



Ross Earnshaw For Ward 4

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?

- This is indeed a troubling, upsetting trend. One of Cambridge's biggest strengths as a community is its diversity. We need to cultivate a welcoming, inclusive, safe environment for people of all races and orientations in our schools, in our neighbourhoods, and in our workplaces. We have made steps as a City to address these issues with Cambridge's Stronger Together: Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan of July 2018, which I support. But it hasn't gone far enough to protect the vulnerable members of our community from discrimination. As outlined in the City's plan, we must continue building inclusive facilities, services, programs, and infrastructure to accommodate our diverse communities here in Cambridge. These groups need safe spaces to celebrate their unique cultures and identities with the support and enthusiasm of their neighbours and local government. We can incentivize and encourage businesses to make their workplaces and public shops more inclusive and accessible. A wonderful example of this is the Stop Gap ramp program that has seen colourful, wheelchair accessible ramps placed in the front of local businesses here in Cambridge. It is also crucial that we recognize and celebrate the diversity within our community. I would love to see City-wide celebrations marking holidays like Eid or Diwali, and more effort within Cambridge to mark occasions like Pride for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. I believe an attitude of tolerance and inclusion begins with education. In schools, we need programs and classes that teach children about the diverse aspects of the world they live in. Students and residents should have the opportunity to meet and engage with different members of the diverse communities in Cambridge, and understand the individual and societal consequences of bigotry and xenophobia. I will strive to engage with members and leaders of our diverse communities here in Cambridge to better understand the complex issues that they are facing, and how I can help create a safer, more inclusive space for everyone.



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 was pleased to see the City support the return of "Walk a Mile in Their Shoes" to Cambridge this year after a two year hiatus. This is a wonderful event that brings awareness to gender-based violence and raises money in support of victims. It was encouraging to see the changes made to this year's event to be more inclusive and recognize the alarming rates at which the 2SLGBTQ+ community suffers from domestic violence. In the future I'd like to see more initiatives championed by our council and regional council to support women and gender-diverse individuals in need. As a City we can support and engage with events like "Walk a Mile in Their Shoes" and organizations like the YWCAs of Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo, and the Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region.ortant 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.

- I am in support of a CTS site in Cambridge. The number of deaths of members of our community as a result of overdose and drug poisoning is both appalling and heartbreaking. I support a CTS site for the reasons that it will prevent fatal and non-fatal overdoses, reduce the spread of infectious disease amongst users, connect those who use drugs with the appropriate support and services that they desperately need, and reduce the amount of needle waste and drug use in our public spaces. I trust the professionals and experts on this matter and their consensus that this is what is best for our community. It is extremely important to me that we find the right long term location for the CTS site in Cambridge where the most possible people can benefit from the services provided and the impact on the surrounding community and neighbourhoods is minimized.



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?

- It is certainly true that there is a large number of people in our community facing mental health challenges. The isolation of a years-long pandemic and the increasing cost of living and lack of affordable housing are just a couple of the factors playing into this issue. The situation arises from a lack of funding and from a lack of nearby clinicians skilled in the necessary treatment modalities to address the needs of citizens presenting with mental health issues. The Cambridge Community Wellbeing Advisory Committee needs to be revitalized, given a fresh and specific mandate and reconstituted with a smaller membership to make it more agile and responsive. Governance and lack of focus seem to be an issue with too many City subcommittees. If elected, I would request an assignment to this committee with a view to making it the productive and forward thinking group that was intended. I would also like to create a plan on how the City can attract clinicians and experts to the Cambridge area. We need more support and more services for those suffering from mental health challenges in our community.

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?

- The Cambridge Food Bank is a pillar of our community. Its importance and value cannot be overstated. I would like to see their efforts advertised and celebrated more in the public eye to encourage more donation and volunteer work. I want to engage with the leaders of these organizations, like the Self-Help food bank, to understand the best ways that the City council can support and expand the services that they provide.



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?

- To support those currently experiencing homelessness in our community, I will, in the short term, work to provide improved facilities like washrooms and showers, and more temporary shelter housing. I will work to extend further mental health support services to those who need it. In the longer term, I see a tiny home community as a potential part of the solution. As we deal with the homelessness crisis, it will be crucial to provide more affordable housing throughout Cambridge. I will work with higher levels of government to fund more affordable housing projects in Cambridge and develop creative solutions to this issue. I will encourage organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Indwell, and Menno to continue to build or convert existing units into affordable 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?

- The past couple years of uncertainty and isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic have been difficult for everyone, but particularly for children. They lost crucial moments of change, development, socialization, and education. Being a young person today is very challenging. They must deal with the pressures of social media, the constant barrage of information from our phones and the internet. These are factors that have rapidly changed the way young people grow up and how they view the world. I believe we must provide more spaces for children to connect and develop relationships with one another. The youth must have more access to activities like arts, science and technology, and sports programs that foster accessibility and inclusivity. We must work with local leaders in these fields to attract young people and remove any socioeconomic barriers. It is here they can build gratifying, useful skills that help shape a rewarding, meaningful, happy life. Furthermore, it will be vital to provide adequate support for youth dealing with mental health issues. We need stronger, more robust, widespread services dedicated to the mental wellbeing of children in our schools and our community at large. We need more professionals in Cambridge who understand these issues and are prepared to diagnose and treat children who are suffering.

Question 8:

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

- Web: www.rossearnshaw.ca
- Facebook: Ross-Earnshaw
- Instagram: [ross_earnshaw](https://www.instagram.com/ross_earnshaw)
- Twitter: [@Ross_Earnshaw](https://twitter.com/Ross_Earnshaw)