
Subject: 2025 budget feedback for the region

From: Predrag Gutovic [REDACTED]
Sent: October 20, 2024 1:02 AM
To: Regional Clerk <RegionalClerk@regionofwaterloo.ca>
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As a resident of Kitchener, I am increasingly concerned about the decisions made by the current council regarding the region's growth and expansion plans. The hidden costs associated with population growth are real and significant and must be acknowledged. Essential services are rapidly declining as budgets are stretched thin. It is crucial to identify, assess, and manage growth costs effectively. Our continued expansion is placing an undue burden on the community and jeopardizing the ability of future generations to remain in the communities they call home. We continue to borrow from our children's future.

Expanding the transit system, bike lanes, and increasing housing capacity are positive initiatives, but it is essential to consider the impact on existing services and infrastructure. The city must implement comprehensive plans to simultaneously expand roads, hospitals, emergency services, and community services to accommodate the growing demand.

For sustainable growth, it is imperative that services expand rather than contract. We need more healthcare professionals, emergency responders, hospital capacity, and law enforcement personnel. Additionally, increasing the number of bylaw officers is essential to enforce regulations that enhance the quality of life for all residents. We cannot allow our community to deteriorate or let irresponsible behavior undermine our progress.

I question how cutting \$8 million from the city budget will facilitate any improvements.

To support growth, the region must develop strategies to generate additional revenue, including appropriately adjusted development fees aligned with growth plans. Those who benefit from growth should contribute to its funding, rather than placing the financial burden on those trying to make ends meet.

We must not allow provincial and federal governments to impose detrimental decisions on our communities, as seen over the last decade. It is essential to prioritize the well-being of our current population before accommodating new residents.

City council must advocate for fair treatment from provincial and federal governments in addressing the challenges posed by increased immigration and housing demands. Seeking funding related to developments will alleviate the burden on municipalities, ensuring that services improve with each new resident rather than diminish. The council must hold our government accountable for its decisions and learn to push back when necessary.

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Before pursuing further growth, the region MUST prioritize creating a robust financial plan. We should learn from other cities, such as Milton and Brampton, that have expanded too quickly and are now facing significant challenges.

In recent years, it has become evident that our city is not adequately prepared for population growth. This is reflected in our daily experiences, whether struggling to secure spots in recreational programs for our children or experiencing longer and longer traffic delays as we question how our infrastructure will meet future demands.

We witness reckless driving through our neighborhoods, while we are told that there is a 20-year plan for traffic calming, yet only see compliance on streets with installed speed cameras. Our streets are littered with garbage and abandoned shopping carts, issues we should not ignore. The growing presence of homelessness and tent cities requires urgent action rather than mere discussion. Our downtown area has become a place to avoid rather than enjoy.

The rise of tent cities in our region is alarming, with first responders dedicating more time than ever to these areas. While we aim to expand affordable housing, we are losing more units than we are adding. Mandate for small percentage of affordable homes in new developments will never be able to fill the demand.

Unlike our federal and provincial governments have, we must not accept escalating crime rates, such as car thefts and home robberies, as the new norm. It is time to halt this trend and approach future decisions with careful consideration. We should lead and not follow. We should set examples by overfunding our police services to get things back into control.

While growth can be beneficial when managed effectively, there is currently a lack of concrete goals to address the many challenges we face daily.

As I write this, I hope there are still individuals within the council who can advocate for reasoned discussions and encourage informed decision-making. We need to challenge our provincial and federal governments to do better and support the growth they seek. We need to challenge ourselves to do better.

Thanks for your efforts

Pred Gutovic

Kitchener, ON.