

IELECT Candidate Questionnaire

IELECT Hamilton is asking every candidate for Council to complete this online questionnaire to provide residents with information regarding your campaign platform.

Please complete the following questionnaire. IELECT Hamilton will post your unedited responses on our website. The questionnaire is structured using the six priorities identified in our research of municipalities across Canada.

Email *

info@laurafarr.ca

Name: *

Laura Farr

Running for: *



Mayor



Councillor

If councillor, which ward are you running in:

- Ward 1
- Ward 2
- Ward 3
- Ward 4
- Ward 5
- Ward 6
- Ward 7
- Ward 8
- Ward 9
- Ward 10
- Ward 11
- Ward 12
- Ward 13
- Ward 14
- Ward 15

Which ward do you currently reside in: *

- Ward 1
- Ward 2
- Ward 3
- Ward 4
- Ward 5
- Ward 6
- Ward 7
- Ward 8
- Ward 9
- Ward 10
- Ward 11
- Ward 12
- Ward 13
- Ward 14
- Ward 15
- Other:

Campaign website:

www.laurafarr.ca

Campaign Email: *

info@laurafarr.ca

I - Infrastructure

A Leader who inclusively improves Hamilton's neighbourhoods, parks, playgrounds, roads, bridges, community centres, and waste water treatment facilities.

1. What three things are you most concerned about and would like to see changed as they relate to Hamilton's current infrastructure needs? *

Aging infrastructure such as water/waste water systems including the sewer overflow systems (which were known to be inadequate going back to the mid-90s), the inability of successive councils to ensure that enough budget was allocated towards the "infrastructure gap", and the biggest thing that needs to be changed - aside from the procurement policies which give us the "race to the bottom" which can translate to deficient projects that end up costing more money - is for innovative yet proven new technologies to build infrastructure and using things like permeable paving in parking lots, rain gardens and water mitigation techniques to help with run off during weather events.

2. As a councillor, what three actions would you propose to improve Hamilton's infrastructure? *

Prioritize the unsexy things that still need budget like our wastewater system, push for Hamilton to be a leader in new and greener technologies, and use the tools available (and lobby for others) to help generate the revenue needed to cover and fund the infrastructure gap due to successive Councils all the way back to the 80s who held the property tax rate increase to 0%.

E - Economy

A leader who strengthens the overall financial health and prosperity of Hamilton and all its diverse residents, through better and more secure jobs, a living wage, housing availability and affordability, and access to public services.

1. What three things are you most concerned about and would like to see changed as they relate to Hamilton's current economy? *

The City of Hamilton has a terrible reputation of being friendly to small business owners trying to open - there is a disconnect between Senior Managers and what is happening. Some work was done on this, but not enough to get ahead of what industries here need and want and ensuring the workforce can fulfill that. Housing affordability and availability has only gotten worse over the last 10 years, and Council again has tools it could be using to address this.

2. As a councillor, what three actions would you propose to improve Hamilton's economy? *

Continue the partnership between the educational institutions, Employment Hamilton, EcDev, Chambers of Commerce and businesses to get ahead of the need. Address the issues head on with the business licensing and permitting procedures - other cities have done this by establishing clear timelines and using technology more effectively. NYC had a City Commission in 2015 report on this. We can do this too without spending more money to make the City of Hamilton a partner and not a barrier. We already have the capability to tax vacant residential and commercial properties higher and Council has only recently pulled this lever. Far too late! We also have an issue with neighbourhood "ghost hotels" - places used for short-term stays that cause issues and take units for people to live in off the market. Other cities have implemented registries with strict fines for bylaw complaints and other infractions which the City of Hamilton could do as well.

L - Leadership

A leader who treats all residents with respect and dignity, pushes for transparency and good governance, inspires others through a bold vision, and takes innovative, equitable and evidence-based decisions to better serve all Hamiltonians.

1. What three things are you most concerned about and would like to see changed as they relate to Hamilton's current leadership at Council? *

Having worked for 75% of the current Council from 2008-2018, I can tell you that the biggest changes that need to be made are having more than a vision that is lip service, collaboration, and transparency to the people of Hamilton.

