Regional Municipality of Waterloo
Budget Committee Public Input Meeting
Minutes

Wednesday, February 11, 2015
6:03 p.m.
Council Chambers, 2nd Floor
150 Frederick Street, Kitchener, ON


Members absent: B. Vrbanovic

Chair S. Strickland provided introductory remarks regarding the purpose of the meeting and thanked the delegations for participating in the 2015 Regional Budget Review process.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interest Under “The Municipal Conflict of Interest Act”

None declared.

Delegations

a) Sarah McLellan, Board Chair, Women’s Crisis Services Re: Haven House, provided a video to the Committee. She gave an overview of the challenges faced by women and children suffering from domestic violence and the need for the Region’s financial support. She stated that Haven House is precluded from receiving any funding from the Region while other shelters across the province receive both provincial and regional funding. She noted that Haven House services align with the Region’s strategic plan and she re-stated the funding request for one-time capital funding of $50,000 and waiving $270,000 in Regional development charges.

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The Committee inquired about the organization’s alternative proposal if development charges cannot be waived; the status of requisite approvals for the building; other sources for operating funds; and, whether the City of Cambridge has approved a grant in lieu of waiving development charges. S. McLellan stated that the organization is seeking Regional one-time funding payable in 2015 and advised that provincial funding is not expected to increase despite the increased number of beds; fundraising is planned to offset the operating shortage.

She stated that Haven House hasn’t yet received a grant in lieu of development charges from the City of Cambridge but plans are being developed to secure this and that the organization hasn’t yet paid the Regional development charges since a building permit hasn’t yet been issued.

b) Heidi Holmes, Board member, Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region, Re: Support for Funding Proposal, provided a presentation to the Committee; a copy is appended to the original minutes. Supplementary information was distributed to the Committee members. She requested that the Region support their counselling and public education services with $50,000 in annual funding. She provided an overview of the services and programs offered, noting that the waitlist is six (6) months long. She provided details about reduced provincial funding and other funding sources.

In response to questions from Committee members, she advised that the organization is not affiliated with St. Mary’s and isn’t receiving any program funding from the Region of Waterloo.

Liana Nolan, Commissioner of Public Health/Medical Officer of Health, stated that there are no directly related services offered through her department. Deb Schlichter, Director, Housing, stated that the Region does provide grants to other counselling agencies.

A Committee member suggested that a comprehensive task force be established to review the public awareness of domestic violence but no action was determined.

H. Holmes responded to Committee questions regarding legal status, the organization’s ability to fundraise and the mandate. Sara Kesselman, Operations Manager, responded to a Committee question about response teams and protocol, and local partnerships.

A Committee member noted that the Region provides grants to local counselling agencies to support people in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) benefits. The delegation confirmed that the organization’s financial statements have been received by Regional staff. It was also confirmed that financial support has been received by some of the Area Municipalities.
The Committee suggested that staff investigate opportunities to provide funding, perhaps in the form of purchase of service contracts, since the community support is evident.

D. Craig stated that City of Cambridge staff has advised him that the development charges can be deferred. S. Strickland suggested that the Regional Solicitor review options available.

c) Lori Prospero, Owl Child Care and the Child Care Network of Waterloo Region, Re: Child Care Fee Subsidy, gave a presentation; a copy is appended to the original minutes.

She provided an overview of the purchase of service agreements with the Region, identified the number of children served and the subsidy options available to families. She summarized the gap between labour market rates and approved per diems, noted the locations of the Owl Child Care centres and the accumulative impact of the fee subsidy on Owl Child Care operations. She thanked the Region for their leadership and stated that she supports the recommendation for full market rates, effective April 1, 2015.

d) Sonya Haffner, Re: Child Care Fee Subsidy, appeared before the Committee but agreed not to speak given the anticipated approval of the recommendation by Regional Council.

e) Lynn Macaulay, Initiatives Coordinator, Homelessness & Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG), Re: Discretionary Benefits, acknowledged her colleagues in the audience. She outlined the services included in the Region of Waterloo discretionary benefits, noting that most people consider them necessities. She summarized past funding support from the Region and stated that, while it may not be reasonable for the Region to continue to support from the local tax base, it's more cost-efficient than supporting homelessness. She concluded her presentation with a summary of HHUG's current advocacy with the senior levels of government and she thanked the Region for its support.

f) Cameron Dearlove, Family and Children's Services, Re: Pedestrian Access Improvements, Environmental Assessment between the Hanson/Hayward Industrial and Alpine Village Areas, provided a presentation to the Committee; a copy is appended to the original minutes. He outlined the background of the organization and the concerns with transit service at the new location. He noted the locations of the closest bus stops (725 m and almost 1 km away) and provided data about the number of people who access the centre. He gave a summary of communications with the Region on this issue, noting that the matter has not yet been resolved. He outlined the projected cost of a new route versus a modified route and proposed a route for Council’s consideration.
He requested an update on the process and Council consideration of a bus route that would increase transit accessibility to the Family and Children’s Services facility.

The Committee directed staff to review an existing route and determine how to add service to the facility with some frequency. The Committee also requested a report for the 2015 budget to provide some level of service that could grow over time.

In response to Committee concerns that Council didn’t receive a follow-up report to the Environmental Assessment (EA), Thomas Schmidt, Commissioner, Transportation and Environmental Services, stated that a follow-up report on the EA will come back to the Planning and Works Committee. He noted that a new route will cost approximately $500,000 and advised that the Region should continue with the EA process and make a decision upon review of the staff report, expected in early-April 2015.

The Committee requested information about the options available to address transit access at this facility and suggested that lesser priority routes be reviewed.

In response to a Committee inquiry about the use of bus-plus at this location, T. Schmidt stated bus-plus has been considered as an option but the location of the centre is fairly isolated. S. Strickland directed staff to inform the delegation when this issue is on the agenda in early-April.

g) Steve Devitt, Kitchener, Re: Waste Management, shared with the Committee his support for the green bin program and his concerns about the lifespan of the Erb Street landfill. He offered suggestions for increasing efficiencies at the site and advocated for more aggressive measures to reduce roadside dumping.

h) Harald Drewitz, Kitchener, Re: Waste Management and Police Budget, provided a written submission which was distributed to the Committee; a copy is appended to the original minutes. He summarized his concerns including: net zero budget increases, the purchase of taser guns for police services, the cost of installing cycling lanes and the renovation of the old courthouse. He advocated for more public engagement with Councillors and staff. He raised a concern about the recent garbage pick-up re-scheduling in the Forest Heights area and requested a staff report including the analysis of the weight of garbage and the number of truck loads on a regular 2 week period, and how this information could be applied to the scenario he noted.

The Committee agreed that a staff report on this matter would be beneficial in determining policies for garbage collection. The Committee clarified that the Region doesn’t have a role in determining the Waterloo Regional Police Service budget. The Committee also responded to the processes involved in the renovation of the old courthouse and noted the varied and numerous options for public engagement with Regional Councillors.

