

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.

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Name *

Rouba Fattal

I'm running for *

Mayor

Councillor

If Councillor, what Ward are you running in?

Kanata-South

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?

Schools should be a place that students want to be. As a city councillor, and community leader, I will advocate strongly for proper adequate funding to schools in Ontario. I will coordinate with the province to make sure services such as counselling are made available to students. I also want to be a leader in community engagement, to make sure students feel wanted, valued, and part of their community.

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

I think that Ottawa could be doing a better job of funding after school programs, and can do so in a way that comes at a minimal cost to the city. Ottawa has many post-secondary institutions that could offer a program where students can receive credits for supervising after-school learning and entertainment programs. This would be important not only to help struggling students who may not be able to afford a tutor, but can also help build intergenerational relationships.

It is important for youth to have mentors, and for the city to maximize the utility of community centres. Offering programs through partnerships with post-secondary institutions like this is one way I think we can help improve youth mental health, and build community.

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

I would vote yes on the establishment of a Ottawa Youth Mental Health Plan. I think it would be effective to coordinate the delivery of provincial and federal plans for mental health at a municipal level, while working to ensuring there is no duplication of services.

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?

Making sure marginal communities have access to, and are aware of, the resources in their community is important. Many people are unaware of the support that exists for problems they may be facing. Providing education and awareness campaigns to these folks would be one way to help them get access to services that may reduce stresses they are incurring. It is important to make sure that these services, and all city services, are being delivered in an inclusive manner, and do not discriminate.

Many of these services are under the jurisdiction of the province, so I would work diligently with provincial service providers to coordinate awareness and education campaigns.

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?

I think that creating spaces for indigenous, and 2SLGBTQA+ to express themselves and connect to each other is important. It is also important to protect these spaces that we create, so that these groups are not subjected to hate crimes. I believe that art has the power to heal, connect, and educate people. In addition to creating spaces for marginalized communities, I think that the City could do more to support indigenous and 2SLGBTQA+ artists, and give them the opportunity to lead in the creation of these spaces.

These spaces are especially important for Indigenous folks in Kanata-South, as there are not many areas for them to connect. I believe that there is space in Kanata for a more indigenous services that could be in collaboration with community resource centres.

As previously mentioned, I think that education about existing services is paramount in making sure that people who are experiencing mental distress are aware of, and have access to the programs being offered by all levels of government

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?

There is a tremendous opportunity to look at best practices in other cities that group post-secondary students together with seniors living alone to help address both the housing affordability crisis for students, and the mental health crisis facing seniors. I would investigate these programs thoroughly to help council understand how Ottawa could introduce similar programs.

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?

The Kanata Seniors Centre and the Western Ottawa Community Resource centre in Kanata South provide services to seniors, and have the opportunity to expand on these services, should someone advocate for them at city hall. As a councillor, I would advocate for the implementation of programs that can connect seniors to each other, and to the younger generation. I think the city, using the mobile library program, could provide digital training to seniors to allow them to connect to family and friends digitally and help mitigate feelings of loneliness and depression.

We also need culturally appropriate services and meeting times, so that more holistic programs are being offered to everyone.

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?

I would like to advocate for more exercise activities and programs for seniors at community centres, so the city can help provide preventative healthcare services. I would also like to see more community gardens in Kanata-South and all over Ottawa that cater specifically to seniors and vulnerable groups. Gardening, and eating local produce is proven to have profound impacts on mental and physical health.

It is important that we are encouraging and teaching people how to live as healthily as possible, as to avoid them from being injured, and/or developing chronic illness that requires medication which they can overdose from.

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 think there needs to be a serious discussion between the city and the province to help relieve pressure on our hospitals. Ottawa needs its ambulance and paramedic services to operate well so that they can properly help people experiencing a mental health crisis. Paramedics transporting patients experiencing mental health crisis should not have to wait hours in a hospital wait-room... but relieving this cannot be solved the city alone. More robust training for paramedics might be one way to ensure folks in distress can be treated immediately once the paramedic arrives, and keep them out of the hospital.

I am committed to understanding how we can fix this problem further once elected.

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?

Yes

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 a crisis line such as this, however it is important to make sure that there is not a duplication of services, in order to optimize public spending. CAMH lists 8 different distress line that specialize in certain distresses, and areas... So making sure that this crisis line supports these existing services, and does not over complicate/deter them, is paramount.

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 like to see that service providers to youth are able to seamlessly and easily transfer over patient information from the youth programs to adult programs. Perhaps establishing partnerships between local health care service providers, so that folks do not have to travel across the city to receive services now that they are of a different age group.

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 support and create policies by using as much information available to me from credible sources.

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?

Absolutely. I want to support and create policies by using as much information available to me from credible sources. Kanata saw the death of several youth due to opioids that concerned many people in the community.

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

While I support the idea of supervised injection sites, I do not believe that there should be, nor is there a need for them in Kanata-South. Opioid related deaths in the area are more related to the overdosing of prescription medications, rather than the injection of illegal drugs. Other areas of the city are in higher need of this particular service than Kanata-South.

Creating an area like this in Kanata-South has the potential to draw the wrong crowd of people to the area, which is very dense with young families and schools. I think this needs to be avoided, if possible.

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?

As a city councillor, my ability to influence high-school curriculum is very limited. I would happily coordinate with the province if given the opportunity, however, I believe that perhaps the city should consider creating and providing its own substance use and drug education flyer. In light of this, I believe it is important for each councillor hold a town hall with concerned parent and their kids so the city can best understand how to approach this problem, and to what scale we talk about engaging in risky behaviour.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

On the note of marginalized communities, I think it is important to make sure that our police force is being trained to more effectively distinguish, and charge, individuals who are committing hate crimes versus assaults. I think it is important that violence against minority groups is delivered its proper punishment, and that people who use spaces that are meant to protect minority groups can go to these spaces (including schools) confidently knowing that they will be protected, and no hate will be delivered to them.

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