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Mayoral Candidate

Question 1:

My vision for Port Hope four years from now is pretty simple: I want people to feel proud of where they live again, and I want them to feel like their municipality is working for them. I want to see a community where families can actually afford to live, where young people have a reason to stay, where farmers and rural residents feel heard, and where small businesses feel like they are being welcomed rather than constantly asked to jump through another hoop. I want our roads, water, wastewater and other essential infrastructure looked after properly. I want us making smart investments instead of constantly playing catch-up. Port Hope is already facing an infrastructure funding challenge, and the 2026 budget alone includes more than \$6 million in water, wastewater and stormwater investment. I also want us to stop thinking that the only way to balance a municipal budget is to keep asking residents for more. I want Council looking harder for opportunities—economic development, tourism, investment and new revenue—while being very careful about what we spend. And I want a Council that actually listens. If a major project is being considered, whether it's Wesleyville, a new development, a major capital project or something that changes the character of our community, residents should understand what we're doing, why we're doing it, what it costs and what they are getting in return. Four years from now, I don't expect every problem to be solved. That's not realistic. But I would like to look back and say we made Port Hope easier to live in, easier to build a life in and easier to do business in.

Most importantly, I want people to feel that they have a voice here again.

That's my vision: a financially responsible, growing community that takes care of the basics, creates opportunity and doesn't lose the things that make Port Hope special along the way.

Question 2:

I think Port Hope has a tremendous economic opportunity in front of it, but we also have some very real challenges that we can't ignore. Our location, our waterfront, the Ganaraska River, our heritage downtown, our agricultural community and our proximity to the 401 give us a lot to work with. We have tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, energy and small business opportunities, and we're sitting in a region that is going to see significant investment over the coming years. The Municipality's own economic development strategy identifies infrastructure, employment lands, business support, talent attraction and focused sector development as key areas for Port Hope. I also think Wesleyville could create opportunities—but I don't think we should put all of our economic hopes into one project. Whether it's nuclear, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, our waterfront or small business, we need to be looking at multiple ways to grow our economy and bring money into our community. The biggest challenge, in my opinion, is making sure growth actually works for the people who already live here. We need housing people can afford, we need to attract and retain workers, and we need to make it easier—not harder—for someone to open a business, expand their business or invest in Port Hope. The municipality's own research points to an aging workforce and business-owner population, along with the need for housing and services that can support population growth.

And then there's infrastructure. Growth is great until your roads, water, wastewater and other services can't keep up with it. We need to make sure we're planning ahead instead of waiting for problems to become expensive emergencies.

For me, economic development isn't about making Port Hope bigger just for the sake of being bigger. It's about creating opportunity.

I want a young person to be able to stay here and build a life. I want a local business owner to see Port Hope as a place where they can grow. I want farmers to know their industry matters. And I want people visiting Port Hope to spend their money here, not just drive through.

We have a beautiful community with a lot going for it. I think the opportunity is to take what we already have and build on it—without losing the character that made people want to live here in the first place.

Question 3:

I believe the Municipality's role should be to create the conditions for businesses to succeed—not to try to run the businesses themselves. We already have good businesses here. We have people who have invested their money, their time and sometimes generations of their family into Port Hope. I think the first responsibility of Council is to listen to those people and ask a simple question: "What are we doing that is making it harder for you to succeed?"

If a business owner wants to expand, open a new business or invest in a property, I want Port Hope to be a municipality that says, "Let's figure out how we can make this work," rather than one that makes them fight their way through unnecessary red tape. That doesn't mean lowering every standard or approving everything. We still need good planning, responsible development and protection of the things that make Port Hope special. But there is a difference between having appropriate rules and making it unnecessarily difficult to navigate them.

The Municipality already has an Economic Development Strategy focused on business-focused services, supportive planning processes, infrastructure and attracting investment. I think the next step is making sure those ideas actually translate into the experience a business owner has when they deal with the Municipality.

When it comes to attracting new investment, I think we need to sell Port Hope much harder and not be so selective on the types of businesses we allow to be a part of our downtown.

