

Dear Chair Redman and Representatives of Regional Council from Kitchener,

I am writing to you as a resident of Kitchener and the Region of Waterloo to express my strong opposition to the proposed 2026 Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) budget. While I understand the importance of community safety, I am deeply concerned by the proposed **\$272.6 million operating budget** - a significant 7.98% increase over last year - and the substantial capital investment required for the new Public Safety Communications Centre.¹

My opposition is based on three primary concerns regarding fiscal responsibility, the prioritization of infrastructure over basic needs, and the effectiveness of current policing models:

1. The "One Million Ready" Strategy vs. Basic Needs The police leadership justifies this budget as necessary to become "One Million Ready," citing a consultant's recommendation to "right-size" the force with 73 new officers by 2030.² However, we are facing a concurrent affordability and housing crisis. As noted during the November 26 budget discussions, Regional staff indicated that some affordable housing projects might need to be delayed to manage debt.³ I agree with the sentiments raised by Councillor Huinink: when people's basic needs - specifically housing - are met, they are less prone to crime.³ Approving a budget that prioritizes police expansion while potentially displacing funding for affordable housing is a reactive, rather than preventative, approach to public safety.

2. The \$173 Million Communications Centre I am specifically opposed to the \$173 million capital allocation for the new Public Safety Communications Centre.⁴ While Chief Crowell argues this facility is "essential," the scale of this project was rightly questioned by Mayor Salonen, who asked if it was a "Rolls-Royce" model when a compromised or phased approach might suffice.³ At a time when the Region's debt load could restrict future spending on critical social infrastructure, committing to such a massive single-asset expenditure is fiscally imprudent. I urge Council to demand a scaled-back approach or explore alternative governance models for emergency communications.

3. Diverting Resources to Upstream Solutions Data indicates that a significant portion of 911 calls are non-criminal. Specifically, "Compassionate to Locate" (wellness) calls have risen 35% since 2016.⁵ These are social and health matters best handled by non-police crisis teams, similar to the Toronto Community Crisis Service, which data shows rarely requires police backup. By approving a \$20 million budget increase for the police, we are effectively choosing not to invest that money in upstream diversion programs that address the root causes of police workload.

Furthermore, I am concerned by data showing that WRPS use of force continues to disproportionately impact Black residents at a rate 3.7 times their representation in the population.⁶ Expanding the budget without first addressing these systemic inequities and exploring civilian-led alternatives is unacceptable.

The police portion of the property tax bill is set to rise by nearly 7%.⁷ I urge you to vote against this budget increase on December 16 and to direct staff to prioritize funding for housing and social services that build true community safety.

Sincerely,

Tyler McConnell

Kitchener, ON

References:

1. *WRPS Presentation for 2026 Approved Operating and Capital Estimates*, November 26, 2025.
2. *The Record*, "Activists still pressing to divert funding from police," Nov 14, 2025; *WRPS Presentation 2026*.
3. *The Record*, "Cost of new Waterloo Regional Police safety and comms centre questioned by regional councillors," Nov 27, 2025.
4. *CBC News*, "New police communication centre 'essential' for operations, says police board chair," Dec 10, 2025.
5. *Citifed*, "Policing and the Regional Budget," Melissa Bowman, Dec 12, 2025 (Citing delegation data from Craig Sloss).
6. *The Record*, "Activists still pressing to divert funding from police," Nov 14, 2025 (Citing WRPS Use of Force data 2023-2025).
7. *CityNews*, "WRPS finalize spending plan ahead of regional budget vote," Dec 11, 2025