



Nate Whalen For Ward 3

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 care deeply about ensuring a sense of safety, community, and belonging here in Cambridge. That means we must celebrate diversity and inclusion, while standing up against hate and gender-based violence. At a City level, we must work everyday to create a more inclusive Cambridge, by coming together to celebrate people of all genders, sexual orientations, colours, religions, and abilities, applying an intersectional lens to policy-making, and working with community partners, including Waterloo Regional Police, to combat incidents of hate and violence.

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 think the most groundbreaking thing that the City has done for women and gender-diverse individuals is providing free menstrual products in City facilities/washrooms. This is an important step to ensuring a more equal world where women, gender-diverse individuals, and our teens can thrive.



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.

- There are significant benefits and potential drawbacks to the CTS. Not only will there be major public health benefits such as fewer overdoses, fewer cases of HIV transmission through dirty needles, and less strain on our emergency medical professionals. The CTS also allows a place other than a park bench for folks to go, provides an access point for treatment services, and may provide a community safety benefit. The other side of the coin is there's legitimate concern from residents about the potential negative impact in the immediate surrounding area, including being within 150 meters of a school with small children and the Galt Downtown Core being a stones throw away. The project has been approved so I want to see what happens and use data/evidence for further decision-making. If elected, I will support the CTS in its first year, with a Council review based on a study of results and outcomes.

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 that we need to work with the federal, provincial, and regional government to come to the table on mental health and therapy supports. In my reading and speaking to folks, most mental health issues seem to be caused by trauma, especially with traumatic or insecure parental relationships. Poverty can also contribute to mental health issues.
- In terms of solutions, I believe there's an opportunity to review the structure of how existing dollars are used to deliver services more efficiently and how do we combine mental health treatment. We need to invest in more immediate telephony/online talk therapy support so we don't have to suffer from local staffing shortages, free online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy programs, and more group talk therapy.
- When building emergency shelter, we should also have on-site wrap-around services. Finally, to address root cause, we also have to ask how do we as a City help families spend quality time with each other, not have to have a parent move for financial/work reasons, and provide more support to youth so they're able to develop strong relationships and better coping mechanisms.



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?

- I believe the first thing we must do is ask: why is there an increased need and how can we alleviate folks' economic woes. That starts with working with governments to support lower prices and reducing the burden on taxpayers and renters by reducing our Property Taxes.
- If elected, I will propose a coalition of community and religious organizations come together to help support the increased need and help our Food Bank.

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) I will make a motion to provide seed funding to the City to explore with Cambridge Shelter Corporation the expansion/potential relocation of the Bridges Shelter (via Federal Housing Co-Investment Fund) to ensure the Bridges is properly able to support the community's increased need. I will also make a motion to provide a \$600,000 commitment over three years to supplement the Cambridge Shelter Corporation's rent top-up program so we can get more folks out of Emergency Shelter and into permanent, stable housing.
- (b) I will work tirelessly to accelerate affordable housing development, including cutting red tape, and holding City officials accountable for the speed of permit approvals. I also believe we should explore converting empty city-owned buildings and parking lots into housing.



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?

- I will ask the City's Recreation Department to review our City facilities and programs to ensure there is an expanded year-round programming that's affordable for youth and families. This could include potentially expanding the existing 50+ Community Centres to also support youth programming and working with schools to offer more after-school programs.
- I will also support relaunching the Cambridge Youth Advisory Committee to Council (YACC) to provide City Council with advice on how to improve services and programming for our youth right here in Cambridge.

Question 8:

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

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