

# 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?

Working as a paramedic in the City of Hamilton for the past 5 years, I am no stranger to the challenges youth and young adults face in regards to supports for mental health. If I were elected as Ward 6 Councillor, I would pledge to do better by enacting a policy to have more support on site in schools. This could look like an onsite social worker or child life specialist who could offer immediate services to youth in crisis, and additionally act as a liaison to connect students and their families with pre-existing programs in the city. Additionally, I would like to increase the municipal funding into mental health supports for youth to eliminate or at least reduce barriers to care.

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

If elected, I would advocate for more on site presence for youth in crisis, de-stigmatization of seeking help, and removal of common barriers to care (ex. finances, transportation, long wait lists).

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>)

If elected, I would wholeheartedly support the recommendations put forth in the Youth Strategic Plan. Reading through the 5 priority themes, I believe they are appropriate aligned with the needs of the community, and address gaps in the systems currently in place.

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 would like to have in person spaces set up for members of marginalized communities where they can come together with support that is specifically designed to meet their needs in a like-minded setting. An example of this would be a centre for the LGBTQIA2S+ community that is staffed by allies and those who identify as a member of that community. The vast majority of community outreach programs are secular, which could be a deterrent for members of marginalized communities so increasing the number of non-secular non-profit spaces could also be of benefit.

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?

Reducing rates of suicide starts with implementation of more accessible and equitable resources for the community before moments of crisis. A large part of this initiative would also include breaking down a systemic barrier rooted in colonialism, racial bias and generational trauma. More specifically, I would like to see an increase in both in-person and online mental health supports for youth in the community that is supported by or created with the marginalized communities it will serve.

## 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?

A way to ensure the care of seniors and their mental health would be to push for the resumption of pre-pandemic activities and services in LTCF. From working with these communities as a paramedic, you can see the overarching issues of loneliness and isolation that have only been amplified. There needs to be safety measures in places to protect those who are vulnerable to COVID-19, but continuing to care for seniors mental health needs to also be of high priority. Resumption of outings to local shops or churches, live music, games, crafts and socials are a few of the priorities that I believe would improve the care of seniors.

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 have had the idea for a community guardian program where residents of a neighbourhood could sign up to offer support or services to those in their community. These could include but are not limited to driving someone an appointment or errand, providing first aid/a home cooked meal or completing a chore. If a network like this were to exist, it could in theory offer comfort/support and someone to complete a wellness check for seniors in the community while also building relationships with those around your home. This support could improve the mental health of those who may be isolated or not have immediate family or friends they can turn to in times of need.

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?

To help ensure the reduction of substance misuse and/or dependency in seniors, I would like to create a network of volunteers (or possibly paid city staff) to have weekly check ins with seniors in the community who wish to be apart of a program like this. This would be extremely beneficial to those who no longer have any family or friends to touch base with on a regular basis, and would also give people in the community a chance to get to know their neighbours on a more personal level. I believe that this basic interaction alone would be helpful to reduce senior substance misuse as they would have more meaningful connections in their daily life, and an outlet to express concerns regarding mental health.

## 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?

I would encourage the city to push for more supports from the federal and provincial governments to expand mental health programs to reduce waitlists and expand who can qualify for reduced cost or free services. I would also recommend that there be better wages for staff working in the programs, and sign on or retention bonuses to attract and keep staff.

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, if elected I would do all I could in my position to advocate for better access to services and 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?

Yes, I wholeheartedly do support this number. Having reliable access to emergency and crisis services in the community is a huge part of reducing suicide rates. If I were to be elected I would advocate for raising awareness about this service, and ensure it is given to those seeking health services who are deemed to be at risk.

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?

Bridging this gap is incredibly important for the youth it serves for them to develop health coping mechanisms and the building blocks for responsibility and self sufficient behaviours in early adulthood. I would help to increase grants for local NGO groups working in this field to reach a broader audience and provide a wider range of services.

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 believe that working with the groups out in the community already doing this work with little resources need to be apart of the decision making and need to be heard at city council. If elected I hope to ensure their needs are heard.

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 currently am working on volunteering with SOPEN Hamilton and the HUB and believe these are both incredibly important groups that service the city and its residents. These groups deserve a seat at the table, and should absolutely be included in policy development.

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

Yes, I support safe injection sites in the city of Hamilton and in my ward as they are an integral part of harm reduction.

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 like to work with the HWDSB to add education about substance use in a non-judgemental safe space, and know from experience that students are usually a lot more receptive to sensitive information like this when it comes from their peers. Programs like SOPEN are a student run organization that focuses on education for youth regarding harm reduction strategies in a safe and effective way. If there were the opportunity for education to be provided through groups like this I believe the outcome would be great.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

Thank you for your time.

# Google Forms