



Matt Rogers For Ward 2

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?

- As a Councillor, I would like to work with my colleagues to introduce a slew of legislation that promotes all types of interactions between residents and people from outside communities. This could come in the form of making it easier to hold festivals and other gatherings, or simply by building our city in a way that allows people to safely walk, ride a bike, or take transit. As Canadians, we need to uphold our own reputation of compassion and kindness, especially here at home. Policies like these will do that, even if they aren't explicitly created to address those issues.

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?

- I can't honestly answer this question, since I'm not a member of either of those communities. Any attempt to answer this question without admitting that, is nothing short of willful ignorance. For any women or gender-diverse individuals reading this, reach out to me (matt@mrogers.ca)! I want to hear about your concerns, so I can address them as your Councillor and prevent such decisions from being made in a way that negatively impacts you!
- I do know that lighting is of concern, though, as many of our parks and streets are not very well-lit in the darker hours. This can be problematic for women who may feel unsafe walking alone in the dark (while walking a dog, for example). My own mother has brought this up to me in the past. I think this is an especially important issue, since the days are quickly becoming shorter.



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.

- It was my understanding that the CTS facility was happening regardless of how the new Council feels. Either way, I do support the creation of such programs to help address the issue. Though, I can already see issues. I've heard from a number of people that people who go and use substances then leave and linger around the downtown. This has led to some instances of violence and harassment. Since we need to address the issue of addictions, we should also give people a safe space to be while they are under the influence of such substances.

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?

- The fact is, we are playing catch up in the mental health game. Mental health issues have been (and sort of still is) stigmatized for decades. Thankfully, those stigmas are beginning to be erased from society, but people are adapting and seeking help (as they should!) faster than facilities can get built and professionals can be trained. I'm not sure if there's much, if anything, that municipal governments can do about this, but I would push the Region and Public Health to do as much as they can to address these shortages.



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?

- That is a horrendous statistic, and we should be ashamed of it. As for what a city can do to address this issue, there is not a whole lot. We can invest in infrastructure that allows for people to move about their city more cheaply, we can invest in daycares centres (potentially a Region issue) to provide more affordable child care for struggling parents, or we could create a series of community gardens across the city using excess/ underused parkland to grow some local fruits and veggies. None of these will make a drastic dent in the issues that these people are facing, but trust me, every dollar counts, and if any/ all of these potential initiatives will help those individuals and families that are struggling, then that is what we need to do.

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) as unsavoury as it is for the general public, we need to allow encampments (or something similar) in select spots, or at least not arrest people simply because they cannot afford to live inside. Managed approaches can create safer environments for people currently experiencing homelessness, and can hopefully lead to these people escaping homelessness faster.
- b) as outlined in my platform, I would like to introduce policies that create affordable housing units in all new developments. This way, we can create more units exponentially faster, and not need to spend a single dime of taxpayers money in the process. With all the developments currently proposed in Cambridge alone, we could build over 1,200 affordable homes by introducing a standard 10% affordability rate on all new developments. This percentage could range higher for projects with higher numbers of units, or that tend to be labelled as "luxury," which essentially guarantees that units likely won't even be "attainable" for most, let alone affordable.



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?

- Cambridge is an inherently boring place in comparison to Kitchener, Waterloo, Toronto, and many other nearby cities. There is simply not much that is interesting for young people in this city. It may sound harsh, but it is the truth and everyone openly admits it. Another truth: not everyone can travel around southern Ontario for fun every weekend, and nor should they be forced to. To improve wellbeing across the city, we must invest in programs aimed at young people so that they have something to do other than sit at home and wallow in their boredom. This applies to all ages, though. We should also be investing in programs for the elderly (who face strikingly similar mobility barriers - i.e. can't drive), and we should be allowing our city to develop in a way that will incentivize more small business and privately owned entertainment/ amenities.

Question 8:

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

- Website: mrogers.ca
- Instagram: [instagram.com/mattrogersward2](https://www.instagram.com/mattrogersward2)
- Facebook: Matt Rogers
- Email: matt@mrogers.ca