

**Trudy Beaulne**  
**Social Development Centre Waterloo Region/  
Previously the Social Planning Council of Waterloo Region**

Thank you. The Mayor, Council, staff, members of the community in the audience here. I'm speaking on the recommendation to defund our organization, half of the major portion of it for this coming year, and most of it for 2017. I want to highlight, first of all, all the areas of our 2016 request. I want to clarify why a local community information centre is important to our local community. And I hopefully will be able to address the questions that were raised at the committee meeting last week that we weren't able to respond to. I do have a PowerPoint presentation, but I brought it in too late for it to be up there. There is a package. Actually we're giving you two. One is a package with material, and it blew away in the wind. That landed up in a mud puddle on the way over here. One of those great ironies. There is a second package that we thought would be good for additional information we're not going to speak to, but it's a package with some of the resources that we have created to make available to the community. So our 2015 agreement that we were funded \$74 000 thousand and, my apologies here, the old eyes, \$333 dollars. Our request in 2016 was for a total of \$100 000 thousand which was the request we make every year since funding has happened in 2010, which is \$75,817, which is a 2% cost of living increase over the the 2015 grant request, and an addition of \$24,183 dollars to cover the cost of a part-time social planner to help us convene forums, which the community is asking us to do more of. The 2016 staff recommendation that there be no dollars for the social planner to support those forums, that \$31,779 dollars, which is 50% of the 2015 grant, for community service and development be funded in 2016, and zero in 2017, and that \$10,829 dollars is retained to support the role we play as partners in the Festival of Neighbourhoods. The defunding rationale, from what we could understand, were three main points: that the city corporation does not need a local information service, these needs will be met by the region of waterloo new database; that community members can get information online or through other access points; and the City of Kitchener can't justify being the only funder of local information service. So our response to that is we really don't know what the city corporate needs are because they have not been stated and there are things we provided over the years, so there's a missing piece of information for us. There has been a web-based directory that's been publicly available over 8 years now. So there's nothing new in what you're getting from the region's database. The information resources that we do create are provided now to city community centres. From my quick count, there are 5,000 brochures that we created and distributed to the community centres at their request. Kitchener is our primary service area. 42% of the population of the region lives in Kitchener. 60% of inquiries contacts are from Kitchener residents and service organizations. 60-70% of the community organizations and services are located in Kitchener. And that's region wide. Kitchener stakeholders continually ask for region wide information. So it is important that we be able to provide that kind of thing. The city versus the region funding: the city fund is to support the service, which is the inquiry service, system navigation support resource centre. The region funded us to support the database, which supports the service. They do the database as a tool, and the service is what you do with the tools. We have validated the need for service with the community. We get continual good feedback that

the information is there. And the people tell us that the resources we provide, the support and the service we provide is meaningful and needed. And there are 23 statements and letters of support that are in the package, and hopefully you have had the chance to read them. And I don't think I will have time to respond to the questions that you've asked, but we put together information to respond to the questions that have come up. They are in particular a question around: Are we using city funds the way we are supposed to?" We are. [audio stopped] Wrap it up is that, in sum, we think the defunding is ill-advised. It doesn't fit what we know about the community and what they are telling us. And our ask is that we retain the funding for community information service and development, that we work to begin to restore funding for social planning, and that the city work with us to understand, to do an information needs assessment, so that we can better understand together what the needs are because I think there is a disconnect. Thank you.

**Derek Alton**  
**Community Researcher**

Thank you your Lordship and Council for this opportunity to speak to you here tonight. I would like to start by introducing myself. My name is Derek Alton. I am a community enthusiast and a community researcher. I've spent the last five years studying communities from all sorts of different angles, including two years working at the Tamarack Institute of community engagement. We've done a national study of how people experience community across Canada. And I'm currently doing some graduate work. We're trying to figure out how we can be more effective at building community. To basically summarize these five years of research into one simple idea, I can say that really community building comes down to relationships. Relationships are really what's essential to helping people connect, to feel like they belong, but also to accessing information that is important to them. And I think that is really what is important about what we're talking about here with regards to information centre. This information hub is this online database, but it's so much more than an online database because people engage with community research not through online tools but through relationships. It's through people you know. It's how you connect. So whenever I would go to a community, whether it's here in Ontario or all the way out to British Columbia, I wasn't just engaging with online databases. I'd actually go out to people, to organizations in communities who have relationships on the ground. And that's where you really understand what services are available because it's easy to get lost in a database. This conversation really sits on, which is the relationship between a city and a Social Planning Council around this community information database, this community information hub. Now, I understand the community information hub that online piece is now being taken on by the Social Planning Council of Cambridge. And because the city the staff are suggesting that funding is now downgraded or removed because that service is no longer needed because the Social Planning Council of Cambridge will now take on that role. But what I would argue is that, like I was saying earlier, there is so much more than just a database. It's relationships. And these relationships take a long time to develop, particularly with

marginalized populations. These are populations that oftentimes struggle to engage with the tools that we try to provide for them, either because they feel uncomfortable or don't know how to navigate these online tools, or because they distrust institutions. And because of that, they depend even more than many people on these relationships of trust. The Social Planning Council of Kitchener Waterloo has spent the last several decades working really hard to develop these relationships of trust to marginalized populations here in Kitchener. And I'm concerned that if we take away their funding, we're actually taking away one of the only avenues that all these marginalized populations have to engage with the services we have in Kitchener, which are an amazing collection of services. So I want to end by saying that I really encourage you to think about what is being lost by removing funding from this organization, and who loses out when we take away funding from this organization. Thank you for your time.

