



# Scott Hamilton For Ward 7

## 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?

- First -- and most importantly -- I recognize that, as a white able-bodied male, I'm in no place to 'tell' or 'recommend' how to address the issues that affect others and their lives experiences. So, the first thing to do, is truly listen; to seek out the voices and groups in the community that can magnify positivity, inclusion, hope, and acceptance, for all. Secondly, I would ask these groups what they need (i.e. Funding? Event space? Marketing? etc.) -- then, I would craft motion(s) that are within the city's purview, to help. (There are frequently overlaps with other levels government, so it's essential here to work with Regional, Provincial, and Federal partners, to ensure there's real action).
- In sum: I would listen with an open heart and mind to understand what is needed to assist the groups, persons, and communities affected; I would then seek out what the city can do to assist; and finally, I would try to act as an example -- for my family, friends, colleagues on council, etc. -- of someone that is open and accepting, and engaged in creating a compassionate and caring community.

## 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 closing of Regional Daycare Centres put a tremendous strain on families across Waterloo Region, and women are most negatively impacted by this because the cost and burden of childcare is disproportionately weighed by them. I do think that Cambridge's motion to place free feminine hygiene products in city bathrooms was a positive step towards more inclusivity. In the future, I think more city-led events and initiatives that bring diverse members of our community together -- such as the recent 'Walk a Mile in Their Shoes' event by the YWCA -- would be a fantastic way to break down stigmas, increase understanding of the trials and tribulations that women and gender-diverse individuals face in our community, and honestly, just connect the community to turn strangers into friends. And honestly, I think more funding towards groups that address the social fissures in our society is badly needed.



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

- Yes, I am in favour of a CTS in Cambridge, and I was an outspoken supporter of it before I joined council. In short: in order to judge whether a CTS would work in Cambridge, we cannot listen to Facebook groups, blogs, or 'word of mouth'. This is a medical, social, and health-related (i.e. drug poisoning) crisis, so we have to listen to front-line workers, doctors, and medical experts with lived experience in working with, and treating, addictions. So, when I first asked "Would a CTS work in Cambridge?" this is what I did. I reached out to: The police, the fire department, the hospital, doctors, paramedics, nurses, front-line workers, the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank, Langs, the House Of Friendship, and many other groups. Across the board, there was 100% agreement from everyone with experience in working to combat the drug crisis that a CTS site isn't a magical solution that will solve the crisis, but its the best solution we have under our current circumstance. It cleans needles off of our streets and playgrounds, by bringing people into a safe space; it offers the potential for a person who uses drugs to seek help and other wraparound services; it saves the lives of local residents in need of help; and most importantly, it is a space that makes people in the horrible throes of this addiction, feel that they are human again: that they are accepted, worthwhile, and that they are worthy of getting help and seeking something better.
- I made a surprise visit to CTS sites in Guelph and Kitchener, and I spoke with people who were addicted to drugs; I spoke with staff; I door knocked neighbours in the area (no one wanted to leave the area, and all liked where they lived); I door knocked businesses in the area (there were no issues related to the CTS site specifically), and the list goes on. My point is, that the fears we hear about online, never materialized in Kitchener or Guelph. Instead, a lot of lives were saved, people were helped, the streets became cleaner, the community became more understanding. THIS is what I think will happen in Cambridge. Too many lives have been lost, and this site is needed where the damage is currently the highest; and there, it will do the most good. (And, again, this is also coming from front-line workers and doctors working in addictions and healthcare, it's not spurious guesswork or 'goss' from the interwebs).



#### 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 mental health crisis has a variety of causes (cuts to education, rise of electronic usage, increased levels of pressure and trauma to children, youth, young adults, etc.), and the myriad causes were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Naturally, organizations in our community, like the CHA, need better funding, so as a councillor I will help to request that from the Region, asap. Next, I think it's important for public figures to speak about the mental health crisis, to reduce the stigmas surround it, and to ensure that in need of help can access it without fear of reprisal from friends, school colleagues, workers or bosses, etc.

#### 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 thought you said this was a short survey?! There are PhD theses on this question alone!!) But, in short: food insecurity stems from a myriad of different causes and origins, from job loss and economic precarity, to a difficult family / home relationship and life, to being a new Canadian or recent immigrant to the country, to being a senior that has lost a spouse or 'breadwinner', to suffering from trauma and addictions, etc. With so many roots, I think the key to ensure that no one goes hungry, is (1) making sure the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank is operating at full capacity, with trucks, fridges, pantries, etc., all operational; (2) To market the food bank, so those in need know how to access it, and can do so from all ages and backgrounds; (3) To ensure the community donates to the food bank; not just food (which is essential, of course) but also money, to fund infrastructure, repairs, new services, more staff, etc. Operations, advocacy, and awareness, are key to ensuring no one goes hungry.



## 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:

- do, in your capacity, to support the people currently experiencing homelessness?
- do, in your capacity, to ensure that everyone has access to affordable housing?

- (A) First, we must ensure that agencies and front-line workers assisting people experiencing homelessness are funded, staffed, and safe. Then, we have to speak out to reduce stigmas behind homelessness, and work with other levels of government (e.g. Region, Province) to acquire more funding, staff, and facilities to address this.
- (B) Affordable housing is typically under the purview of Region / Province / Feds, so it's difficult at a city level. However, as a councillor I did pass a motion to allow Cambridge to look at 'Tiny Homes' on properties, which should, in the future, create many dwellings and many roofs over people's heads, from all walks of life --- from those experiencing homelessness, to those seeking to live close to family, to those looking for a small rental apartment, and much else. Basically, we need housing as quickly as possible, and Tiny Homes are one way to create more stock quickly, conveniently, and locally, hopefully driving the price down. Of course, the next step is to work with the Region, Province, and Federal government, to gain the capacity and funding to build more affordable and transitional housing, at a faster and greater scale.

## 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?

- Well, if you are a Cambridge youth, the question of 'what is there to do in this town?' frequently arises. Naturally, there need to be supports in school to address mental health crises and stigmas when they arise. But cities need to create inclusive spaces and places for kids and youth of all ages to go, feel comfortable, and be themselves. This needs to be a variety, of course, but something is better than nothing. More group activities, more areas to hang out, safer parks, skate and bmx parks, basketball courts, etc. All of these would help! Free programs that get people away from screens, into nature and sports and hobbies, would be a great start.



### Question 8:

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

- [www.scotthamiltoncambridge.ca](http://www.scotthamiltoncambridge.ca)
- <https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonCbridge>