

Response from Conor Meade

This is a topic I've learned a lot about recently in the context of this election. I'm usually able to take my safety for granted, which is a privilege available to me as a man, but I've spent some time with the women on my policy team and we've come up with the following responses:

1) Fund public service ads to raise awareness about harassment in public spaces

I do support these sorts of ads. But I also think that it is a very small step that won't ultimately have much of an effect. The only truly effective solution to street harassment is the shaming of harassers at the micro-social level. It's easy to tune out a poster on a bus, but social disapproval is what will actually make progress on this issue.

2) Hire more OC Transpo Special Constables

I recognize the need that this solution could address. Are Special Constables the best solution? Maybe. But I need more information before I can say for certain. I will have to consult with OC Transpo, the Ottawa Police, and groups like Hollaback, and look at the evidence of whether SCs, Police, or security infrastructure (panic alarms, cameras, lighting) are the best use of our resources.

To be clear, I am fully supportive that this is a problem for which we need a solution. I just haven't done enough research on what are the best tools available to solve it, and I like to be cautious with my campaign promises when I don't have all the facts. I am happy to commit to significant new investments in better mass transit security, part of which would likely go to Special Constables.

3) Prevent sexual assault at mass gatherings

I agree that this is a priority, and the city can make a difference by increasing our deployment of police and first responders at large events. Unfortunately that's just a band-aid, and the real problems go much deeper into our culture, but at least it's an action we can take immediately.

4) Promote comprehensive sexual health

Yes, absolutely. Understanding consent must be a major focus of all sex education.

5) Show commitment to making public transit safer for women & LGBTQ* folks

Also agree. As with many of these questions, the problem is not one that can be fixed with simple solutions; it is a cultural problem that goes to the core of our society. However, until these deep problems are solved, we can take measures to alleviate the danger that women and LGBTQ people face, by taking measures such as:

- Improving lighting and visibility of transit stops
- Increasing the frequency of buses
- Building safety-enhancing infrastructure such as panic buttons and safewalk stations

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Let me close by thanking you for asking these questions, and inviting you to listen to my CBC spot that focused on some of these issues:

<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Local+Shows/Ontario/All+in+a+Day/ID/2522905116/>

Cheers!

Conor