**Gehan Sabry**  
**Editor Cross Cultural Magazine**

Thank you and good evening Mr. Mayor and Council. I'm here today as a member of the community because I do not agree with the recommendation to defund the Social Planning Council of Kichener-Waterloo and the Community Information Centre, which has been renamed Social Development Waterloo Region, for the work it does to provide information service to the Kitchener community. I believe the work done by this agency is important and worthy of continued support from the city. We have had occasion to use the resources from the centre many times over the years. And I've worked with the centre on numerous projects within the community, especially when we require the assistance in spreading and sharing information about our events. It is a mistake to assume that all community members have equal access and capacity to get their information needs met by the internet, or even that they would wish to duplicate and invest in such an exercise. Digital inclusion continues to be an issue for many. And information overload makes it more important than ever to have knowledge experts who can mediate access and ensure information is packaged in ways that are meaningful and accessible to those who need it. Independent community based social planning organizations such as the Social Development Centre are accountable to the expectations of the community. The value of the work done by the Centre has been proven time and again over its 48 year history. Their work embodies citizen engagement, diversity, quality data, and information to support problem solving and planning to benefit the overall quality of life for everyone in this community. I respectfully request that you take into consideration the quality and level of expertise that the community stands to lose by decision to defund. Thank you.

**Mary Pappert**  
**Renters Educating and Networking Together, R.E.N.T.**

Good evening. Mayor Vrbanovic, councilors and staff. My name is Mary Pappert, and I appear before council this evening in support of funding for the Social Development Centre of Waterloo Region, formerly known as the Social Planning Council of KW, and I'll call then the Centre from here on. I'm here on behalf of an organization called Renters Educating and Networking Together, R.E.N.T. R.E.N.T. is a volunteer association of proactive, nonpartisan, concerned citizens who work to improve tenant conditions within the Region of Waterloo through education, organization, and general representation of tenants. R.E.N.T. understands that the City of Kitchener staff are recommending that all funding related to the community information work done by the Centre be phased out with the assumption that this service is no longer necessary for Kitchener's community. R.E.N.T. believes this is ill-advised and short-sighted. We believe that it is important for the city to continue funding support that will allow the centre to maintain their efforts to offer in-person service to our community. The centre's in-person communication with local residents is greatly valued and fully utilized by all who contact them. The internet and computer controlled environment is not enough. To hear a human voice answer at the other end of the telephone, a person who will listen to a question, discuss the difficulty and offer relevant, current information to help people solve their problems is extraordinary. That kind of local information support which the centre provides requires experienced local-service personnel. Without the assistance of the Centre, R.E.N.T. could not function efficiently in this community. Why? R.E.N.T. has been a member of the Social Planning Council and utilized the Centre's telephone contact service since 2005. As a volunteer group, our active executive members are few, and our funds are limited. The Centre provides us with a listing in the telephone book, and allows us to utilize their telephone number in our advertising. The Centre provides R.E.N.T. with a service in which they take calls for our group, screen out calls that do not apply to our service, and pass on contact information for those that we may be able to help. The Centre is a valuable support for volunteer organizations. With their help R.E.N.T. communicates with tenants who can benefit from the landlord and tenant information that we are able to supply. To remove funding from the Centre would jeopardize an important local service and undercut the Centre's ability to provide support and development of information resources that meet local needs. For years R.E.N.T. has worked with many initiatives with the centre to improve the living conditions of people in Kitchener. One particular initiative that we applaud is the Centre's goal to improve tenant conditions in vulnerable neighbourhoods. That is important. Together we have recently created the useful information resource document for tenants to guide them through formal complaint processes when dealing with rental property maintenance issues, and you have a copy, I believe, of the information sheet that we provided. To publicize this we mailed this out to all our R.E.N.T. members in our Fall 2015 R.E.N.T. newsletter. R.E.N.T. relies on the Centre to support our work. It is our intention to continue to collaborate with them to better address ways to connect people with the support that they need. So diverse groups can work together to shape our community. Further community development is needed within this area. And a wider range of external agencies need to work together to develop necessary knowledge, leadership, supportive relationships, and to improve the quality of life for the citizens in our area. Therefore, R.E.N.T. strongly encourages the City of Kitchener to continue funding the Social Development Centre Waterloo Region for community information and development. Thank you.

## **Martin de Groot**

Thank you. And thanks for the invitation to be here. I just want to reiterate what I said in an email message that I sent to all of you earlier this week. And that is to relate something of our experience when I was the executive director of the Waterloo Regional Arts Council. At one point we were down to almost nothing, and we just decided that one thing we were going to do was we built a cultural directory. And that's not an easy thing to do. The first thing we did was to connect with the Community Information Centre, partly because they had the expertise, and we wanted to make sure there was no overlap and all of that. So that was the beginning of a 10-year relationship, and a lot of what we were able to accomplish, we owed to Trudy and her staff. It was partly the encouragement and making sure that everything was there and also making the connection to the Social Planning Council that made the connection to community system group. From there we were sort of able to over the years to build something that really hasn't been surpassed, was a really good complete directory of artists and art organizations in this region. And thinking on that and hearing about the situation here, I'm not sure I fully understand the complexities of what happens with the shifting of the agencies and different kind of things. But I just want to raise the question is let's just be careful. We just don't throw out something that could be of ongoing value. I mean, the cultural directory information alone, that is still work that needs to be done. There are many many similar kinds of challenges faced by all sectors and smaller organizations, and there is no kind of organizations that can do patient, meticulous work like a grass-roots organization with 40 years of experience like the Social Planning Council. So I would say just hold off. If you need any, I'm happy to sort of look and help to see is there value here? Is there a way to repurpose some of this for the needs of City of Kitchener and citizens and all of that. And that is the main point I wanted to make. Thank you.