

Trent Hills

Trent Hills Council Candidate



Municipal Elections

2026 YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR VOICE. YOUR VOTE.
INFORMED TODAY. STRONGER TOMORROW. • N897 FM

First Name *

Meagan (Meg)

Last Name *

McLean

Campaign address *

16 Laver Crescent

Website and social media *

<https://www.facebook.com/mcleanforward4>

What specific, concrete steps are you prepared to take to support your position on the Alto High Speed Rail project as it relates to Trent Hills?

I've spent the past few weeks researching this topic, and before I answer, I want to acknowledge something: Council members cannot simply stop Alto or personally decide where the line runs. Alto is a federal Crown corporation, and ultimately those decisions are not ours to make.

One of my biggest concerns is the potential loss of agricultural land. Farmland is not an unlimited resource in Ontario. It accounts for only about 5.2% of Ontario's total land area, yet Ontario contains roughly half of Canada's highest-quality Class 1 agricultural land. Once infrastructure permanently removes productive farmland, we cannot simply get it back. At a time when the cost and security of our food supply are increasingly impacted by factors outside of our control, I believe we need to be bullish in protecting the farmland we have.

With that in mind, I think we need to participate aggressively at every opportunity as this project moves forward. The first round of public consultation has already concluded, but Alto has said engagement will continue throughout the project, with further consultation on the Toronto–Ottawa portion expected in 2027. They've also been clear that feedback from municipalities and communities is being used as the corridor is narrowed, including concerns around farmland, environmentally sensitive areas, community priorities, and the practical realities of the areas the rail line could pass through. Our Council needs to be prepared to be the voice of our community in those discussions.

Our current Council has already raised serious concerns about the potential impacts of this project, and I think the next Council needs to keep that pressure on as the actual route becomes clearer.

I would also commit to working with Northumberland County, neighbouring municipalities, agricultural organizations, environmental organizations, and our provincial and federal representatives. Trent Hills isn't the only community facing these concerns, and I think there's a stronger case to be made when municipalities and organizations are pushing together rather than everyone fighting their own little battle.

And I would advise you all to continue to make noise about this. It's so important, and over the years I have watched this community rally around causes that matter, ultimately making an actual impact. Council needs to do its part, but residents should continue asking questions, showing up, and making sure their concerns are heard.

We may not be the ones who ultimately decide where the line is drawn, but damn can we annoy the hell out of the people who do.

Where do you stand on the proposed new bridge in Campbellford and what practical actions will you take to support your position? Explain.

It's important to acknowledge that this project is much further along than the word "proposed" implies. Planning and studies have been happening since 2008. The environmental assessment was approved in 2017, detailed design began in 2019, properties have been acquired, utility work has started, and homes have been demolished or slated for demolition. Northumberland County has already committed \$10 million toward a project currently estimated at around \$55 million.

I think one thing we all want from our governments is for them to be good stewards of public money. After almost two decades of planning and millions of dollars already spent, I don't think this can be boiled down to whether you're simply "for" or "against" a second bridge.

At this point, I have a lot of questions. What will it actually cost to finish? Where is that money going to come from? How much have we already spent? What would it cost to walk away now? And maybe most importantly, are we still confident that what we're building actually solves the problems we set out to solve?

As Trent Hills, and specifically Campbellford, continues to grow, I understand the argument for a second bridge. We rely heavily on one crossing through downtown, and there are very real concerns about traffic, emergency access, future growth, and what happens when that bridge eventually needs major repairs or has to close.

But \$55 million is a hell of a lot of money, and I think a project of that size deserves serious scrutiny.

As a Councillor, I would push for transparency around what has already been spent, what is left to spend, and where that money is coming from. I would also advocate hard for provincial and federal funding so that as little of that burden as possible lands on us, the taxpayers.

And I would want us looking beyond just the price tag. What does this actually do to traffic? Does it make walking through the area safer or worse? What happens to the businesses nearby? Have things changed since this project was first studied almost 20 years ago that we should be taking into account now?

