

From: Frank Voisin, President
#120 – 137 Glasgow Street
Kitchener, ON N2G 4X8
(226) 791-5051
frank@voisincapital.com

To: Regional Chair Redman and Members of Waterloo Regional Council

Date: December 13, 2025

Subject: WRPS 2026 Proposed Budget and Public Communications Centre

I am writing ahead of Council’s upcoming vote on the Waterloo Regional Police Service Board’s proposed 2026 operating and capital budgets. Much of the public discussion has focused on year-over-year changes in isolation. Missing from that discussion is basic context: how police spending has changed over time relative to population growth, what the evidence says about spending and outcomes, and whether the proposed Public Communications Centre costs reflect realistic market costs given current conditions.

To that end, I reviewed WRPS budget documents, population data, academic research, and local commercial real estate market reporting. The summary below is intended to ground Council’s decision in verifiable facts rather than momentum or precedent.

10-Year Snapshot

Item	2016	2026 (proposed)	Change
WRPS operating budget	\$165.549M ¹	\$272.610M ²	+64.7%
Waterloo Region population	535,154 ³	690,000 ⁴	+28.8%
Budget per capita	≈ \$309	≈ \$395	

This comparison shows a structural increase in per-capita policing costs. Even after accounting for population growth, the proposed 2026 budget embeds an approximately 28% real increase in cost per resident.

¹ Region of Waterloo Budget Committee Agenda, January 11, 2017. Table titled 'Waterloo Regional Police Services Budget Summary' lists 2016 Approved Budget.

<https://calendar.regionofwaterloo.ca/Council/Detail/2017-01-11-Budget-Committee/C12017-0111.1.pdf>

² Council calendar showing the 2026 WRPS budget was presented to Council on Nov. 26, 2025 with WRPS attachments listed (agenda item for presentation of Operating & Capital Estimates):

<https://pub-regionofwaterloo.escrimetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Agenda=Agenda&Id=739c404c-a944-4fa7-b06b-c8cc283329a2&lang=English>

³ Regional Municipality of Waterloo population of 535,154, based on the 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada, Census Division 3530 (Waterloo).

⁴ Estimated Regional Municipality of Waterloo population of approximately 690,000, based on the Region of Waterloo’s most recent Year-End Population and Household Estimates (2024) and continuation of recent annual growth trends used by the Region for planning purposes.

What The Research Says about Police Spending and Crime

The best available empirical evidence shows no reliable or proportional relationship between higher municipal police spending and reductions in overall crime, meaning there is no evidence-based justification for continued above-population growth in per-capita police budgets.⁵ This is not an argument against policing, but a governance point: when marginal benefits are uncertain and diminishing, budget growth must be explicitly justified and constrained.

The PSCC Capital Request and Cost Realism

WRPS has approved construction of a new Public Safety Communications Centre of up to 75,000 square feet, with an estimated total project cost of approximately \$173.6M.⁶ This implies an all-in cost of roughly \$2,300 per square foot.

From a commercial construction standpoint, fully built-out, high-end office or institutional space should not exceed approximately \$500 per square foot for a new build. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings is typically far less expensive. A cost exceeding \$2,000 per square foot should be treated as a stop sign requiring independent validation, scope challenge, and alternatives analysis.

Downtown Vacancy and Use of Existing Office Stock

Recent market reporting shows exceptionally high office vacancy in Waterloo Region, including downtown vacancy approaching 40% in Kitchener.⁷ In this context, Council should require WRPS to demonstrate why existing office stock, including downtown buildings, cannot be retrofitted to meet operational requirements at a fraction of the cost of new construction.

My company, Voisin Capital, has focused heavily on adaptive reuse precisely because renovations are typically faster, cheaper, and lower-risk than ground-up builds, while also making productive use of underutilized urban space.

What Council Should Require

First, reject the proposed 2026 operating and capital budgets until the following are complete:

1. Publication of a third-party, independently prepared cost estimate for the PSCC, including scope, assumptions, and cost per square foot.
2. A documented alternatives analysis comparing new construction against leasing, retrofit, and adaptive reuse of existing office buildings, with full lifecycle cost comparisons.
3. A clear explanation of why existing office inventory cannot meet WRPS requirements, including security, resiliency, and operational criteria.

⁵ Seabrook, J. et. Al. (2023). *Police funding and crime rates in 20 of Canada's largest municipalities*. Canadian Public Policy, Vol. 49, No. 2. <https://upstreamlab.org/publication/police-funding-and-crime-rates-in-20-of-canadas-largest-municipalities-a-longitudinal-study/>

⁶ Public Safety Communications Centre (PSCC) scope and cost: up to 75,000 square feet with estimated total project cost of \$173.6M. Source: WRPS Police Services Board report approving PSCC project. <https://wrps.ca/sites/default/files/2025-05/WRPS%20PSB%20Agenda%20October%2016%202024.pdf>

⁷ Downtown Kitchener office vacancy approaching 40%. Source: Colliers Waterloo Office Market Report Q3 2025, as cited in local media. <https://www.collierscanada.com/en-ca/research/waterloo-office-market-report-q3-2025>



Second, adopt a transparent and forecastable budgeting framework that ties future WRPS budget growth to population growth or another objective formula, preventing continued per-capita escalation without explicit Council approval.

Public safety matters. Fiscal discipline, transparency, and evidence-based decision-making matter just as much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Voisin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frank Voisin
President, Voisin Capital Inc.