

## 2SLGBTQIA+ Questionnaire for Waterloo Region Municipal Candidates

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

Yes

**What role are you running for?**

Municipal Council - Woolwich Ward 3

**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?**

2SLGBTQIA+ folks are still overrepresented amongst those suffering from mental health and addictions challenges, employment precarity and homelessness because they live in a world that still doesn't accept who they are, and constantly must fight a battle to feel at home in their communities, workplaces, and even their own skin. It is crucial that we create communities that are supportive, nurturing and free from hate.

Everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation should feel welcome and included in Woolwich. If elected, I will seek to build greater partnerships between municipal council and 2SLGBTQIA+ groups and organizations to ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ voices are not only heard but play a crucial part in decision-making when it comes to issues affecting them.

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

Yes, I have participated in an 8-week Indigenous Canada course with the University of Alberta, and have complete three separate AODA training course.

**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?**

The township of Woolwich has recently witnessed first-hand the continued presence of intolerance and hate not just within our community, but on our council, and that is unacceptable. If elected I will work to uplift the voices of traditionally underrepresented people and make sure that no one is ever marginalized from council chambers again. I will look to schedule regular meetings with stakeholder groups that advocate for marginalized communities and hold regular town halls to seek input from members of our community when making decisions.

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

Supporting community organizations like Spectrum and OK2BEME that provide valuable services to those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community experiencing mental health challenges and homelessness is key. Additionally, ensuring that shelters have adequate beds, there are safe injection sites that are accessible, and there are enough social workers to help vulnerable populations will all help those in crisis. On the same token, council cannot deal with these issues by attempting to fix the problem with band-aid after band-aid; we must get to the root causes of these issues, including supporting anti-hate and education efforts, better employment supports for members of vulnerable populations, improving mental health and addictions support, and creating more truly affordable housing.

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

Absolutely. 100%.

**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?**

One of my first steps would be to support the motion put forth by Coun. Merlihan on mandatory diversity training for township staff. Those in a leadership positions have a particular responsibility to lead by example and I believe that by providing ongoing learning to staff we can begin to do the important work of healing the rift recent events have caused within the community.

**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?**

There is no place for outdated or hateful ideas in our education system. I absolutely think 2SLGBTQIA+ representation and education is crucial at all grade levels to reduce homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, to educate students about themselves and the world around them, and to make students feel more at home in their own skin. I would support Woolwich schools and students by being a vocal advocate for additional supports for students, supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming motions that come before council, encouraging training for all representatives including trustees, and participating in activities " including but not limited to Pride, voting in favour of the rainbow crosswalk, and the Pride flag raising " that support those in the community.