

## 2SLGBTQIA+ Questionnaire for Waterloo Region Municipal Candidates

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**Do you identify as a member of a 2SLGBTQIA+ community?**

Yes

**What role are you running for?**

Ward 6 Councillor (Waterloo)

**What do you believe are the most critical issues for the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community? If elected, how would you work with the local community to address these issues?**

The local 2SLGBTQIA+ community is systemically underserved and undersupported, and these structural inequities manifest in different ways, including through homelessness, mental health, isolation, unemployment, and discrimination. Grassroots organization is integral to progress, and there are many folks in the community who know much more than I do. It's important for me to listen to and support those voices when working to address those critical issues.

**Have you ever participated in 2SLGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training?**

I haven't participated in any training specific to 2SLGBTQIA+ cultural competency, but I have participated in a few general training sessions geared toward equity, diversity, and inclusion. I've been eager to register for the Making Spaces workshop facilitated by the Gender and Sexuality Diversity Alliance when the program re-launches!

More personally, some of the people I'm closest to are part of the queer community, and it's important to me that I continue to do right by those people. I'm especially cognizant of how diverse and nuanced the 2SLGBTQIA+ experience is, and that it's vital to offer people respect and kindness.

**Systemic homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are still prevalent in our community, resulting in significant socioeconomic disparities within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. If elected, how will you combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia?**

Much of my responsibility on Council will be in maintaining a critical eye on reports and proposals that come our way, as well as knowing when to reach out to people around me for their expertise and experience. Combatting discrimination can sometimes come in the form of targeted initiatives, but it more more importantly needs to be woven in as a foundation for any policies that Waterloo moves forward with.

**If elected, how would you address the ongoing issues of homelessness and mental health, especially as they disproportionately affect members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?**

I see a number of structural insufficiencies that exacerbate challenges for the queer community, particularly where access is limited. For example, when healthcare (physical or mental) is inaccessible in the region, the ability for an individual to rely on inter-regional transit can be vital to their health. Right now, inter-regional transit is very limited, and I would like to see the City of Waterloo continue to push the provincial government for expanded inter-regional transit service. Similarly, empowering youth to move through the city via public and active transit networks means that they can independently and privately access support and connect with their community. Given the disproportionate rates of homelessness and poverty within the queer community, it's essential that the city does its part in ensuring that crisis and transitional housing options are inclusive and safe, and financially accessible physical and mental health resources stay available in the region.

I recently attended a presentation from Project Willow, a research project by YW Kitchener-Waterloo, Community Justice Initiatives, and the Coalition of Muslim Women, that interviewed trans, two-spirit, non-binary, and women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence who are currently experiencing homelessness. I learned about some of the specific struggles faced by these groups and specific areas where there's more for our regional and municipal governments to do.

**Do you agree with the statement that "trans rights are human rights, and must be protected as such?"**  
Yes.

**What is one motion would you bring to council that you think will improve the lives of specifically queer people, racialized individuals and/or marginalized residents and why?**

The rising cost of housing is affecting almost everyone in the city in some way, but members of marginalized groups often have a greater need for affordable housing and a lessened ability to obtain it. Council needs to use all the tools available to it to support housing in the City, including through inclusive zoning reform, supporting non-profit housing, and permitting more "missing middle" housing in Waterloo. (I have more specifics on what I think the city can do on housing on my website [vote.matthewschwarze.ca](http://vote.matthewschwarze.ca))