

CAMERON KROETSCH

FOR **WARD 2** COUNCILLOR

r/Hamilton on Reddit Candidate Questionnaire
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Name - Cameron Kroetsch

Ward - Ward 2

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Do you live in the ward?

Yes, I live in Ward 2 in the Durand neighbourhood.

How long have you lived in the area / do you intend to move to the ward if not and why did you choose to run in that ward?

I moved to Hamilton with my partner Derek in 2014. We've lived in the Beasley, Corktown, and now Durand neighbourhoods in Ward 2 ever since. I chose to run in Ward 2 because this is where I live, where I've worked and run my small business, and where I spend time with my neighbours and friends. Ward 2 is our home.

How have you contributed to your ward prior to running for council this year?

I have actively shown up at and organized community events, including alleyway and park cleanups, in each of Ward 2's six neighbourhoods and I regularly attend neighbourhood association meetings and rallies.

I have supported many Ward 2 and downtown institutions as a board member including The AIDS Network (TAN), the Hamilton Literacy Council (HLC), and the Hamilton

Centre for Civic Inclusion (HCCI). I have also actively supported Ward 2 community initiatives like those run by Community Fridges HamOnt, the Hamilton Encampment Support Network (HESN), and The Hub.

I have spoken out in public about issues impacting Ward 2, both in print in The Hamilton Spectator and CBC Hamilton, but also on social media and through numerous delegations to City Council.

I was a member of the Corktown Neighbourhood Association executive and founded its Planning and Development Subcommittee and am currently a member of the Beasley Neighbourhood Association (BNA).

I also founded the [Downtown Sparrow](#), focused on making space for the voices of downtown residents.

Why are you running for council?

Hamilton is a great city and it deserves a better City Council. Our current Council has eroded the trust of Hamiltonians and is constantly at the centre of controversy, scandal, and secrecy.

We need change and we need leaders who have demonstrated that they are ready to tackle the big challenges facing our city and that they can do so while remaining compassionate and caring towards all residents. We need leaders we can trust.

I think I've gained the trust of many members of the Ward 2 community, including when I ran for a seat on Council in 2018. I want to build on this momentum so that every Hamiltonian can have a more democratic, transparent, and accountable municipal government.

What experience do you have that will help you lead the city if elected?

I have experience as a small business owner, labour union leader, and community organizer. The skills I've learned in those roles will help me to bring leadership, authenticity, and integrity to City Council.

In addition to that experience, I have a solid education. I earned an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree from Brock University, a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Toronto, and a Master of Arts degree from Western University.

I also have experience working with City staff, not only as a very active and engaged citizen, but as the former Chair and current member of the City's LGBTQ Advisory Committee and as a juror for the City's Community Enrichment Fund. I understand how the City works, what its current policies and procedures are, and where things can be immediately improved. I will be able to hit the ground running on day one.

In addition, I've spent time listening to residents directly. I know why many feel alienated from their municipal government and what's important to them. As a fellow Ward 2 resident, I will not only bring the collective lived experiences of my neighbours to the job, but I will continue to engage with them as current issues change and new ones emerge. I have proven myself to be accessible, accountable, and transparent; skills and experience that are important for serving Hamiltonians.

What are your three priorities should you be elected councillor?

- (1) Environmental Stewardship** - The City declared a "climate emergency" in early 2019, but has not taken this pledge seriously enough. The City must implement an aggressive plan for tackling climate change including improvements to development standards and transit. Everything we do is connected to the natural world and we must take care of it.
- (2) Safe Neighbourhoods** - Everyone in Hamilton deserves to get around safely. Residents can't do that if their sidewalks, streets, school areas, and bike lanes are danger zones. Hamiltonians deserve to be able to get outside when and how they want to.
- (3) Affordable Housing** - Hamilton is falling behind, across the spectrum, when it comes to affordable housing. Deeply affordable housing beds are being sold off faster than they're being built, while the waiting lists continue to grow. This is not sustainable and we all see the growing need in our communities.

While the environment is an important factor for many, Hamilton still has a large industrial sector. How will you balance these concerns?

