

*Catherine McKenney
Hollaback Ottawa!*

Thanks for your request on how I would tackle gender-based violence in Ottawa. It is an important issue and I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts.

We are lucky that Ottawa is a relatively safe city in comparison to other cities, however, I feel it is every women and girls' right to walk down any street she wants, at any time of the day or night without being harassed.

We have resources and expertise here in the city including Hollaback! Ottawa, the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) and the Women's Initiative for a Safer Environments (WISE), who work to raise awareness about gender-based violence and street harassment.

I think Hollaback! Ottawa is a dynamic organization. I appreciate how it has become a sounding board for women who have experienced any form of harassment, as well as being an advocate for women's safety.

We don't need to teach women to move in safer ways. We need to make our neighbourhoods safer for women and we need to make reporting incidents of violence easier and safer for women. In order to create safer public spaces, as Councillor I would seek to identify and understand what causes women to feel unsafe. We need to consider how we design our neighbourhoods and encourage positive use of public space through better lighting and thoughtful planning.

It's simple; we need to set up our communities so people who are out and about on the streets feel safe, day or night.

1. Funding public service ads to raise awareness about harassment in public spaces

Ottawa needs to do more to raise awareness about harassment in public spaces and to commit to making public spaces and our public transit system safer for women.

I believe in public education campaigns; raising awareness is vital in reducing street harassment. Part of a successful public service campaign is the thoughtful placement of advertisements. I would choose to utilize major bus stops, busses, popular shopping areas and parks, specifically along main streets such as Elgin, Bank, Somerset, Gladstone and Preston.

We need to make people aware that the City of Ottawa will not accept any incidences of harassment. It is clear, after the 'F... safe space' situation at Carleton University that we need to do more education and awareness on the meaning of safe space, what gender-based violence is, and the definition of street harassment.

As Councillor, I will support publicly funded service campaigns, including both social and traditional media, to raise awareness about harassment in public spaces.

2. Hire more OC Transpo special constables

OC Transpo has initiated a number of services to help women and vulnerable persons feel safe while travelling on public transport. As Councillor, I pledge to ensure that OC Transpo continues to take precautions to protect all their passengers, and in particular, women, girls and other vulnerable persons.

Ottawa needs to be a leader in safety initiatives and, as Councillor, I would heed the recommendations made by the American Public Transportation Association in its review of Ottawa's transit services and actively support the hiring of more OC Transpo special constables.

I will also promote and support other practices that can increase women and girls' safety when using public transportation such as passengers asking to be dropped off closer to home; more security cameras; more effective bus routes, services, resources and laws which increase the safety of our residents who use public transportation.

3. Prevent sexual assault at mass gatherings

Ottawa is a city of Festivals; there is not a month during the summer that the City is not hosting a large event. It is imperative that the City works with the organizers and staff of the festivals to promote each and every event as a safe environment, where women and girls are free from any form of sexual harassment.

We need to be able to make perpetrators aware that sexual harassment will not be tolerated. We need public awareness campaigns to promote the safety of all our citizens, especially women and girls, and to encourage others to speak out if they see anyone being harassed at any public gathering.

As Councillor, I would advocate for awareness campaigns against sexual violence through the use of social media, mass media, pop culture and events. Using multi-media platforms, the City of Ottawa can work with private festival organizations alongside

grassroots initiatives such as Hollaback! Ottawa to make the streets, and all public spaces, safe for women.

I will support any efforts to prevent sexual assault at public events including working with our Special Events Advisory Team to make education and prevention a key piece of their requirements for a safer environment during large gatherings.

4. Promote comprehensive sexual health

I will work with Ottawa Public Health to address and promote comprehensive and inclusive sexual health. This not only includes education on safer sex but also healthy relationships and consent for all manner of intimate relationships. I am aware that there is much still to be done in educating our young people specifically on consent and would support an awareness campaign with a positive and fun focus on sexual health and well-being.

I'm aware that there are valuable organizations working within our ward to educate on these topics such as the AIDS Committee of Ottawa, Gay Zone, and our community health centres alongside Ottawa Public Health. As Councillor, I am committed to working with these organizations and supporting their initiatives.

5. Show commitment to making public transit safer for women and LGBTQ folks*

Not all women experience safety the same way. Some women are more vulnerable than others, likewise members of the LGBTQ* community experience safety in different ways. As a queer woman, I know first-hand what it's like to experience street harassment.

As Councillor, I will commit to making public transit safer for women and all members of the LGBTQ* community. Ottawa residents should feel safe each and every time they use public transport.

I support Hollaback!'s recommendations of increased advertising for safety mechanisms and the development of an anonymous reporting system.

As such, I am happy that, in 2013, the City's Transit Commission accepted recommendations to apply the City's Equity and Inclusion Lens in all decisions and consultations related to bus changes in the future. The Lens is a tool that was introduced by the City in partnership with the City for all Women Initiative with the aim of including diversity, equity and inclusion of women into the day-to-day workings of all City services.

This is a good step. However, there is more we can do. I also feel we must address the issues identified by women and girls in the report, *'Women and Girls' Eyes on the Neighbourhood: Feeling Safe in Public Space.'*

In this community research project, conducted by the Pincrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC) and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), women in four West end neighbourhoods were asked about what makes them feel unsafe when taking public transit.

Their answers were straightforward: infrequency of service, distance between bus stops and the lack of visibility at bus stops. These are all simple things to fix and. I will work towards making women, girls and members of the LGBTQ* community feel safe when using public transit.

Thanks very much for your interest, please let me know if you have any other questions.