



# What is the culture of Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council? THE SECRET SAUCE



Region of Waterloo

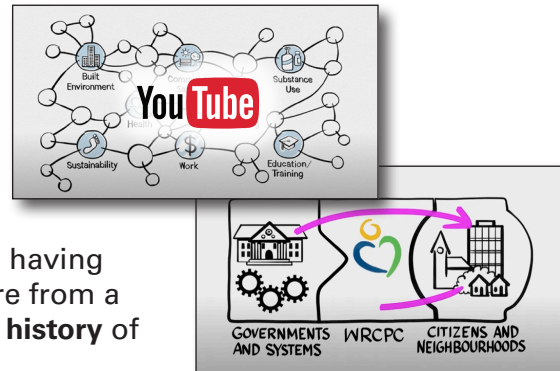


**Waterloo Region  
Crime Prevention Council**  
*Together for a Safer Community*



# Our Story

The Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (WRCPC) was created by the Region of Waterloo in 1994 and was one of the first organizations of its kind in Canada. WRCPC has been in continuous operation to the present day, over the years evolving in its approaches but remaining rooted in its original principles. WRCPC is core funded by the Region of Waterloo, having generated additional funding throughout its tenure from a variety of sources<sup>1</sup>. Its work is grounded in a long **history** of restorative justice and community stewardship.



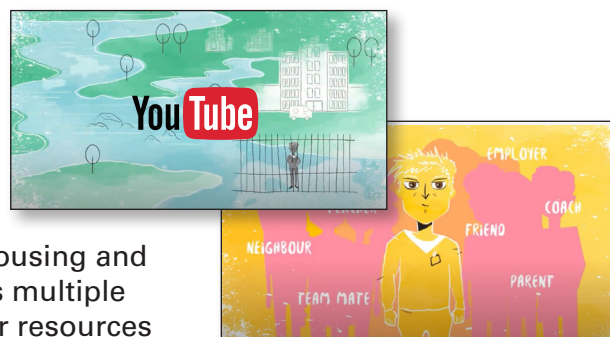
The Council consists of 40 members who represent a very broad range of service sectors and populations within the community and its work is augmented by the **Friends of Crime Prevention** network. Friends understand the connection between their everyday lives, the work they do, and the opportunities they have for helping to create a safer and more connected community.



The WRCPC generates a greater public understanding of the root causes of crime and of many other forms of social concern, creating a deeper community commitment to upstream thinking and prevention. To do this, WRCPC focuses its efforts on public engagement, knowledge exchange and evidence-based decision making, developing dynamic partnerships and advocating for equity and belonging and against discrimination and marginalization.



The WRCPC strives to shift the focus of crime prevention further upstream by building a community foundation where all citizens experience safety and wellbeing equitably. Upstream approaches to community safety and wellbeing are about more than the absence of crime; they are about creating a community where everyone has opportunities to grow, learn, work, play, connect, love and be loved.

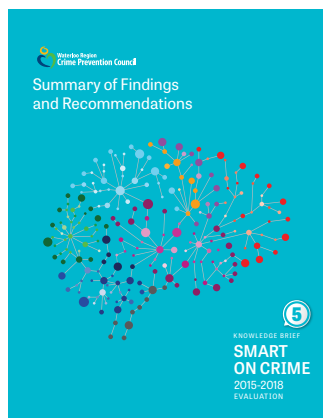


When we start **upstream**, we make the connection between many diverse aspects of wellbeing such as safety, health, income, housing and belonging. This approach allows us to address multiple downstream issues simultaneously with fewer resources and before harm happens.

<sup>1</sup> Some of this funding was generated by WRCPC but directed to community agencies best placed to implement initiatives in question.



## Our Culture



The most recent **evaluation of the Council's community plan** illustrated what various elements of WRPCPC's culture look like in action. These elements also come out of a rich body of literature on community organizing, grassroots momentum and citizen engagement. We didn't just make them up, but rather, over time, we have refined,

revised and at times erased certain approaches based on experiences and community feedback. More than just focusing on strategy we have taken care to create a way of working in and with the community that is conducive to building broad ownership of the issues. It has been said that "culture eats strategy for breakfast." And we agree. The best strategy is only ever as effective as the will to implement it. That sustainable preparedness to work for the best of the community has taken a long time to come together to define our culture. The impact of WRPCPC is directly linked to this empowerment agenda.

