

# 2026 Draft Budget

Region of Waterloo  
November 19, 2025

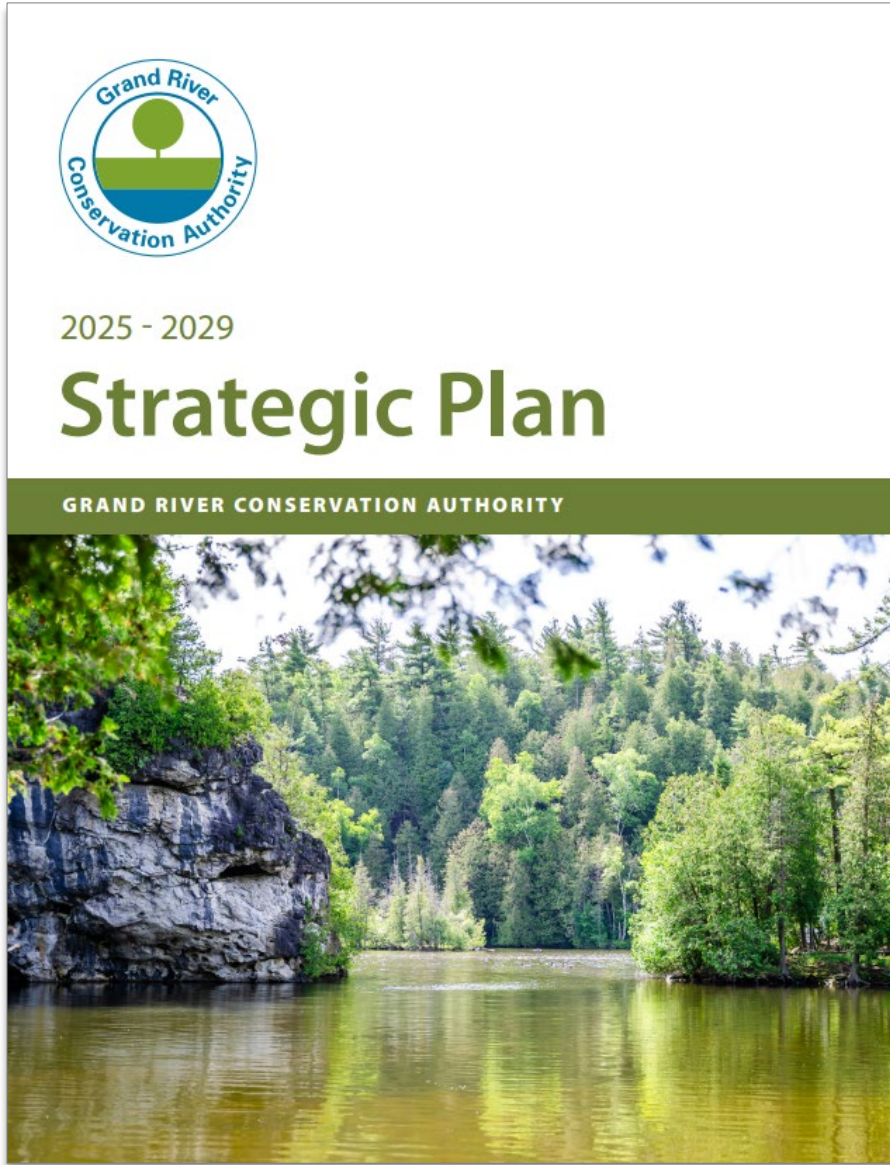


# About the Grand River Watershed



- The Grand River watershed is the largest in southern Ontario
- The Grand River and its tributaries lie at the heart of one of the richest, fastest growing regions in our province

# The Grand River Conservation Authority



- Local agency organized on a watershed basis
- We work with watershed communities to reduce flood risk, maintain and support a healthy watershed, and connect people to nature.

# Strategic Priorities

## Protect life and minimize property damage

- Seven dams and reservoirs are actively managed to reduce flood damages and maintain flows



# Strategic Priorities

An aerial photograph of a city, likely St. Louis, showing a major highway (I-44) running through the center. The city is surrounded by greenery and a river (the Mississippi River) is visible in the foreground. The image is used as a background for the slide.