2. As a councillor, what three actions would you propose to improve the city' leadership? *

My record at City Hall is known - I resolved things for people by maintaining constant communication and resolution of issues coming into the office. On city-wide issues I often had to work with all councillors to build consensus, explain perspectives on divisive issues such as LRT, and ultimately to work to get the votes in Council to get things passed. I will build on this by highlighting that only by working together can we get things done, and that the Council vision statement shouldn't be lip service. That is what Council is paid for - for the good of all Hamilton, not the next election.

E - Environment

A leader who champions actions to address climate change to ensure a healthy, safe, and sustainable environment for all current and future Hamiltonians.

1. What three things are you most concerned about and would like to see changed as they relate to improving Hamilton's current environment? *

Storm overflow and runoff from increasingly regular "extreme weather events", protecting our natural spaces and waterfronts, and improving public transit.

2. As a councillor, what three actions would you propose to improve Hamilton's environment? *

I am a lifelong transit user and cyclist across our city. We don't have the worst transit, but it could be so much better. We can get rid of area rating for transit and make it a city-wide priority. Coach Canada gave Council a report of recommendations when the City bought the HSR in 1946. Not one recommendation has been implemented. Storm overflow issues and "sewer gate" were well known to be a problem to Wastewater workers as far back as 1996 - I attended an event held by staff for a high school class and NOTHING WAS DONE THEN. Now, we are playing catch up still - as Councillor, championing a proactive approach to these instead of denials and hiding by the current Council needs to be embraced. Our greenspaces can be protected and expanded on and we can do that by requiring vacant lots to be renaturalized until a building permit is issued and using our current city property inventory to determine where parks are missing. Staff already have this data. As councillor I will also continue to support green project requests such as pollinator patches, community gardens, and plantings from residents, but in addition to continuing to roll up my sleeves in our greenspaces, there will also be dedicated funding from the Ward Office.

C - Community

A leader who fights for the needs of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive population and who improves community engagement so the voices of all Hamiltonians are heard.

1. What three things are you most concerned about and would like to see changed as they relate to supporting the needs of all communities in Hamilton? *

Our communities have become more disconnected over the course of the pandemic. Outreach and engagement feels performative and there is an increase in apathy and trust in the City.

2. As a councillor, what three actions would you propose to support Hamilton's communities? *

When the Neighbourhood Action Strategy was essentially unfunded by the current Council, it made what communities in Ward 3 were beginning to do. As a volunteer I saw firsthand the impact of a supported neighbourhood association. One that was just beginning to bring people from other cultural and religious communities together. That work is important, and our City has the knowledge and ability - Council just decided to shift the funding. I would move to reinstate that, and increase it so that other neighbourhoods could also access small grants to make big changes that they want in their areas. The current engagement strategy is also top down - this needs to change back to the more difficult work of listening and reducing barriers for people to tell the City and Council what they want. That, along with a shift in priority in putting people first would increase trust in the City of Hamilton. This one is a big ask, I know, however as a former City of Hamilton staff, it's one I feel strongly about. If Council can understand that putting all people first would change literally everything that people feel is not working, frustrating, and wrong - we, as a City, could start looking forward to the future.

T - Transportation

A leader who supports safe, effective movement throughout the city for all Hamiltonians by ensuring access to equitable and affordable public transit, safe roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails.

1. What three things are you most concerned about and would like to see changed as they relate to Hamilton's current transportation needs? *

Speeding traffic, underfunded public transit, and traffic patterns need to be updated.

2. As a councillor, what three actions would you propose to improve Hamilton's transportation * systems?

The number one issue all across the city is speeding. It happens on my street, it happens on main streets - it happens on every street. I've been hit twice while walking in this city, and I bet you know people that have been too. In 2018, I spoke about the traffic calming measures we could be doing with paint that would be quick and inexpensive. We know that this is a huge issue and action needs to be taken. As a staff member that helped champion Vision Zero, I fully support all measures. Our transit system is underfunded as most of Council doesn't understand the importance of public transit being functional, reliable, and cheap. As I said I've been a transit user my whole life - I don't drive. As Councillor, my decision making will support that. We also know that more integrated streets that are safe for vehicles, transportation and pedestrians make better streets. The City of Houston took a look at their transit map, and their traffic patterns and took everything off the map. They asked "where are people starting from and where are they trying to go?" and they were able to redraw their maps. The City of Hamilton can do this as well - we have the maps, the staff, and the capability- no consultants required. My role as a Councillor would be doing what I've always done - getting the others around the horseshoe to vote for it.

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