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Candidate Details

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Simon Guthrie

Regional Councillor (Kitchener)

What is your motivation for running for election?

I'm running because I believe Waterloo Region can govern better: more transparently, more collaboratively, and with a stronger focus on long-term sustainability. Regional Council makes decisions that shape our essential services, infrastructure, housing, transit, water systems, and quality of life. I want to bring an evidence-based, relational and consensus-seeking approach to those decisions, while helping rebuild trust between residents, Regional staff and their democratic institutions. For me, sustainability means making choices that are environmentally, socially, financially and democratically sustainable for the years ahead.

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

My three top priorities are making Regional government work better, connecting the Region, and securing our future.

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

I want to improve how Regional government works: stronger transparency, better collaboration, clearer accountability, and a serious conversation about whether our current two-tier municipal structure still serves residents well.

I want to connect the Region by strengthening public transit and active transportation, completing ION to Cambridge, improving integration between modes, and advancing the Kitchener Transit Hub.

Finally, I want to secure our future by identifying vulnerabilities in essential systems such as water, infrastructure and public services, and making decisions through a lens of environmental, social, financial and democratic sustainability.

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

I would focus on the tools that are actually available to Regional government: protecting and expanding the supply of community and supportive housing, using Regional land strategically for affordable housing, and working with lower-tier municipalities and non-profit housing providers to speed up projects that meet clear affordability targets.

I would also support stronger measures to prevent homelessness in the first place, including housing stabilization and supports for people at risk of losing their homes. Where development depends on Regional infrastructure, I would favour agreements and incentives that produce genuinely affordable units rather than simply increasing the overall housing supply.

Finally, I would push for sustained advocacy to the provincial and federal governments for the capital funding and operating support needed to build affordable housing at the scale our Region requires.

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

I would support the Region continuing to expand its role in making licensed child care more accessible, affordable and reliable, including by increasing the number of spaces available through the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system.

That means working with public and non-profit providers to add spaces where demand is highest, supporting workforce recruitment and retention so new spaces can actually be staffed, and partnering with local post-secondary institutions to strengthen training pathways for Early Childhood Educators and help build the workforce needed for expansion."

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

I am strongly opposed to the privatization of critical public infrastructure and services, including drinking water and wastewater systems. Safe water is an essential public service, not a commodity, and decisions about its operation should be driven by public health, environmental stewardship, reliability and long-term affordability rather than private profit.

I would be cautious about arrangements that increasingly outsource the operation, management or financing of essential water infrastructure to private companies. These systems require strong public accountability, transparency and a skilled, stable public-sector workforce with the institutional knowledge needed to operate and maintain them safely.

Waterloo Region is already confronting a crisis around water capacity. This is precisely the time to strengthen our public systems, invest in the people who operate them, and maintain democratic control over decisions that will affect residents for generations.

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

The Region should be a strong defender of public ownership, public operation and democratic accountability for our water and wastewater systems. These are essential services, and decisions about them should remain focused on public health, reliability, environmental protection and affordability.

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

The most significant inequities in our community are economic insecurity, lack of affordable housing, unequal access to essential services, and the barriers faced by people who are already marginalized by disability, race, immigration status, poverty or homelessness.

These inequities are often interconnected. A person who cannot afford stable housing is also more likely to face challenges accessing transportation, health care, employment and other supports. Regional policy should therefore focus on reducing those barriers rather than treating each issue in isolation.

I support expanding affordable and supportive housing, strengthening public transit and community services, improving access to child care, and protecting strong publicly delivered services. I also believe the Region should assess major decisions through a social-sustainability lens: asking who benefits, who bears the costs, and whether a policy will narrow or widen existing disparities.

Above all, Regional government should make sure that people most affected by its decisions have meaningful opportunities to participate in shaping them.

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

Much of my community and professional work has involved addressing exclusion, inequality and the systems that leave some people with less access to security, services and decision-making.

I worked with Mennonite Central Committee Ontario as a Social Inclusion Program Associate, supporting work focused on inclusion, community participation and reducing barriers faced by marginalized people. I have also been involved with Project Ploughshares, where my work has been grounded in peacebuilding, human security and addressing the structures that contribute to violence and injustice.

As President and Board Chair of Community Kitchen Cooperative KW, I have worked in an organization built around food security, dignity and community participation. That experience has reinforced for me that poverty and exclusion are not simply individual problems; they are shaped by systems and public policy.

My involvement with St. John the Evangelist in downtown Kitchener has also brought me into sustained contact with members of the unsheltered community. Through that work, I have seen how homelessness intersects with poverty, stigma, mental health, addiction, disability and barriers to accessing services. Those relationships have strengthened my conviction that people experiencing homelessness should be treated with dignity and included in decisions that directly affect their lives.

Across these roles, my approach has been to listen to people most affected, build relationships across differences, and look for practical changes that increase participation, dignity and access to essential supports.

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

Yes