

Candidate Details

Joe Gowing
Regional Councillor

What is your motivation for running for election?

"My motivation is simple: I believe local government works best when elected officials are accessible, willing to listen, and prepared to act.

During my time on Regional Council, I have tried to bring a proactive rather than reactive approach to decision-making. I ask questions, challenge assumptions, look at the evidence and try to find practical solutions that improve services while respecting the taxpayers who fund them.

The Region delivers some of the services people depend on most, housing, child care, public health, water and wastewater, transit, social services and many others. Those services are ultimately delivered by people. I want to continue working to make Waterloo Region affordable, sustainable and inclusive while ensuring our employees have the resources and support needed to provide quality public services.

I am running because there is still significant work to do, and I believe I can continue making a positive contribution."

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

My three priorities are: 1. Housing affordability and homelessness 2. Protecting our water supply and planning infrastructure for responsible growth 3. Keeping essential public services strong, accessible and financially sustainable These issues are interconnected\.

Growth without infrastructure creates pressure on services\.

Housing costs affect families and our workforce\.

Under\-resourced public services ultimately cost communities more when problems are allowed to become crises\.

My approach is to plan ahead, use evidence to make decisions and invest where we can demonstrate a meaningful benefit to residents

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

"On housing, my vision is a Region where people at different income levels can find a safe and appropriate place to live. That means increasing affordable and supportive housing, preserving existing affordable units, encouraging more housing choices and working with governments, non-profits and the private sector to increase supply.

On water and infrastructure, I believe growth must be supported by infrastructure that can actually sustain it. Waterloo Region has a unique and precious groundwater system. Protecting it must remain a priority while we invest in conservation, new supply, infrastructure renewal and responsible long-term planning.

For public services, my vision is a Region that delivers reliable, high-quality services while remaining affordable for residents. Good public services require good people. Fiscal responsibility should not simply mean cutting positions or reducing services; it means making sure every dollar is being used effectively, investing in the workforce and infrastructure we need, and constantly looking for better ways to deliver services."

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

"There is no single solution, so I support using several tools at the same time.

I would continue moving forward with the work I have supported on exploring a Municipal Housing Corporation, particularly as a vehicle for affordable and lower-income rental housing.

I support making appropriate Region-owned land available for affordable housing, partnering with non-profit and co-operative housing providers, preserving existing affordable rental housing and making better use of existing buildings where opportunities for acquisition or master leasing make financial sense.

I also support incentives such as property-tax relief tied to genuine, measurable affordability and working with area municipalities to reduce unnecessary delays in housing approvals.

We also need housing across the spectrum, supportive housing, deeply affordable housing, affordable rental housing, missing-middle housing and market housing.

Most importantly, we should measure results by how many homes people can actually afford, not simply by the number of units approved."

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

"Affordable child care is both a family issue and an economic issue. Parents cannot participate fully in the workforce if they cannot find reliable child care.

The Region is already working toward thousands of additional CWELCC spaces, with new spaces targeted toward communities with the greatest need. I want to ensure that expansion continues and that we pay attention not only to the number of licensed spaces, but also to whether families can actually access them.

That means supporting sustainable operating funding, working with public and non-profit providers, addressing workforce recruitment and retention, identifying areas with the greatest shortages and looking for opportunities to incorporate child care into community facilities and new developments.

We also need to advocate strongly to the provincial and federal governments for predictable funding. Creating spaces on paper is not enough. We need qualified people to operate them and a system that providers can sustainably participate in"

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

"I do not support privatizing our drinking water or wastewater systems.

Water is an essential public service, and decisions regarding its operation should be based on public health, environmental protection, reliability and long-term community needs, not the financial return available to a private operator.

I am also cautious about models that move water services into separate corporate structures, even where ownership technically remains public. Any change must preserve transparency, public accountability and meaningful municipal control.

There may be appropriate roles for private contractors in specific projects or specialized work, as happens today, but ownership, control and accountability for our core water and wastewater systems should remain firmly in public hands."

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

"A very strong one.

Waterloo Region has an additional responsibility because so much of our drinking water comes from groundwater. Protecting both the resource and the public system that delivers it should be treated as a fundamental responsibility of Regional government.

I support maintaining public ownership and accountability, investing in our employees and infrastructure, protecting groundwater recharge areas, strengthening water conservation, planning responsibly for future supply and ensuring major decisions remain transparent to the public.

I have also pushed for stronger safeguards around groundwater and private-well impacts as the Region considers future water supply and development decisions.

Our water system should be managed for the next generation, not simply the next budget year."

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

"Economic inequality and housing insecurity are among the most visible inequities in Waterloo Region, but they intersect with many others, including systemic barriers experienced by Indigenous, Black and racialized residents, newcomers, people with disabilities and other marginalized communities.

Government cannot solve every inequity by itself, but it has a responsibility to ensure its own programs, policies and services do not create additional barriers.

I support continuing the Region's reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion work; improving accessibility; listening directly to communities affected by our decisions; and using data to identify where residents are experiencing unequal outcomes.

I also believe we need to address poverty upstream rather than continually paying for its consequences downstream. That includes affordable housing, accessible public services and advocating to senior governments for policies such as a basic income that can provide people with greater economic stability.

Equity should not simply be a statement in a strategic plan. It should be reflected in how we design services, allocate resources and measure results."

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

"Much of my involvement has come through public and community service rather than membership in a particular advocacy organization.

As a Regional Councillor, I have supported continuing the Region's work on reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion and believe that Indigenous relationship-building and Truth and Reconciliation must remain part of the Region's long-term priorities.

I have made strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities one of the priorities I want to continue working on during the next term. To me, reconciliation requires more than acknowledgements or ceremonial statements; it requires listening, building relationships and considering Indigenous perspectives when government makes decisions.

I have also recently engaged with the work of Basic Income Waterloo Region. I support advocating to the Province for a basic-income approach as one potential tool for addressing poverty and the systemic economic barriers that affect many residents.

Throughout my community work, I have tried to create organizations and services where people are treated with dignity and respect regardless of their background. I also recognize that this is an area where elected officials must continue to listen and learn. I do not claim to have all the answers, but I am committed to doing the work and ensuring that people who have historically been excluded have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect them."

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

Yes