The following statements outline some of the core aspects of WRPCPC's culture along with a selection of illustrative (but by no means exhaustive) examples, some of which are described in more detail in the Appendix. These aspects have been present in one way or another in all of the initiatives of the Council from the early days onwards. While these statements reflect ambitious values and principles, WRPCPC consistently continues to strive to adhere to them. This is achieved, in part, through ongoing critical reflection and evaluation.

## RELATIONSHIPS

The evaluation of the **2015-2018 Smart on Crime Plan** highlighted the centrality of relationships and the need for a strong sense of trust when it comes to working with the community. The process of relationship-building is inherently intensive in nature and can't be rushed without causing damage to the community and the work overall. Strong and well-developed relationships are foundational to our work and play a critical role in the success of our partnerships and initiatives.



**In Practice: Monthly Council meetings emphasize interpersonal connections as much as the agenda and much of the 'magic' happens in the informal moments before and after meetings. Staff and members of WRPCPC put a great focus on building and maintaining connections person to person and aside from their roles.**

## COLLABORATION

We understand that a culture that values working together and reciprocal support has a much better chance of being productive than a culture that is characterized by mistrust, territoriality and competition. Rather than trying to outdo each other, we believe that our community benefits the most when we bring all of our skills and efforts together. We can attempt to form partnerships for a wide-range of social issues, but if collaboration is not embedded in our culture (or is not something we know how to do well) then our efforts will likely miss the mark and have limited impact. That is why we believe collaboration should be a regular practice. We frequently ask: how is our **collaboration** practice going?



**In Practice:** When the WRPCPC came together to create a WHY (we do what we do) statement we intentionally selected divergent voices. The discussions were challenging and at times tense but the group brought forward their statement with one voice and with a sense of pride. This is true of many other often controversial positions created by Council.

## FOSTERING COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION

Having long-standing, strong connections in the community and beyond allows us to leverage contributions and support that we could not afford to resource otherwise.

This exponentially increases our reach and our ability to affect change. It is also great value for money. We annually generate in-kind supports for direct WRPCPC work that is the equivalent of over three full-time staff, which is more than half of the organization's backbone (staff) capacity; this is not counting what people do when they move away from the round table to advance prevention within their own spheres of influence.

**In Practice:** The campaign to prevent cyber-bullying that became known as **THINK** started with a committee of Council and was subsequently incorporated into the curriculum of both school boards and led to a region wide school funded conference that included parents and students. In total over \$200,000 was generated in in-kind efforts.







## LOOKING DEEPER

We aim to address the ‘hardware’ of our community issues over and above the ‘software’. Many approaches have a focus on which actions to take and which programs to run, and, by extension, give less consideration to how well we are set up to undertake such actions. Simply put, crime prevention through social development is not about the projects and programs per se but it is about how we conduct ourselves in the community as equal partners with a common vision. Every voice at the table matters. We give strong consideration to this because that way actions are more likely to emerge from within the community. Social change has never been accomplished by programs or projects. This is why, rather than being a direct service provider, we are a facilitator<sup>2</sup> of change and an animator for investments in prevention as a collectively agreed upon goal (see graphic on next page). We believe in radical honesty and are not afraid of structural change even when it gets political.

## RESPECT FOR PROCESS

We have a very strong focus on process. HOW we do something is as important as WHAT we do. This is based, in part, upon a capacity-building philosophy. We want to bring people along because it fosters ownership in the work and gets people motivated to be and stay engaged. Clarity of task and transparency are two key tools to make this possible.

