

# 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).

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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?

As a municipal councillor, I may not have the authority to ensure better mental health resources within the schools, but I will work with all ward level school trustees (English Public and Catholic, and French Boards) to identify gaps in resources and find solutions to ensure that our students are receiving adequate mental health resources and opportunities to seek additional help when needed.

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

I will work closely with our City of Hamilton's Youth Strategy to ensure that they are resourced to support mental health in youth. I will also consult and work with youth facing organizations like Living Rock and Liberty for Youth as they have a direct connection with youth in the City and support them as they provide necessary programs and initiatives for our youth. Also, I would like to support the formation of the HamOnt Youth Steering Committee as outlined in the Youth Strategy.

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>)

As a councillor, I'm in support of the Youth Strategic Plan and will be supporting it with staff and resources to ensure that we are following through on the strategy.

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?

I'm not an expert in mental health related disorders and will have to rely on the experts and on-the-ground staff that are working in these areas to provide knowledge, action plans, and leadership in how I can support and advocate for these communities. I will be listening to those with lived experiences and working within my powers to support and enable them to get the help and supports that they 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?

I will be working with and consulting the following groups and organizations to better serve this group. Those areas include our Urban Indigenous Strategy team, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, Biindigen Wellness, and YWCA Spectrum to get a wider sense of the supports and resources that we need in order to reduce rates of suicide. I want to create a welcoming and inclusive Hamilton that supports all of our community members.

## 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?

This topic is very near to my heart as there are many long-time ward 4 residents that have been in their homes for more than 50+ years and have been able to age at home. When I have knocked on their doors, they have listed challenges with loneliness and depression. Hamilton has a plan for an Age-Friendly City which I will revisit and adapt according to our post-covid times while also consulting with our Seniors Advisory Council on best tactics to for the care of seniors and their mental health.

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?

I will be consulting with experts and will be deferring to their recommendations on how I can best support them. I believe that the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health will be a valuable resource and one that can direct our collective efforts to ensure we reduce senior suicide and self-harm in our 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?

This is another topic that I'm unfamiliar with and as such, will work on educating myself on the challenges of this topic. I am open to hearing from all stakeholders including lived experience seniors, nonprofits supporting this population, and experts in this area.

### 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 participating in the Board of Health Committee and other public health committees so I can directly learn and influence decisions to ensure that we are properly supporting our hospitals and public health organizations. They are doing important work in the community and we as elected leaders should be listening, learning, and supporting them to continue to serve our community.

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! And I hope to initiate a long-term campaign aimed at our local residents that will arm them with information for alternatives to seeking emergency mental health care. I am committed to providing information and resources to help our community connect with each other, access programs that will help lower mental stress and elevate mental health and well-being, and help our community stay healthy as we advocate for shorter wait times.

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 support this and will commit to working with all levels of government to ensure implementation.

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?

Yes, and as I've stated above, I will be working with our Youth Strategy team to determine the best ways to identify supports and implement them for young people.

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, I commit to meeting and listening to mental health advocacy groups and their input for mental health policies for the city.

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?

Absolutely! They are already doing great work in the city and require our support to continue that work.

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

Yes. Provided that we have public consultation and have placed them close to support organizations and away from areas where children and young families frequent.

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 will be working with our ward trustees in both the Public and Catholic school boards to ensure that there are educational resources to support youth and facilitate safe spaces.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in about this.

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