**Protect life and minimize property damage**

## **Planning and Development**

- Review of Planning Act applications and other planning documents
- Permitting and compliance

# Strategic Priorities

## Improve watershed health

### Source Water Protection Program

- Ensure Region's drinking water systems are protected now and in the future
  - Ongoing support for municipal Source Protection Plan implementation
  - Update Grand River Source Protection Plan to reflect changes and new information



# Strategic Priorities

## Improve watershed health

- Region provides data to the Watershed-wide Wastewater Optimization Program for annual reporting
- Several regional plants have recently been recognized through the WWOP recognition program

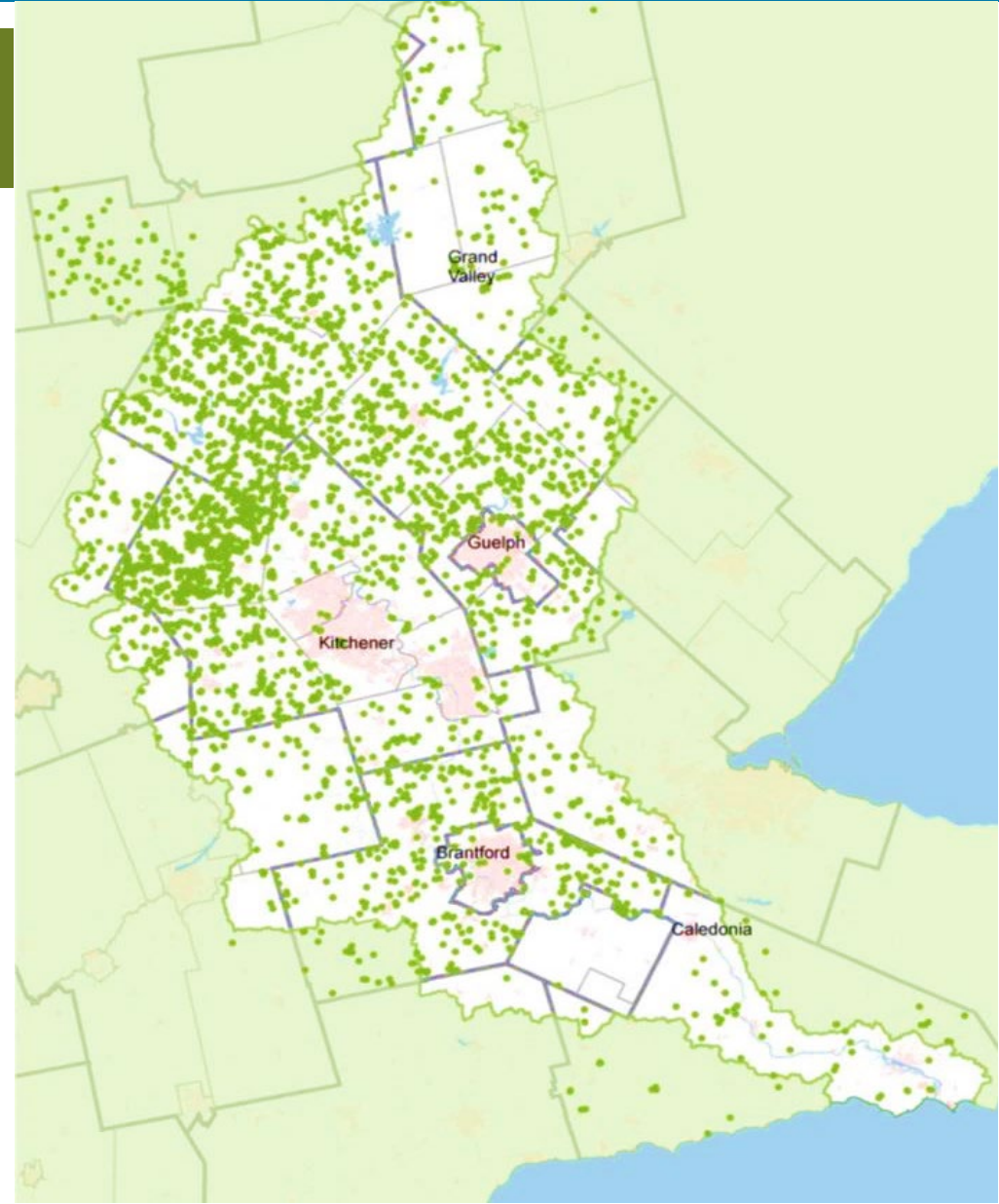


# Strategic Priorities

## Improve watershed health

### Rural Water Quality Program (RWQP) watershed-wide success since 1998:

- 8,600 projects completed
- \$25.8 million in grants
- Over \$70 million invested



# Strategic Priorities

## Improve watershed health



### **RWQP in Region in 2025:**

- 55 projects completed
- \$223,000 in grants
- Landowner contribution of \$781,000
- Total investment in water quality - \$1 million

