

Candidate Details

Anna Meksavanh

For Regional Councillor (Kitchener)

What is your motivation for running for election?

My motivation for running for Regional Council in Kitchener is my strong call to action to ensure our community grows in the right direction, a direction that uplifts all who live here. I've always been engaged and interested in public service from a young age. My family came to Canada as refugees and relied on government support and community services. I value what was poured into me from my community, and always wanted to give that back in how I live my life and in the work I do.

As a longtime resident, I have seen the intense growth in our community and have become familiar with the associated growing pains. I have concerns over affordability, from groceries, to housing, the struggle to find gainful employment, and the lack of healthcare services. I want us to all feel safe in our neighbourhoods and support the human rights of all the residents of the Region. I want our children to be able to live and work in their own community, and for us to be able to age in place without the worry of whether we can continue to afford living here.

I want to ensure our local voice and priorities are represented in our municipal government, these are the priorities I want to represent in our community:

1. Affordability
2. Smart & Sustainable Growth
3. Preserving Our Rural & Urban Identity
4. Transparent & Accountable Government

When making a decision I will always prioritize:

1. The Voice of the Community
2. Fiscal Responsibility
3. The Impact on Current & Future Residents

I believe my experience working at the Region for 11 years, community involvement, and being a lifelong resident, combined with my fierce work ethic makes me a good advocate for our community at Regional Council.

What are your top three priority issues you want to address at Regional Council?

1. Affordability
2. Smart & Sustainable Growth
3. Preserving Our Rural & Urban Identity
4. Transparent & Accountable Government

What is your vision for each of the issues you identified above?

1. Affordability

- I want to create opportunities in labour for our community, that provides gainful employment for our citizens now and in the future.

- I want to make decisions that foster the belief that housing is a human right in our community.

- I want to make decisions that will allow all our children to live and work in their community, and ensure you and I can age in place.

2. Smart & Sustainable Growth

- I want to ensure our community grows in a responsible way that uplifts all in our community, keeps our neighbourhoods safe, and respects our resources and infrastructure.
- I want to protect the quality public services our community relies on.
- I want to build a socially strong community, where our current and future residents have access to things like; a family doctor, mental health support, affordable housing, affordable childcare, and pathways to gainful employment.

3. Preserving Our Rural & Urban Identity

- I want to make decisions that respect and value both our rural and urban communities.
- I will make decisions to help protect our rural and green spaces, reduce urban sprawl, and focus on smart growth.

4. Transparent & Accountable Government

- I will engage with our community to make the Regional government more accessible and approachable to citizens.
- I will mobilize our community to ensure that decisions made represent our local priorities.
- I want to make community services and resources easy to find and access.
- I want to foster partnerships with local businesses and groups to leverage our resources, to benefit our citizens financially and provide services we can all benefit from." "I will champion an inclusive, people-centered, Housing-First strategy that treats safe housing as a fundamental human right.

What tangible steps would you take to increase the supply of affordable housing across the Region?

I am prepared to deepen our partnerships with trusted non-profits in our community already doing the work. This is to ensure stable resources for specialized street outreach, rapid permanent housing, and wrap-around mental health support.

Housing insecurity is a systemic challenge shared across provincial and federal jurisdictions, not just in our community alone. I am committed to mitigating the financial impact on local residents. By aggressively pursuing higher-level government funding.

To the benefit of our entire community, I will champion the adoption of the Affordable Housing Strategy Advisory Committee's definition of true affordability: housing capped at 30% of a minimum-wage income.

We need to work together with the common understanding that housing is a fundamental human right, and we must treat all our residents with the dignity they are entitled to."

What is your plan to expand access to affordable, high-quality child care and create additional child care spaces?

Waterloo Region's childcare system is in a crisis that has created an unfair two-tier reality. The current system cannot meet our community's needs. Even if the region hits its official 2026 targets, two out of three children will be left behind. Lower fees made demand skyrocket, but a severe shortage of educators means physical daycares cannot run at full capacity.

As your Regional Councillor, I will fix this with an actionable plan. This requires zero property tax hikes, relying instead on reallocating existing local funds, capturing structural savings from past centre closures, and drawing on upper-tier government funding.

1) Immediate Relief: I would like to fast-track existing home daycares into the Region's licensed network. By using available provincial startup grants to offer a \$1,500 onboarding grant for safety audits and reallocating local childcare surpluses for a provider wage top-up, we can quickly open thousands of affordable \$10-a-day spaces without waiting years for construction.

2) Economic Strategy: I will align our economic development goals with family needs by advocating for regional efforts to actively attract and incentivize employers that support young families through flexible hybrid work, on-site childcare partnerships, or robust parental leave top-ups. A family-friendly economy takes pressure off municipal infrastructure.

3) Long-Term Relief: I will lobby higher levels of government to introduce a Basic Income for caregivers, funded through federal and provincial tax bases. This eliminates career and retirement penalties for stay-at-home parents (overwhelmingly women) by compensating unpaid caregiving. Giving families enough financial security to avoid poverty if they choose to stay home naturally shortens waitlists for parents who need to return to external work. We must stop waiting for a broken system to fix itself. It is time for practical municipal solutions and bold long-term vision.