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i) Nadine Quehl, Alliance Against Poverty, Re: Transit Access, provided a written submission, which was distributed to the Committee; a copy is appended to original minutes. She stated that most people living in poverty can’t afford a 10% increase in bus fare rates and she encouraged the Region to be a leader in transit fare equity. She advocated for the following: free bus passes for all people in receipt of OW benefits; subsidized passes for people receiving Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP); and an immediate freeze on all fare increases for the next 5 years. She also raised concerns for eliminated bus routes, specifically Route 18 (Guelph Street) near The House of Friendship where people routinely pick up food hampers; she suggested a small detour on current Route 6. In closing, she suggested that development charges be used to stimulate affordable housing along the Light Rail Transit (LRT) routes.

The Committee noted that feedback received from The House of Friendship indicated that the impact of the eliminated route has been negligible; staff were directed to bring back a report with updated information about this matter. The Committee also noted that the Region spends approximately $1.8M on subsidized transit.

In response to a Committee question about the public consultation processes when the elimination of bus routes are being considered, T. Schmidt stated that there have been several public consultation sessions on the proposed elimination of routes.

j) Brayden McNeill, Alliance Against Poverty, Re: Living Wage, provided a written submission and supplementary materials for the Committee; copies are appended to the original minutes. He gave a summary of the concept and the group established to advocate for a living wage in the Region, Living Wage Waterloo Region (LWWR); he noted that in Waterloo Region, a living wage is calculated to be $16/hour and he acknowledged that the Region already pays most employees a living wage. He summarized the benefits of a living wage, the financial costs of poverty and requested that the Region propose a budget that would include the adoption of paying a living wage.

In response to Committee questions about access to the living wage report and the inclusion of student employees, B. McNeill advised that the report supporting the living wage rate for the Region of Waterloo is available on the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) website and that LWWR advocates for a living wage for students as well.

S. Strickland referenced the Regional meetings held in 2009 to consider and review a living wage for Regional employees and he requested that copies of the related staff reports be distributed to all Councillors.

k) Richard Walsh, Alliance Against Poverty, Re: Housing, expressed his concern with a proposed budget decrease of 2.4% for assisted and affordable housing, noting that
housing has a correlation with improved mental health. His written submission was distributed to the Committee and a copy is appended to the original minutes. He outlined his four (4) specific housing issues, including increased funding, less bureaucracy, Regional advocacy for senior level government housing strategies and storage locker access for homeless people.

The Committee noted that Regional Council has passed numerous resolutions to advocate for provincial and federal housing strategies and that the Region allows for any combination of providing affordable housing.

I) David Marskell, TheMuseum and Andrew Bennett, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Re: 2015 Funding Request, addressed the Committee noting their appreciation of past and current financial support. They advised that the four pillar organizations in the Region are collaborating more than before and they welcome the collective municipal review of arts and culture.

m) Chris Varga, Re: Transit Passes for Low Income People, outlined her proposal and the merits of free bus passes for people receiving social assistance benefits.

Moved by K. Redman

Seconded by G. Lorentz

That the meeting adjourn at 8:17 p.m.

Carried

Committee Chair, S. Strickland

Committee Clerk, S. Natolochny
Application for Funding from the Region of Waterloo
Who We Are:

- A community based, social profit agency that has served the Region of Waterloo for 25 years.
- We offer services and support to people and their families who have experienced sexual violence.
- We provide individual and group counselling, a 24 hour support line, advocacy and accompaniments for those navigating court, police, and medical processes.
- We also educate community members and agencies on preventing sexual violence through innovative and evidence based programs.
Who we serve:

- All the residents of Waterloo Region - a population of 570,000... and the community is continuing to grow in size and diversity.
- Through all of our services, we support all genders – adults and children. (Counselling is for those 16 years of age and older.)
- We counselled 184 clients last year. Despite adding a third counsellor from our own funds raised, we continue to have wait lists in Kitchener and in Cambridge.
- In the first 10 months of our current year, our Centre has offered 156 workshops/information sessions to local businesses, schools and community groups on preventing and responding to sexual violence and sexual harassment.
Funding:

• We are currently operating at 60% of the per capita provincial funding we had two decades ago.

• In our 1995-96 fiscal year we received $342,123 in provincial funding. According to census data, our regional population in 1996 was 405,435. This means that our per capita funding at this point was approximately $0.84 which is equal to $1.20 today. (Bank of Canada)

• In our current fiscal year we received $409,207 in core provincial funding. With an estimated regional population of approximately 570,000, our per capita funding is now less than $0.72.

• Today we have a staff complement of 8 full time people and 1 part time person and have three locations. We have overhead costs like any other organization, and still put our community, the Region of Waterloo, first on our priority list, addressing funding issues to date with our own privately raised funds and donations.
Per Capita Provincial Funding for Sexual Assault Support Services for Residents of Waterloo Region (Adjusted for population and inflation)
Our Request for Funding:

$50,000 to support our counselling program, reduce wait lists, and better serve survivors in our region, as well as providing additional public education services. We’re asking for the Region’s assistance in ensuring timely, expert support and advocacy is accessible when local survivors reach out.

• By doing so, the Region of Waterloo would be standing up against sexual violence and supporting those within it’s boundaries who are survivors.
• The Region of Waterloo would also be joining many other municipal governments, such as: Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, Kawartha, and Brant, who support their local sexual assault centres with annualized funding.
THANK YOU.

• Questions/Comments?
Region of Waterloo
150 Frederick Street
Kitchener, ON N2G 4J3

February 10, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

"I slept the whole night for the first time since I can remember after I reached out." (Client Testimonial)

"I’ve gotten back into writing, poetry, music. I feel like I’ve been a tight rosebud held together for so many years... and now I see myself starting to open up. It may just be the beginning, but the petals are starting to come back." (Client Testimonial)

For twenty-five years, our Centre has been a place of healing and hope for survivors in Waterloo Region. We’re writing today to advocate for annual funding from the Region of Waterloo for the critical services we offer to the residents of our community.

The Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region is a community-based, social profit organization. We offer services and support to people and their families who have experienced sexual violence. We provide individual and group counselling, a 24 Hour Support Line, and advocacy and accompaniments for those navigating court, police, and medical processes. In addition to support services, we’re committed to preventing sexual violence through education and collaborative social justice efforts throughout the region.

As you know, Waterloo Region is one of the largest urban areas in the province and the nation. With an estimated population of 570,000, we’re one of the fastest growing urban areas in the Province. We’re also an incredibly diverse community with roughly 1 in 4 of our residents born outside of Canada.

Unfortunately, provincial funding for our services has not increased to reflect our region’s accelerated population growth or to account for inflation. Given this, waiting lists for our services have crept up in recent years. Many survivors have had to wait up to six months for individual counselling services.

A simple analysis of the numbers demonstrates the funding shortfall we’re facing. This problem grows with each year that passes.