I don't think responsible leadership means digging your heels into a position just so you can say you're "for" or "against" something. It means continuing to ask questions, even when a project is already well underway, and being willing to change course if the information in front of you tells you that's the right thing to do.

What role should the municipality play in the proposal to build a new hospital?

This one is pretty easy for me: the municipality should do everything possible to help build this hospital (within our power).

Last year, CMH received a \$2.5M planning grant from the Province. That is a huge step forward after years of work and advocacy from a lot of people in this community.

While Trent Hills isn't building the hospital, we absolutely play a role in its success. Helping advance planning approvals, working through infrastructure and servicing needs, partnering with the County, and continuing to advocate to the Province. In other words, continue being the squeaky wheel.

The Province finally provided the funding we needed to move forward. Our job now is to keep the pedal pressed firmly to the metal.

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

I think Canada is going through a period of significant change, and for a lot of people, it's been a tough go. News headlines tell a bleak story, and I think it's important to listen when residents say they don't feel as safe as they once did.

Public safety is something I am deeply passionate about, and while my instinct is always to act when I see a problem, I also recognize that our response needs to be based on evidence and focused on what we can actually influence.

One of the clearest examples here in Trent Hills is speeding. We've collected traffic data in areas where residents have raised concerns, and speeding continues to come up as a very real issue, particularly in areas used by pedestrians, seniors and children. Collecting the data isn't enough if we don't do anything with it.

I would support looking at practical ways to actually change the way people drive. That could mean traffic-calming measures where they make sense, changes to Community Safety Zones, or working with the OPP on targeted enforcement in areas where the data shows an ongoing problem.

There are crimes I have zero patience for, particularly crimes involving children and vulnerable people. But being angry about crime isn't a municipal policy. As a Councillor, my responsibility would be to take that conviction and focus it on the things we can actually do here in Trent Hills to make people safer.

That means paying attention to what the data is telling us, listening when residents tell us there's a problem, working with the OPP and other partners, and being willing to act when something within our control can make a difference.

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?

I think we need to get more creative about housing instead of assuming every solution has to be a massive new development.

We already allow additional residential units on many properties, and Northumberland County has funding available to help create affordable rental units. We should be making it ridiculously easy for homeowners to understand what they can build, how to get it approved, and what funding might be available to help them do it.

I also want to see more smaller-scale options. Infill, modular homes, conversions, townhouses, secondary suites and small apartment buildings can all add housing without fundamentally changing the character of our communities. The County is already doing some of this right here in Campbellford, including adding modular affordable housing units on Kent Street.

And where Trent Hills can help through municipal land, faster approvals, zoning changes or reasonable incentives, we should.

We don't need to become a housing developer. We need to stop making good housing projects harder than they need to be.

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

We should make it much easier for people to add housing to properties they already own. If someone wants to legally add a basement apartment or another unit, they shouldn't need to become an amateur planner to figure out zoning, permits, servicing, costs and available funding. Give people one clear guide and a simple process.

I'd also look at whether any of our own rules are making housing unnecessarily difficult or expensive to build. Things like zoning, parking requirements, fees and approval timelines are all worth looking at. There's a lot of room for smaller-scale housing like duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, infill, conversions and small apartment buildings.

And I think it's important to separate adding housing from adding affordable housing. More supply matters, but simply allowing more market-rate homes doesn't automatically make them affordable. We should be looking at both.

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

I don't support Strong Mayor powers.

I believe municipal government works best when Council works collectively, issues are debated openly, and decisions are made by a majority of the people residents elected to represent them.

Giving one member of Council significantly more power undermines that process and, in my view, creates unnecessary risk. I don't think the mayor should have special powers simply because the Province decided they should.

A mayor should lead Council, not have more power than the rest of it.

What specific steps would you take to support local business?

I think the first step is actually listening to our local businesses. I want to hear directly from them about where Trent Hills is doing well, where we're making things unnecessarily difficult, and what Council could realistically do better.

