

Orléans-Cumberland
Community
Resource Centre



Centre de ressources
communautaires
Orléans-Cumberland

September 13, 2018

Dear Candidate:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre (OCCRC) as well as on behalf of the residents the Orléans-Cumberland Ward whom we have the privilege to serve. The OCCRC is an active member of the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres of Ottawa (CHRC), a network of multiservice, health and resource centres that deliver community-based health and social service programs to the Ottawa residents. The centres that are members of the Coalition receive a portion of their funding from the Ottawa Community Funding Program.

In the context of municipal elections, I am reaching out to you with the intention of asking you questions pertaining to social-economic and community issues that are significantly affecting the people we serve. I hope that in your answers, you will specify how you plan to deal with such matters in your capacity of city councillor. I look forward to hearing from you and afterwards, to sharing your perspectives with the community.

1. Again this year, we witnessed a significant increase in the use of all our first-line services. Our direct intervention programs, intake, crisis intervention and food bank, continued to be in high demand. We also noticed that more and more individuals who are faced with difficult and complex life situations require sustained and more frequent interventions from our staff.

Here are some examples:

- ✓ Last year, 622 individuals – 42% of which were children –, compared with 328 in 2007 and 495 in 2012, received food assistance on a monthly basis. This represents a 90% increase over ten years and a 26% increase over five years.
- ✓ Last year as well, we met with 899 individuals through our Intake Program and our emergency services, as opposed to 491 individuals five years ago, for an increase of 81%.
- ✓ In a survey conducted this year by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa among social services organizations funded by the City of Ottawa, 87% of respondents

indicated that they had seen an increase in the use of their services; however, 44% of them stated that they had no choice but to scale down their services; worse, 18% of them stressed that they had to turn away a number of clients due to lack of adequate resources.

Should you be elected, would you commit yourself to the development of a long-term vision in order to reinvest in our social infrastructures?

Given that the population keeps growing and that the needs in the community are evolving, would you ensure that community social services as well as municipal services are allocated adequate funding to meet the ever-increasing demand for them?

2. Our Centre does not receive any funding from the City for its youth services. From all the community centres that are part of the Coalition and of which the Centre is a member, it is in the neighbourhoods served by the OCCRC that we find the largest number of teenagers between the ages of 15 and 17, or 13.4%, as opposed to 12.2% for the City of Ottawa overall (source: Statistics Canada, 2016). Since 2015, we have demonstrated just how innovative we can be in order to continue to meet the needs of our youth. For example, we successfully applied for non-recurring grants totalling more than \$430,000 from other funding providers such as the Trillium Foundation of Ontario and the Ottawa Community Foundation. Unfortunately, these sources of funding will no longer be available to us in 2020.

We also made optimal use of funds raised through a number of our own fundraising activities. Combined together, these funds have allowed us to offer services to hundreds of youth in need in our community.

Should you be elected, would you commit to working with us so that new municipal investments are made to ensure the delivery of youth services in our community?

In addition, how would you engage with youth and their families who come from marginalized communities, as well as with community organizations that support them to ensure that each youth has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential?

3. Organizations such as the Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre (OCCRC) are grateful for the annual base funding increases that they have received from the City of Ottawa for programs and services that they deliver on the City's behalf. The Coalition of Community and Health Resource Centres (CHRC) plays a lead role in ensuring that newcomers are provided with the resources that they need in order to settle and become engaged in Canada. This was never more apparent than when the City of Ottawa welcomed several thousands of refugees from Syria in 2015-2016.

As Canada continues to represent a safe haven to people who have fled violence and war in various countries around the world, both their numbers and the severity of their needs keep increasing as many people who arrive in Canada have suffered from loss and trauma tremendously.

Should you be elected, how would you ensure that the help provided by the City of Ottawa to the community continues to be a welcoming place for people who have been displaced from their homelands as a result of often unimaginable circumstances?

4. Canada is in the midst of an overdose emergency, with people becoming ill and dying from drug-related causes at an unprecedented rate. The OCCRC is one of many community and resource centres that work with partners such as community health centres, Ottawa Public Health, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Fire Services, Ottawa Paramedic Service and medical professionals to ensure the safety of drug users.

Please share your harm-reduction perspectives as a key part of the solution for prohibition and drug poisoning related harm and death

Should you be elected, how would you ensure that the City of Ottawa continues to invest in services that will reduce risks while easing the burden caused by drug overdose that falls on people, families and our community?

5. Overall shelter use in Ottawa increased by 16% from 2014-2017, and it is primarily the result of a rise in the number of families and newcomers. Single women represent up to 21% of all shelter users in Ottawa who are single. Homeless people in our community who have no other option but to live in their car, come to the Centre every day to use our showers and to receive a range of services that they need. It is obvious that there is not enough affordable housing in Ottawa to meet the demand. In 2017, more than 10,000 people were on a centralized waiting list for social housing. National trends indicate that housing costs are significantly higher in locations near rapid transit systems. High rent costs put many individuals at risk of becoming homeless or of having to live in sub-standard conditions.

Should you be elected, how would you ensure that the City's plan to reduce homelessness includes specific measures and goals, and with sufficient funds allocated to them to bring about this reduction?

Would you ensure that 25% of new housing developments are dedicated to affordable housing with a special emphasis on very affordable housing located within 1 km of rapid transit stations in our City?

6. Following a well-attended community conversation in response to concerns around *swarmings* and the subsequent arrest of three young men. Resident leadership led to a Facebook group called "It's Your City, Let's All Help Make Orléans Safe" which quickly gathered over 4,500 residents to discuss these issues. Unfortunately, young people,

specifically young men, have not been at the centre of these important discussions.

Should you be elected, how would you ensure that responses to concerns expressed at community events are evidence-informed, and that they do not lead to further marginalization and isolation of vulnerable communities? How would you ensure that all community members feel safe and have a sense of belonging, regardless of their age, faith or ethnicity?

We thank you for your participation in this survey and for your commitment to our community. I look forward to having the opportunity of getting to know you. I wish you a very successful election campaign. This will be a critical term for the Council as well as for us all. Best of luck to you!

Sincerely,



Luc Ouellette
Executive Director
Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre