

Provincial  
Election  
Vote  
June 12!

# K-W RESIDENTS VOTE



**Poverty Free  
Kitchener-Waterloo**

Poverty Elimination Framework

Support to All Low-income People

## Youth need independence AND belonging

We often hear that youth are connected these days through social media and increasingly rely on electronic links within cyber communities. How well do we support them in the everyday world in which they live? Work done in 2004 to understand the social and economic inclusion of youth in K-W and area communities found overall, that youth feel disconnected from their communities. Youth did not feel valued nor accepted as contributing members of society, and as a result, do not participate in civic life. These findings are consistent with what has been found since then in other studies and plans.

### Community infrastructure – places to go and ways to get there

There is a sense that youth have no place to gather with their friends and no way to get around the area that they live. Walking distances, reliance on adults to drive and access to public transportation influence youth independence. Municipal structures and formal institutions, in general, discourage the gathering of youth in public places through the enforcement of bylaws and failing to plan and develop public spaces for youth to gather.

### Community and personal safety

Youth express concern about being safe in their neighbourhoods and in their relationships. There is a fear of youth gathering on their own without adults present and there is an absence of adult presence in the lives of youth. In one report, almost 50% of youth reported that they are treated unfairly by police. Social scientists have identified uncaring communities as “socially toxic environments” that many of today’s children and youth call home. One-fifth of all violent crimes reported in 2003 (to 122 Canadian police services) were committed against children and youth aged 17 and under. In 2004, the chances of being a victim of crime was highest among people aged 15 to 24. Young people are 1.5 times more likely to be victims of crime than people aged 24 to 34 and 19 times more likely than seniors aged 65 and older.

### Mental health and personal support

Between 2009 and 2012, 27% more youth 12-19 and 29% young adults 20-34 reported being diagnosed as having a mood disorder, compared to 16% for all ages over 12. A 2011 Waterloo Region Public Health report on the perceptions of youth health listed the major causes of youth mental health difficulties are stressed relationships with parents, romantic partners and friends, and large amounts of expectations related to school, work and other responsibilities. In a recent visit to Queens Park youth in care of Family and Children’s service, identified also the need to better support youth who are gay, immigrants, have disabilities or are First Nations. Youth also reported they are not sure where to find help if they need it.

**Resources:** Community Information Centre of Waterloo Region: 519-579-3800 [www.waterlooregion.org](http://www.waterlooregion.org);

Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council: [www.preventingcrime.ca](http://www.preventingcrime.ca); Waterloo Region Public Health: <http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca>; Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868 [www.kidshelpline.ca](http://www.kidshelpline.ca);

Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Transit: [www.fcm.ca/home/issues/transit-and-transportation.htm](http://www.fcm.ca/home/issues/transit-and-transportation.htm)



**Social Planning Council  
of Kitchener-Waterloo  
Community Information Centre  
of Waterloo Region**

How, where, when & why to vote  
Issues worth voting for  
[www.waterlooregion.org/provincial-election-2014](http://www.waterlooregion.org/provincial-election-2014)

This fact sheet was adapted from a series produced by Social Planning Toronto.

## Where Ontario political parties stand

Party	Community Infrastructure	Community and Personal Safety	Mental Health and Personal Support
<b>Green</b>	Dedicated transit fund—one that politicians can’t waste on things like moving gas plants--to build new transit and support the operation of existing transit.		
<b>Liberal</b>	Develop and support school-community hubs to promote efficient use of public assets and ensure more viable schools can stay open.		Permanently increase funding for Children’s Treatment Centres by \$5 million a year, bringing total investment to \$101 m/yr. \$300 million in community health infrastructure, including: Increase funding to Mental Health and Addictions Strategy ; Develop Community Hubs for community-driven programs that focus on health and wellness. Invest \$2.5 million over three years in an Urban Aboriginal Action Plan to help Aboriginal people in our cities find economic opportunities and access social services.
<b>New Democratic</b>	Bring better public transit to cities and towns across Ontario. Create an “Open Schools” fund to prevent school closures and extend after-hour programs		
<b>Progressive Conservative</b>	Ensure that our children get 45 minutes of physical activity every weekday, through school-based activities <b>and after-school sports.</b>		Integrate services for a comprehensive approach to help some of our most vulnerable citizens. Mental health care is a fundamental part of health care and cannot be treated exclusively as a social service.

### Get Involved... Ask your candidates:

- Will your party support community system planning (e.g. public transit and facilities (schools, recreation facilities)) that enables youth to build independence and use youth independence as a key measure of success for those systems?
- How is your party recognizing youth as the future of Ontario and ensuring their development is supported through appropriate public services, first through their families and then directly to them as individuals?