It's possible to both prioritize the environment and help our industrial sector thrive. In fact, I'd argue that we can't do one without the other, and that many cities around the world are demonstrating how green industrial sectors can thrive.

Hamilton's industrial history, and some of the resulting pollution, can often be traced back to poor decision-making at the municipal level. Previous City Councils didn't

properly ensure that there were checks and balances in place to protect our land, air, and water. As a result, we have far too many brownfield development sites and contamination in some of our waterways. It's going to take a lot of work to undo this damage.

We have to learn from our past mistakes and ensure we have a balanced approach to future industrial operations. As a City Council, we represent the people who live in our communities and we have to do everything we can to ensure that they're healthy and safe.

This means that we must proactively ensure that industry grows at a pace that can be managed safely, that honours not only the land, air, and water, but the Indigenous peoples who steward it.

Crime is a very real issue in the area within many wards. We have had shootings, stabbings, and regular car break-ins and thefts across the city. What is your plan to work with HPS to mitigate this?

If elected, I would seriously consider joining the Hamilton Police Services Board to work directly with the Hamilton Police Service to address issues of community safety.

This is an important issue in Ward 2, in the downtown core, where we regularly observe news reports about crime. I am committed to engaging the downtown community to talk about what safety looks like and how we can collaborate to help our neighbours.

In part, that work includes helping the City to ensure that as many communities as possible are involved in implementing [Hamilton's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#).

Our council is extremely fractured right now, with divisions of "progressive" and "regressive", suburbs vs the old City, even lower city vs mountain / suburbs. How would you work with your peers to get your vision, as well as the city's vision, in place?

Every member of City Council is elected to represent not only constituents at the ward level, but all residents in Hamilton. That means coming together at the Council table to do what's best for the City, even if it sometimes means more work at the ward level to implement changes. There will be a considerable amount of change on Council in this term. I think that a willingness from all to be collaborative and open-minded, from the

first day on the job, is the only way forward. We have been an amalgamated City of Hamilton for more than 2 decades and it's time we act like it.

In addition to my many years of experience collaborating on boards and committees in the community, I have publicly demonstrated my ability to work with a decision-making team as the Chair of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee. We successfully brought forward several important resolutions to City Council that have since been approved and implemented. We were able to do this work because we listened to one another and engaged with the communities we were appointed to represent. I will continue to do this work as a City Councillor.

Transparency is an issue for many voters, how will you ensure more transparency if elected.

I have spoken out publicly about transparency for many years and have fought to make the City of Hamilton a more transparent organization. When I have been in possession of information that's publicly relevant, I have shared it, even when it was challenging to do so or I knew that there may be backlash.

My revisions to procedural bylaws, recommendations and delegations, and attempts to shift City Hall culture with respect to Advisory Committees have collectively pushed the City to be more transparent.

Both my current campaign and my 2018 campaign have been completely transparent. We filed our financial statements on time, shared data and information about our donors and supporters, and have kept our website up to date when responding to surveys and questionnaires. I have consistently been public, and vocal, about my positions on issues that matter to Hamiltonians. I will not be silent in the face of legitimate and fair questions that may be difficult to answer.

As the Editor of the [Downtown Sparrow](#), I have led teams of volunteers who have, time and again, provided transparent and democratic access to important municipal information. Not only did I start the original petition asking for an inquiry about the 24 billion litres of mixed raw sewage that the City spilled into Chedoke Creek and Cootes Paradise, but I published a [transparent timeline](#) so that members of the public could follow what happened. As a small organization, the Downtown Sparrow regularly provides transparent financial information about all of our [donations](#).

I will continue to bring transparency to everything I do as a City Councillor.

What is your plan to address homelessness and encampments in the ward and across Hamilton?

First and foremost, we must acknowledge the upstream causes of homelessness, like the lack of affordable housing and mental health supports, in clear and accessible language using open and transparent data in real time.

We can only address and solve these problems if the City is willing to get on the same page as those who deliver support services. I will prioritize that dialogue and facilitate more direct collaboration.

