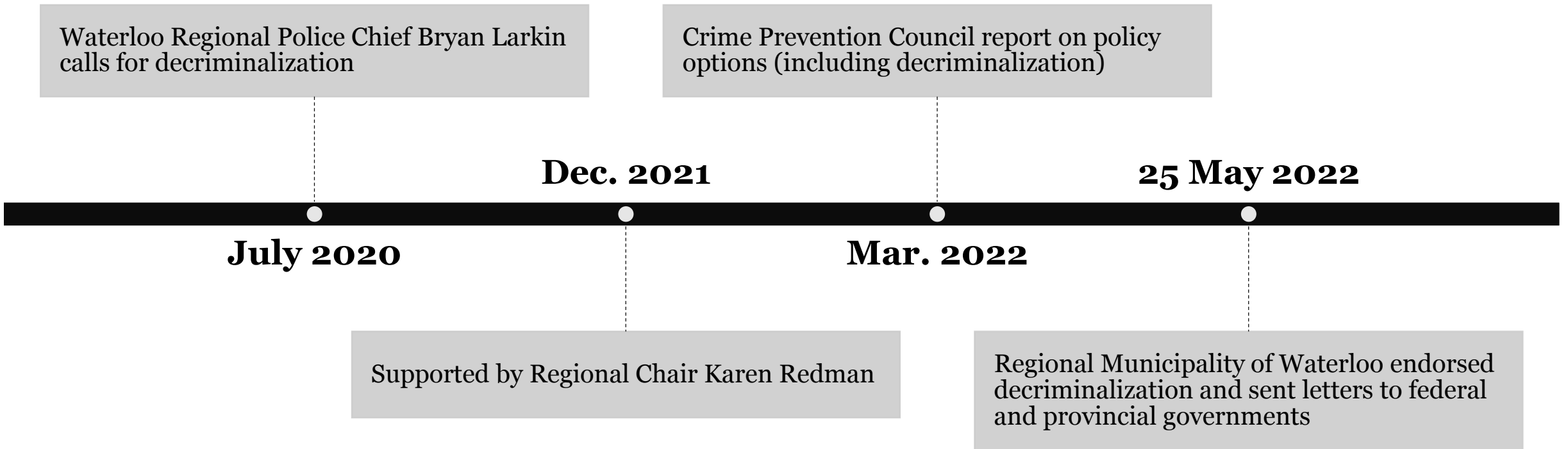
Background

- Waterloo Region is experiencing a drug poisoning crisis
- Need for a coordinated response at the municipal level
- Scientific evidence demonstrates the social, economic, and health harms associated with drug criminalization
- *De facto* decriminalization is a policy option that will save lives and money

