

Port Hope

Port Hope Council Candidates



Municipal Elections

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Give one or more specific things related to the New Nuclear Power Generator proposed for Wesleyville you will want to see happen before the end of your term on council?

The immediate launch of meaningful community consultation, led by the municipality. Not consultation run by the proponent about a design, but our own process, continuing and evolving throughout the impact assessment as more information comes online.

That work begins with understanding where our lines are as a community. What impacts are we willing to bear, and what do we hope to get from this project? We have not had that conversation, and until we do, every position any of us takes is a guess about what residents actually want.

Ultimately, before we consider signing on as a willing host, I would like to see us use a model like a citizens' assembly to test the proposal and its impacts and determine whether the project is in our overall interests. A citizens' assembly brings together a randomly selected group of residents that reflects the community, gives them time and access to expertise from all sides, and asks them to work through the trade-offs and make a recommendation. It is not a poll and it is not a public meeting. It is a deliberative process built for exactly this kind of decision: high stakes, technically complex, permanent, and genuinely contested. Communities elsewhere have used it for decisions of this weight, and the results carry a legitimacy that a council vote on its own cannot.

I also want us to use the Official Plan review to ensure that growth associated with potential new nuclear happens on our terms, in the ways that make the most sense for the people already here, and in ways that protect our sense of place.

That requires people at the helm who truly understand this place, our values and our interests, and who will work to protect it. And it requires more transparency and public dialogue than we have had so far.

How would you characterize the Port Hope Area Initiative clean up, giving any steps necessary to address concerns you may raise?

Real work has been done, and property by property the remediation is happening. The soil compaction specification is a good example of the system working. That standard was drawn from municipal road and servicing requirements and was never appropriate for residential yards, and it has now been fixed, in part because of persistent advocacy from the community, from our Environmental Advisory Committee and from staff.

The next piece of that same problem is drainage. We need to ensure that the stormwater management capacity of a remediated property is what it was before the work started. Remediation almost always requires the removal of mature trees, and a mature tree does an enormous amount of hydrological work. That means an honest accounting of the deficit left behind without those trees, and compensating for it through other measures built into the reconstruction plan, rather than handing a property back and discovering the problem two storms later.

I also brought forward a motion for an independent advisory panel to support residents navigating this process. The project is complex, the parties are many, and residents are expected to make decisions about their own homes without independent advice. That gap should be closed.

Beyond that: continue pressing on the arsenic criteria, where council has already passed a supporting resolution, keep clarifying how Special Circumstances are applied, and properly reactivate the Community Advisory Committee as established in the 2001 agreement.

How would you balance the requests of developers with the heritage aspects of existing neighbourhoods and preservation of significant buildings?

I do not see development and heritage, or environment for that matter, to be competing priorities. Framing them as a trade-off is how we end up with worse versions of all three.

Adaptive reuse is the clearest illustration. It is one of the most efficient and sustainable approaches to development we can choose. The building already exists, so the embodied carbon is already spent, the servicing is largely in place, and the result is a building that belongs on the street it sits on. That is a heritage outcome, an environmental outcome and a development outcome at the same time. It is the approach I have supported at 39 Pine Street and at Port Hope High School, and I would rather see a heritage building occupied and adapted than preserved and empty.

What creates real conflict at our table is unpredictability. Most of it comes from rules that are vague, or applied late, so an applicant makes plans and then discovers the constraint. That is expensive for them and it produces poor outcomes for us, because by then the conversation is about salvage rather than design.

So the answer is to be clear early. The Official Plan and zoning by-law we are updating now should establish what is expected, including identifying and mapping our cultural heritage landscapes along Lakeshore Road and the Ganaraska, before applications arrive.

The second piece is incentives. Designation without financial tools puts the whole cost of conservation on individual owners, which breeds resentment and eventually produces demolition by neglect. Our Community Improvement Plan powers under section 28 of the Planning Act are underused.

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?

All three come from the 2025 report of the Intermunicipal Taskforce on Housing Solutions, which I co-chair and was the lead author of. That report drew on a facilitated workshop that brought together builders, planners, building officials, local politicians, realtors and mortgage lenders, so these are not theoretical. They came from the people who actually build and finance housing.

As-of-right infill that fits. I have already achieved the changes to our additional residential unit provisions. The next step is supporting infill that works across our neighbourhoods, triplexes and fourplexes of an appropriate stature. These need to be permitted as of right, so that the people trying to help us solve our affordable housing challenge are not bogged down in costly rezoning processes. Alongside that, give our planning department more discretion to fast-track designs and development plans already built elsewhere in our community. A local builder putting up the same building they have already built on another lot should not be starting from scratch.

Action the land inventory. We have the inventory. What we have not done is activate partnerships with community housing providers to develop affordable housing on municipally held land that is well located for families and seniors and integrates into existing residential neighbourhoods.

A Community Improvement Plan for additional residential units. Permission is not the only barrier. Upfront cost is. A CIP would help residents cover the cost of building these new rental units through loans repaid via their tax bill, in theory out of the rental revenue the unit generates. That turns a permission most people cannot afford to use into one they can.

