

Hamilton City Council Candidate Survey

Mental health has never been as important as it is now.

As a candidate for Hamilton City Council (HCC), we here at the YMHM Canada ask that you please complete the following survey to the best of your ability regarding mental health and what you would work to do to ensure mental health in Hamilton if you are elected this October.

Your answers as well as your name and ward, as well as your answers will appear on our website at ymhmcanada.ca/Hamilton.

Sections

1. Mental Health in Youth
2. Mental Health in Marginalized Communities
3. Mental Health in Seniors
4. Mental Health Supports and Services
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Mental Health in Youth

A report by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found that about 27% of students between grade 9-12 reported poor mental health and 16% seriously considered suicide in the past year. If elected, what are you going to do to ensure better mental health within not only highschools within Hamilton, but all schools?

We have a serious lack of support for youth in the community, an absence of education around mental health in general and a growing need to address that. In the last couple of years, COVID restrictions have amplified the need to communicate and connect more with the youth in the community. Connecting the dots between Federal/Provincial & City supports is critical to integrating greater youth engagement and support. We can become more inclusive as a city by raising awareness around the support needed, educating not only Youth but everyone in the community, that it is ok not to be ok. It is ok to seek support, but as a City, we need to integrate ourselves with the youth groups, build off of the city's Youth plan and implement better access to workshops around mental health, work with outreach groups to provide services and host learning seminars within the school network. The city needs to include youth in the decision-making process, consult with school youth councils and seek their guidance & input on the support that is useful and needed.

If elected, what would you advocate for to better ensure the mental health of youth in Hamilton?

The youth of our community are our future, it is foolish of us to neglect their needs. We can only service those needs best when they are understood and not assumed. We need to ensure the youth council committee is actively involved and engaged with this forthcoming council. We need their reports and feedback as to what is just and needed in connecting the appropriate support for youth in the community. Bridging the communication gap between the youth outreach groups in the city and the city itself. Without effective communication across these groups and agencies, we as a council are doing a disservice to all of ourselves for the generation to come. We need to understand the need and seek out the funding required provincially, federally & charitably to ensure that the city's strategy and inclusivity of our youth are met. As a city, we also need to look at the facilities we have available for youth, centres, parks, buses, etc. we need to make sure we have services available.

If elected, would you support the recommendations for youth mental health and addictions set out by the City of Hamilton Youth Strategic Plan that was created by HamOntYouth? (<https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/youth-strategy>)

Unequivocally YES!

Mental Health in Marginalized Communities

Members of marginalized groups are at a higher risk for mental health-related disorders, suicide, and more. If elected, what are you going to do to help ensure the mental health of those in marginalized communities?

As a city we need to educate, we need to reach out to the community at large and educate. We can do this through partnerships with the youth groups in the community. The advocacy agencies that are in our great city of Hamilton. Work with them to engage everyone in the community, hosting workshops at city facilities, parks & rec centres. Through education, we can break down barriers, and begin to take away the stigma around mental health but also around marginalized groups.

We are all people, we are all unique, and we are all in the city trying to live and enjoy our lives, it is this diversity that makes our communities and city.

It is not for one to make another feel less valued. We need to get beyond that, that can only happen by educating and engaging with the Community.

Over and above this, working with federal & provincial partners to ensure things like the 988 is implemented, engaging with provincial partners to ensure education programs in schools are in place.

Ensuring that there are always SAFE and accessible spaces throughout our communities for everyone should they ever feel the need.

Indigenous rates of suicide can be as high as 9 times non-Indigenous peers, and LGBTQ youth can be as high as 14 times more at risk for suicide than straight counterparts. If elected, what are you going to do to reduce the rates of suicide within marginalized communities in Hamilton?

It is sad in the year 2022 that this is the case.

Education as noted above is a must. Our ignorance leads to fear & frustration, the unknown. This amplifies over time and creates the ugly situation we are now in.

We need to educate and raise awareness, this can be done through greater youth integration. As a council to be open honest and transparent, to be diverse, to be inclusive and make it equitable for all.

It is everyone's community and city, not just for some.

We need to partner with our youth groups, integrate all of the communication across them and have a functional youth council committee that listens, hears what is happening and will be a formative part of the council in advising and deciding on a strategy.

There is no place for discrimination, there is no place for hate, and we cannot function as a city if there is.

Mental Health in Seniors

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the Senior population and has led to more people having feelings of depression and loneliness. If elected, what are you going to do to ensure the care of seniors and their mental health?

As is the case with youth, often seniors are ignored within the community. As a community our community services centres, connect groups and seniors centres are vital assets to all in the senior community.

We need to make certain they have a voice at the council, their advocacy groups are heard, and we need to make sure there is an inclusive effort to hear their concerns firsthand, not making assumptions.