**In Practice: All projects of Council follow a similar formula. We engage in a problem definition and then ground the issue in evidence so that we are not tempted into mission drift. We then facilitate a dialogue with some ground rules for engagement and the outcome gets determined only through that process. We design the journey not the destination.**

**In Practice: A street gang prevention project funded by the federal government and coordinated by us generated knowledge that we used to animate system reflections and change in approaches to exclusion of youth in public settings, in workplaces, in school and with addiction services. Many of the directions were entirely driven by youth which was not a common practice at the time including with some project partners. A subsequent youth navigator project funded by local funders utilized that knowledge in an equally successful youth intervention in struggling neighbourhoods. One neighbourhood carries on the work with their own resources to the present day.**

<sup>2</sup> The most recent evaluation identified that the catalyst role was at the core of WRCPC’s work.

# ENGAGEMENT & INTERACTION





## COLLECTIVE THINKING AND ACTION

Many years ago we agreed to develop a WHY statement<sup>3</sup> because what motivates people to do their part is knowing WHY you do something, not just WHAT you do. We do with (people) and never for/to (people)! We refrain from manipulating the outcome by never committing ourselves to pre-determined results. We are a catalyst towards designing outcomes through bringing community attention to issues and then facilitating local, evidence-based solutions.

In the spirit of “we all know more than I do”, we provide the space and the tools for collective thinking and action to emerge. WRCPC adheres to the notion that communities have wisdom and that this wisdom deserves the same consideration as professional knowledge. We employ the ‘honest broker’ approach whereby we put the community in a position to be able to determine the most appropriate course of action. We do this by coming up with a range of options/alternatives for addressing community issues and by equipping the community with information and insights that facilitate sound evaluation of options on the table.



**In Practice:** The Council co-facilitated a process with a local College that led to the development of a Community and Criminal Justice Degree Program that is the only one of its kind in the Province of Ontario. The program recently celebrated ten years of training students in multi-disciplinary prevention, intervention and restorative justice approaches. Council members remain in an advisory role supporting the College to adjust curriculums and field placements to changing industry realities.



<sup>3</sup> We know that when the well-being of ALL people matters then social justice and positive change follow.