On targets, I will commit to what council can actually deliver, because the municipality does not build housing. By the end of the term I want to see at least two municipal properties identified in the land inventory under development for needed housing, more flexibility built into our zoning, and an ARU incentive program up and running. Those are targets I can be held to.

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

Two examples.

First, make the permissions genuinely usable. The Act allows up to three units on most residential lots, but permission on paper means nothing if the zoning by-law layers on parking requirements, coverage limits and setbacks that make a second or third unit impossible. I have already brought our ARU provisions into line. The same logic needs to extend to triplexes and fourplexes, permitted as of right at a scale appropriate to the street, so we are not sending every modest infill proposal through a rezoning.

Second, speed up the approvals side rather than only the permissions side. Fast-tracking designs already built elsewhere in Port Hope is the clearest example. It costs us nothing, it reduces staff workload on repeat review, and it takes months out of a builder's timeline, which shows up directly in the price of the unit.

I will add the honest caveat. Bill 23 also reduced development charge revenue and limited conservation authority review. Those are real losses to our ability to fund growth-related infrastructure and assess environmental risk. I voted to commit to lowering development charges to qualify for housing funding, and I would make that trade again for units delivered. But growth should pay for itself, and where it does not, existing residents carry the servicing cost indefinitely.

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

I am not in favour of them.

I worked with Councillor Darrell Toms to bring forward a resolution requiring at least one affirmative vote from each ward on the budget, so that rural and urban perspectives both carried weight in fiscal decisions. Strong Mayor powers rendered that moot.

Here is what I would want voters to understand. Even when a mayor publicly rejects these powers, functionally they have already changed things. The ability to hire and fire senior staff necessarily means the mayor has more authority over the people who are supposed to execute council's directions. I have seen how that plays out: more access to information, meetings where the mayor is the only elected official in the room, and influence over how things are moving behind the scenes, often long before an item ever comes before council.

That is a slippery slope and we should all be watching it. I hope every mayoral candidate is conscious of it and prepared to monitor it once they are in the chair.

None of this is about any individual. It is about a structure that quietly relocates decision-making out of the room where the public can see it.

What specific steps would you take to support local business?

Use the Community Improvement Plan properly. It is our most flexible tool for facade work, upper storey residential conversion, accessibility upgrades and vacancy reduction, and we underuse it. When the Giant Tiger closure was announced I looked at exactly this, along with the provincial Rural Economic Development program, because the instinct to say a municipality has no role in private retail decisions is only half true. We shape the conditions.

Fix the approvals experience. Small businesses do not have planners on staff. A predictable, quick permitting path with a single point of contact is worth more to a business owner than most grant programs.

Buy locally where we are permitted to. Social and local procurement, within trade agreement limits, keeps municipal spending circulating here.

Support the workforce pipeline. The new millwright apprenticeship training facility is exactly the kind of thing that makes a local economy durable, because it gives young people a career path without leaving.

And recognize that liveability is economic development. Transit that gets staff to work, housing they can afford, and a downtown worth walking through are business supports.

What are your plans to support recreational facilities and parks?

Fund the lifecycle, not just the ribbon cutting. Recreation facilities are the assets most often allowed to decline quietly, because nobody notices deferred roof work until it becomes a closure. That is precisely what my infrastructure levy motion was about. We also have to be more conscious of the repair and maintenance costs upfront, especially when the initial recreation asset is built leveraging grant funding. Grants almost never cover what comes after, and a facility we could afford to build is not automatically a facility we can afford to keep.

Expand what parks do. I have supported naturalization work that adds food growing, pollinator planting and rain gardens to neighbourhood parks, because a park can manage stormwater, cool a neighbourhood and feed people at the same time as it provides a place to play. That is better value than mown grass.

Connect them. Parks and facilities you can only reach by car exclude the people most likely to need them. Active transportation connections and transit access are part of recreation planning.

Keep the cost barrier low. Programming that requires registration fees excludes exactly the families it would most benefit.

And protect parkland through the Official Plan and parkland dedication as we grow, so new neighbourhoods are not built with a promise of green space that never materializes. Noting that we may need to make some difficult decisions about the equipment investments in each park - balancing proximity to users with ensuring we can meet the needs of all park users.

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

I am not going to name a percentage before seeing a budget. Anyone who does is guessing or planning to break it.

A reasonable tax increase can only be evaluated in the context of the inflation on our costs in any given year. It is not reasonable to hold taxes to an arbitrarily lower increase when the cost of municipal assets has more than doubled in five years. So the real question is a trade-off between not digging ourselves a deeper hole, and reasonably increasing revenue and finding savings through other mechanisms.

