



Bobbi Stewart For Regional Council

Question 1:

Over the last two and half years it feels as if we have become a less compassionate and caring community and are seeing increased incidences of racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia and sexual and gender-based violence, not only in the broader community but in our schools. If elected, what are steps you would take or policies you would propose/support to begin addressing this troubling trend?

- I am also very troubled by all of these very concerning trends. I see it in the way people communicate with each other on social media, reacting first, often with anger, criticism and judgment. I have to wonder if these same people would react the same way if they communicated face – to – face, or at least via the telephone. I believe we need to listen, pause and reflect before responding. When we hear or observe any of the “ism’s” or regarding any discrimination, hate or vitriol, it’s crucial that we not comply with silence, but rather that we respond quickly, with respect, but with no apology for speaking out, or for causing some to feel uncomfortable. If elected, I will always speak out against the absence of compassion and regarding incidences of racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia and sexual and gender – based violence anywhere I see it.
- I will listen, learn and do the research whenever I hear of these incidents. I will support community members and fellow politicians and members of Regional and City of Cambridge staff to support current community programs. I will listen, learn and advocate when expansion of programs or creation of new initiatives are requested.

Question 2:

What is one decision made by Cambridge/Regional Council in the last four years that you believe has had the most impact on the lives of women and gender-diverse individuals? What more would you like to see?

- We often hear about women and gender – diverse individuals who cannot afford to buy menstrual products. This is very sad and concerning. Something that many of us take for granted is actually out of reach for the working poor and others living in poverty. The decision made by both the Waterloo Region school boards to provide free menstrual products through the Nutrition for Learning is one of great importance and positive impact. The program called Changing the Flow not only eases the financial burden for students across Waterloo Region, but gives back pride and dignity that has been taken away by poverty and vulnerability.
- I would like to see this program offered outside the school systems. The City of Kitchener provides free menstrual products in city buildings and I hope to see this expanded to The City Cambridge, Waterloo, North Dumfries and Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich Townships.
- We have many excellent programs in the Region to support victims of family violence, gender – based violence and assault against children. I would like to see that the necessary ongoing funding is provided to continue these programs and will advocate to all levels of government to this end.



Question 3:

Data from neighbouring municipalities and cities across the globe show that Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) reduce the risk of overdose and drug poisoning. Waterloo Region currently ranks as having the eight highest rate of overdose deaths in Ontario. This is a crisis and punitive “war on drugs” models of managing it have failed time and again, causing countless preventable deaths. If elected, are you prepared to support a CTS in Cambridge as it has been proposed and agreed to by Council? Please explain your rationale.

- I totally support a CTS site in Cambridge. As many are aware, this was approved by Cambridge City Council in October 2021. Council also approved a motion put forward by Councillor Donna Reid to endorse 150 Main Street as the site because there were already existing health and social services available and accessible for potential clients. I am told that the Provincial government has funding for 21 sites only and that we are in the queue at 22. I will advocate to the provincial government for expedient funding for our Cambridge site.

Question 4:

From children to seniors, adults and couples, people across the community are facing mild to severe mental health challenges. We have heard many stories of people not being able to access the mental health supports they need. From community counselling to crisis and residential supports, organisations and institutions are lacking the resources to meet the community need (<https://www.cambridgetoday.ca/local-news/cmha-still-seeing-high-demand-for-mental-health-supports-5559717>), and waiting lists are significant. Why do you believe this to be the situation, and if elected, what will you do in your capacity to support the mental health needs of the community?

- I believe this situation is caused by a lack of funding caused by years of cumulative tax cuts by the provincial and federal governments and by an overall lack of the necessary funding for existing and new services.
- If elected, I will listen to constituents, monitor the situation and advocate to all levels of government as necessary.



Question 5:

More than 5,500 individuals living in Cambridge visited the Food Bank this year for emergency food assistance. Of those, 1,200 individuals accessed the food bank for the first time in their lives. What will you do to ensure that no one in our community goes hungry?

- When we look at Food Bank usage we think of providing spaces for community gardens, innovative programs, accessibility in getting fresh food and produce from the farmer's hand to our kitchen tables. We think of terrific volunteer programs such as The Trinity Table where full meals are provided three times a week to those in need for 30 years! We also think about Innovative ways to engage people in making healthy eating a part of their reality in a way that is accessible to them.
- I will watch and listen regarding existing community programs, the need for expansions and new programs and will advocate to all levels of government for funding as necessary.

Question 6:

An unprecedented number of people are experiencing homelessness, either accessing shelter or living unsheltered. This is happening across the country, and we know that no one level of government can fix this issue.

What will you:

- a) do, in your capacity, to support the people currently experiencing homelessness?
- b) do, in your capacity, to ensure that everyone has access to affordable housing?

- a) In my capacity as Regional Councillor representing Cambridge, I will show support, connect with the community and find out from both housed and unhoused community members how they want their voices to be represented in Regional Council. I will work with outreach and different support programs that are currently providing front line support to those experiencing homelessness. As always, I will advocate to different levels of government for funding as necessary.
- b) I will work with grassroots organizations such as Rhythm and Blues, advocate for mental health funding for children, work to expand, and make the community aware of extra-curricular programs to keep our children busy and safe. I will also advocate to different levels of government for funding as necessary.



Question 7:

Last year's Child and Youth Planning Table survey of the Region's youth, particularly the report with disaggregated data by municipality (<https://childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CYPT-YIS-GEOGRAPHY-SNAPSHOT.pdf> and <https://www.cambridgetimes.ca/opinion-story/10651359-the-kids-aren-t-all-right-cambridge-youth-are-sounding-the-alarm/>) showed youth in Cambridge experiencing more significant challenges than their peers in other parts of the region. This includes lower outcomes in their sense of belonging, mental health, support from family and community, and access to recreational facilities. Youth in Cambridge have clearly identified significant issues growing up and becoming successful adults in our community. Why do you believe this is the case, and what will you do to improve child and youth wellbeing and outcomes in our community?

- Through the years, being a teenager has never been easy for most. It's a crucial, "push – pull" time of transition, exerting some independence, but still needing parental and community guidance. I worked with vulnerable youth, foster parents and birth parents for 25 years and have raised five children. I love children and youth and am concerned and sad to learn of these outcomes through The Child Youth Planning Table.
- Over several decades, more and more parents must go out to work in order to support themselves and their families, relying on two family incomes. As good paying jobs with benefits become hard to find, there is more competition and as the cost of living rises, many are barely making it by and for some, it is out and out poverty. Parents want to be there physically and emotionally for their kids, but merely trying to survive can cause emotional preoccupation and physical absence. In times past, many grandparents lived with their adult children and grandchildren or at least nearby, this is not always the case. Parents may also find themselves at odds with each other and this puts additional stress and strain on the children. Research informs us that many of our youth feel isolated through the use of social media and even bullied. Research also tells us that many youth spend an inordinate amount of time on screens albeit television, computer or cell phone. This can increase isolation, but also means that youth are getting the fresh air and exercise they need to thrive. Add the state of the world with many wars and the climate crisis, and it's no wonder so many of our youth are depressed as the future appears so uncertain and bleak.
- If elected, I will work with individuals, community groups, including our Neighbourhood Associations and fellow politicians, including school board trustees to solicit input regarding existing and additional programs for children and youth. I will assist and support in the planning process and advocate to all levels of government for funding as necessary.



Question 8:

Do you have a candidate page or social media you would like to direct people to for more information?

- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Bobbi4Regional>
- Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/bobbi4regional/>
- Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/Bobbi4Regional>
- Website: Bobbi4Regional.com