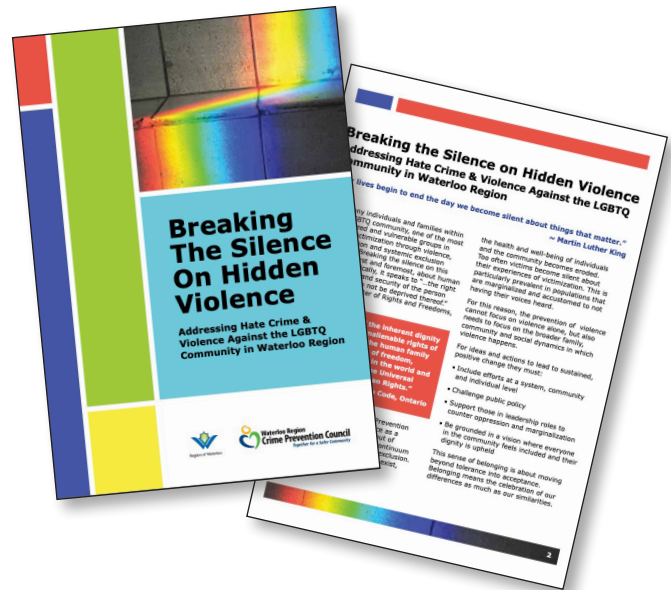


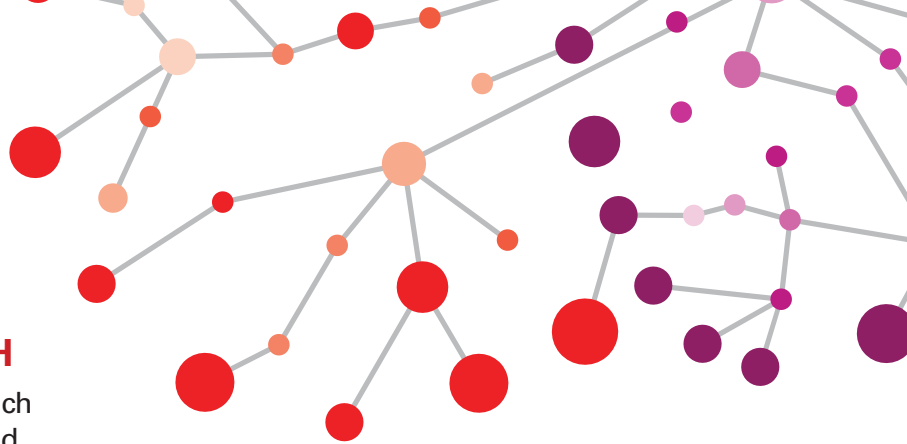


### MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

The WRPCPC community engagement approach has a key ingredient of meaningfully (never in a token way) engaging people with lived and living experiences. This can be at odds with traditional consultation methods because the complexity of engagement is perceived to be too high to be tolerated by large systems that also tend to have a low threshold for difficulty. This community engagement approach has caught the attention of many other municipalities as a unique government-community-grassroots partnership of equals that brings together the best of all three worlds. It is neither top down, nor bottom up – but rather middle out.

**In Practice: The Breaking the Silence against Violence in the LGBTQ+ Community (BTS) was a report that came out of the realization that hate crimes in the region were increasing especially against the gay and trans community. A community forum was hosted to dialogue about this issue, and directed us to write a report which was subsequently endorsed by many organizations and municipalities. The report ‘has legs’ to the present day and is now owned by the BTS group of the rainbow community. Among many other efforts, a major research study was completed assessing the experiences of the trans community. The study was not Council’s doing but Council was a catalyst and remains a partner to the present day.**





## DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Many of the positive outcomes to which we have contributed over time evolved organically. This means that we are prepared to change track mid-stream if that is what makes the most sense. This allows us to learn on the go and stay responsive to the community while keeping our eyes on the overall direction and staying rooted in our values and principles. We are often described as nimble and highly accessible – something that was echoed in several evaluations (e.g. **inReach**<sup>4</sup>). The most recent evaluation of our Smart on Crime community plan recommended the developmental method for collaboration as a model for engagement of both the grassroots and those in decision-making roles, and strongly suggested that we further advance this strategic approach into the future.



**In Practice: A member of Council designed a business development course for women at Grand Valley Institution for Women, a federal correctional facility. The course attracted other local business leaders in support, leading to a greater understanding of women in prisons by a sector of the community that would be unlikely to normally engage in this exchange. The partnership led to several well attended community forums looking at challenges in rehabilitation and reintegration, such as lack of employment, to animate business to 'give the women a chance'. The forums were co-designed by the women, a local agency, the business community and the Council. No-one could have envisioned this outcome from the original effort. It developed organically.**

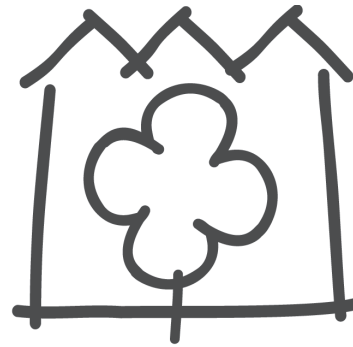
<sup>4</sup> Youth street gang prevention program, which operated in Waterloo Region from 2009 to 2013

# UPstream



## UPSTREAM THINKING

From the beginning, WRPCPC has been committed to an approach of preventing crime and nurturing safety by addressing the underlying conditions that lead to crime and many other social ills that impact communities. Over time, this focus on **root causes** evolved into advocacy for comprehensive and integrated prevention approaches in all sectors, known as **Upstream** thinking. This involves going beyond social determinants of well-being to shine a light on structural, institutional and systemic barriers to equity. Many of the experiences during a crisis tend to underscore the impact of structural shortcomings and a lack of proactive, long-term measures. When we look at different issues they tend to converge at the upstream point. This means that when we work upstream we integrate our efforts and simultaneously address multiple issues such as social exclusion, problematic substance use, food insecurity, violence, and many others.