Medically we need to ensure the right services are available also, physio, Chiro, dental, etc... and available in safely accessible areas.

Safely accessible via wheelchair or walker, safely accessible via transport be that bus, car or walking.

Our parks & recreation centres need to include services and programming for seniors, we need to make sure these centres are fully accessible.

Additionally looking for opportunities to host and run events for seniors, and provide outlets for connection and communication, through city-run events or supported events through charitable partners, community service clubs and senior centres. Events that are frequent and reliable, allow for routine and connection.

Older adults, men in particular, have among the highest suicide rates in the world according to the WHO. If elected, what are you going to do to help ensure the reduction of senior suicide and self-harm in our community?

The city needs to connect with the seniors' groups and community partners to work with them to ensure all seniors have an avenue of communication, a contact centre and are aware of activities and events happening in the community.

To advocate for provincial and federal support for care homes and facilities for all seniors in the community.

According to CCSMH, substance misuse and dependency among older adults is a growing but neglected issue. If elected, what are you going to do to help ensure the reduction of senior substance misuse and/or dependency that could possibly lead to an overdose in our community?

The city needs to connect with the seniors' groups and community partners to work with them and the pharmacies/hospitals in the area to ensure that anyone who is in need of support has access to that support.

And of course to advocate for provincial and federal support for care homes and facilities for all seniors in the community.

Mental Health Services and Supports

If elected, what are you going to do to ensure that hospitals are properly supported by the city to provide help to people seeking mental health treatment or programs?

This is something over and above the city alone.

There are significant federal and provincial partnerships needed here to advocate for services across all hospitals, not just in Hamilton.

We need to improve the services around mental health, without question for all, this we can do with larger support. But we can also do a significant amount of education for all around what mental health is, to all openly talk about it, hold open workshops with our community partners & outreach programs working in the field of mental health.

Support, encourage and create awareness for all around these agencies already doing tremendous work in our communities.

Meet and engage with them frequently, understand the needs, ask questions and engage with them at council.

Wait times in Hamilton for mental health services can be as long as 710 days. If elected, would you commit to working with all levels of government to ensure that people within your ward and Hamilton are able to access services within a shorter amount of time?

Unequivocally YES!

The House of Commons has approved a National 988 Suicide and Mental Health Crisis Line (as of 2020). Do you support such a number and if elected, will you commit to working with all levels of government to help ensure such a number is implemented?

Unequivocally YES!

There are little to no supports for youth transitioning from youth mental health services to the adult sector. If elected, what will you do to bridge this gap in service for young people?

Access to mental health services is a challenge across all ages, engaging with youth councils, committees and outreach groups at the council is our first step to understanding this better.
I would also advocate that the council volunteer with agencies, and humble ourselves in fully understanding the need.
Listening to that information, engaging with it and doing something about it. Working with federal & provincial partners to break down those barriers to service and create more support.
Seek funding to grow and develop the outreach programs already in the community, advocate on their behalf and higher levels of government, and invest in them. Support them with open workshops, community events and engagement.

If elected, would you commit to working with and listening to mental health advocacy groups in Hamilton to help aid in giving input into mental health policies for the city?

Unequivocally YES!

Addiction Services and Supports

If elected, would you commit to working with and listening to addiction and harm reduction advocacy groups in Hamilton to help aid in giving input into addiction policies for the city?

Unequivocally YES!

Do you support safe injection sites in Hamilton and/or in your ward (if elected)?

Unequivocally YES!
I will work to ensure that they are done properly, with all of the necessary supports built around them. Educating, Housing, Social assistance, Jobs, Mental Health, etc... all of the supports.
With proper federal & provincial funding, this can be done, this should be done as a matter of urgency.
I would also encourage all at the council to get out and volunteer, ahead of voting on anything, get out and volunteer, see it first hand, and speak with an informed opinion.

According to the Office of the Chief Coroner, in Ontario up to and including 2020 acute drug toxicity has been the number one cause of death in youth 15-24 years old since 2017. Education about overdose prevention and response with naloxone, harm reduction, and how to use drugs safely can reduce the number of overdose-related deaths in young people as they will have the knowledge and tools to make informed choices about drug use. If elected, how will you ensure that highschool curriculum includes better education about substance use in a non-judgemental safe space?

This will take work through federal and provincial partners, work that should be completed as a priority. Integrating the thoughts and voices of our youth councils and committees as to what is needed and how it should be delivered.

That involvement is critical to success, hearing from youth for youth, supporting them where they are at, being aware and present for them.

Higher levels of government work and process of change takes time, at an immediate city level working with local partners, we can create education events, works shops that all schools and youth groups can participate in.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

To the wonderful support agencies and advocacy groups in Hamilton, the work being done is not going unnoticed. It is greatly appreciated and to all of those agencies, Thank You.

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