
Subject:

Region of Waterloo Budget - Comments to Region, City & Township Councils

From: Douglas Saunders**Sent:** December 9, 2024 12:16 AM**To:** Regional Council All <RegionalCouncilAll@regionofwaterloo.ca>; Regional Clerk<RegionalClerk@regionofwaterloo.ca>; mayor@waterloo.ca; council@waterloo.ca; hamiltons@cambridge.ca;earnshawr@cambridge.ca; robertss@cambridge.ca; gkosch@wellsley.ca; Jeff Smith <jsmith@woolwich.ca>**Cc:** Luisa D'Amato <ldamato@therecord.com>; Doug Coxson <doug@cambridgetoday.ca>; The Record Newsroom <newsroom@therecord.com>; newsroom@cambridgetimes.ca; mike@villagemedia.ca**Subject:** Region of Waterloo Budget - Comments to Region, City & Township Councils

Regional Chair Redman, Mayors, Regional, City and Township Councillors:

I had contemplated forwarding comments to the final meeting of the Budget Committee and Special Council Meeting for consideration before the 2025 Budget is finalized. I chose instead, to send you a post that I have sent broadly throughout my contacts through email and social media. It has gone to contacts across the country. That same post, included in this message should be considered in the context of your final deliberations. They are offered bluntly and from the heart in the hope that you will soberly consider the contradictions of your statements and actions with the hope that you will understand the imbalance of your actions and the resulting harms for constituents ... especially the poor, the unhoused, those struggling with additions and chronic mental health issues.

As always, and once again I offer to be available to meeting with you to provide advice based on my 45+ year career in the human services ... advice that I am currently offering to municipalities and District Service Administration Boards throughout Ontario through my association as a consultant with the Beam Group out of Toronto.

Should you wish to discuss anything in the comments below, please feel free to contact me. My coordinates and contact details are at the end of this message.

Message Delivered via Email, Social Media and Person to Person

Is it just me or does anyone else see that logic and reason have taken their place beside common sense as long distant historical elements of political thought?

Everyone from the Mayor and many Cambridge City and Waterloo Region Councilors to the Premier, devoid of compassion, shout from the rooftops that the poor (especially Ontario Works recipients) should "get off their a\$\$es and get a job" (said by the Premier himself), the homeless, after having their encampments bulldozed should go somewhere else, addicted drug users and those with declining mental health should move away or be scooped up and forced into some magical treatment beds sufficient of which don't exist for those who currently want treatment! Yet, at the same time, these same politicians are proposing significant reductions in funding for the very services that are designed to help the poor achieve these very demands politicians are making. Balancing the Regional budget by significant cuts in the Social Services, reductions in transit

frequency or increases in transit fares are **COUNTERINTUITIVE** to the expectations of "get a job", "live somewhere other than a tent" and "stop using drugs".

As a former Commissioner of Community Services for this Region, I can tell you the counselling collaborative funded through the Region, was, in part, established to provide support to clients in their search for employment. These supports are designed to assist those most estranged from the labour force, those battling mental health and addictions to address these issues through treatment and education in order to obtain and maintain gainful employment. If you are cutting these services, you are defeating your own request to the client population not to mention the fundamental principle and primary expectation of the Ontario Works Act!! Further restrictions of such supports to employment simply compound the elimination of the staff Social Workers in the Employment and Social Services Division who not only provided direct client services but also served as consultants to Case Managers in supporting them to understand the mental health barriers faced by their clients. These represent significant service removals made exponentially worse by the proposed reduction in funding to the Counselling Collaborative.

The poor, no matter whether they are recently unemployed and receiving EI, the working poor, Ontario Works or ODSP recipients, need transit services to attend education, training and reskilling programs that make them more able to compete for an obtain employment, not to mention be able to get to work should they obtain a job. Reducing service frequency or increasing the fares are illogical and, dare I say stupid, when you're expecting people to obtain and maintain employment. You cannot demand that people get off their bottoms and get jobs then limit their ability to get to work.

During the Premiership of Mike Harris, I ran the Family Benefits Programs for the Province in Toronto Region. When Harris and his clan cut the social assistance rates by 21%, staff in my offices (over 1,000 in 9 offices serving 100,000 clients) wept when parents came into our offices, left their children in our waiting rooms and said to our reception staff, "you raise them, we can't afford them" ... this is not hyperbolae, this actually happened. Sadly, it was not deemed sufficiently newsworthy to capture media attention that might well have enraged clear thinking citizens. It was the only time in my executive management career that I told the staff to call FACS or CAS and ask them to apprehend the children from our offices, not because of parental neglect or abuse but because of incompetent government policy.

These cuts to balance the Region's budget are no different. They are incompetent government policy. They are evidence that the political arena is no longer a place where thoughtful elected officials come together to problem solve with balance in mind so much as contradicting themselves at every turn and harming their constituents in what appears to be the sport of the exercise. No elected official in their right mind would ever blatantly speak out of both sides of their mouths ("get a job but we're cutting employment supports") without being certain they could get away with it ... and we have only ourselves to blame. A misguided "majority" of the electorate, largely angry, self interested and compassionless individuals, put the current politicians there and a silent majority enables them by not standing up to challenge these proposed policies and cuts. The behaviour at all levels of government is beyond unconscionable and mere steps behind our neighbours to the south.

I don't want to hear a single politician gripe about the poor, the homeless, encampments, the addicted, those suffering mental health issues or others unless and until you come to your senses and begin to govern responsibly. YOU are harming your constituents by failing to be balanced, knowledgeable and compassionate

in your decisions. You are an embarrassment to what it is to be Canadian. You make a mockery of the principles of wealth distribution, universality of services and the notion of Canada's long respected social safety net. For proud Canadians who believe in the underlying principles of what it is to be Canadian are embarrassed by your actions.

As for Regional Councillor Pam Wolf (and any who may be silently sympathetic) ... I applaud you. Keep up the good work and continue to fight for those who lack the agency to stand up for themselves. I promise you, there are those of us in this community who will do our best to organize and be ready for the next election to ensure those who cannot do the job in a balanced, compassionate and logical way, no longer have the positions around the horseshoe to continue imposing harm.

I hope you will listen carefully to this input, consider your decisions and reverse the unnecessarily harmful actions you are imposing on the most vulnerable among us.

Deeply sincerely,

Douglas

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