(transforming lives for 25 years)
In our 1995-96 fiscal year (April 1st to March 31st) we received $342,123 in provincial funding. According to census data, our regional population in 1996 was 405,435. This means that our per capita funding at this point was approximately $0.84. According to The Bank of Canada inflation calculator, $0.84 in 1995 is equal to $1.20 today.

In our current fiscal year we received $409,207 in core provincial funding. With an estimated regional population of approximately 570,000, our per capita funding is now less than $0.72.

In other words, we’re now operating with 60% of the per capita funding that we had two decades ago.

In recent years, we’ve poured our fundraising and donation revenue into our counselling program to reduce the amount of time survivors have had to wait for services. To a degree, this has helped keep our waiting lists under control but our Centre is unable to sustain this in the long-term.

In addition to direct support services, our public education program has the broad role of educating for social change. In 2013, our Centre offered 113 trainings/presentations to local businesses, schools and community groups on preventing and responding to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We’re also pioneers in our work to engage boys and men in prevention work through our Male Allies Against Sexual Violence (MAASV) program (www.maleallies.org).

Given this, we’re making an appeal to the Region of Waterloo. Many municipal governments in urban areas across Ontario, recognizing the funding shortfalls facing sexual assault centres, are funding their local sexual assault services. Last year we polled our sister centres; municipal governments in Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, Kawartha, Brant, etc. are supporting their local sexual assault centres with annualized funding.

(-transforming lives for 25 years-)

201-151 Frederick St. Kitchener ON N2H 2M2
office: (519) 571-0121 fax: (519) 571-0522
email: info@sasctr.org web: www.sasctr.org
24 hour support line: (519) 741-8633
Today we’re making an appeal to the Region of Waterloo for $50,000 a year to support our
counselling program and our public education program and alleviate some of the financial pressures
we’re facing due to population growth and inflation.

We know the Region is committed to our community’s Violence Prevention Plan and preventing crime
by addressing the root causes of violence. We applaud the Region’s commitment to early intervention
and prevention and feel our proposal aligns with our Region’s priorities.

In responding to this appeal, the Region has the ability to ensure that local survivors of sexual violence
have hope and a chance to heal, with specialized counselling and advocacy readily available to them
when they reach out. The Region also has the ability to ensure that we continue our critical crime
prevention work in the community.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider our letter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Sara Casselman
Public Relations & Operations Manager
Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region
Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region

24 Hour Support Line
519.741.8633

OUR SERVICES:
• 24 Hour Support Line
• Individual Counselling for Adults (16 years of age and older)
• Group Counselling for Women (16 years of age and older)
• Police, Legal and Medical Accompaniment and Advocacy
• Public Education, Speakers, and Workshops
• Practical Assistance
• Family Court Support Program

Services are confidential and free of charge.

One in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in their lifetime.
—MEASURING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, STATISTICS CANADA, 2006

“I slept the whole night for the first time since I can remember after I reached out.”

www.facebook.com/SASCWR
www.twitter.com/SASCWR

www.sascwr.org

transforming lives since 1989
You are NOT alone.

The Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region is a community-based, social profit organization. We provide services and support to people and their families who have experienced sexual violence.

We employ a feminist analysis in our work which recognizes systemic structures that promote sexual violence. We affirm our collective power to create social change and transform systems which victimize members of society.

GET INVOLVED!

Volunteer opportunities are available. If you have the passion, we have the training.

Home to the MAASV program.

Male Allies Against Sexual Violence

YOUR GIFT
OF $40

pays for one hour of counselling. Our dedicated counsellors focus on the specific needs of each individual, for as long as they need us. You can transform a life.

Charitable registration: #132274093RR0001

Email us at: info@sascwr.org

sasc
SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTRE OF WATERLOO REGION

201-151 Frederick St, Kitchener ON N2H 2M2
(519) 571-0121 | www.sascwr.org
24 Hour Support Line: (519) 741-8633

Ontario MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Funding for this Program is provided by the Government of Ontario.

The views expressed in this publication are the views of the Recipient and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government.
Regional Council
Public Input on 2015 Budget
Re: Child Care Fee Subsidy
Purchase of service agreements
- Between Region of Waterloo and licensed child care operators
- Agreements with 137 licensed ELCC programs

Services purchased monthly for 3100 children

Families may receive:
- Full subsidy
- Partial subsidy
Child Care Fee Subsidy

Market Rates
- Based on an operator's actual costs
- The rates charged to the general public
- Paid by those who are not subsidy approved.
- Typically increased annually

Per Diems
- Rates approved by the Region
Gap between approved Per Diems versus Market Rates has grown significantly:

- No increase to per diem rates since 2011
- Full day kindergarten has caused added strain for child care operators
  - Annual increase – in some cases – have been higher than in the past.
Current Gap between Market Rates and Per Diems

- 14%, on average
- ~ $900,000
### Owl Child Care – an example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>July 2014</th>
<th>December 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># children receiving subsidy</td>
<td>% of total children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Owl centres (7 locations)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Sweeney (1 location)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Owl centres (7 locations)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Sweeney (1 location)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gap for Owl Child Care

- All of 2014, across 7 locations…
What does this gap impact?

- Additional support for children with special needs
- Growth / Expansion of child care spaces
- Quality improvements
- Improved technology and program equipment for the classroom
- Improved wages for RECEs
- Staff training
Recommendation Approved:
- By Community Services Committee, Feb 3/15
  - That effective April 1, 2015, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo pay full market rates for purchase of service related to child care fee subsidy for licensed Early Learning and Care operators in Waterloo Region as outlined in report CSD-CHS-15-04.
Presentation to Waterloo Regional Council Budget Committee

- Background and about the Family Centre
  - History of transit discussion
  - Changes to the FC
- Request for update and next steps
Background

• Family & Children’s Services of the Waterloo Region (FACS) is a NFP organization mandated to carry out child welfare activities in our region.
• In 1991 FACS’ main offices were moved to a new building at 200 Ardelt Ave., Kitchener
• In 2011, The Family Centre (an initiative of FACS) opened. This 60,000 square foot facility is a community and service hub where FACS can work with community partners to support children, youth, and families in our region.
Background

• In 2011, The Family Centre opened with 4 partners: FACS, KidsAbility, Alliance for Children and Youth, Waterloo Region District Schoolboard
• Today, we have 17:
  • **General Partners**: Alliance for Children and Youth; Canadian Red Cross; Family and Children's Services; KidsAbility; Morning Glory Café; Waterloo Region District School Board
  • **Centre for Autism**: Autism Services Waterloo Region; Facile Waterloo Region; KidsAbility Autism Services; Waterloo Region Family Network
  • **FC Community Hub**: Bereaved Families of Ontario; Hummingbird Centre for Hope; KidSport KW; Muslim Social Services; Najda Now; Planned Lifetime Networks; World Wide Opportunities for Women
• Each partner brings unique services and supports to children and families in our region; together we “strengthen families through a community of collaboration.”
Background

• The Family Centre includes unique projects, including:
  • Morning Glory Café (youth employment program)
  • FC Community Hub project (incubator project for small non-profits)
  • New $350,000 investment from Lyle S. Hallman Foundation to create the Child and Youth Resilience Project (drastically increasing programming for vulnerable children and youth)
• Additionally, we have had over 80 community groups and organizations who have held meetings, events, and programs at The Family Centre.
• Ongoing partnerships with Strong Start, KPL, YMCA Immigrant Services
• This incredible growth (and array of community supports) has happened despite our lack of transit; services would be significantly stronger with transit access.
Background - Location
Background
Background
Who goes here?

