

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
5. Addiction 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?

Support and advocate for funding with our school board and provincial partners.

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

Ensure equitable and fee reduced access to recreation programs, including supporting the return of "chill" spaces for teens.

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.

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?

By fostering more cultural awareness in the community and ensuring access to supports, supporting affordable housing and employment opportunities.

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?

By following the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission - we can advocate, create and expand services that support Indigenous youth in partnership with the Province and local services such as the HRIC.

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?

Expand and support seniors programming at recreation facilities for no or extremely low cost and also support the Seniors 55+ programs that the city has which includes virtual and phone programs. During covid, many city staff made calls to seniors just to check in and say hello. It made a difference. Volunteer programs working with school partners would also be supported.

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?

We can make support programs more robust and ensure that people in our community have affordable places to live, access to employment opportunities and social programs.

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?

We know that this is a growing issue here and elsewhere. I would continue to work with our Federal and Provincial partners, however also advocate that we are about 5-7 years behind. Simply, we need to do more to intervene early before it gets to the point that people are at. As a councillor, we can support more affordable housing and economic supports, but also advocate funding more mental health supports offered by the Province.

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?

Hospitals tend to operate as a monolith silo in neighbourhoods where they are located. Part of making sure they are properly supported means working with their senior leadership to be better able to partner with them.

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?

Absolutely.

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?

I do support it, and would definitely commit to working with all levels of government and the CRTC to make it happen.

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?

There needs to be adequate and stable funding and all providers need to be working together. As Councillor, I would advocate to bring those working to bridge these gaps in our community together to figure out what the City's role in assisting these providers could be, with a goal of making it more robust.

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.

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

I do support them - however the only 2 currently proposed for all of Hamilton are in Ward 3, and they would be less than 2km apart from each other. This, plus a feeling of performative engagement from one of the providers has led to a community backlash. We have more work to do to ensure that these services are equitable and also accessible for the whole city, and that residents understand what these sites are and aren't.

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?

High school curriculum is the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, however as a Councillor working with Provincial partners and advocating for its inclusion is something I would do as Councillor.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to answer your questions!

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