

Response of Tobi Nussbaum, candidate for councillor, Rideau-Rockcliffe ward

The work of Hollaback Ottawa to reduce gender-based violence and street harassment is to be commended. It is clear from the many reported incidents that further work is required in our city to make it safer for all – particularly women. As a father to two young daughters, I also believe that gender-stereotypes – which can be confining to women and girls - need to be combatted in all spheres of public life. Below are my comments on the five-point action plan.

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

In order to end harassment in public spaces, the City of Ottawa should partner with other active groups to launch a public awareness campaign. Hollaback has a great toolkit that outlines everything from direct bystander intervention to ways to get assistance, depending on the situation. That could be the basis for a wider public campaign supported by the City.

2. Hire more OC Transpo special constables

OC Transpo could do a better job promoting a harassment-free space. Ads encouraging passengers to speak to drivers if they experience harassment should be posted prominently in all vehicles. Using statistics on previous incidents, OC special constables should focus on locations and time of day when harassment or other incidents are most likely to occur.

3. Prevent sexual assault at mass gatherings

Mass gatherings can be intimidating events for vulnerable populations. The City, working with the Ottawa Police Service, should send messages about harassment at big events including by promoting the use of mobile technology to help identify problems.

4. Promote comprehensive sexual health

Yes, absolutely, the City has a role to play through its public health services to promote sexual health and anti-harassment.

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

Just as there has been impressive work done on anti-bullying in the last few years, so too we should take on issues of gender-based violence and harassment. Besides the ideas listed above, issues of lighting, emergency response access, and more public dialogue need to be actioned.

If elected, I would also work to ensure that areas within the City of Ottawa's mandate contribute to solving the significant problem of gender-based violence and harassment.