ON Coroners data: Waterloo Region

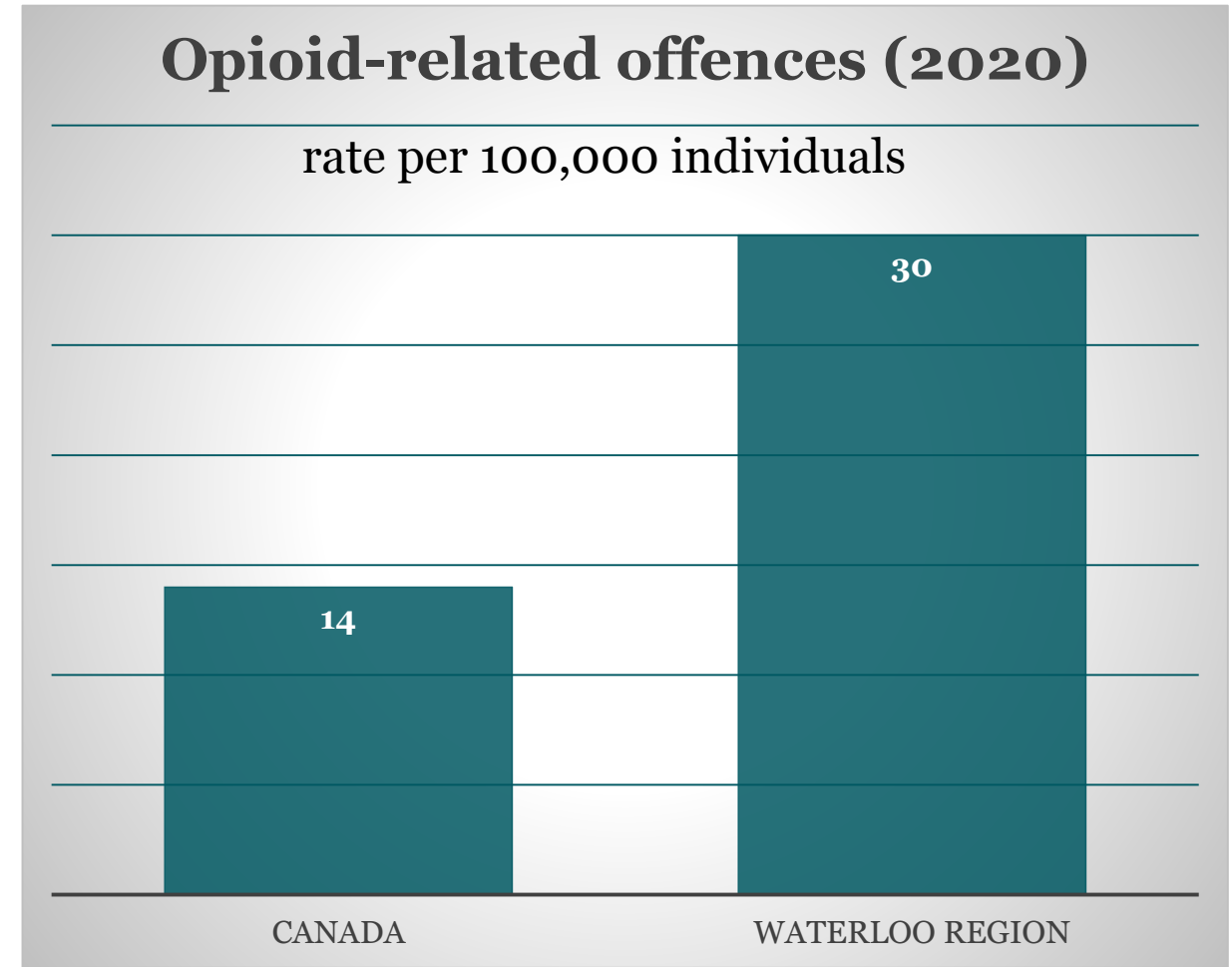


Background: Local support for decriminalization



Financial costs associated with criminalization

- Waterloo Region **6th highest rate** of opioid-related offences nationally (StatsCan, 2020)
- Majority of offences are possession-related
- Costs: policing, processing, courts, incarceration, etc.
- Criminal justice costs for substance use in Canada: **\$9.2 billion** annually (CCSA, 2020)



De facto decriminalization

- Does not require a s. 56 federal exemption from CDSA
- Directive from Chief of Police
- No arrests for simple possession of illegal drugs
- No drug confiscations

Examples:

- Vancouver Police Dept (2006)
 - “Deprioritization Policy” limits enforcement of simple possession city-wide
- Toronto Police Service (2017)
 - Non-enforcement CTS zones
- Copenhagen, Denmark (2012)
 - Non-enforcement zones

Conclusions

- Bold action needed to address drug poisoning crisis
- Strong support locally for decriminalization
- *De facto* decriminalization a policy option available immediately to improve social, health, and economic outcomes across Waterloo Region
- High amount of police time and resources dedicated to drug possession
- Council cannot direct police operations but it does approve budgets
- Cost-savings policy option in era of growing police budgets and reduced municipal resources

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FACULTY OF HEALTH
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cycleWR

2023 Regional Budget

January 2023



Introductions

We are CycleWR!