I also want the Municipality to be easy to work with. Whether someone is opening a business, expanding one, applying for a permit or just trying to get an answer to a question, the process should be clear and people should know who to talk to.

Sometimes supporting local business isn't about creating another program or spending more money. Sometimes it's simply about listening, removing unnecessary barriers and making it easier for people to get things done.

What are your plans to support recreational facilities and parks?

My priority would be to take care of what we already have, make it better where we can, and invest strategically.

That means keeping our parks and recreational facilities well maintained, listening to residents about where improvements are actually needed, and making decisions based on how our facilities are being used and what our communities actually need.

I don't think we need to spend money just for the sake of announcing something new. I'd rather put money into facilities and spaces people will actually use, and that we can afford to maintain long-term.

Also, a dog park would be pretty rad.

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

There isn't a simple answer to what the "right" tax increase should be. I can review budgets and financial statements, but I haven't been sitting at the Council table for the decisions that got us to where we are today. I don't think it would be responsible for me to throw out an arbitrary number just because it sounds good.

Generally, I think tax increases should be reasonable, and inflation is one of the things we should be looking at when deciding what reasonable actually means. Municipal costs go up just like household costs do, and some of those costs can rise even faster than inflation.

But before asking taxpayers for more, I want us looking hard at where the money is already going. Where can we save? What are we spending money on that isn't working? Are there things we're doing simply because that's how we've always done them? And when we're talking about a major investment, does it actually make sense for Trent Hills right now?

At the same time, keeping taxes artificially low isn't responsible if it means we're neglecting roads, infrastructure or services and leaving a much bigger bill for people five or ten years from now.

For me, the goal is pretty simple. Spend carefully, question things, plan further than the next budget, and don't ask taxpayers for more than we actually need.

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

What is a reasonable increase and what Trent Hills can actually do about that increase are two different questions.

Trent Hills controls its own budget. We don't control the OPP's budget, and we don't get to decide what we're willing to pay for policing. The Province capped the increase in municipal OPP costs at 11% for 2026, and has now done the same for 2027. Under our current arrangement, though, we ultimately get a bill and we have to pay it. We can't just decide it's too high and send back a smaller cheque.

I also don't think it would be responsible for me to throw out a percentage I consider "reasonable" without actually doing the work. I'd want to look at previous increases, go through the numbers and understand exactly what's driving the cost.

That doesn't mean we just accept an increase without questioning it. If we think it's unreasonable, ask for the numbers. Ask why. Push back. Advocate to the Province and work with other municipalities dealing with the exact same problem. Trent Hills has already pushed back on OPP costs, and I think we should continue to do that.

But I also want to be realistic about what that accomplishes. We can make all the noise in the world and the bill may still show up.

At that point, we have to figure out where the money comes from. Before automatically passing the entire increase on to taxpayers, I'd look at the rest of the budget. Are there capital projects that can wait a year? Can a vehicle or equipment replacement be pushed back? If a position is vacant, can the work reasonably be redistributed instead of immediately hiring someone new?

I'd also be looking hard at grants. They don't have to be policing grants. If we can get outside funding to pay for something we would otherwise have to fund ourselves, that frees up money somewhere else.

Reserves can help soften a particularly bad year too, and Trent Hills has already done that with policing costs. But reserves aren't an endless pot of money. If policing costs stay higher year after year, eventually those costs have to be dealt with in the regular budget.

There isn't one easy answer. Look at the whole budget. Question the costs. Find savings where they actually make sense. Push back on the things we don't control. And don't compromise the services or community safety people expect just so we can say we kept the tax increase down.

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

There are five things I'd really like to see happen.

First, a dog park in Warkworth. We have a lot of dogs here, and I've had several people tell me they'd love a fenced-in space where they can safely let them run around and burn off some energy. It's not a massive project, but it's something I think people would genuinely use and enjoy.

Second, I want to help create a new Strategic Plan that residents are actually involved in and can easily follow. The current plan expires in 2027, so this will be one of the next Council's jobs. Strategic planning is something I have quite a bit of experience with, and I'd love to be part of that process.