- Between The Family Centre and FACS offices, there are 327 employees (286 FT, 41 PT)
  - We have no capacity to track the number of visitors to our centre each day, but it can easily climb into the hundreds. Please see attached handout for employment and visitor numbers provided to Region of Waterloo in March, 2014.
    - Many of our partners and services work with newcomers to Canada who are twice as likely to use public transit.
    - Many of our services are for people with disabilities who are also more likely to use public transit.
    - Our work is often with people experiencing poverty and financial challenges
    - Young families who struggle to get here with children and strollers
    - Extensive work with children and youth, particularly crown wards
  - We serve a very vulnerable population who already face extensive barriers to service and supports.
Who goes here?

The following are some of the businesses and institutions in the Ardelt/Hanson area that would benefit from improved access to Grand River Transit. The larger public facilities are in bold.

**Ardelt Avenue**
- Waterloo Region District School Board Office
- Doug Coleman Trucking
- Brock Solutions
- Lehmann Bookbinding
- United Rentals
- The Panel Shop Inc.
- WSI Waste Services Inc.
- Dentistry – While you sleep
- Rockway Building Supplies
- Firstonsite
- Accurate Fasteners Ltd.
- Woodhouse

**Hanson Avenue**
- The Family Centre
- Family and Children’s Services
- Wolsley Canada
- Sharp Bus Lines

**Hayward Avenue**
- Peter Hallman Ball Yard
- Hayward Mini-Storage
- Grand River Brick and Stone
- Graybar

**Lennox Lewis Way**
- Royal Autobody
- Activa Sports Complex
- St. Mary’s High School
- Kitchener Public Library – Country Hills
Who goes here?
Transit History

- When FACS built on Ardelt in 1991, the City of Kitchener’s long-range plan proposed some bus service in 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2004 to meet the needs of a planned residential area.
  - Despite significant changes to this area, and expansion of transit service under GRT, this neighbourhood remains without transit and with poor pedestrian access.
- 2012, we met with Transportation staff; told no plans to expand transit to this neighbourhood.
- We engaged in a campaign to raise awareness; collected hundreds of signatures provided to RoW council, letters of support, etc.
- In January 2013, Regional Council endorsed initiating a Pedestrian Access Improvements Environmental Assessment between the Hanson/Hayward Industrial and Alpine Village Areas
  - Was to be completed in fall 2013 in time for consideration in 2014 budget.
- In fall 2013, we inquired on the status of the EA and were told that it had not been conducted due to staffing changes
  - Therefore it was not presented for 2014 budget
Transit History

- June, 2014, a public consultation centre was held at The Family Centre.
  - Strong level of engagement; within 1 hour, copies of the handouts needed to be made. Dozens more comment forms were submitted following the session.
  - Following the session, we received feedback expressing disappointment from many people on what was presented in the public consultation:
    - Attendees were presented with two preferred options: the construction of a pedestrian access route from Alpine neighbourhood to Homer Watson (involving land expropriation) or pedestrian improvements along Hayward Ave.
      - While we applaud improved pedestrian access, neither option would significantly reduce distance to transit.
    - While many hoped to see a proposed bus route, this was not presented as an option; instead, there was a display board explaining why this was not feasible (cost).
Our Request

• We feel that the business case for transit modifications was not accurately assessed. The EA looked only at transit route modifications of existing routes (with existing frequency) rather than creating a new route to meet a specific need.
  • Based on the EA, 120,000 transit trips would be negatively impacted by modifications, and would cost $500,000 for a new bus, along with $565,000 in annual operating costs.
  • Seeking clarification, we received an estimate from John Ciccutin that annual operating costs on a new route would run between approximately $150,000 (8 hour service day, Monday to Friday) and $300,000 (12 hour service day, Monday to Saturday).
  • We sought feedback from our partners and heard loudly that a Monday to Saturday route, with evening access, would be ideal for our needs (particularly the evening access for youth programming). This feedback was shared with the RoW, along with a suggested route for this new service.
• A new route would not negatively impact transit trips and would meet the community need while improving access to an underserved area of the city (which has seen residential growth and will see an ION stop nearby).
Our Request

Here are 2 sample routes meant to illustrate how a new route would fill an accessibility gap.

Sample Route 1: Charles Street Terminal / Ottawa / Homer Watson / Hanson / Block Line / Forest Glen Terminal

Sample Route 2: Charles Street Terminal / Stirling / Homer Watson / Hanson / Block Line (ION Stn.) / Fairview Mall Terminal (ION)
Our Request: Update

- Since the EA and consultation, we have not heard anything official on this matter.
- Council had intended to hear back on this issue in under 1 year – it has now been over 24 months. As such, we are asking:
  - For an update on the process
  - For council to give full consideration to an option that includes a bus route
  - For council to give full consideration to issues of access, equity, and the importance of services and supports to the people in our community who need it most.
Thanks For Your Time!

- Please come visit us!
  - Family & Children’s Services Main Offices – 200 Ardelt Ave.
  - The Family Centre – 65 Hanson Ave.
- Please get in touch!
  - cameron.dearlove@facswaterloo.org
  - 519-772-4399 ext. 1
  - www.thefamilycentre.ca / www.facswaterloo.org
  - @TheFamilyCentre on Twitter
PRESENTATION TO REGIONAL COUNCIL FEBRUARY 11, 2015 @ 6:00PM.
PUBLIC INPUT SESSION FOR PROPOSED 2015 BUDGET INCREASE

Good Evening!

FEB. 11, 2015
FINAL

To: Mr. Chairman

Regional Chair

Members of Regional Council

This past Monday or just 2 days ago, when I watched the evening News, I could hardly believe what I was hearing – Ontario Minister, Deb Matthews, was talking about “net zero budget increases”. Here was a Minister of the Provincial Government, to some degree, in the “real world”! This was music to my ears. We need this music co-ordinated here in the Region of Waterloo and adopt this same musical platform and have one great symphony of “net zero” property tax and fee increase!

