

2SLGBTQIA+ Questionnaire for Waterloo Region Municipal Candidates

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Do you identify as a member of a 2SLGBTQIA+ community?

No

What role are you running for?

Regional Council, representing Cambridge

What do you believe are the most critical issues for the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community? If elected, how would you work with the local community to address these issues?

Watching and listening, I believe the most critical issues for the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community range from a lack of awareness/ sensitivity in the community to outright discrimination, bigotry and verbal and physical violence,

The first thing I would do would be to reach out to Spectrum to learn more and to see if I can meet with individuals who want to tell me about their experiences. At this time, or another later time, I would ask about their ideas, needs and challenges. Depending upon what I learn, I would then check in with Regional government regarding their hiring policies to ensure that they encourage diversity. I would ask about ways in which they do not and I would work with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and advocate with them. I would find out what Regional government staff and politicians know about the bigotry and violence against that occurs against 2SLGBTQIA+ people and advocate for education and funding for education/ training programs and necessary additional resources. This would also include outreach to Waterloo Regional Police.

Have you ever participated in 2SLGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training?

I have taken some training in gender diversity through courses in the MSW program at Laurier and through The New Democrat Party; however I know that 2SLGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training would teach me much more and I would like to take the training.

Systemic homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are still prevalent in our community, resulting in significant socioeconomic disparities within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. If elected, how will you combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia?

As detailed in the previous question, I will find out where this occurs and will seek information from the 2SLGBTQ+ community regarding preferred solutions and the need for advocacy and funding. This would include collaboration with political partners on all levels of government and with Police. I will always stand up against systemic homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

If elected, how would you address the ongoing issues of homelessness and mental health, especially as they disproportionately affect members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?

I am aware that The Aids Committee of Waterloo Region (ACCKWA), and the Sanguen Health Centre offer support to all people who are homeless and who also face ongoing issues regarding their mental health, We must continue to invest in the human and financial resources necessary to maintain and grow programs for all. We must improve access to mental health services so that people don't have to wait months for service. We must be sensitive to the unique needs of members of the 2SLGBTQAI+ community and advocate for what they tell us they need.

I recently attended a terrific video conference regarding the research findings of Project Willow regarding gender based violence against homeless women and gender diverse people. This report was based on input from fifteen people who experience homelessness, some for decades. I learned that 44% of these people experience violence twice or more times daily. There are more horrifying statistics regarding this vulnerable population and more must be done to stop the violence and to provide safe havens for those on the street and in other unsafe spaces.

If elected, I would advocate (and I expect with many others being as there were 66 political candidates from within Waterloo Region in the virtual conference) for safe spaces for homeless 2SLGBTQAI+ people. I would advocate for specialized mental health and overall health services. I would support The Region's current plan to ease the homelessness crisis and watch to make sure timely progress is made.

Do you agree with the statement that "trans rights are human rights, and must be protected as such?"

Yes, absolutely I totally agree with this statement and will raise this every time it is necessary to do so!

What is one motion would you bring to council that you think will improve the lives of specifically queer people, racialized individuals and/or marginalized residents and why?

I would support Jayne Herring's motion to the Wellington & District School Board for free transportation for all students. The Grand River Transportation Authority (GRTC) would collaborate with the School Board to make this happen. It is crucial that Regional Council is supportive regarding the idea and the necessary funding. Through this program, 2SLGBTQAI+ youth along with their student colleagues, would learn important life skills, have easy access not only to school and school field programs, but other employment, educational and recreational activities. It is hoped that, this would be a safe space for 2SLGBTQAI+ youth and that, as such, and with all accompanying opportunities, this would facilitate good mental health and well-being.

When thinking about our schools, do you agree that 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in books and lessons is critical at all grade levels? How would you support 2SLGBTQIA+ students in schools?

Yes, I absolutely agree that 2SLBTQAI+ representation in books and lessons is critical at all grade levels. I would support students in schools by voting for School Board Trustees who support this curriculum. I would encourage my grandchildren's school principal to set up a list of volunteers who can answer students' questions and support them. As a Regional Councillor, I would support our school board in this regard.