

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?

Regional Councillor (Kitchener)

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?

As a gay man who is part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, I understand the importance of representation around the Council table and will bring my personal perspective to all decisions.

There is an organized movement to roll back hard fought and earned rights for the 2SLGBTQIA+ members across Canada. I will advocate to support those groups who support the community through financial resources and ensuring that there are no barriers to use of Regional facilities for events or gatherings.

Lastly there is an opportunity for the Regional Arts Fund to include an explicit equity, diversity, and inclusion lens in its process to ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ artists are supported.

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

Yes, I have participated in this training through my work and previously as a student.

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 will speak up on these issues in our community through advocacy and online to ensure that homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are called out. One example of how we can combat the systemic nature of this is to disaggregate our data to inform changes to public policy. The Region collects community engagement data through tools such as surveys and through policing records, and I will push to ensure that we understand how our decisions and actions affect those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. As a professional facilitator, I understand what it takes to listen to voices who are not heard at the table to co-create solutions and centre the community at the heart of 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?

As the housing provider, Regional housing services need to offer a diversity of spaces for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ who may not feel comfortable in existing facilities. This starts with ensuring that our community outreach workers are equipped with the tools to best direct residents to appropriate resources - whether for care or housing, and continuing with ensuring our service providers are aware of the needs of the community. I will work with organizations, such as SPECTRUM and its peer support groups, to understand specific needs and collaborate across agencies and the Region.

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

Absolutely.

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 will commit to working with community leaders to identify specific initiatives or resources that the Region can support. As the Region embarks on implementing upstream funding, I will also advocate to expand the program beyond initial roll-out to better meet the needs of our growing community and the agencies who support queer people, racialized individuals, and marginalized residents.

The Region includes a number of considerations on staff reports brought forward to Council including alignment with the strategic plan and financial implications of the proposed recommendation. I would work with staff, including the new Director of Equity, to understand how staff reports can include a sub-section related equity implications of the recommendation. This will allow staff to reflect on the implications of recommendations and provide a fulsome picture to Council to understand how decisions affect queer people, racialized individuals, and marginalized residents.

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?

The Region of Waterloo operates several libraries in the rural townships of Waterloo Region. These facilities play a role in promoting equity and inclusion in our book collections - beyond the urban areas of the Region. I will support funding for the libraries to continue to expand their collections and provide resources for youth across the Region.