What I will commit to is the principle I have already voted for. In my first budget cycle I brought forward the motion to fully fund the Asset Management Plan through a dedicated infrastructure levy. We have an \$11 million gap between what we have saved and what we need to maintain roads, bridges, stormwater systems and equipment. Deferring maintenance does not save money. It moves the cost to a future council and it grows while it waits. I have written about this at length in my Budget Rabbit Hole series, which you can find at facebook.com/porthopeclaire, including the example of Fauquier-Strickland, a township that ran out of money entirely after years of artificially low taxes achieved by draining reserves.

How I would get there:

Move away from base budgeting. Right now we scrutinize new staffing requests and new capital projects while everything already in the base carries forward largely unexamined. That is backwards. The existing budget deserves the same scrutiny as the new ask. We also have to be willing to do without services that are no longer meeting the priorities of today, so we can make room for new ones without ever growing the municipal budget.

Harness the assets we already have in this community. Expert advisory committees, drawing on the people and experience already here, can reduce our reliance on costly outside consultants and support staff to get work done more efficiently. This is why I oppose reducing how often our committees meet. We should be using them more, not less.

Make smart lifecycle costing decisions on all municipal assets, so we stop robbing Peter to pay Paul. That includes fleet, where the full lifecycle comparison favours electrification once maintenance is counted, not just fuel.

Be realistic about grants. They are valuable, but most are one time, many require matching funds, and their timelines can distort our priorities. Good budgeting means being ready to leverage grants without becoming dependent on them.

And I will keep making the case upward. A significant driver of local tax increases is provincial downloading and regulatory mandates arriving without funding. AMO estimates municipalities across Ontario are collectively covering \$3.8 billion a year in costs that should be provincial.

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

I want to answer this honestly rather than give you a number that implies an authority council does not have. The Police Services Board prepares and approves the police budget. Council approves a total estimate, and our ability to adjust individual line items is very limited by statute. A candidate promising you line item changes to the police budget is describing a power they will not have.

More importantly, police staffing levels are an unfunded provincial mandate, and we should call that out plainly. The decision about how many officers we are required to have rests with the province. The cost is levied on our property taxpayers. That is not a local budgeting problem and it cannot be solved with local belt-tightening. It is one of many expenses in this category, which is exactly the pattern I have been documenting for residents.

What council can legitimately do is ask better questions before approving the estimate. Multi-year budgeting so we see the trajectory rather than one year in isolation. A clear picture of what is actually driving increases, which in policing is overwhelmingly compensation and is largely set through arbitration outside local control. And the same rigour on outcomes that we apply to every other department.

I would also press the point that a significant share of calls are housing, mental health and addictions issues that have nowhere else to go, and those budgets sit with the county and the province too.

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

A Community Improvement Plan supporting renovations for affordable infill housing. This would cover additional residential units, triplexes and fourplexes, with loans repaid through property taxes. We have no program like this now, but PACE programs provide the precedent. Permission is not the only barrier to infill. Upfront cost is, and the people trying to help us solve our affordable housing challenge should not be stopped at the financing stage after we have finally cleared the way for them in the zoning.

Strengthening the role of community advisory committees and taskforces. These provide meaningful opportunities for residents to contribute to decision-making and to advance community priorities. They also leverage the skills and expertise already in our community, which reduces our dependence on external consultants and ensures our community's needs and interests are centred in municipal work. I brought forward the motion to empower the Environmental Advisory Committee to lead implementation of the Community Climate Action Plan, and they are proving how capable community is in advancing municipal work. That is the model I would extend. It is also why I have opposed reducing how often our committees meet. We should be using them more, not less.

Championing activation of Vision Zero. Our current council commissioned this work on the basis of a resolution I brought forward. Activating it means safe streets for all, and it makes active transportation genuinely feasible for the young and the old, who are the two groups most often designed out of our road network.

Monthly open discussion meetings, held alongside willing council colleagues, so residents have a meaningful opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion about council business in between Committee of the Whole, where we receive information, are briefed by staff and have preliminary discussion, and Council, where we make final decisions. I advocated unsuccessfully for this third meeting to be included in our procedural by-law this term. Next term I will simply do it.

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 would not claim nobody else could do this. I would say the combination is unusual.

I have spent 25 years in community development. That work is facilitation, solutions-building on a budget, and getting people into a room who would not otherwise be there and making the conversation productive. The 2025 Taskforce report is a good example: I brought together builders, planners, building officials, realtors, mortgage lenders and elected officials, facilitated the session, and wrote the recommendations that came out of it. Those recommendations are now moving through Official Plan updates across this county.

That is what I bring to a council table. Not just a vote, but the ability to convene, to find the workable path when the money is tight, and to talk to people in a way that gets them excited about contributing to this community. A great deal of what needs doing here will not be done by the municipality alone, and someone has to be able to make that collaboration actually happen.

I also represent Ontario municipalities on the Green Municipal Fund Council, chair our Environmental Advisory Committee, and co-chair the Intermunicipal Taskforce on Housing Solutions. And I am a mother of three, which is its own education in what this municipality does and does not make easy.

Guilty pleasure: food television. Far more of it than I would like to admit, and I do occasionally try the recipes.

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