I think it's important to state, as a response to this question, that encampments are a symptom of the affordable housing crisis. No one is in favour of this crisis and no one thinks that encampments are the solution to it. Encampments are a response to the dangerous conditions in some shelters, the overall lack of safe shelter spaces and deeply affordable housing units, generations of discrimination, the increase of precarity in our communities, and the erosion of supports for those who need them.

I will work with community organizations who are doing the majority of work on the ground, to develop short, medium, and long term plans that will proactively address this crisis.

I will put forward a motion to bring the City's considerable land assets to the table to create sustainable partnerships.

My [platform](#) also addresses this in several ways, including -

- **Develop a policy for addressing homelessness that is founded in compassion and accountability** - this will provide better outcomes to homeless Hamiltonians and help the City to better determine its ability to support them
- **Coordinate CityHousing Hamilton and the City's Housing Services department** - this will save money, allocate services more equitably, and make it easier to develop and implement policies
- **Audit and grade downtown shelter spaces** - this will level the playing field and help to create a uniform approach to service delivery that will reduce negative impacts for shelter users

What measures do you suggest we take to address overall affordability in the city at a time when people are finding it hard to afford even groceries and what impact do you think this will have on local businesses and the city as a whole.

As I state in my [platform](#), I will -

- **Complete an immediate audit and assessment of all City land assets** - this will determine what land can be allocated and leveraged to build long term deeply affordable housing and to create a municipal non-market housing program (including rentals for all income levels)

I think this is the best way to immediately contribute to projects that need land assets in order to be successful. Many not-for-profit housing providers have said that getting access to land is often the missing piece of the puzzle for an affordable housing development.

I will put forward a motion to bring the City's considerable land assets to the table to create sustainable partnerships and to streamline the planning approval process to ensure that affordable housing is prioritized.

Roads & Transit

Do you regularly walk, cycle or use public transit in your daily life?

I regularly walk, cycle, and use public transit. I'm lucky to live in a very dense area so I can get to many amenities by walking or cycling. I rarely take transit to destinations within Ward 2 but more often when I'm going up the mountain, traveling eastward, or leaving the city to visit family and friends. Neither my partner nor I own a car and are avid users of the carshare services in Hamilton, but primarily rely on transit for longer distances.

Do you support the recent safer streets report including two way conversion of Main?

Yes, and as I state in my [platform](#), I will -

- **Collaborate with neighbourhoods to redesign unsafe streets** - this will slow down streets, make neighbourhoods more liveable, and make it safer for everyone to get around in their city
- **Audit roads, sidewalks, and other public spaces to ensure that they're hazard free and kept that way** - this will provide all Hamiltonians with a better pedestrian experience and will remove barriers for folks who use assistive devices to get around; this will require the City to make a serious commitment to Vision Zero principles

What other measures do you think we should take to make Hamilton safer for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers?

As I state in my [platform](#), I will -

- **Clear snow from all sidewalks, side streets, bus stops, and hydrants** - this will provide residents, including those who are isolated, with the confidence to enjoy their city year round; it will also make it easier for City staff to access critical infrastructure in the winter
- **Implement traffic calming measures equitably across neighbourhoods** - this will give underserved neighbourhoods a chance to catch up so that all Ward 2 communities benefit equally
- **Connect existing cycling infrastructure and improve the current network** - this will create much needed citywide cycling connectivity so that people can more readily choose active transportation and will prioritize protected cycling infrastructure
- **Prevent non-local truck traffic from cutting through downtown neighbourhoods** - this will force truck traffic to exclusively use the purpose-built ring road network for non-local deliveries

Do you support the Hamilton LRT project?

Yes, and as I state in my [platform](#), I will -

- **Manage the implementation of Light Rail Transit (LRT) in Ward 2 to mitigate impacts to residents and business owners** - this will help those most impacted to navigate the years-long disruption to their lives and livelihoods

If you could make one immediate change to HSR what would it be?