# Strategic Priorities

## Connect people with the environment

- GRCA's fee-for-use conservation areas are a vital part of the watershed's recreational infrastructure
- Outdoor Environmental Education Program connects people to nature



# Strategic Priorities

## 4. Responsible and sustainable land management

- 48,000 acres of land, consisting of 493 parcels
- Land Inventory and Conservation Areas Strategy help guide the GRCA's land management decisions



# 2026 Budget Challenges

- Economic environment including inflation, supply chain issues, cost pressures arising from the impact of tariffs and skilled labour shortages
- Projecting Conservation Area operating revenue is challenging (impacted by consumer demand and weather conditions)
- Nature Centre program in transition, pace of change difficult to predict
- Aging infrastructure
- Increased demands on managing lands (i.e., land use decisions, hazard tree management, trespassing, infrastructure)
- Keeping pace with digital innovation and technological advancements



# 2026 Budget Assumptions - Operating

## Major Assumptions – Operating Budget:

- Compensation & benefits 5% increase (market adjustments, rate increases, grid movements, benefits)
- Insurance expense increased 5% compared to actual 2025 cost
- Administrative computer charges increased 10%
- Operating expenses increases range from 0% to 5%
- Increased Conservation Area Activity - \$660,000 expense increase
- One-time 2025 budget expense items not included in draft #1 Budget 2026 - \$400,000
- **OUTCOME: Operating Expenses increased \$1.2 M (3.7%)**



# 2026 Budget

## Budget 2025 vs Budget 2026

### EXPENDITURES

|                         | 2025              | 2026              | Incr/(Decr)        | % Change      |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| <b>OPERATING</b>        | <b>31,491,465</b> | <b>32,653,388</b> | <b>1,161,923</b>   | <b>3.7%</b>   |
|                         | 78.6%             | 82.7%             |                    |               |
| <b>CAPITAL</b>          | <b>6,053,000</b>  | <b>5,648,100</b>  | <b>(404,900)</b>   | <b>-6.7%</b>  |
|                         | 15.1%             | 14.3%             |                    |               |
| <b>SPECIAL PROJECTS</b> | <b>2,419,000</b>  | <b>1,057,000</b>  | <b>(1,362,000)</b> | <b>-56.3%</b> |
|                         | 6.0%              | 2.7%              |                    |               |
| <b>RESERVES</b>         | <b>116,500</b>    | <b>116,500</b>    | <b>-</b>           | <b>0.0%</b>   |
|                         | 0.3%              | 0.3%              |                    |               |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>   | <b>40,079,965</b> | <b>39,474,988</b> | <b>(604,977)</b>   | <b>-1.5%</b>  |

# 2026 Draft Budget

## EXPENDITURES

**Operating Budget (\$32.6 Million)**

**General Operating Expenses - \$4.3 M**

**Category 1- \$11.5 M**

- Watershed Management, Dams, Flood Forecasting, Resource Planning, Conservation Land Management, Source Protection

**Category 2 - \$1.2 M**

- Subwatershed Planning, Conservation Services

**Category 3 - \$15.6 M**

- Tree Planting, Conservation Services, Environmental Education, Property Rentals, Hydro Production, Conservation Areas, Administrative Support



# 2026 Draft Budget

## EXPENDITURES

### Capital Budget (\$5.6 Million)

#### Category 1- \$3.2M

- **Water Management Capital (\$3.0 million) -**  
(Maintenance and repairs to dikes and dams)
- **Gauges and Hardware (\$250,000)**

#### General Operating Expenses - \$400,000

- **Motor Pool** expenses funded with reserve  
(\$143,000)
- **Information Systems** funded with reserve  
(\$255,000)

#### Category 3 - \$2.0M

- **Conservation Areas**



# 2026 Draft Budget

## EXPENDITURES

### Special Projects (\$1.057 Million)

#### Category 2 - \$965,000

- Rural Water Quality Grants
- Species at Risk
- Blair Creek Subwatershed Monitoring

#### Category 3 - \$92,000

- Mill Creek Rangers Project
- Brant/Brantford Water Festival
- Waterloo Wellington Children's Water Festival



