

Cobourg

Cobourg Council Candidate



Municipal Elections

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Name one or more specific actions you would take to address voter's concerns related to community safety?

During my door knocking, the concerns were equally split between homelessness(safety) and growth. I have been very consistent in saying that we have an affordable housing crisis, as does many towns and cities across Canada. As many people have heard me say, we need to tear down the silos, leave egos at the door and come together to address this issues. That will include non profits, private companies and ALL levels of government. We also need to improve services and support for people with addiction and mental health challenges. We have to let the police do their job with regards to illegal activities.

As for the growth of Cobourg - we need growth but it must be the right growth. I would like all of our attention to be focused on bringing our Official Plan up to date so that we are not amending by-laws in response to developers. Our heritage, infrastructure, and needs must be addressed. Most importantly, proper and meaningful community meetings must be held so that the people of Cobourg can be heard!

How would you address issues related to mental health and addiction of individuals living rough, giving specific steps or actions by council?

I would immediately to the following:

1. help the new mayor repair the relationship with the County who has the responsibility of providing services and supports to address mental health and addictions
2. working collaboratively, with my fellow Councillors, discuss the services that are being offered now and help identify areas that are lacking
3. look at all the options and identify what can be implemented immediately and by whom
4. as mentioned above, work to improve affordable housing, with supports where needed

We need to remember that not every person needs, or wants, the same supports.

How effective do you think the Emergency Care Bylaw is in addressing the needs of unsheltered people who need a temporary home? What, if anything, would you change?

This by-law needs to be thoroughly reviewed. It states that facilities must be located in a main central commercial zone. Does this include our downtown area? If so, people are complaining that they feel unsafe because people are sleeping and doing drugs downtown. You can see that there is a problem right there. The by-law also states that the spaces must be designated as 'relief spaces' with no sleeping permitted. This is inhumane. It's unfortunate that we have a need to provide warming/cooling spaces at all but for now that is the reality. Let's do it right! I would work with the County and with the Executive Director of Transition House (310 Division) to ensure that these services can be provided successfully while also keeping the safety of the community in mind.

How would you address the creation of affordable housing, giving three specific items you would introduce during your term on council? How many units would you want to see created by the end of your term?

Most of this has been in address in the first question. Additionally, I'd like to look at existing buildings to identify any that can easily be converted to affordable apartments. It takes time to build new buildings and a four year term is not a lot of time but I am confident that we can at least get some building started. The county has a 10 year waitlist for affordable housing. Wouldn't it be nice if we could ensure that all the people in the Cobourg area are housed in four years! Yes, I am very optimistic, but we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We have examples to follow such as St. Thomas, London and Hamilton, to start. We need to be creative and open to thinking outside of the box. I'm ready to roll up my sleeves! This doesn't answer your question directly though. I would like to see 40 -50 units created by the end of my term but I will be aiming for more!

How would you implement the More Homes Built Faster Act locally. giving two examples?

This is a tough one because I don't think that building faster, without consideration for the community is the right thing to do. As far as I know, this act doesn't address affordable housing either. For example, the proposal for the Brookside property offers and 'affordable' house with a purchase price of \$500,000. To qualify for a house of this price, you would need to earn \$125,000. A person earning minimum wages, who is lucky enough to work 40 hours a week for 52 weeks will earn just over \$37,000. There is no mention of any rental units that will be offered to seniors, who may only have OAS and CPP earning between \$25,000 and \$30,000 or someone on ODSP with a yearly income of approximately \$17,000. On top of all f this, the community doesn't want a development with high apartment buildings and an increase of 1800 to 2000 people in one area! This act will most certainly mean that Cobourg will have very little chance of winning this case if it goes to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

What are your views on Strong Mayor powers and their use?

I believe that a mayor who works collaboratively and respectfully with his team, does not need strong mayor powers.

What specific steps would you take to support local business?

Interesting timing for this question. My daughter and her family, who have just moved to Toronto, texted me with an urgent message that her favourite store in Cobourg, BonTon, is at risk of closing. She suggested that I go today to buy her Christmas gift and to tell the whole town that they are a wonderful store! I was a founder and chair of a BIA and I would like to work with the businesses here to brain storm ideas on how we can attract more customers, by hosting a brain storming meeting, aiming for the moon and see where we land. Wouldn't it be nice if the people who bring picnic baskets when they visit our beautiful beach, would eat at our local restaurants instead? Can we work on a combined advertising campaign? Are the current events working for the businesses that are here? What other options can we explore?

What are your plans to support recreational facilities and parks?

I have been asked to sit on the Cobourg Skateboard Association as I sat as the chair of the Southeast Toronto Skateboard Association where we build the second largest skateboard park in Canada - I've never stood on a skateboard but I saw the need through the eyes of my son. I will offer as much support for this group as I can as our park is dated and dangerous. Although I am the least co ordinated person in Town and I'm more of a cheerleader than an athlete, I firmly believe that recreation is extremely important to help reduce isolation, increase confidence, improve health - for all ages. If we have a healthy community, we have a happy community which may help to minimize other health issues. Being specific, I would like to learn more about the use of our outdoor pool. Is it being used to it's full potential? If not, can it be? We need to make sure that we are being fiscally responsible but let's make sure that we have all the answers first. This term conducted a detailed review of Parks and Recreation. Let's make sure that the plan is implemented.

What is a reasonable municipal tax rate or increase? How would you achieve this, giving specific budget areas or line items?

I will need to get back to you on this as I haven't learned all that I need to know in order to provide a solid answer.

What is a reasonable increase to the Cobourg Police Service budget? Give specific services or line items you would adjust to reach this goal?

This is tricky. We all have heard that the community wants to feel safer, and they should, but that will mean that we need police to address illegal activity which costs money! We haven't had a Deputy Chief for several months now. This will show a reduction in costs for this year but that will be short lived. Specific services? This is tough because we are a growing town with City sized issues that we all expect the police to take care of on a thin budget. Do we look at joining forces with a nearby town? Do we look at using OPP instead of our own police services. As you can see from my previous answers, I believe in asking questions and looking at options. I don't think that we have looked at all the options yet so I can't say what a reasonable increase would be until we have done this!

Name one or more new initiatives you plan to implement over your term to improve the quality of life for everyone in the municipality?

I plan to improve the broken relationships between town and county which will result in more open communications for the community. i plan to work to improve affordable housing and services which will reduce the number of people in our parks. I plan to review our transit system to insure that the community is receiving what they need, and that the tax money is being spent well. I plan to work with the business, not only on King St, have what they need to succeed.

I plan to listen!

How are you uniquely qualified to be elected to council that no one else can provide, but also giving at least one guilty pleasure?

I have many transferable skills including advocacy, accountability, transparency, and the ability to inspire people to be their best. Having a career in banking, primarily banking, and a career in the non profit sector, I have learned to be flexible and creative.

My guilty pleasure - chocolate!

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