

## HAMILTON VOTES

### 'That is a lie': Ward 1 candidate who uses wheelchair disputes inaccessibility of LRT 13 candidates are running for Ward 1

Samantha Craggs  
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*Lyla Miklos, Syed Bakht. (Samantha Craggs/CBC)*

Sophie Geffros, Ward 1 election candidate, uses a wheelchair and often watches crammed buses pass by. So when a light rail transit (LRT) opponent said the planned transit system wasn't accessible, Geffros couldn't help but fire back.

The 23-year-old was one of 13 candidates in a Ward 1 debate at McMaster University Tuesday. Held by the McMaster University Students Union, the debate focused on rental housing, safety — and of course, LRT.

Carol Lazich, a candidate who opposes LRT, said the system contravenes the provincial Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Geffros, who's been left on the side of the road many times, got visibly riled.

"Some of us worked on steering committees regarding its implementation," Geffros said. "That is a lie.

"The LRT is a truly accessible mass transit that will hugely benefit people with disabilities in the city. In fact, the accessibility committee at city hall universally recommended it as accessible transit.

"I know what I'm talking about. Don't come at this issue."

Lazich doubled down. Even though she's not "as well versed in that area as I possibly should be," she said, she knows LRT stops will be between 600 and 1,000 metres apart.

"I can't understand how you feel that does not contravene the accessibility act when people have to navigate 1,000 metres between the stops through snow, ice, through rain."

Geffros said afterward that HSR buses only fit two wheelchairs. Buses regularly pass people in wheelchairs — in the snow, in the dark.

"I felt disrespected," Geffros said of the argument. "And I felt tokenized at the same time. I didn't appreciate it."

Eleven candidates are running to replace Aidan Johnson in the Oct. 22 municipal election. Johnson isn't running again.

Other moments from the debate:

Harrison White, 22, says he knows what it's like to have an absentee landlord. His old landlord let the sink flood the kitchen for six months. He was also hit by a car when he was 10 and had to relearn how to walk. "When I say I want safe streets, I mean it."

Maureen Wilson proposed looking at transit through a "gender-purposed lens." That means safer, brighter-lit transit stops. More than 60 per cent of transit users are women, she said.

Lyla Miklos proposed holding regular town halls at McMaster to engage students and hear their issues.

Jason Allen proposed a more streamlined process for people to complain to police. This will help police get better data about what's happening in neighbourhoods. He also proposed a sort of "social media Neighbourhood Watch."

Lazich and Wilson disagreed on how to characterize LRT, which will be run by a third party through a public-private partnership. Wilson said it'll be a public asset "like GO Transit." Lazich says it'll be more akin to Highway 407.

The election is Oct. 22.

## **CANDIDATE PROFILES**



**Lyla Miklos.**

**Age: 44.**

**Occupation:** Education worker, lay chaplain, publicist, broadcast journalist.

**Where do you live?:** Ward 1.

**Past experience:** Over 20 years of experience as a sex positive, queer, feminist, activist. Helped create and served as president of Mohawk Pride, Mohawk College's first official club for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, two spirit, and more (LGBTQI2S+) students. Instrumental in forming the GLBT Advisory Committee for the City of Hamilton, later sitting on it as a member and interim chair. Member of Hamilton Pride Festival Inc. for over a decade, chairing it in 2005 and 2002. Support group facilitator for the Toronto Bisexual Network, Bisexual Women of Toronto and the Hamilton Bisexual Network and a volunteer with the Toronto Women's Bathhouse Committee. Co-staff advisor with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board for Parkside High School's Gay-Straight Alliance Club and Westdale Secondary School's Positive Space Club. Former member of the Ontario Federation of Labour's Solidarity & Pride Committee representing OSSTF. Former Chief Negotiator for OSSTF D21 OCTU.

Former Chair of OSSTF D21's Political Action Committee. Former Union Steward for CEP Local 723M. Secretary for the CHUM Locals Council. Over 20 years of experience in the Broadcast and Communications industries. Currently the Host and Producer of Centre Stage on 101.5 FM The Hawk and is the Owner of Lyla-The Publicist. Lay Chaplain with The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton. Former Co-Chair of the Church's Worship Committee.

Over 30 years of experience as a vocalist and community theatre performer. Former Board Member for Hamilton Theatre Inc. Former member of Arts Hamilton's Theatre Arts Committee.

Also served as a board or committee member with Elect More Women, Hamilton Centre Federal NDP Riding Association, Hamilton West Provincial NDP Riding Association, Mohawk College Alumni Association, Mohawk Students' Association, Status of Women Advisory Committee for The City of Hamilton, and Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative. Currently, Lyla sits on the Board of Directors of The Hamilton Independent Media Awards.

**What are the top issues facing your ward?:** Access and equity, affordable housing, arts and culture, economic development and sustainability, parks and recreation, police carding, public transit and safe injection sites.

**Do you support LRT?:** Yes.

**Why are you the right person for the job?:** My passion and love for the City of Hamilton. My ability to bring people together to create and sustain community.

My commitment to diversity, equity and anti-oppression. My communication skills and creative talents. My core belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every living being. My unapologetic pride in being an out queer feminist activist. My desire to be a strong and effective voice for the residents of Ward 1 on city council and to respect and uphold the democratic process.

**Something you'd like voters to know about you:** I'm a lifelong Star Trek fan. Gene Roddenberry's positive vision of the future often gives me hope for humanity.

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