

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?

Kitchener City Council - Ward 10

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?

I think the most critical issue for our community right now is safeguarding our children's right to self-determination and acceptance in schools and other public places. There's currently a small, but vocal, minority who are pushing back against the growing general acceptance of gender and sexual minorities we've seen over the last 5-15 years. It is possible that we could lose ground that we've gained since the turn of the century.

I would work with the local community first by being an example of a trans person in public view - I think the bigotry of many comes from the fact that they misunderstand us, and are not aware that they likely already know someone who is trans/gay/two-spirit/etc. It is, in many ways, a fear of the unknown, the "other". The second part of this is a general education-type campaign, where we can work to hold events in which people can meet queer volunteers from our community. It's unfortunate that as the marginalised population we must do so much advocacy and emotional labour ourselves, but I don't see general acceptance growing any other way.

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

No, but I believe being a queer trans woman who, in a former life, identified as a gay guy gives me a firsthand education in many aspects of our culture.

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?

I think that much of the homophobia/biphobia/transphobia come from a place of misunderstanding and unfamiliarity. The best way to combat hate like this is through exposure - which unfortunately means that the marginalised group ends up doing the labour (physical and emotional) to overcome this hate.

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 believe in a housing first approach to homelessness with a concomitant focus on reallocation of resources to upstream interventions (mental health, housing supports, addiction services, etc). This approach gets the current homeless neighbours housed, as well as working to prevent further homelessness from occurring.

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

Absolutely! As a trans woman, I want full equality with everyone else.

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 bring forward the motion that the city hire a director of 2SLGBTQIA+ Affairs (from within the community) to address systemic issues we face at a local and regional level, as well as to provide a contact point within the municipal government. The role could liaise with members of the community to plan and promote events pertinent to the queer community. I also support a motion to install an Indigenous Representative position, which is needed to provide representation to the city's Indigenous population.

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?

I can only imagine how beneficial seeing such representation would have been for my development as a young trans girl. It warms my heart that kids today have the opportunity to see people who are like them reflected in the books they read and lessons they are taught. I would publicly support any initiatives that safeguard the gains in representation and public acceptance that we have made over the last number of years.