Josh Orita

President

Emily Slofstra

Vice-President



State of Active Transportation in ROW

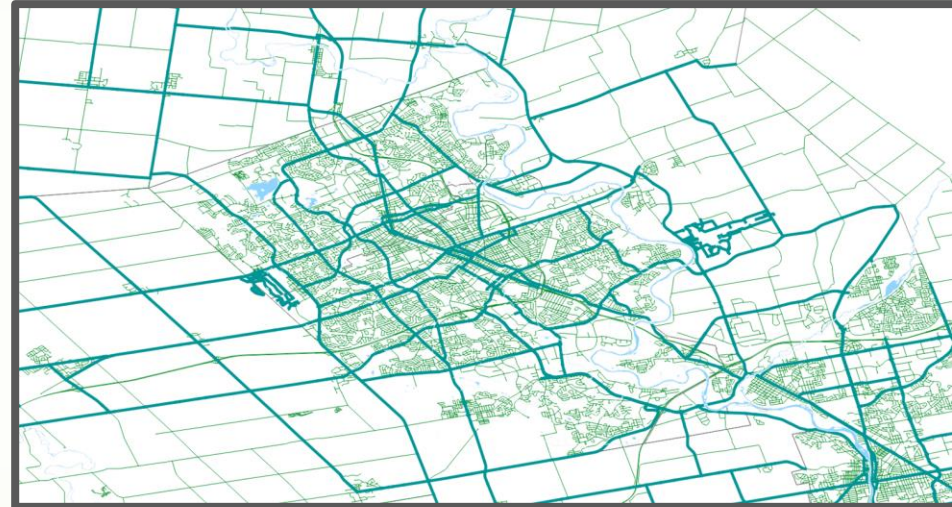
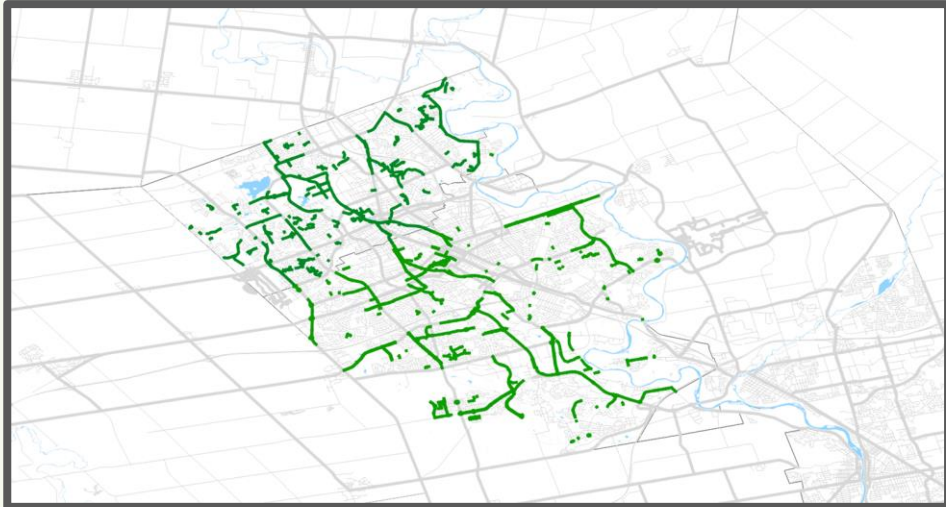
- More separated and protected bike lanes, and multi-use trails than ever before.
- COVID-19 impacted commuting numbers, but the newly installed counters throughout the region will tell a different story in a few years.
- Safety still a concern: More than 8 cyclists/pedestrians were hit by vehicles from November-December 2022, including one fatality and others leading to hospitalizations.



Active Transportation is a Strategic Priority

AAA cycling network in KW

Motor vehicle network in KW



Generated in 2022



Environmental responsibility

- Climate Emergency declared by the Region in October, 2019
- ClimateActionWR's report TransformWR approved unanimously by the Council in June 2021
- 49% of regional emissions are in transportation sector



Photo credit Ben Nelms



Regional Budget Asks 2023

Continue the momentum set out in the region's plan

- “Investment in active transportation continues with a ten-year capital program to build over 200km of active transportation connections.”
- “Active transportation growth, through a micro-mobility pilot as well as new guidelines and practices for cycling infrastructure.”



Regional Budget Asks 2023 (continued)

Support active transportation and climate change initiatives

We support Councillor McCabe's requests:

- “For Council to amend the Active Transportation (AT) policy to enable the ability to create multi-use paths, trails, separated cycling paths independent of roadworks and expansion projects.”
- “For Council and staff to de-couple the AT budget from the roadwork capital budget to enable the prioritization of AT projects and of climate change goals.”
- “For Council to prioritize funding connected to climate change initiatives and goals in the budget and in the Strategic Plan.”



Regional Budget Asks 2023 (continued)

Expand free access to transit

- We support Councillor McCabe and Councillor Deutchmann's proposal to expand free access to transit.
- Provide children under 12 with free access to transit.
 - Makes public transit more accessible to families.
 - More young riders can build a habit of using public transit.



How to pay for it

- **Don't** diminish spending on important issues like homelessness, mental health supports, equity, reconciliation, etc.
- **Do** continue to allocate resources within the Transportation budget to expand the AT network.





cycleWR

Advocating for better, safer cycling in Waterloo Region.



cyclewr.ca



hello@cyclewr.ca



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