As I state in my [platform](#), I will -

- **Equalize funding for transit across the City** - this will end transit area rating and ensure that transit reaches and serves all residents

Infrastructure & Housing

Do you support the urban boundary decision?

Yes, I fully support the urban boundary decision. We must actively intensify within the current urban boundary by providing more gentle infill density and allowing multi-unit residential zoning.

I actively contributed to the discussion and decision to stop sprawl by delegating to City Council and by helping to lead a team of volunteers to produce a [Map of Underutilized Space within the City of Hamilton's Urban Boundary](#) for the [Downtown Sparrow](#). This map illustrates how much land might be available within the current urban boundary.

How should we go about densification within the city? What measures will you put forward / support to encourage building housing?

We have to introduce density through gentle intensification like laneway housing and permitting more duplexes, triplexes, and quads; and we have to prioritize more inclusionary zoning, including for amenities like local grocery stores, so that we can build complete, dense, and affordable communities throughout the existing urban boundary.

And, as I state in my [platform](#), I will -

- **Implement mandatory Green Development Standards (GDS) for all new development** - this will increase energy efficiency to reduce energy costs, minimize greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), decrease stormwater impacts to address infrastructure costs, improve public health, and preserve the natural environment
- **Accelerate the expansion of greenspaces and parks** - this will help to mitigate the effects of urban heat islands and aid in the development of the urban forest canopy; it will help neighbourhoods adapt to rapid change and provide more equitable access to outdoor spaces
- **Develop policy to support the inclusion of as much "missing middle" housing as possible** - this will introduce gentler density within the urban boundary while allowing us to meet our Provincial growth targets
- **Plan for more transit connections and local amenities to keep up with the pace of development** - this will make it easier to manage change in neighbourhoods experiencing significant growth by ensuring space for grocery stores, laundromats, and community hubs

Affordable housing is currently 125% of market values, with jumps in market values in Hamilton this has become unaffordable and puts pressure on low income housing. How will you ensure that housing is affordable in the city?

I will work with my colleagues to redefine the term “affordable housing”, acknowledge that there’s a spectrum of affordability, and work to support those who need access to affordable housing most.

And, as I state in my [platform](#), I will -

- **Complete an immediate audit and assessment of all City land assets** - this will determine what land can be allocated and leveraged to build long term deeply affordable housing and to create a municipal non-market housing program (including rentals for all income levels)

- **Advocate to the Provincial government for the reversal of its decision to end residential rent control** - this will prevent landlords from renovicting or pricing out tenants
- **Expand landlord licensing to include all of downtown Hamilton** - this will address the gaps in the property standards system and make it possible for the City to identify landlords and hold them accountable for unsafe or harmful practices
- **Retrofit CityHousing buildings to provide emergency cooling and heating relief during extreme weather** - this will provide relief to residents and will create a backbone of staff support to support residents on site when these events occur
- **Sign on to the first Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)** - this will increase affordable housing and create a culture of community dialogue and partnership that provides vital community amenities and jobs through fairly negotiated agreements with developers

How do you suggest we keep up with the infrastructure needed for densification and what level of tax increases are you willing to support to fund these repairs and upgrades?

Some of the repairs required will be addressed during the construction of the LRT line. For those that will not, some will require municipal funding. The City recently completed a Roads Value for Money Audit. I will work with my colleagues to ensure that its findings are part of a discussion for how to prioritize the immediate repairs and plan, proactively, for lifecycle demands.

I will be open and honest about how budgeting works, including breaking down language barriers when it comes to municipal budgeting. And, as I state in my [platform](#), I will -

- **Bring back the Ward 2 Community Council** - this will enable neighbourhood organizations to bring their issues to their City Councillor and to have the opportunity to meet with other community members, exchange ideas, collaborate, and advocate collectively for change

- **Eliminate the use of single sources for municipal contracts and choose bidders based on balanced scoring** - this will allow for open bidding processes and result in choosing bid winners on the basis of quality of work and high standards, not just the lowest bid

I will prioritize the use of materials that are more sustainable and for approaches to bidding and contracting that ensure long-lasting, high-quality results.