As I have made several presentations during the last six weeks, to the City of Kitchener, Region of Waterloo Police Services Board and this Waterloo Region Council, several members of the “inner circle” of our Tax Watch Group, living in different cities and townships in this region, have connected with me and provided a lot of information. They are suggesting we need to change our mandate and not just “watch the taxes” but promote “reducing the taxes”. I was forwarded two articles from the Globe and Mail, dated August 2, 2014 and December 6, 2014 in which it talks about what took place in Britain a number of years ago, regarding “budget cuts”. The Toronto Police Chief and the Chair of Toronto’s Police Services Board went to England to get some more detailed information. We suggest our Chair of the WR Police Services Board have an “in-depth” meeting with his counterpart in Toronto. I am not intending to focus just on the Police, but this is an example. Sustainability of some services are just beyond the reach of many of our citizens’ ability to pay!
Since I am talking about the Police and the 2015 Police budget, I want to thank Staff Sergeant, Michael Haffner and all involved, for providing me with most of the answers to my questions that I asked on January 7, 2015 and still working on the outstanding questions. Further to the 2015 Police budget, which I understand was approved by the Police Services Board last week, and is still to come before this council, I and others still do NOT agree with purchasing all of the 182 “X2” guns! I urge this council to question this more thoroughly and purchase the minimum amount for “special” services. Then evaluate the use and requirement of these tasers before you even think of purchasing the 2nd batch. The cost to the taxpayer of these additional issues is ludicrous, when we take into account that the crime rate is decreasing here and across the country.

Secondly, I have previously spoken about the number of employees that the Region employs. The Region should be planning, as happens in the private sector, not to replace an employee who terminates his/her employment. The Region can shift workload responsibilities and save considerable tax dollars for its citizens.

Thirdly, the cost of providing designated bike lanes is now in the stratosphere when one considers how few bicyclists there are in this region. Are you aware that only about 1% of residents use bicycles, and fewer still, for transportation from school or work? Why are we committing to millions of dollars for construction of bike lanes?

Another major cost to citizens of Waterloo Region, that has been well-hidden, is the cost of capital expenditures such as the old Waterloo Region Courthouse on Weber Street, which is being renovated at a cost of $10 - $15 million. Couldn’t this money have been better spent, or better yet, saved?
Now on to a slightly different topic – public engagement!

Most of you campaigned for more citizen engagement. Putting information on the Region’s website is NOT engaging! Engaging is – briefly putting forward a proposal, handing out information and allowing ample time for citizens to have a Q and A session with councillors and staff. Tweeting is NOT engaging – it is only sending out a message that the tweeter wants to get out via social media! Communication on the LRT has been sorely lacking.

This Council Chambers is where democracy should take place. You are to represent the citizens. This is NOT the forum for “efficiency”! This is where citizens should be able to express their opinions. Could not time limits for delegations be similar to that of Queen’s Park, for instance, where the limit is often fifteen or twenty minutes, or in the case of an expert delegation, longer?

We hope that efficiency in this “corporation” can take place starting with the CAO all the way throughout the organization regardless of what the employee’s responsibilities and job requirements are. Again, repeating myself, this chamber is where the democratic process needs to take place respectfully, regardless of time!

Other – Garbage Day – Monday 2/2 moved to Sat. 2/7

Questions and Analysis:

1. Analysis – weight of Garbage and # of truck loads on a regular 2 week period on a Monday

2. Weight of garbage and # of truck loads for Feb. 7 and 9

Thank you for your time.

Harald Drewitz, CMA

Chairperson, Kitchener Tax Watch Group

RW 2015 BUDGET PUBLIC INPUT EVENING FEBRUARY 11 2015
February 11, 2015

Nadine Quehl, member of the Alliance Against Poverty (AAP)
nquehl@uwaterloo.ca / (519) 998-7568

Transit accessibility and affordability are essential for a healthy community, and the Region's commitment to healthier transit options for our present and future population is very important. However, while we realize that sensible transit costs a lot of money, Grand River Transit's business-plan of recovering ever more of its operating costs from the fare box is unaffordable for the poorest who simply can't afford the current fares, not to mention any increases, much less the 10% increases that we have seen in the past. People living on social assistance receive extremely low payments that increase only 1% annually, and the minimum wage continues to be far short of a living wage.

Moreover, transit access is a human right; we have spoken to Council previously about the necessity of sustainable transport as a way to eradicate poverty, and the urgent need to address the mobility needs of people living in poverty, who are the primary users of public transit. We believe that Waterloo Region can be a leader in Transit Fare Equity. A particularly important issue of social justice – equal access to urban mobility – must be addressed, rather than maintaining the inequalities built into the public transit system. Research has shown that there are intimate links between the mobility of the poor and their range of housing and employment options. Small changes in public transit prices and service levels can make big differences to the mobility of those living in poverty. The relative immobility of the urban poor, especially women, is a central concern in their lives and severely limits their employment options; they must trade-off the time and cost required to access livelihood opportunities against security and quality of housing.[iii]

Waterloo Region, like all communities, has an obligation to lower fares for people on low incomes. Other cities are finally recognizing this, and we can be a leader and offer a model of Transit Access for All for other communities to follow. If indeed we are a community of barn-raisers, this should be a challenge we are well-equipped to accept.

We propose that Council instruct Grand River Transit to make available free bus-passes for all individuals receiving Ontario Works. People living on OW are required to go to meetings and search for work, and supportive and low cost housing is often located outside of the city centre; however, their access to transit, because of the cost prohibits job searching. While TAPP exists - Ontario Works Transit Affordability Pass Program, it is available only to OW participants who attend St. Louis School on a full time basis; this eliminates the majority of OW recipients.

We also propose subsidized passes costing $21 for all individuals receiving ODSP, as well as those whose income falls below the low-income cutoff. The cost of the TRIPP (Transit for Reduced Income Program) is currently twice as high as it should be (at $42), and these subsidized bus-passes are in very short supply, with a lengthy waitlist. Those on ODSP, and others with low incomes, require subsidized passes to ensure their inclusion in the community.

We also call for an immediate freeze on all fare increases for the next five years.
In addition, the current GRT strategy is to cut routes and schedules and focus on cost recovery, when we need to focus on extending transit to the poor and increasing ridership. Specifically, the cancellation of Route 18 — which took in part of Guelph Street, where the House of Friendship Emergency food hamper program is located, has caused undue hardship to our Region’s most vulnerable residents. The nearest bus to the warehouse is Route 6, which stops a few hundred metres away at Guelph and Lancaster streets. That’s a very long walk with a heavy food hamper. Thousands of low-income KW residents including the unemployed, the working poor, new immigrants, refugees and those relying on Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program, rely on the emergency food hamper to feed themselves and their families; the majority do not own cars and rely solely on bus service to get to and from the Guelph Street location. In April of last year, over 300 KW residents signed a petition asking for the cancellation of Route 18 to be reconsidered. Unfortunately GRT plans went ahead, and as expected, during this winter, the cancellation of the Route 18 bus has meant that some residents have been unable to use the food hamper, because the snow has prevented them from pushing a cart with the food hamper up to the bus stop. This is even more of a concern for people with mobility issues. GRT should make a small route-change in the bus line to the Food-Bank pick-up so that people can access it much more easily and safely.

AAP also urges Council to use development charges to stimulate the creation of affordable housing units, especially along the LRT route. That’s where people who are dependent on transit need to live. Improved transit won’t help lower income people the way it should, if they can’t afford to live near it. Both affordable housing and affordable public transit are essential to eliminate poverty. Once built, those living in poverty must also have access to the LRT, in a way that is affordable for them.

