



Naeem Awan For Ward 5

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?

- If elected, I would set up workshops and events to help educate people on different cultures in order to help them understand and communicate with each other in a safe and peaceful manner. I think most incidences of racism and other forms of discrimination stem from a lack of education, awareness, understanding and misconceptions about other communities, culture, religion, race and genders. There isn't much being done to combat all of these serious issues and I would make sure to address all of these concerns.

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?

- Cambridge Council has supported various charities and organizations in setting up shelters for women who are facing issues such as homelessness, domestic violence and other such challenges. I think this is a very beneficial venture and that there should be more outlets and places that women can go to in order to seek help with any issues they may be facing.



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.

- If elected, I would put my full support behind CTS in Cambridge because I don't think that drugs will ever become non-existent so the best option in this situation is to ensure that they are being consumed in a safe manner that puts the user and the people around them at minimal risk. I also think that we need to spread more information about drug usage to our communities to educate people on things like drug overdoses, how they occur and how to handle a situation in which one may occur. Lastly, it is important to highlight that the countless death that took place are not only because of the consumption of drugs but other factors play a significant role as well.

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 reason we are facing this mental health crisis situation is due to the lack of resources which stem from a lack of education and understanding of mental health challenges and the consequences they carry. If elected, I would do my best to convince the City Council to provide more funding and resources to community counselling, and crisis response/support teams and organizations. I would also propose opening various counselling centres across the city/region to provide more accessible help and support to people of all ages, race, ethnicity and more.



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 would do my absolute best to raise more funds for the Food Bank and other organizations having the same theme in order to ensure that they are able to properly function and provide for our communities. I would also meet with members of our communities, businesses, educators, council members and youth to find a practical solution to the challenges they face in being able to provide food for themselves and their families. We should work on creating more community gardens across Cambridge so people have the ability to grow fresh produce and learn the basics of gardening. This would not only allow for people to have more food available to them but at the same time it would allow them to learn a skill which they might have not learned/practiced before.

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?

- Homelessness is a systematic and classical example of the trickle-down effect of many issues. I will support the homeless people by adopting two strategies. In the short term plan I will highlight the issue in digital, print and electronic media across the board and recognize it as everyone's issue and emphasize its direct/ indirect impacts on the economy, mental health & health care system, community safety, and societal well-being. There should be an open and regular communication with all the stakeholders including homeless people to get their opinions and logic to resolve the issue and show solidarity, support and sincerity with them. The long term strategy should be focused on decreasing the high cost of living and the housing market. This plan can be achieved by delimiting the zoning criteria, minimizing property taxes and freezing taxes for a certain period of time for first time buyers and seniors. We have a shortage of skilled labor and the society can use them by developing customized licensing criteria without compromising the professional and safety requirements.



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 youth in Cambridge have significant issues which hinder their success due to lack of sense of belonging, mental health, and lack of support from family and community and less recreational sources. The major reason is lack of funding sources and technical trained staff. Cambridge is growing rapidly but the infrastructure is not developing at the same pace, which has a direct impact on the youth and future generation, resulting in higher rates of depression, anxiety and in severe cases drug addiction. I would do my absolute best to raise more funds for mental health and food security organizations in order to ensure that they are able to properly function, provide best service and support to the communities. I would also meet with all stakeholders to have a dialogue among community members, businesses, educators, council members and youth to find a practical solution for the youth by providing better schooling and job opportunities.

Question 8:

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

- Number: 647-740-6031
- Website: www.vote4naeem.ca
- Email: naeemawan@nawan.ca
- Facebook: NaeemAwan4Ward5
- Instagram: NaeemAwan4Ward5
- Twitter: NaeemAwan4Ward5