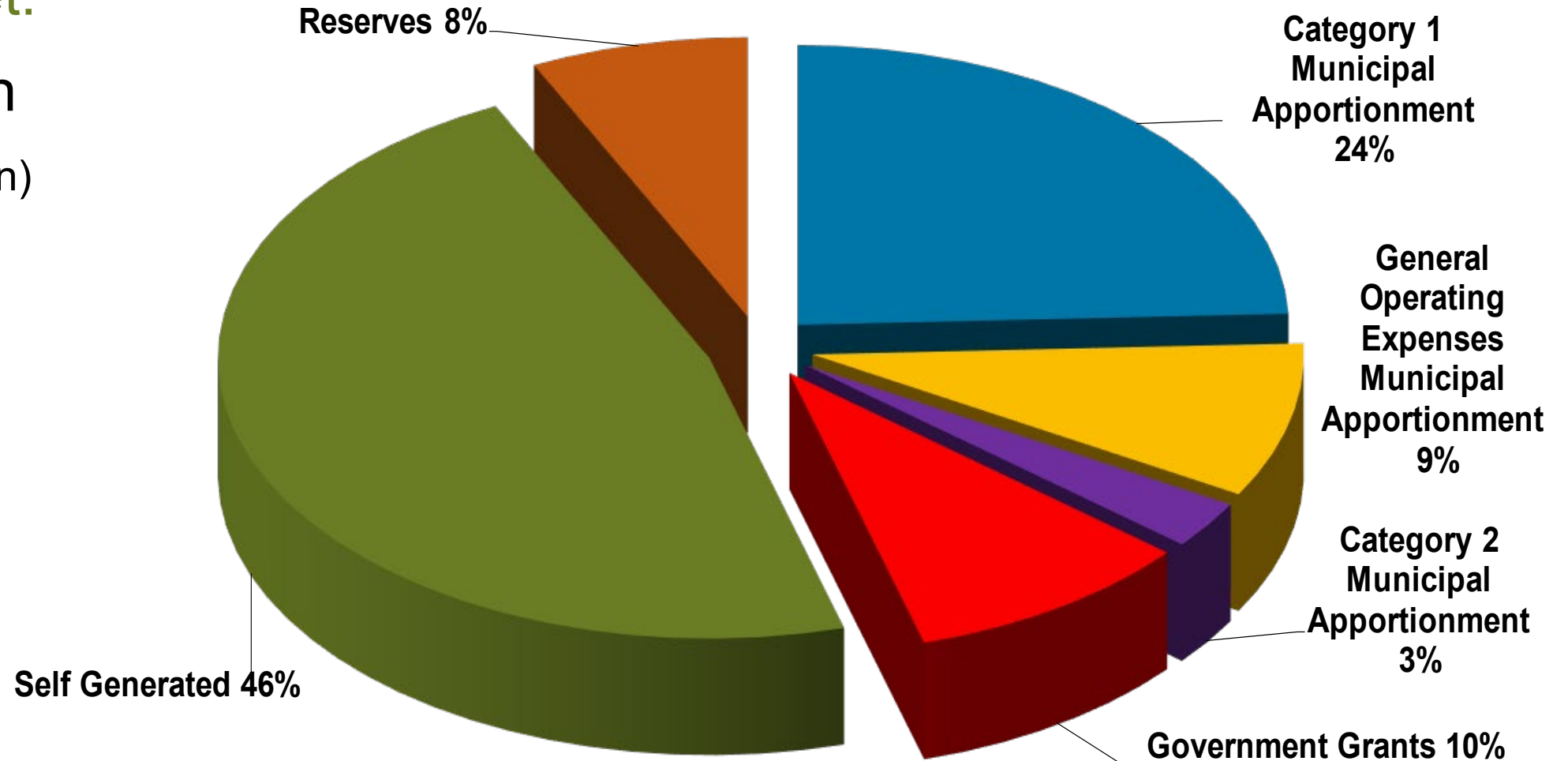
# 2026 Draft Budget

## Revenue by Category

2026 Budget:

\$39.4 million

(2025: \$40 million)



# Municipal Funding Increases

2023 - 3.5%

2024 - 2.5%

2025 - 3.5%

2026 – 3.5%  
proposed

## Region of Waterloo

**2026: 3.3% increase or  
\$7,190,000**

**(2025: \$6,960,138)**



# 2026 Draft Budget



## Next Steps:

Oct. 24, 2025 - Board Direction - Municipal Apportionment increase

Nov. 2025 - Distribute draft Budget to Municipalities

Dec. 12, 2025 - General Meeting - Finalize Municipal Apportionment

Dec. 19, 2025 - Send Notice to Municipalities of Municipal Apportionment Vote

Jan. 23, 2026 - General Meeting - Municipal Apportionment Vote

Feb. 27, 2026 - Approve 2026 Budget