Finally, political pressure should be kept up on the province by Waterloo Region Council, for a better deal on day-to-day transit costs. Transit Fare prices need to be fair prices ... I am confident that Waterloo Region can be a leader in Transit Fare Equity and poverty elimination. In conclusion, I would like to officially request Council to prepare a budget proposal item investigating the costs of making transit fare free for those on OW, half of the current fare for those on low-incomes, ($21 instead of $42), to freeze fare increases for the next five years, and to make a small change to GRT Route #6, so that those living in poverty can easily and safely access the Emergency Food hamper. With these improvements to our transit system, fairness is achieved by ensuring access for everyone, and in particular, it addresses the immediate and vital step needed toward ending poverty. It also moves us toward producing a more egalitarian society and toward building an environmentally friendly community. Waterloo Region cannot afford NOT to make these changes.

Let’s make GRT — Grand River Transit, rather than what it is becoming known as: GRT — Growingly Regressive Transit.

Thank you.
Brayden McNeill, member of the Alliance Against Poverty
brayden.mcneill@gmail.com
(226)792-5906
www.allianceagainstpoverty.com

Good evening and thank you for having me here to speak to you about the Region of Waterloo’s growing living wage movement.

I’m confident that many of you are familiar with the concept, but for those who aren’t a living wage is the basic hourly wage required for someone to live a life of dignity. The wage is based on the needs of a family of four with two full-time working parents and taking local factors into consideration. The calculation takes into account nine categories for expenses; food, clothing and footwear, shelter, transportation, other family expenditures, child care, medical costs not covered by the government health care plan, adult education/training and contingencies. With the help of the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) communities across Ontario and Canada have begun calculating their living wages and implementing plans to lift people out of poverty.

Last year several companies and individuals from the area formed Living Wage Waterloo Region (LWWR). It’s a local organization whose mission is to encourage and help employers in our region adjust their pay scales and offer a living wage. LWWR and CCPA Ontario will also calculate a living wage every year in order to continuously adjust for the needs of community members. In the Waterloo Region the living wage is $16 per hour.

LWWR recognizes five levels of commitment to the living wage creedo. “Friends” of the living wage program commit to examining their pay scales within a year; “supporters” pay all their full time employees a living wage; “partners” pay their part time employees that living wage as well; “leaders” add contractors or students to the list; while living wage “champions” provide all direct and indirect employees a living wage. So the Region can easily begin to look at this initiative without “breaking the bank”, it’s just a matter of deciding when and how fast the Region would like to increase its living wage employee base. In fact, I know for a fact most of the people I’m addressing are being paid a living wage and many of you only work in these positions part-time.

In Ontario the minimum wage is $11 per hour. If you work full-time hours at that wage your annual salary puts you over 10% below the poverty line. That is completely unacceptable! Can anyone justify argue that a full-time worker, of any position, deserves to live in poverty? What kind of society surrenders the largest social class to poverty as a matter of policy? Most of them unfortunately, the wrong kind, but that’s beside the point. Unfortunately this council hasn’t got the mandate to raise the minimum wage, but you can do right by your own employees.

Since we’ve identified the $16 living wage, it becomes the responsibility of the employer to address the needs of the employee for a reasonable quality of life. As the official arbitrators of
social and economic life in our area, I believe that the Region of Waterloo has a special obligation to set a positive example in our wage scale.

There are many benefits to a living wage policy besides the obvious benefit for employees. Wages paid to employees are usually spent locally making a living wage good for the community at large. A living wage campaign also sets a tone for other discussions. Living wage and minimum wage discussions are complementary. A living wage policy can be good for employers as well, by reducing turnover rates, training and recruitment costs. As one of the largest employers in our area it would be a great benefit for the living wage movement if the Region were to adopt a living wage for its employees.

Paying a living wage would also help align the Region and its employees with the council’s own anti-poverty agenda. To quote the *Region of Waterloo Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction* report: "The financial costs of poverty, both direct and indirect, can impact areas such as health care, policing and corrections, and lost potential. The bottom line - we can’t afford poverty."

If this is true the Region certainly can’t afford to pay any employees minimum – or poverty wages.

I would like to officially request the council to prepare a budget proposal item investigating the costs of implementing a living wage policy for all full-time, part-time, student and contract employees.

I would also like to invite the council to contact the chair of the LWWR steering committee, Greg deGroot-Maggetti to ask about the process of becoming a living wage employer.

Thank you for having me here, let me leave you with a few words from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.;

"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar.
It comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring."

Living Wage Waterloo Region contact information:

Greg deGroot-Maggetti
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gregdegrootmaggetti@mcco.ca
livingwagewaterloo@gmail.com
Living Wage in Waterloo Region

Rent for 3 bedroom apartment, utilities, insurance, cable, internet and phone

1 vehicle and 20 bus tickets

Health, vision, dental, disability and life insurance

Clothing, footwear, bank fees, personal care, household supplies and reading, parental education, other

Nutritious food basket

Subsidized childcare & School Fees

Family membership at YMCA & museum, outings, 1 week camping trip 'staycation'

Strengthening our families
Supporting our economy
Building our community

Waterloo Region’s Living Wage
$16/hr.

LIVING WAGE WATERLOO REGION

For more information visit our website at www.livingwagewr.org or email livingwagewaterloo@gmail.com
Join Today!

LIVING WAGE
WATERLOO REGION

Becoming a
Living Wage
Employer

For more information on the Living Wage Employer Recognition Program, please visit the website:

www.livingwagewr.org

For detailed information on how the living wage for Waterloo Region was calculated, please refer to the document “Calculating a Living Wage for the Waterloo Region” on the website.

For more information on how to become a living wage employer, please refer to the document “A Guide to Becoming a Living Wage Employer” on the website.

Follow us on Twitter @livingwagewr

Like us on Facebook /livingwagewaterloo

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Living Wage
Waterloo Region
Celebrating living wage employers in our community.
What is a living wage?

A living wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their family’s basic expenses within their community. It is calculated based on a family of four with both adults working full-time, year-round at 37.5 hours per week.

The living wage includes expenses such as food, clothing, shelter, childcare, transportation, medical expenses, recreation and a modest vacation.

The living wage does not include retirement savings, debt repayment, home ownership, savings for children’s education, or anything other than the smallest cushion for emergencies or hard times.

Waterloo Region's current living wage rate is $16.00/hour for employees not receiving any non-mandatory benefits. If your organization provides any benefits please contact the Living Wage program for a personalized calculation for your organization.

Why pay a living wage?

Living Wage Employers are responsible employers who care about their employees and the community. They recognize that paying a living wage represents a critical investment in the long-term prosperity of the economy by fostering a dedicated, skilled and healthy workforce.

The Waterloo Region Living Wage Employer Program recognizes and celebrates employers who pay employees a living wage.

Employers paying a living wage experience:
- Decreased turnover,
- Decreased absenteeism,
- Increased retention and productivity, and
- Savings on rehiring and retraining.