## Safe & Sound

**In Practice: Project Safe and Sound, funded by the federal government, placed facilitators in neighbourhoods that were facing significant economic, social, and community struggles with an often transient population. The goal was to demonstrate that neighbourhoods are an ideal place for proactive interventions through building natural leadership and enhancing local capacities. Ten years after the project ended, one of the neighbourhoods that had built citizen leadership successfully advocated for a community centre. Project Safe and Sound was identified by the neighbourhood and the municipality as the animator for that change.**

## CLOSING REFLECTIONS:

When community collaboratives do their job well they are often invisible and do not take credit for the impact. Especially with prevention, the outcomes tend to be removed from the initial actions and we can't always point back to that point when actions took root.

To a large extent, citing examples of success is counter intuitive to the culture of WRPCPC. It doesn't matter who gets to be in the limelight as long as the impact upon the community and beyond is positive and the public can be reassured that the collective efforts are value for money.

In times of high competition over limited resources, it is our hope that this document leads to the lessons learned being retained for the well-being of future generations even if the organizational arrangements change.

This document was unanimously endorsed by the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council at its regular meeting on May 08, 2020.





# Appendix

## EXAMPLES OF AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

**Look Deeper:** the campaign was created to support the transition from the Young Offenders Act to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. It won several awards and Council was asked by the Province at the time to facilitate multi-sector development efforts to animate communities to support the prevention and restorative justice mandate of the new legislation.



**Say Hi:** was a campaign designed to encourage citizens to engage in simple actions that lead to the community being and feeling safer. Over a decade, schools in the region hosted a Say Hi day. The campaign spread across Canada and far beyond (all the way to the London Olympics).

**THINK:** a newspaper article citing an increase in online bullying led to the development of an exploratory working group that eventually gave rise to the THINK campaign. The campaign has gone as far as Australia and remains a known concept in schools to the present day.

**Upstream:** based in research and extensive reflection and dialogue on prevention, the Upstream campaign is designed to take Council into its next chapter where it becomes clear that crime prevention has far more to do with designing equitable communities than it is about preventing crime. It has already caught national attention as the next iteration of municipally based crime prevention efforts.

**RAP (research and planning) sheets:** Council, often in response to a community issue, has produced many educational materials which follow the pattern of identifying data, describing the problem, alerting to local resources and making a call to action. The topics range from elder abuse and intimate partner violence to the importance of volunteering for children.





## EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES:

**Integrated Drugs Strategy (WRIDS):** Problematic substance use is connected to over 55% of all crimes and affects people's lives and communities in significantly negative ways. The WRIDS offers recommendations to prevent, reduce or eliminate problematic substance use and its consequences through five pillars:

- Prevention
- Recovery & Rehabilitation
- Harm Reduction
- Enforcement
- Pillar integration

The strategy was developed in 2011 by a 26-member Task Force of the Crime Prevention Council in consultation with more than 300 citizens and service providers across Waterloo Region. After it was adopted, Council generated the funds so the strategy could be housed in the community for implementation. The WRIDS has become the basis for many community efforts including the Opioid Response Plan. Council remains a member of both to the present day.

**Overdose Prevention Strategy:** Overdose prevention and intervention provides life saving tools for people at risk of experiencing an overdose. Across Canada, a fatal opioid-related poisoning occurs every 2 hours. Ontario's opioid-related poisonings grew 33% in the first quarter of 2018 compared to the same period in 2017. WRCPC was an early advocate for Naloxone kits to be made widely available to emergency services and the public.

The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act came out of WRCPC research with people with lived experiences identifying barriers to calling 911. This research led to a report which was



picked up by an MP as a private member's bill that addresses some of the structural barriers to seeking emergency medical assistance by providing limited immunity from prosecution during an overdose emergency for victims and witnesses. Council was instrumental in passing the bill including providing evidence to a Senate committee. Council subsequently worked with national and local partners to create wide ranging awareness campaigns about the legislation which included publications and films and involved significant media engagement.



