



Sheri Roberts 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?

- Having people with diverse backgrounds and experiences around the table is vital to ensuring their voices are heard in the room where decisions are being made. I would like to see more diversity on council and on advisory committees so that the perspectives of those from equity deserving groups are at the forefront of decision making in Cambridge. Education in the classroom and to the general public around these increasing incidents of violence is imperative to curbing this alarming trend.

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?

- Within the Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan (2018-2022) policies were implemented to improve service provision for women and gender-diverse individuals including developing and implementing policies and procedures for serving customers across a spectrum of diversity, including gender identity. Also, within that plan, in 2019-2020 plans were made for system and community level changes based on the calls to action that were identified in the "Breaking the Silence on Hidden Violence: Addressing Hate Crime & Violence Against the LGBTQ Community in Waterloo Region" report. Systemic changes are vital to improving the lives of those facing discrimination including women and gender-diverse individuals.



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 absolutely prepared to support harm reduction strategies including the CTS that is being brought to Cambridge. The city needs to provide the means to support those using drugs so they can do so safely. The CTS site will also act as an opportunity to build trust and make connections between those using drugs and those who offer the supports that they will need if they choose to try to stop using.

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 social isolation and anxiety that was brought on by the pandemic has compounded our already severe mental health challenges. Financial supports for organizations like Family Counselling Centre of Cambridge and North Dumfries comes from upper levels of government and donations. Greater collaboration needs to take place between municipal level representatives and MPPs/MPs who can effect fiscal change. The demand for subsidized counselling sessions far exceeds the available supply. I would communicate the needs here in Cambridge to those who are able to channel more funds into these programs.



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 meeting with the Executive Director of the Food Bank, we discussed how often community members want to help but sometimes don't know how. I would assist the Food Bank with promotion of the needs and increase the exposure of the supports and services offered at the Food Bank to the general public so that they know how best to support the wonderful programs they offer. Also, PPP (Public Private Partnerships) are a great tool to get more funding into services like the food bank. Holding community events where donations can be made directly to the organization is another way to increase both community engagement and help support the agency.

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?

- Our community has a lot of supports already in place that can help those experiencing homelessness. Often there is a disconnect between those supports and the folks who need to access them. I would like to see more resource coordinators/front line staff connecting with those folks and helping them to navigate the often-complicated social services system to maximize the support they can access immediately.
- The lack of affordable housing is a massive issue. I would like to see more creative methods of increasing the affordable housing inventory from utilizing vacant space with infill homes, tiny homes and creating incentives for developers who include affordable units in their developments. This is a problem that will take time to solve but if we start today, it isn't insurmountable.



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 was present at the most recent Child and Youth Planning Table meeting where the conversation around the issues facing the youth in Cambridge took place. Youth engagement is at an all-time low right now. Between virtual fatigue and increased anxiety from over two years of social complications as a result of the pandemic, agencies and individuals who support youth are struggling to make the same connections with them that they once did. Programs like the Smart Waterloo Region Innovation Lab which offers youth led initiatives, can reconnect young people to their community through engagement projects. We also need more positive social and recreational programs and facilities in the city for our youth. Keeping the young people engaged and busy in a positive way can go far to preventing future issues for them.

Question 8:

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

- Website www.sroberts.ca
- Facebook @OurWard5Cambridge
- Instagram @sheri4ward5