What is your position on the Provincial government's efforts to increase private sector involvement in drinking water and wastewater services

"I strongly oppose the Provincial government's efforts to increase private sector involvement in drinking water and wastewater services.

This position is rooted firmly in our region's vision statement: water is a shared natural resource that does not belong to any single individual or corporation. Water is a fundamental human need required for survival, and the infrastructure that delivers it must remain entirely under public control. Essential public services should never be run like a private business or left to supply and demand.

As local residents, we are not corporate ""stakeholders"" or customers buying a commodity; we are citizens and community members. We invest our hard-earned tax dollars directly into the maintenance, safety, and care of our collective water system.

Because of this, there is absolutely no place for profit-driven motives or private sector extraction in the management of our water. Every dollar generated or invested into these

services must remain within the public system, entirely dedicated to strengthening, protecting, and upgrading our public infrastructure for the benefit of all residents.

What role should the Region play in protecting publicly owned water services?

The Region must act as the absolute guardian of our water systems by keeping them 100% publicly owned, operated, and funded. Because water is a shared natural resource necessary for life, the Region cannot treat it like a private business. We must be a fierce advocate for this vision, actively resisting outside pressures to privatize or outsource these vital operations. Our job is to ensure that every single tax dollar paid by our residents goes straight back into strengthening, protecting, and upgrading our public water infrastructure.

The Region should:

- 1) Introduce Council Motions: Put forward formal resolutions to explicitly bar the privatization, outsourcing, or leasing of municipal water and wastewater services.
- 2) Secure Financial Transparency: Request a transparent staff report to ensure all local water rates and utility fees are fully and exclusively reinvested back into public infrastructure upgrades.
- 3) Championing Source Water Protection: Introduce a formal Council motion calling on the Province to establish a Bluebelt over our groundwater moraines and use municipal planning bylaws to strictly limit large-scale private water takings.

Water is a fundamental public asset. The Region's role is to firmly stand against privatization, protect our local tax dollars, and establish strict geographical safeguards like the Bluebelt to ensure our drinking water remains safe, accessible, and publicly owned for generations to come.

What forms of inequity do you believe are the most significant challenges in our community? How would you address them?

Currently the biggest inequity facing our community is too many people cannot find or afford a safe place to live, while our unhoused neighbours are being left behind. Homelessness is not a personal or moral failure; it is the visible symptom of a deeply unequal housing market and a failure of our social safety nets.

We face three major housing problems that we must fix:

- 1) The Cost Crisis: Rents are rising much faster than wages. Many families spend more than half their paychecks just to keep a roof over their heads. This means a single emergency, like getting sick or losing a job can push them into homelessness.
- 2) Fairness and Discrimination: Black, Indigenous, and racialized people, as well as LGBTQ+ youth and people with disabilities, are much more likely to become homeless. On top of that, many landlords refuse to rent to people who rely on government support or have bad credit.

3) Not Enough Help: We simply do not have enough truly affordable housing. At the same time, some neighborhoods fight against building shelters or supportive housing near them because of unfair stereotypes about unhoused people.

To fix this, we need to stop just managing the crisis with temporary emergency shelters. Instead, we must use a 'Housing First' approach. This means we treat housing as a basic human right. We must give people a safe, permanent place to live first, because it is much easier to heal, find a job, and get healthy when you aren't fighting to survive on the street.

I will advocate building housing regular people can afford by allowing ""missing middle"" homes like townhomes and triplexes while locking down a strict boundary to stop urban sprawl. I want to ensure developers, not taxpayers, pay for new infrastructure, permanently protect agricultural lands, and adopt the Affordable Housing Strategy Advisory Committee's definition of true affordability: housing capped at 30% of a minimum-wage income.

What organizations, initiatives, or movements have you supported that work to address systemic discrimination or oppression? Please describe your involvement.

I support the fight against discrimination and oppression through my work, my community, and how I raise my family.

Here is how I have been involved:

1) At Work & In the Union: When I worked for the region, I helped organize Day of Pink events in my department to stand up against bullying and discrimination. I also served as the co-chair of the mobilization committee for my union, CUPE 1883, where I worked to bring members together, amplify worker voices, and fight for fairness.

2) Through Lived Experience: As a racialized person, I recognize that navigating institutional spaces is an active form of disruption against systemic barriers. I place great value on the importance of representation, choosing to take up space intentionally, and speaking up to challenge discriminatory practices or microaggressions when necessary.

3) In the Community: I am currently re-engaging with my local labour council to support workers' rights. I am also learning about the important work being done by the Centre for Mutual Wellbeing, Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region, and MT Space.

4) At Home: For the past eight years, I have been home raising my young children. I believe that teaching people to be anti-racist and kind starts at home. As a parent, I take responsibility for teaching my children right from wrong, showing them how to be compassionate, and helping them understand how to uplift others in their community.

Can you commit to publicly speaking up in favour of these demands, including at Council meetings?

Yes