**Youth Engagement Strategy:** The Waterloo Region Youth Engagement Strategy aims to address barriers to equity and engagement for youth in Waterloo region, particularly for youth farthest from opportunities. The research report, Ounce of Prevention - Pound of Cure, was developed to inform discussions on cannabis legalization and regulation in the context of significantly higher rates of cannabis use in Canada versus our European counterparts. In particular,

Ounce of Prevention drew attention to the near-absence of, or lack of attention to, funding for upstream prevention.

Council with University partners brought the Iceland Prevention Model to Waterloo region. After a concerning drug problem among its youth, Iceland now has one of the lowest rates of substance use among youth in Europe, and has approximately 2/3 less youth engaged in substance use than youth of a similar age in Ontario. Intentional and sustained funding for upstream prevention efforts has generated enviable results. Realizing a hybridized version of the Icelandic model is a key priority for the WR Youth Engagement Strategy to the present day.



## EXAMPLES OF MUNICIPAL ENGAGEMENT:

**Municipalities** play a key role in crime prevention and WRCPC has been instrumental, from its beginning, in profiling this. As the level of government closest to the people – responsible for policing, housing, social services, recreation and public works – municipalities are well positioned to work with local groups to establish effective community-based programs.

Many Canadian municipalities have come to understand the importance of developing strategies that enhance public safety and security through:

- Reducing the risk factors known to contribute to anti-social behaviors
- Developing programs to help the groups most at risk
- Ensuring that programs and services are accessible
- Improving the quality of life in neighborhoods
- Providing public spaces that increase human interaction
- Engaging all youth in meaningful activities

Council developed a training program for municipalities that included forums and the production of a DVD. Council also participated in the development of several national publications on the topic of municipal engagement including the Key to Safer Municipalities.



Council partnered with the media in running two multi-part series featuring local efforts in prevention, named **Safe Cities**.

In and around 2005, Council started to advocate to the Province of Ontario to make municipal crime prevention planning mandatory to highlight the critical role of municipalities in public safety and security. Ontario has now legislated the development of community safety and well-being plans and Council has actively supported local efforts in this regard.

### EXAMPLES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT:

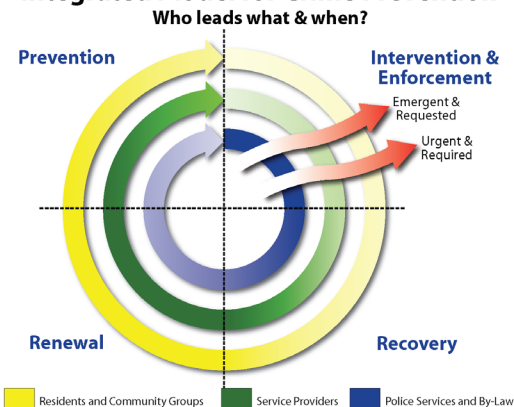
Neighbourhoods can be faced with many challenges that contribute to crime and fear of crime. To address these challenges neighbourhoods require:

- Citizen involvement
- Support from local leaders
- Equitable partnerships with service providers
- Access to basic means (e.g. a place to meet)



By working together, community members are mobilized, residents can build on local skills, and services can complement these efforts towards creating safer neighborhoods. The **WRPCPC Neighbor to Neighbor Toolkit** was created to assist neighborhoods in this work. The tools were generated through experiences in various neighborhoods throughout the region where WRPCPC had a facilitation role.

#### Integrated Model for Crime Prevention



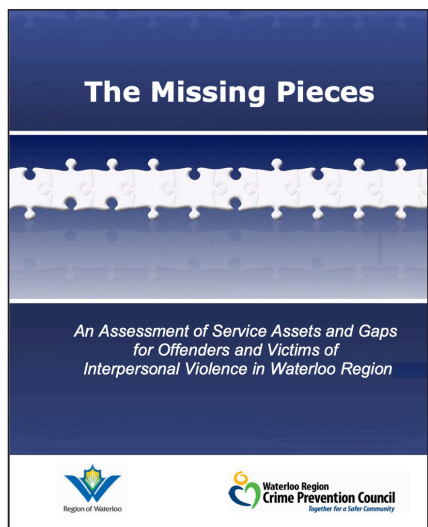
#### The Integrated Model for Crime Prevention

identifies how neighbourhoods, law enforcement, service providers, policy makers and citizens can each play a vital role in finding solutions to community problems. The model was developed out of the learnings from Project Safe and Sound and is based on a shared understanding that crime is a complex issue with roots in economic, social, cultural, family and individual conditions. It takes a comprehensive look at the prevention, intervention, recovery and renewal continuum after a crime has occurred. The model continues to inform Council thinking and actions to the current day.

