

## 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?**

Cambridge Ward 4 Councillor

**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 would love to see more effort within Cambridge to mark occasions like Pride for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Residents should have the opportunity to meet and engage with different members of the diverse communities in Cambridge, and understand the individual and societal consequences of bigotry and xenophobia. I will strive to engage with members and leaders of our diverse communities here in Cambridge, including but not limited to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, to better understand the complex issues that they are facing, and how I can help create a safer, more inclusive space for everyone.

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

No

**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 believe that these systemic problems stem from ignorance, fear and misinformation and that the best way to address them is by removing these barriers to tolerance and understanding. My answers to other questions here demonstrate how I see solutions in education, public events and social interaction. Overnight solutions are not possible but working towards a long term goal by taking incremental steps along the way, informed by members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, will eventually achieve the desired result.

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

To support those currently experiencing homelessness in our community, I will, in the short term, work to provide improved facilities like washrooms and showers, and more temporary shelter housing. In the longer term, I see a tiny home community as a potential part of the solution. As we deal with the homelessness crisis, it will be crucial to provide more affordable housing throughout Cambridge. I will work with higher levels of government to fund more affordable housing projects in Cambridge and develop creative solutions to this issue. I will encourage organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Indwell, and Menno to continue to build or convert existing units into affordable housing.

It is certainly true that there is a large number of people in our community facing mental health challenges. The isolation of a years-long pandemic and the increasing cost of living and lack of affordable housing are just a couple of the factors playing into this issue. The situation arises from a lack of funding and from a lack of nearby clinicians skilled in the necessary treatment modalities to address the needs of citizens presenting with mental health issues. The Cambridge Community Wellbeing Advisory Committee needs to be revitalized, given a fresh and specific mandate and reconstituted with a smaller membership to make it more agile and responsive. If elected, I would request an assignment to this committee with a view to making it the productive and forward thinking group that was intended. I would also like to create a plan on how the City can attract clinicians and experts to the Cambridge area. We need more support and more services for those suffering from mental health challenges in our community.

**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?**

I would bring a motion to host an annual Pride Parade. But there are many other opportunities to advance programs that will educate residents about our diverse communities. I would love to see City-wide celebrations marking holidays like Eid or Diwali, for example. I was pleased to see the City support the return of "Walk a Mile in Their Shoes" to Cambridge this year after a two year hiatus. This is a wonderful event that brings awareness to gender-based violence and raises money in support of victims. It was encouraging to see the changes made to this year's event to be more inclusive and recognize the alarming rates at which the 2SLGBTQ+ suffers from domestic violence. In the future I'd like to see more initiatives championed by our council and regional council to support women and gender-diverse individuals in need. As a City we can support and engage with events like "Walk a Mile in Their Shoes" and organizations like the YWCAs of Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo, and the Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region.

**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?**

Yes, I agree. In schools, we need programs and classes that teach children about the diverse aspects of the world they live in. Students and residents should have the opportunity to meet and engage with different members of the diverse communities in Cambridge, and understand the individual and societal consequences of bigotry and xenophobia. I will strive to engage with members and leaders of our diverse communities here in Cambridge to better understand the complex issues that they are facing, and how I can help create a safer, more inclusive space for everyone. If this sounds like a general response and not one specific to the needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ students, you are correct. Being a young person today is very challenging. The pressures of social media, the constant barrage of information from our phones and the internet. These are factors that have rapidly changed the way young people grow up and how they view the world. I believe we must provide more spaces for children to connect and develop relationships with one another. The youth must have more access to activities like arts, science and technology, and sports programs that foster accessibility, tolerance and inclusivity. We must work with local leaders in these fields to attract young people and remove any socioeconomic barriers. It is here they can build gratifying, useful skills that help shape a rewarding, meaningful, happy life.