I also want us to do a much better job of showing residents how we're doing against that plan. I'd like to see a public "State of Trent Hills" dashboard showing things like roads repaired, capital projects completed, grants received, budget versus actual spending, and progress on the goals we've committed to. It could also help make it much clearer what Trent Hills is responsible for versus what falls to Northumberland County.

Third, I'd like us to actually start knocking items off the Active Transportation and Trails Plan. I'd like to see us pick achievable recommendations every year, figure out what we can afford, and actually get them done. Sidewalks, trails, safer crossings, cycling connections and traffic calming don't all have to happen at once, but we should be able to point to progress every year.

I've also seen residents asking for updates on this plan, and right now it isn't particularly easy to figure out what's been completed, what's underway or what's coming next. This is exactly the kind of thing I think a public-facing dashboard could help with. Let people see the plan, the individual projects, their status and what's actually been accomplished without having to dig through Council agendas and reports to figure it out.

Fourth, I'd like to see environmental protection become something we actively work on, rather than something we only talk about when a development application comes forward. That could mean identifying smaller projects we can realistically accomplish each year, protecting and improving natural areas, supporting tree planting, and looking for opportunities to improve waterways, trails and green spaces. I'd also want us actively pursuing grants so we're not expecting local taxpayers to fund every initiative ourselves.

And fifth, I'd like us to revisit when we hold Council meetings.

Trent Hills currently holds its regular Council meetings at 9:30 in the morning. Compare that to Brighton at 6:30 p.m., Cramahe at 6:00 p.m. and Port Hope at 6:30 p.m.

I know there isn't one meeting time that's going to work for everybody, and Northumberland County itself also meets during the day. But I think it's worth asking who we're making it easier to participate when we choose a meeting time.

If you work a traditional Monday-to-Friday job, attending a 9:30 a.m. Council meeting means taking time off work. That's a pretty significant barrier for a lot of people.

I'd like us to revisit the schedule and look at whether evening meetings, alternating meeting times or another approach would make Council more accessible. Local government works better when the people we're making decisions for have a realistic opportunity to show up and be part of the conversation.

Not every initiative needs to be massive or expensive. Sometimes it's about taking the plans we already have, choosing things we can realistically accomplish, making it easier for people to see what we're doing, and actually getting things done.

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've spent the last several years working directly with municipalities like Trent Hills across North America. I've worked in grants management, strategic planning, and, more recently, water compliance, including FOG, industrial pretreatment, stormwater, and backflow.

I'm not going to pretend I'm an expert in all of those things, because I'm not. What I have had is a pretty unique opportunity to work with elected officials, administrators, department directors, and the people actually doing the day-to-day work of running their communities. I've seen how municipal governments operate, the weird constraints they sometimes have to work within, and just how often they're expected to somehow do more with less.

One thing I genuinely think I'm good at is challenging my own opinions. If I feel strongly about something, I actively look for the argument against it. I want to understand why someone disagrees with me. I want to know what I might be missing. And if I find information that proves me wrong, I'll change my mind. I'd much rather be wrong and learn something than dig my heels in because I've already decided I'm right.

That's something I want from my Council too. I don't expect everyone to agree. In fact, I think disagreement can be incredibly valuable. But I want to know the people making decisions are willing to listen, challenge their own assumptions, and make decisions based on the best information available, not just their own biases.

Guilty pleasure? Oh man. My first instinct was to say that I think I'm hilarious and probably laugh more than any reasonable person should. But I'm not sure enjoying life counts as a guilty pleasure, so since apparently I can't pick just one:

I love a good wormhole, especially if it's conspiracy-related. Ask me about the moon landing, but make sure you have at least 20 minutes to spare.

I love a spicy romance novel. Bonus points if hockey is involved.

And I'm an Enneagram 7w8, which basically means I have a brutal case of FOMO 100% of the time. If something sounds even remotely fun, you can pretty safely assume I'm in.

So maybe my actual guilty pleasure is just... all of the things.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms