

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@raquelforward2.com

Name: *

Raquel Rakovac

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.raquelforward2.com.....

Campaign Email: *

info@raquelforward2.com

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? *

1.) Street safety for children and seniors, we need to protect our most vulnerable population and ensure that all schools, parks and community centres neighbourhoods have proper pedestrianized safe zones.

2.) Fix the Roads: Improvements to infrastructure can contribute substantially to reductions in death and severe injury or damage to vehicles. Therefore, we need proper implementation of a 311 city service for infrastructure and immediate attentiveness to fix the problems.

3.) Wastewater and stormwater infrastructure

In January 2022, The Ontario government announced to invest \$15 million over two years to help 18 municipalities, which include Hamilton, improve aging and outdated storm and wastewater infrastructure to ensure Ontarians can continue to access safe and clean water. Cities can use the funds for minor sewage treatment plant improvements such as optimization, local sewer system upgrades, cleaning out sediment and debris from stormwater management ponds, and putting green stormwater infrastructure in place. We must ensure we use this money towards these essential upgrades.

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

1.) Street Safety: increase safe and consistent bike lanes throughout the city; areas around playgrounds, parks, schools and community centres require special attention, safe zones, and speed bumps. Safe zones should have good walking and cycling conditions and designated pick-up and drop-off areas. Traffic signs and colourful road markings should warn drivers that they are entering a special zone. High-visibility crosswalks and wide and accessible sidewalks should make it easy for pedestrians to navigate. These need to be implemented primarily in all School, Park and Community Centre neighbourhoods.

2.) Roads: Ensuring an audit of our roads is completed. Working with stakeholders to clear our infrastructure backlog, ensuring that we continue to make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

3.) Improve our wastewater and stormwater infrastructure: With the future construction of the LRT, we can utilize porous asphalt pavements, which are being used successfully throughout the continent. According to the environmental organization, the potential benefits to stormwater management of porous pavements include water treatment/pollutant removal, reduced or elimination of the need for curbing and storm sewers and reduced flooding of basements and runoffs into our local waterways.

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? *

1.) Affordable Housing: Remove and amend development fee challenges for local not-for-profit affordable housing projects.

2.) Living Wage: Most City of Hamilton employees already earn better than a living wage, so why begin with city employees? When the City becomes a living wage employer, it will raise the living wage profile across Hamilton and encourage other small and large employers to also participate in a living wage. The largest group of City employees not earning a living wage already are summer/casual workers and many library workers.

It is important to note that workers who move from a minimum to a living wage invest that money back into the community. Therefore, the effects of a living wage on the local economy are vital.

3.) Support Local Businesses: Remove barriers, and increase efficiency and timely responses. Small businesses in Hamilton can be economically impacted or dissuaded from the enormous amount of red tape that goes into starting or maintaining a small business as well as the time it takes to navigate that tape. We must find ways to make these processes easier.

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

1.) Affordable Housing: Remove and amend challenges for local not-for-profit affordable housing projects. We can immediately re-examine and amend our policy concerning development charges for the not-for-profit sector to allow current affordable housing projects to move forward with fewer financial challenges. We can also look at the future fund proceeds from selling city lands and designate those funds for affordable housing projects. In addition, we can work with the existing city land inventory to create 'special' leasing that removes economic challenges to not-for-profits and allow the City of Hamilton to meet affordable housing demands.

2.) Living Wage, we need ACTION NOW: implement and pass a living wage policy.

3.) Cut the Red Tape: Remove barriers and assign a 'familiar' file to a City staff member. Familiarity with a business file allows for quicker response and knowledge of all history. We need to get more efficient and progressive in our approaches to how we mitigate challenges we impose on the business sector that helps our city thrive. Businesses need to earn money, and the more we impede that process, the greater the risks we impose on their viability. The City of Toronto has implemented a similar model that has worked very 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? *

1.) Communication is essential, and the time it takes for response and action does not impart good faith in leadership. We need to improve how citizens can communicate issues and how leadership can receive and act to resolve the problems in the city immediately.

2.) Transparency: What we have seen at Cootes Paradise, and Redhill Valley Parkway must not happen again. I believe that transparency enables good government and imparts hope and trust to the community.

3.) Active Participation with all residents and businesses: a leader must be visibly present in supporting all residents and communities, local businesses, and initiatives.

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

1.) The community and business owners want to see what the municipality does when:

- The power is out in a neighbourhood.
- There are potholes all over a particular street.
- There's an abundance of garbage in a public park.

Many cities use a "311" phone line to take down citizen concerns.

However, as we move towards progressive city planning and services and modernize how municipalities communicate, we can digitize our 311 services through an app.

Consequently, "311 software" can be a progressive solution.

Community members can write directly to their municipality to describe a problem or mention an issue—like potholes on the street, for example. The city can then work to resolve the issue and even respond to the person once the issue is resolved. This will provide a public documented history of issues that have been addressed and resolved; this also ties into increased transparency, accountability and timely responses at city hall.

This is a win-win for municipalities and the community because the city can keep up with issues around the city, and the community feels their voices are heard, and action is effectively taken place.

2.) Transparency Improvement Initiative: 'Create an 'open records policy and designate a Transparency Officer. I support a strong, thorough and extraordinary push to improve city transparency. People's health and well-being are the primary importance for leadership to look after, and building trust again with our community is vital.

As this election year will bring new councils around the table, many who advocate for a transparent city council we must implement change. The atrocities that unfolded from Cootes Paradise and The Redhill Valley Expressway must not happen again. We can support accountability and transparency by implementing this initiative.

A Transparency Officer would be able to set up comprehensive systems of accountability to ensure the city consistently complies with Hamilton's open records and ethics laws.

As another proponent of this initiative, I support an open records website that would provide timely, comprehensive information about records requests, their disposition, and how to contact those responsible for fulfilling them. The transparency initiative can also promise to hold the city accountable for doing more to create a comprehensive plan for best-in-class protocols and procedures for achieving compliance.

3.) We Belong City: To foster community belonging, create a monthly event where the current Ward 2 councillor invites our community to a participatory event that centres around culture, environment and the arts. City hall must take action to unite the community, which begins with city hall representing a place for everyone.

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? *

1.) Increase the Diversity of Trees in our Streets: By expanding the diversity of trees in our streets, we can create ecosystems in an urban area, bringing a diversity of insect and bird species which, in turn, keep the trees healthy. This has already started to be implemented in cities like Singapore, where they are mixing human structures with many different tree species. If we allow ecosystems to flourish, we can spend fewer resources on maintaining them. Instead, we must give space to natural processes and link our green spaces.

2.) Create and Implement City Green Roofs Incentive Programs for Businesses/Development: The city can lead by example by implementing these around city-owned buildings across Hamilton. We must create green spaces wherever possible; this is the first step in making our urban areas healthier. For example, adding a layer of vegetation to rooftops and creating green roofs has reduced the urban heat island effect. Having soil, plants and greenery on our roofs would reduce surface temperature and serve as insulation for the structures below, reducing the energy needed to heat and cool the buildings. Green roofs can also help regulate rainwater, trapping it as it falls and filtering out pollutants. A great example of this would be the building located on the corner of Catherine and Cannon Street.

3.) Eliminate Green Space Gentrification: Green spaces are being created, but those areas become more desirable, and housing costs go up - often pricing out the people currently living there. We must make an effort to recognize that green spaces are vital for everyone and that everyone should feel the benefit. Parks should be easily accessible, democratic spaces and available in every community. We need to create green space in every community across Ward 2 actively.

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

1.) Increased tree canopy and diversity of trees across all of Ward 2, on main streets and neighbourhoods, especially ensuring that tree canopy is replaced after the construction of the LRT.

2.) Support Converting Underused, Inactive Spaces into Pedestrian Plazas

Pedestrian plazas can inexpensively transform under-used spaces into community assets. Unstructured, under-occupied or misused dead zones can be revamped with the help of paint, planter boxes, artwork and street furniture, along with high-resistance and low-maintenance lighting and landscaping. This initiative helps to support local businesses and continue to promote artist mural work while beautifying our city and fostering neighbourhood interaction. In addition, there's an opportunity for many spaces downtown to engage viewers in a new way and bring some artwork into those spaces. The artwork helps enliven some underused spaces downtown; the initiative will help people engage in art and contemporary artists downtown. These transformations have an essential impact on pedestrian safety. For example, New York City has seen a 16% decrease in speeding and a 26% reduction in traffic crashes along streets that contain pedestrian plazas.

3.) Implement Project "PARK(ing) Day" throughout Hamilton

"In an effort to call attention to the need for green spaces in urban environments, a San Francisco art and design studio founded PARK(ing) Day. On PARK(ing) Day, which is held the third Friday in September, city parking spots are transformed into pocket parks all across the USA. PARK(ing) Day displays can be as simple as grass sod spread on the concrete, a park bench, and some potted trees. Others have taken it farther by adding cornhole games, creating horticultural displays, setting up playground equipment, offering yoga classes, and setting up mini libraries. (PARK)ing is a way to envision urban spaces used in a different way – one that is more community-centric instead of car-centric."

Article: <https://www.plt.org/educator-tips/urban-green-spaces/>

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? *

1.) Belonging: a participatory leader is necessary; city hall must be a safe space that welcomes everyone, setting the example by visibly doing the work to engage with all members of our community. We must implement policies and programs encouraging inclusion in the communities it deals with, especially in crucial sectors such as education, housing, and policy. Such an approach can result in long-term, effective success. Communities understand their needs because they are experiencing them daily. Policy planning and implementation must be representative of the communities it reflects. This can also help to strongly connect communities with leadership, grow awareness, strengthen relationships and create trust because it shows leadership that values and listens to community needs.

2.) Increased mental health resources and education: Leadership must support and participate in local initiatives to change the status quo and create hope for all Hamiltonians. We need more education and engagement with local groups so council can understand how to develop effective solution-driven policy. Leadership can participate and use their platform to help people understand the truth about stigma and the increased resources we need to advocate for from the Provincial Government.

3.) We must encourage natural ways to get seniors to connect with their communities. Decision-makers must prioritize green space in city development, but in such a way that pedestrian zones, parks and markets interact and bring seniors in instead of onlookers. Social isolation is a cause of poorer mental health outcomes among all demographics. Still, seniors can be isolated in their homes due to insufficient personal resources, advocacy, transportation issues, and poor weather conditions. They become locked in by urban planning decisions that don't recognize the complexity or scale of their health needs.

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

1.) Build engaged and active communities: City Hall Table Talks

A series of 'Table Talks' are held throughout Ward 2 at local businesses, helping to build community, share and discuss information and grow small business awareness. Our relationship with all residents, businesses and leadership matters; together, we can create a thriving community. If we want to improve cities, we must start with the residents. Respect all people in the community enough to expose them to data, innovation, policy and advocacy—transparency in how we share all information, keeping leadership and community informed and working as a team are essential.

2.) Actively work with marginalized community leaders to address the representation of cultural symbols, art etc., in public spaces such as parks and city hall. We need ongoing community participation for the success of a multicultural place. A feeling of belonging begins with how visibly recognized you are within a community. Intentional leadership for marginalized community planning is one method for tackling issues of underrepresentation. As it relates to the specific marginalized groups, city planning must include and implement perspectives by those individuals it seeks to plan for. In addition, it can help to offer a progressive approach to politics by bringing those historically excluded voices into the decision-making process.

3.) Engage immediately with groups such as Hamilton Alliance Tiny Shelters, cities (i.e. Toronto and Kitchener) and houseless residents

Leadership that participates in understanding the complexities of houseless residents with continued support and participation in education on the stigmas facing homelessness, including poverty, addiction, and mental health, and actively visiting local shelters and City Housing to identify effective, immediate and compassionate solutions needed. We must address and implement short- and long-term housing and safety measures for women and marginalized communities. We need to be engaged with how neighbourhood residents and small businesses are supported, continuing to support and address their concerns and working to create immediate solutions to mitigate their experienced impacts. All residents matter and leadership must work to engage with those groups and cities with experience and resources and continue to educate themselves to understand how to create effective solutions.

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? *

1.) Focussing on pedestrian safety is essential. Recent population trends show that more people live near urban centres. This means there are more people walking, biking, and driving in cities, and effective safety measures need to be in place so that different transportation methods can co-exist. Citizens are also more aware of their carbon footprints, pushing toward participating in climate change initiatives. As a result, more focus is being placed on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, making walking or biking an attractive option. And the recent economic downturn has people all across the country looking for ways to save money that they would otherwise spend on gasoline or car repairs.

We must invest smartly and strategically into protecting pedestrians through infrastructure and safety plans that seek to accommodate better walking, biking, rollerblading etc., as a viable mode of transportation.

2.) Public Transit: During off-peak periods, you may wait up to 30 minutes for a bus along the Main-King corridor. This applies most of the day for bus routes serving Durand and the North End. People will continue to use their cars until transit becomes the quicker, more accessible option.

3.) We must implement effective and efficient snow removal practices. We must ensure that citizens and small businesses can move around the city, get to work and run their businesses all year round. The snow profoundly impacts how people get around, safety and isolation concerns and can negatively impact businesses and their daily operations on how people can get to and from them. We must ensure streets, sidewalks, and fire hydrants have all snow properly removed and not create these massive 'snow hills' seen throughout Hamilton in the winter months that eliminate parking and access to businesses.

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

1.) Provide safe zones for children and seniors

Areas around playgrounds, parks, schools and community centres, senior and retirement homes require special attention, safe zones, and speed bumps. Safe zones must have good walking and cycling conditions and designated pick-up and drop-off areas. Traffic signs and colourful road markings must warn drivers that they are entering a special zone. High-visibility crosswalks and wide and accessible sidewalks should make it easy for pedestrians to navigate. These need to be implemented primarily in all schools, parks, senior residences and community centres.

Let's reach our goal for Vision Zero, which is a global movement transforming the way we use, interact and travel on our roads.

2.) Improving the frequency and accessibility of transit routes will align our city with progressive climate change initiatives. Immediate support that the City of Hamilton continuing to follow its ten-year transit plan. Immediate support that the BLAST network is completed.

3.) Implement safe and consistent cycling routes in Hamilton to promote health, community, and leaving the car at home. For busier streets and higher-speed streets, bike lanes need heavy-duty physical segregation. Therefore, bike lanes must be protected from car traffic with heavy-duty physical separators – such as curbs, bumpers, or barriers.

This form was created inside of ielect Hamilton.

Google Forms