

# 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](http://ymhmcanada.ca/Hamilton).

## Sections

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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?

In my campaign platform I have a section titled "Empowering Youth." In that section I highlight the need to provide mental health care professionals in all schools for both immediate crisis intervention and regular check-in care. If elected I will work with both Public & Catholic School Board Trustees in the Ward to see how we can ensure mental health care professionals are at schools supporting students.

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

In my platform "Empowering Youth" we reference the City of Hamilton Youth Strategic Plan. The strategy prioritizes areas such as accessing mental health supports and addiction supports, accessing safe and affordable housing, accessing employment and training, enhancing safety and a sense of inclusion, and enhancing youth engagement and leadership. That is why if elected I will be implementing a Ward 14 Youth Council made up for students from Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School and St. Thomas More Catholic Secondary School to hear from students and how the City and the Ward 14 office can support them.

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>)

Yes, I would. Our platform addresses many of the issues raised in the Youth Strategic Plan such as access to dignified and affordable Housing, initiatives for social inclusion, and Leadership opportunities

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?

The City of Hamilton recently approved its Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (<https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/priority-projects/hamiltons-community-safety-and-well-being-plan>). The Plan highlights six priorities, namely hate incident/crimes, violence, substance use, mental health stigma, affordability, and housing & homelessness. The plan asks municipalities to address these issues by developing initiatives that focus on social education/development, prevention, and risk intervention. If elected I will ensure that there is funding available for the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan so that local organizations addressing mental health in the City can apply for funding.

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?

There are two main avenues the City can use to address the suicide rates in the Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA+ community. The first is through the Community Safety & Well-Being Plan and the second is through the City Enrichment Fund. Indigenous organizations and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities need funding to work with members of their community. If elected I will ensure that there is specific funding allocations for Indigenous & 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and organizations.

## 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?

In Ward 14 we have a high population of older adults and seniors. In the short term I am committed to adopting mobile-sustainable community centres that provide certain amenities for Ward 14 residents such as seniors, youth and families.

Secondly, I will develop community hubs to support seniors and newcomers experiencing isolation and post-secondary students who need support.

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?

In my platform I talk about the need for the City to develop mobile senior services for older adults and seniors in our community. In the long term the City will also have to develop rec centres for older adults and seniors across the City to meet their needs. A recent Hamilton Spectator article based on census tract data noted the population of older adults is increasing: <https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/analysis/2022/08/24/hamilton-census-data-analysis-2021.html>. The City has to respond to the needs of older adults and seniors across the City.

The article goes on to say that 1 in 4 seniors live in poverty, so if elected Councillor I will ensure we have better housing options for older adults and seniors, better recreational programs, and health centres, while working with older adult-led organizations and communities and staying informed on the needs and well-being of our aging population.

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?

As I mentioned earlier, the Community Safety & Well-Being Plan (CSWBP) highlights the need to the City of Hamilton to address substance use. If elected I will ensure there appropriate funding for the CSWBP to allow Hamilton Public Health and other mental health community organizations to work together to address the issue of substance misuse and dependency among older adults.

## 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?

If elected I will be proposing a restructuring of the Board of Health. Currently, the Board of Health is primarily made up of City Council and the Mayor. I would like to restructure it to include various health experts including mental health experts to inform the work that Hamilton Public Health is doing and to create more collaboration between hospitals, Hamilton Public Health and community health organizations.

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?

Yes. One of the immediate/short-term actions I will take if elected is to work with Trustees from the Public & Catholic Board to ensure there are mental health practitioners in schools to support the needs of youth.

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?

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?

Mental Health is one of the priorities listed in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, if elected I will advocate for a funding envelope to address the mental health needs of youth who are transitioning to the adult sector.

It would be important to talk with youth who are transitioning from youth to the adult sector to see which organizations they would like to work with, where the gaps are, and how we can get the Provincial and Federal government to offer funding to address the gaps in Hamilton.

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?

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?

Yes. I have followed the work of HamSmart, The Hub, Hamilton Urbancore, Keeping Six, SOPEN, and other community organizations in Hamilton. Please refer to comments about the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

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

Yes.

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 is beyond the scope of the role of a Councillor, however, I can raise this issue with Trustees running in Wards 8 & 14. I would be open to asking Council colleagues to write a letter to the Ministry of Education and the Premier to ensure that the high school curriculum includes better education about substance use in a non-judgmental safe space.

Please also see comments about Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

Please send some of these questions to Trustee Candidates running in the Public and Catholic boards.

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