## EXAMPLES OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS:

Interpersonal violence – including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and deprivation or neglect – is a pervasive and complex social problem with serious long term impacts and consequences for individuals and society.

Interpersonal violence can be prevented when communities work together in partnership to develop effective responses and to address the root causes of violence.



Since 2006, the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council has been engaged in research, planning, and initiatives to prevent and reduce interpersonal violence. These include:

- Reducing Violence by Enhancing Human and Social Development – a 40 year plan for Waterloo Region
- **The Missing Pieces: An Assessment of Service Gaps and Assets for Offenders and Victims of Inter-personal Violence in Waterloo Region**
- From One System to Another: Crossover Children in Waterloo Region

## THE BIGGER PICTURE:

The role of the WRCPC is to advise, recommend and stimulate actions that reduce and prevent crime, victimization and fear of crime. As part of this role we review the impact of legislation, policy decisions, trends or major decisions on our local community, organizations and citizens through a prevention lens and bring this information to our local community including municipal councils.

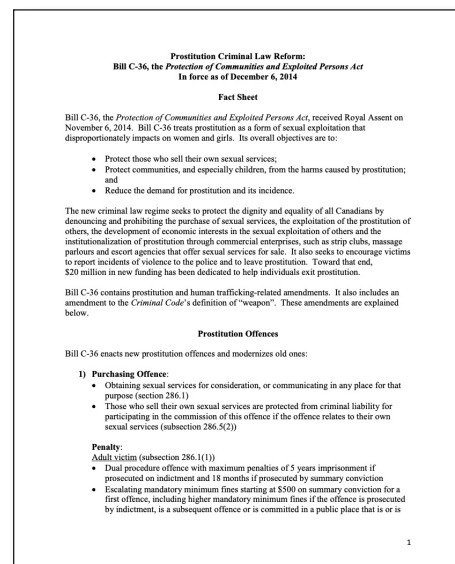
In response to various issues, we developed many position papers, such as:

Bill C-36 – Prostitution Law Reform - 2014

No to Casinos – 2013

Bill C-10 – Safe Streets and Communities Act - 2011

Bill C-91 – Long Gun Registry - 2010



## NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION:

The Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council is a founding member of the **Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention (CMNCP)**, which brings together municipal leaders in crime prevention from across Canada. It is a community of practice serving to build capacity and mobilize Canadian municipalities to prevent and reduce crime and foster community safety and well-being. The network had its inception in Waterloo region where in 2003 a forum of over 125 policy-makers, elected officials, researchers and practitioners collectively wrote the Agenda for a Safer Canada. Council subsequently facilitated and co-chaired the development of the network, which included successfully negotiating federal funding on two occasions. The network is a growing and thriving initiative covering over 50% of the Canadian population by including many major urban centers as well as smaller communities.



RÉSEAU MUNICIPAL  
CANADIEN EN PRÉVENTION  
DE LA CRIMINALITÉ | CANADIAN MUNICIPAL  
NETWORK ON CRIME  
PREVENTION

Ensemble pour des villes canadiennes plus sécuritaires | Together for Safer Canadian Cities

Creation of this WRPCPC document was a collective writing effort and we acknowledge all involved for their dedication to the task in a short time frame.







**Contact us:**

**73 Queen St. N  
Kitchener, ON  
N2H 2H1**

**Tel: 519-575-4400 ext 3474**

**wrcpc@regionofwaterloo.ca  
www.preventingcrime.ca**

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Region of Waterloo