5 Levels of Recognition for Living Wage Employers

1. FRIEND: Committed to determining how many employees are earning a living wage and reducing the number of non-living wage employees within a year. (No decal)

2. SUPPORTER: All full-time employees earn a living wage. Committed to begin reducing the number of non-living wage part-time employees within a year.

3. PARTNER: All full-time and part-time employees earn a living wage. Committed to begin reducing the number of non-living wage employees within a year.

4. LEADER: All full-time and part-time employees, including student positions or contractors, earn a living wage. Committed to begin reducing the number of non-living wage employees within a year.

5. CHAMPION: All full-time and part-time employees, including students, earn a living wage, and all of our contractors pay a living wage. Committed to championing the living wage within our sector/industry and within the community.
Why is an $11 minimum wage still too low?

Thanks to more than a year of organizing across the province, the Ontario minimum wage finally went up to $11 on June 1, 2014.

However this increase still leaves workers 15% below the poverty line without enough money to pay the bills. That’s why we are fighting for a $14 minimum wage which would bring workers 10% above the poverty line.

Ontario workers median wages have stagnated since the 1980s, while incomes for the top 1% grew by 71%.

Low wage workers are getting less of the pie. If minimum wages had grown since 1976 as fast as labour productivity has grown, then the average minimum wages today would be $16 per hour. That means that workers are getting paid less for the value of our labour. Despite the increases in minimum wage from 2004 to 2010, Ontario’s current minimum wage represents 15% of hourly output of the average Canadian worker – down from 25% in the late 1970s.

Cost of living going up, value of minimum wage going down

Prices are going up while wages stay the same. Between 2010 when minimum wage was frozen and 2013, the cost of essentials has gone up as demonstrated in table below while the purchasing value of minimum wage has declined 6.5%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum wage</th>
<th>Increase from 2010 to 2012</th>
<th>Decrease from 2010 to 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baked goods</td>
<td>11.9% increase</td>
<td>6.5% decrease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>21% increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen meat</td>
<td>16.1% increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh fruit</td>
<td>7.6% increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>7.2% increase</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>24% increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transit</td>
<td>9.5% increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Will raising the minimum wage actually hurt low income workers because employers will cut jobs?

Employers have long said that increasing minimum wages will cause job loss. But over the past 20 years, economic research seems to show that minimum wage increases do not lead to job loss. In a substantial overview of the economic literature, John Schmitt of the Centre for Economic Policy and Research finds that the majority of recent studies in the U.S. conclude that the effects on employment are extremely small with some studies showing small positive impacts on jobs.

There has been less research done in Canada. Studies done by Morley Gunderson and colleagues in Canada do not demonstrate job loss; rather they project potential slowing of youth employment growth. Some may think that even a small potential impact on employment should rule out minimum wage increases. But when you look at what is happening in our economies that fear does not pan out. Most provinces and territories in Canada increased minimum wages during the big recession of 2007-09 without attributable job loss. In fact, Ontario increased minimum wage from $7.75 to $10.25 and added almost 150,000 jobs to sales and services sector between 2006 and 2012 where minimum wages dominate.
Will raising the minimum wage hurt small business?

Less than one-third of minimum wage earners are employed in small business (20 or less employees). In fact, the majority of minimum wage workers are employed of large businesses with 100 or more workers (54%). While many low wage workers struggled to make ends meet at these companies, employers have seen their profits increase. For example, Pizza Pizza increased profits by 37% last year.

Raising the minimum wage will put more money into the hands of low income individuals and families who will then spend that money putting millions into local economies and local business.

Isn’t our economy too weak to increase the minimum wage?

A strong minimum wage can boost our economy. Consumer spending is the engine that powers our domestic economy. Household spending drives 54% of our gross domestic product. Raising wages for low and moderate income workers is an effective strategy for boosting demand and helping Ontario’s economic recovery. Working families spend wages on necessities at local businesses, putting money back into local economies.

Raising the minimum wage is a key strategy for boosting consumer spending without increasing provincial or federal budget deficits or increasing costs to taxpayers.

More and more decent jobs are being replaced by low-wage work. The fastest growing jobs in Ontario are in the service sector, where wages are the lowest. Even before the recession, our economy was shifting to lower wage work. Raising the floor of wages in these growing sectors will help workers, put money back into these sectors and maintain level playing field for employers.

Do minimum wage increases help ‘the poor’?

Some people suggest that minimum wage only affects young people and not low income people. Low-wage jobs are not just a problem for young workers, or those who hold retail or fast food jobs. Between 2004 and 2012, the number of minimum wage workers aged 35 years and over has increased by 10%, rising from 17% to 27%. Jobs across many industries have wages near the bottom-end of the pay scale; jobs such as bank tellers, security guards, childcare workers, personal home support workers, teaching assistants and flight attendants.

Raising the floor of wages pulls up the wages of low wage workers, not just those at minimum wage.

Increasing minimum wage helps improve equality by closing the gap at the bottom of the labour market for recent immigrants, women, aboriginals, people with disabilities and racialized workers.

Excerpt from Mary Cornish’s A Living Wage As a Human Right:

"Substantial discriminatory pay gaps permeate the entire labour market spectrum, from less precarious to highly precarious work. At a national level, Canadian women earn, on average for full-time work, 71 cents for every dollar earned by men — amongst the highest gaps in the world. In Canada, racialized workers are paid 77.5 cents for every dollar that non-racialized workers are paid. Racialized men in Ontario earn 73.6 cents for every dollar earned by non-racialized men. In Toronto, 59% of poor families are from racialized groups. Racialized families are 2 to 4 times more likely than non-racialized families to fall below the low-income cut-off. Persons living with disabilities earn vastly less. The median income for Aboriginal peoples is $18,962 — 30% lower than the $27,097 median income for the rest of Canadians. Both persons with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples also suffer the most severe discrimination because they face so many barriers gaining equal access to a job. Poverty among immigrants to Canada is increasing, even though their education levels are higher than ever. Migrant workers are increasingly used in Canada in many sectors, but their wages remain very low and their working conditions extremely precarious."
Employers argue that the government should just strengthen the working income tax benefit? Would that help?

The Working Income Tax Benefit provides tax credits to low income workers with dependents. Employers suggest that increasing this tax credit is a better way of helping out low income workers than increasing wages. Unfortunately the tax credit only helps those that have dependents and not individuals. Also, the tax credit is paid for by taxpayers meaning that taxpayers are subsidizing employers who do not pay wages that are sufficient to live above the poverty line. That is why we as a society brought in minimum wage laws to ensure that employers do not take unfair advantage of employees with little bargaining power. The minimum wage is a strong public policy tool to ensure that the minimum wage is sufficient to bring workers out of poverty and contribute to economic growth.

How does minimum wage affect social assistance rates?

