



POLICY

Homelessness and Drug Addiction

APRIL
Jeffs
For Mayor of Welland

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Homelessness and Drug Addiction

This is a national crisis. Homelessness and drug addiction are growing challenges across Niagara, and Welland is not immune to these trends. Addressing these complex issues requires a coordinated, community-wide approach that brings together municipal, regional, provincial and federal governments, law enforcement, health-care providers, community organizations and other local stakeholders.

April Jeffs believes Welland needs a compassionate but structured approach - one that recognizes addiction and mental health challenges as serious health issues, while also protecting public safety, supporting local businesses and ensuring that those struggling with addiction have a meaningful pathway to treatment and recovery.



1. Track Reliable, Welland Specific Data

Effective solutions begin with a clear understanding of the problem.

While the Niagara Region collects information on homelessness and addiction, much of the available data is reported at the regional level rather than being specific to individual communities. This makes it difficult to establish the full scope and nature of the challenges facing Welland.

April Jeffs will work with the City of Welland and the Niagara Region to develop and collect Welland-specific data on homelessness, addiction and related issues. Establishing a reliable local baseline will allow the City to better understand changing needs, target resources effectively and measure whether policies and programs are achieving meaningful results.

Data collection and action should move forward together, ensuring Welland can respond to immediate concerns while developing evidence-based long-term strategies.

2. Call for Backup from other levels of Government

Homelessness, addiction and mental health are complex and serious issues, and we can't solve them alone. Effective action requires strong coordination among municipal, regional, provincial and federal governments.

April Jeffs will work with all levels of government to ensure Welland receives its fair share of funding, services and resources for mental health, addiction treatment and homelessness initiatives.

Through strong relationships with provincial and federal representatives, April Jeffs will advocate for expanded and continued mental health and addiction treatment capacity in Welland. This should include additional mental health beds and dedicated addiction treatment resources at the Welland hospital and elsewhere in the community. She will also work to ensure that the mental health and addiction treatment services are delivered as promised.

Welland should not have to compete for resources after the fact. Strong advocacy will ensure local needs are clearly identified and that Welland is positioned to secure the resources necessary to address them.



3. Establish a Welland Homelessness and Addiction Task Force

Addressing homelessness and addiction requires coordination, communication and accountability across the community.

April Jeffs will establish a Welland Homelessness and Addiction Task Force to bring together the organizations, agencies and levels of government involved in addressing these issues.

The Task Force will include representatives from community organizations, municipal and regional government, the Niagara Regional Police Service, EMS, health-care and social-service providers, and other relevant stakeholders. They will identify emerging challenges, coordinate existing resources, address ongoing issues and develop strategies that respond to Welland's current needs.

A coordinated approach will reduce duplication, strengthen communication between organizations and ensure that community resources are working toward common goals.



4. Work with the Niagara Regional Police Service

The Niagara Regional Police Service is on the front lines of Welland's homelessness, addiction and public safety challenges every day. Effective collaboration with police is essential to maintaining safe and welcoming public spaces.

April Jeffs will work with the Niagara Regional Police Service to support regular police foot patrols in downtown Welland. A visible and consistent police presence helps deter crime, respond to concerns and provide greater reassurance to residents, businesses and visitors.

April Jeffs will also advocate for expanded mobile mental health response teams, allowing mental health professionals to accompany police officers when responding to individuals experiencing mental health or addiction-related crises.

Additional resources and services should be directed to Welland where the need exists, ensuring police and front-line workers have the support necessary to respond effectively.

5. Compassionate Intervention and Rehabilitation

For individuals experiencing severe addiction who are unable or unwilling to seek treatment, the current system too often allows a cycle of crisis, emergency response, hospitalization, policing and repeated relapse to continue without a meaningful path toward recovery.

April Jeffs will advocate for a compassionate approach to addiction intervention and rehabilitation, focused on connecting people in crisis with the treatment, mental health and recovery supports they need to stabilize their lives and move toward recovery.

When addiction has reached a critical point and a person is unable to seek or sustain help on their own, we must have compassionate intervention options that prioritize dignity, safety, treatment and long-term recovery rather than allowing people to continue deteriorating without meaningful support.

April Jeffs will advocate for expanded treatment and rehabilitation capacity alongside these interventions, ensuring that individuals experiencing severe addiction have access to appropriate mental health, addiction treatment, housing and recovery services.

Welland needs an approach that is compassionate enough to help people in crisis and proactive enough to recognize that allowing people to deteriorate on the streets is not an acceptable solution. Our goal should be clear: intervention, treatment, recovery and a pathway back to a healthier and more stable life on the streets is not an acceptable solution.

My Approach: Compassion paired with Accountability

Homelessness and addiction cannot be solved through a single program or a single level of government. Meaningful progress will require reliable local data, stronger coordination, increased treatment capacity, effective policing and a commitment to accountability.

April Jeffs will bring together the people, organizations and governments needed to address these challenges while advocating for the resources and policy changes Welland needs.

The objective is clear: a safer Welland, a healthier community and a meaningful path to recovery for those struggling with addiction.