

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?

Waterloo City Council, Ward 6

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 believe the most critical issue for the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community is basic safety. We've seen a sharp rise in public examples of hate directed at 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and at least anecdotally there's been a rise in violence against them in their homes.

This seems closely linked to the affordable housing crisis. Because housing is so expensive, more people are having to share homes – often with strangers. This creates an extremely vulnerable situation. And, because housing is so scarce, it can be harder to find any alternative if a place becomes unsafe.

The 2SLGBTQIA+ community has a long, active, history of advocacy. And working with the community means listening to what the community is saying and doing, and supporting those efforts. Being present in places the community creates for itself, as a show of solidarity, particularly places which are being reclaimed from bigotry. An example of this which took place during this campaign is the Rainbow Ride through Woolwich which took place in August.

Beyond that, tackling the affordability crisis is key. But also making sure all policy is examined through a 2SLGBTQIA+ lens, so we're not passing policy without considering its impacts on everybody.

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

I haven't, though I'd be open to doing so.

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 support affirmative action for those who've lost economic opportunities because of bigotry. I think that the best way to combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia is to ensure that members of 2SLGBTQIA+ are not just included but centred in places of power and influence. And that, by doing so, we can create a virtuous cycle which will help unravel the socioeconomic disparities members of the community have faced.

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

From the perspective of the powers that the city has, I think that the largest contribution we can make to homelessness and mental health is to address the affordable housing crisis. There was a discussion paper presented to council in April which included 30 separate recommendations, including more inclusionary zoning, support for cooperative housing, and financial incentives to make units that used to be part of our affordable housing stock affordable again.

More affordable homes means fewer people becoming homeless, and easier paths out of homelessness. It also alleviates stresses which directly cause mental health concerns.

Beyond that, we need to be partnering with other levels of government. Direct support for those who are homeless is a responsibility of the regional government, as are direct mental health supports. We need to be talking with them about the needs in Waterloo, encouraging the expansion of the supports we need, and partnering city services with them so those services are also provided seamlessly.

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

Yes.

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?

Housing first strategies have been shown to be the best approach to addressing socioeconomic disadvantages, which queer, racialized and other marginalized residents experience. But housing which is far from other services doesn't work very well for this purpose.

This is why we need inclusionary zoning, so we can mix services and housing within neighbourhoods. One motion I'd introduce would have aimed at extending the areas where we can have inclusionary zoning to their maximums, so we can build homes that make life easier without significant financial resources.

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 completely agree that 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in books and lessons is critical at all grade levels. I'm not sure how to support that, specifically and directly, from city council, though. I'd love to hear your thoughts on that subject.