Current social assistance rates in Ontario are no where near what people need to cover basic necessities such as food, rent, utilities, clothing and transportation. The minimum wage effectively acts as a “ceiling” for social assistance rates. Pulling up the minimum wage floor could help raise the ceiling on social assistance rates.

For information: Mary Gellatly, Parkdale Community Legal Services – 416-531-2411 ext 246 or gellatlym@lao.on.ca

9 Yalinizyn note 1
Presentation to Region of Waterloo Budget Hearing [11/2/15]

by Richard Walsh, Alliance Against Poverty [rwalsh@wlu.ca]

I’m sure, councillors, you would all agree that with the collapse of Out of the Cold programs the need for more social supports for the homeless remains urgent and dire, especially with this endless winter. But, as I emphasized in my presentation last month on behalf of the Alliance Against Poverty, what’s crucial for the residents of Waterloo Region is strengthening the range of housing options for low-income individuals and families as well as for the homeless. But we in the Alliance Against Poverty are struck by the budget line in your Preliminary Budget Book of a 2.4% decrease in the category of “Assisted and Affordable Housing.” If you pass your budget with that decrease, you will be doing a great disservice to the several thousand people on the waiting list in this region for assisted and affordable housing. Assisted and affordable housing for all the Region’s residents, after all, is a basic human right.

As you know, there are very significant health, mental health, and social consequences of unmet housing needs that drive up other costs. As your “Region of Waterloo Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction” stated: “The financial costs of poverty, both direct and indirect, can impact areas such as health care, policing and corrections, and lost potential. The bottom line - we can’t afford poverty.” I can tell you as a university researcher who published on the issue of housing for individuals with severe and long-term mental health problems, on a team led by my colleague, Dr. Geoff Nelson, that safe, secure, and affordable housing is strongly correlated with stable and even improved mental health, which, of course, lowers collateral costs.
However, there are major deficiencies in your new plan for affordable housing. For example, the plan simply sets what you term a “realistic” goal based on uncertain funding from senior levels of government. But, as your document states, the reality is there is an “ongoing persistent need for affordable housing with limited funding opportunities.” Nevertheless, the inadequate housing options in this Region are remediable, because there are viable Canadian precedents. Two municipalities – the City of Vancouver (pop. c. 600,000) and Medicine Hat, Alberta (pop. c. 61,000) – ensure that their most vulnerable residents, the homeless, have safe and secure housing. Furthermore, in Halifax, Mayor Mike Savage and his Council formed a partnership with the United Way, the Affordable Housing Coalition of Nova Scotia, and housing developers from the private sector to initiate improvements in housing and homelessness. If these municipalities can do it, so can you on behalf of our most needy residents.

As I noted last month, you have made some progress in dealing with the need for assisted and affordable housing across the range of housing options. We recognize that you added 2000 units over 13 years. That’s to your credit. However, while important, this achievement still falls very short of meeting the growing need for safe and secure assisted and affordable housing. As your Budget document states, “The demand for affordable and supportive housing is greater than supply.” Actually, the demand is far greater than the supply. Accordingly, speaking on behalf of the thousands of the “underhoused” and homeless residents in Waterloo Region, we see three major problems and one minor one in your plan, for which we recommend solutions.

#1. According to Deb Schlichter, the Region’s Director of Housing, the waiting list for assisted and affordable housing consists of 3,000 people, which includes seniors, families, and single non-seniors; the greatest need is for one-bedroom accommodation. If you pass your Budget as proposed with any decrease to housing, you not only decrease the rate of new units
reaching the market, but the growing demand for affordable housing will continue to expand as the population of the Region increases. Thus, you will fall even farther behind in meeting housing needs, all during a precarious time of austerity budgets and weak employment. Your operating principle should be the documented housing needs for the Region’s residents across the range of housing types required (emergency shelters, supportive housing, and affordable housing mixed with market-rent units). These needs should determine the funding required, rather than the previous funding levels, which as the needs escalate, are increasingly insufficient.

Therefore, we urge you to follow the lead of Vancouver, Medicine Hat, and Halifax, and invest in the well-being of our least fortunate citizens by developing a robust assisted and affordable housing strategy that does not rely chiefly on the dubious financial support of provincial and federal governments and that eliminates the waiting list by the year 2019. Besides, building new housing stock of this sort will have the positive economic side-effect of increased employment and will reduce collateral costs.

For example, according to CBC/KW, a recent Region survey showed that in the last half of 2014 over $300,000 were spent on hospital emergency room visits and ambulances for homeless people requiring care. At this rate we’re talking over $600,000 annually spent on emergency trips for homeless people, but most of that cost would be eliminated by building sufficient shelters, because for those people who are housed, as your housing staff know, the number of emergency trips is significantly reduced. So, it’s clear that building permanent housing for everyone requiring affordable housing makes both humane and economic sense.

#2. A major barrier to building affordable housing, again according to a CBC/KW story, is too much government red-tape. The owner of a local development company, who has built 175
affordable housing units in the Region, stated, "When we first started we were building within six months of finding a piece of property. Now it's taking two and three years to get through the planning... it's a long and drawn out process." Some of the obstacles he encountered are the difficulty of finding quality land within the right building zones, being taxed on government grants, and shouldering the costs of re-developing existing properties.

If the Region is not planning to construct the necessary housing but to contract with private developers, which like all public-private partnerships, as the provincial auditor reported several months ago, will cost the public significantly more than public development would, doesn’t it make sense to lessen or remove these obstacles to smooth the way for investment in affordable housing?

#3. Instead of simply noting insufficient federal and provincial support, advocate for it by passing a resolution on the need for national and provincial housing strategies for assisted and affordable housing and convey your resolution to the MPs who represent us in Ottawa and the MPPS who represent us at Queen’s Park. Besides, federal and provincial budgets are coming, sooner or later. Tell the federal and provincial governments to reorganize their budgets to ensure that a national and provincial, publicly supported, housing strategy materializes so that everyone can experience safe, secure, and affordable housing. This step is crucial, because local and regional planning is weakened when funding is uncertain.

Now, the minor and, hopefully, temporary problem: Besides housing, many people living in poverty, such as but not only homeless people, do not have any safe and secure place to store their possessions. A member of our group, the Alliance Against Poverty, who fits this description, suggests that the Region provide a bank of lockers for this purpose in central
locations, say the bus terminals. Having this service available would be a huge relief for many people living in poverty.

To sum up, affordable, safe, and secure housing across the range of housing types (i.e., emergency shelters, supportive housing, and affordable housing mixed with market-rent units) is a basic human right. However, more and more residents of the Region will be denied this right, because your current plan not only cannot meet the demand but will fall much farther behind relative to the increasing demand. The moral thing to do is increase the funding each year to ensure that all residents can be safely and affordably housed.

Given all the considerations I have noted and the three major and one minor problem that I identified, I request that Council prepare a budget-proposal item investigating the costs of developing affordable, safe, and secure housing, including storage space, across the range of housing types required for all 3,000 people currently on the waiting list and for the projected number of additional people who will require affordable housing to the year 2019.

Thank you very much for your consideration.