

Ottawa City Council Candidate Survey

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

As a candidate for Ottawa 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 Ottawa 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 www.yhmcanada.ca/ottawa.

Sections

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2. Mental Health in Marginalized Communities
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Name *

Yvette Ashiri

I'm running for *

Mayor

Councillor

If Councillor, what Ward are you running in?

Ward 19, Orleans South-Navan

Campaign Email *

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Mental Health in Youth

A recent report has shown that 1 in 5 students has a diagnosed mental health problem and 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 highschoools within Ottawa, but all schools?

I will ensure all schools have mental health programs and have the funds to make sure they work. Teachers should also be educated on the signs of mental health distress.

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

Schools and home are the places where kids are the most. So I would advocate for more programs to educate parents and teachers on the signs of mental health issues in youth and how to best support kids going through mental health struggles. I also plan to invest in more city mental health related services and programs specifically targetting youth.

If elected, would you support the creation of a City of Ottawa Youth Mental Health Plan to better support youth and their mental health?

Absolutely, any initiative to help youth and their mental health I will always be in support of.

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?

Marginalized communities are often forgotten. As a Black woman, I have seen and experienced this first hand. Allocated mental health funding specifically targeted to marginalized communities is essential in addressing the inequities that are often experienced in health care.

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 Ottawa?

Finding the root and systemic issues of why these groups have a high suicide risk and working with leaders in those communities to find solutions. These solutions may look like more diverse city programming targeting specific demographics and making sure youth feel connected and supported within their communities.

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?

Ensuring that senior living centres and LTC homes have adequate funding to help those with mental health issues and to try reconnecting seniors to their families and social groups - whether that be in person or over a video-calling software. Knocking doors, I have met many seniors who feel socially isolated. Through my canvassing, I've been able to connect seniors looking for friends to go on walks with. A big part of my platform is introducing more city and community programming targeting seniors to give them more options to interact with their peers.

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?

A lot of the time, people feel like they cannot reach out to seek help and I believe that creating communities that are safe and supportive environments is crucial. I would advocate to create programs to help nurses, caretakers, and family members learn the signs of suicidal thoughts. And again, ensure that senior's and LTC homes have adequate funding to support these programs. As mentioned above, more city programming helping seniors be more social is also a big part of my platform.

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?

If/when older adults feel the need to seek dependency of substances, there should be easily accessible services to help them. Accessible rehab programs should be readily available. It's important to address this issue before it becomes a pandemic, as a community we need to get ahead of the issue and ensure that our seniors feel supported by their city.

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?

Right now our hospitals are under-staffed and under-funded. I would join forces with unions and groups that are advocating to de-privatize health care services and I want to help create programs to inspire people to join the mental healthcare workplace. Healthcare needs to be made a priority in our budget.

Wait times in Ontario for mental health services can be as high as 919 days. If elected, would you commit to working with all levels of government to ensure that people within your ward and Ottawa are able to access services within a shorter amount of time?

Of course, everyone who needs mental health services should have easy access to them with as little wait time as possible. I want to work towards a future where people don't have to wait longer than 30 days to receive the mental healthcare treatment they need. As someone who has had the opportunity to live in other countries, I have seen how healthcare wait times are handled much better elsewhere, and we need to start doing the same.

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, It's so important to have people dedicated and educated to specifically in mental health to help those in a mental health crisis before they have the chance to do something drastic. People in mental health distress need to know that there is support available to them. I believe a number like this will save many lives, and I will do everything in my power to make sure it's implemented.

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?

I would work with those in charge of said transition to figure out the root cause of why it is so hard to seek help in the adult sector after being in the youth sector. I definitely support any initiative to make the transition easier. No one should lose access to the treatment and support they need simply because they turned 18.

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

Absolutely, I want to learn as much as I can so I can support the mental wellbeing in my community and be able to make the most informed decisions in regards to mental healthcare at City Hall.

Addiction Services and Supports

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

Yes! As mentioned before, I want to be as informed as possible.

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

Yes, I do. As many preventative measures as we can take, people may still decide to use. With injections sites in Ottawa and Ward 19, I hope those who do use, do so safely and know that there is support available to them. Safe injection sites save lives.

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?

I would ensure that experts in overdose prevention have a say in our schools' curriculum. I would love to help set up a program where teachers create safe spaces and start the conversation on substances. I would also like to see experts go to schools and go into more detail about preventative measures, what to do if someone is overdosing, and whatever else they believe young adults should know about substances and substance abuse.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

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