

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?

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?

Mental and physical health and safety. The statistics on 2SLGBTQIA+ community members experiencing homelessness is staggering. Helping people (especially youth) navigate crises has been at the forefront of my professional experience in the community. I recognize that queer, racialized individuals and communities experience specific challenges in accessing social supports and services as well as accessing housing. I will work with these communities to develop a motion (or motions) to ensure their specific needs "where barriers to housing and other social supports are concerned" are meaningfully addressed in the City's short and long term-term planning targeting concurrent housing and mental health challenges.

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

Yes. I have completed Be a Better Ally with Karen B. K. Chan through FliP University, and training via Positive Spaces and Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. (OCASI). I have also completed Salem Debb's Anti-Racism Course which addresses Allyship and intersectionality.

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?

Being an ally and having an equity lens has been and will continue to be a priority to me in healthy community development. I will lean into my experience for going beyond rhetoric and taking action. These principles are at the foundation of my personal and professional initiatives. My role on Council will be informed by the relationship-based community practices I have developed over the past decade-and-a-half working in Kitchener for innovative not-for-profits. This approach ensures that constituents' rights and needs stay centred where every action of Council is concerned. Policy, infrastructure, governance, and future planning must all be informed by the dynamic priorities of a city made up of dynamic peoples often experiencing an intersectionality of issues. Equity deserving groups including the 2SLGBTQIA+ community will largely guide my priorities on municipal issues. These voices include but are not limited to: youth, indigenous peoples, racialized individuals and groups, newcomers, people who are precariously housed and unhoused, and people living on a limited income. My priorities will be the priorities of many principled citizens -- a thriving community where everyone can have a home, economic and social opportunity, and democratic agency. Within these principles is room for myriad conversations and actions that include representatives from all walks of life and social status -- but my immediate priorities will be informed by systemically underrepresented voices.

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 would advocate for the city to include an immediate budget line to increase support to local agencies focused on the issues of homelessness and mental health: I would like to see additional funding be allocated to groups already doing this work. I will advocate that development costs be waived for affordable and supportive housing initiatives. Kitchener can take the lead where funding priorities are concerned while simultaneously appealing to other levels of government (Regional, Provincial, and Federal) for additional capital investments in this important work..

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?

Consultation is important. Motions are best crafted with the direct input of affected communities and invested organizations. Step one in creating such a motion would be to consult. Improving public input from diverse and under-represented groups through targeted outreach and financial compensations is a standard of community involvement I will advocate for.

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?

Absolutely. Telling the truth is important at any age, especially in an educational context. I have been working for over a decade supporting diverse students and families including people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ community members and people just learning about themselves and where they fit into the community. My local community development work with Carizon and Pathways has given me the opportunity to extensively practise and develop in this supportive role. I am also an active supporter of the SHORE Centre and have benefited from their expertise in consultation many times. I am committed to continuous learning and growing with our community.