We have our location, the 401, our waterfront, our downtown, our industrial lands, our skilled workforce and our quality of life. We should be actively telling businesses why Port Hope is a place where they should invest—not simply waiting for someone to come knocking.

And when a major opportunity does come along, I want to make sure local businesses have a chance to participate in it. The Municipality has recently started work specifically aimed at helping local companies prepare for opportunities in energy and advanced manufacturing supply chains. That's the kind of thinking I want to see continue.

Ultimately, I want a business owner to say, "Port Hope wants me here."

If we can make it easier to start, easier to expand and easier to invest, while actively going out and attracting new businesses that fit our community, we can grow our tax base, create good local jobs and create more opportunities without simply putting the entire burden of growth on existing taxpayers. That's economic development I can get behind.

Question 4:

I don't think Port Hope has to choose between growth and preserving what makes this community special. I think we can do both—but we have to be intentional about how we grow.

Port Hope is special because of its character. Our downtown, our heritage buildings, the Ganaraska River, our waterfront, our rural landscape and the small-town feeling people still have when they live here. Those aren't things we should sacrifice just because we're growing.

At the same time, we can't put up a “no vacancy” sign and expect Port Hope to thrive. We need new housing, we need opportunities for young families, we need places for people to work and we need businesses that can grow. For me, the answer is smart growth. Let's put the right development in the right places. Let's make better use of existing serviced areas and infrastructure before continually pushing outward. Let's encourage housing that people can actually afford, while making sure new development contributes appropriately to the infrastructure and services it depends on.

And let's stop treating every development proposal as simply a question of “for or against.” We should be asking: *Does this make sense for Port Hope? Does it fit the area? Can our infrastructure support it? What does the community gain? And are we protecting the things that cannot be replaced?* I also think growth should create opportunities for the people already here. If we're attracting new investment and new residents, I want our existing businesses, tradespeople, farmers and young people to benefit from that growth too. I don't want Port Hope to become a place that people recognize only by its population number. I want us to grow without losing our identity. If we do this properly, four years from now we can have more housing, more businesses, more opportunity and better infrastructure—and still have the Port Hope that made people want to move here in the first place. That's the balance I would be looking for: progress without losing our character.

Question 5:

For me, a healthy business environment starts with something pretty basic: make it easier to do business in Port Hope. Businesses need reliable roads, water, wastewater, reliable infrastructure and good connectivity. Those aren't exciting campaign promises, but they're the foundation that businesses depend on every single day. They also need predictability. If someone is putting their savings into opening a business or expanding an existing one, they need to know what the rules are, what the process is, what it will cost and how long it's going to take. Nobody wants to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars and then spend months trying to figure out how to get through the municipal process. I think the Municipality should have a strong economic development department, but its job shouldn't just be to produce reports. It should be working directly with businesses, helping them navigate municipal processes, identifying barriers and actively looking for opportunities to bring investment into Port Hope. We also need to look seriously at parking, traffic, roads and infrastructure around our commercial areas. A thriving downtown or business district needs to be accessible to customers, employees and deliveries. And then there's taxes. Businesses are taxpayers too.

We need to be conscious of the cumulative cost of property taxes, development charges, permits, fees and other municipal costs when we're trying to attract investment. Every dollar matters when you're running a small business. Most importantly, I want Council to have a different attitude toward people who want to invest here. The starting question should be, “How can we make this work?” That doesn't mean approving everything or lowering responsible standards. It means being responsive, transparent and solutions-oriented. If someone wants to invest their money and create jobs in Port Hope, I want them to leave the municipal office feeling like we want them here. Because ultimately, a healthy business environment isn't created by one program or one department. It's created when our infrastructure works, our rules are clear, our processes are reasonable and our municipal government understands that businesses are partners in building our community.

Question 6:

I think the first step is actually pretty simple: **get out of the municipal building and talk to people.** Business in Port Hope doesn't look the same everywhere, and it shouldn't be treated that way. A downtown shop has completely different challenges than a farmer, a contractor working from a rural property, a manufacturer, a home-based photographer or someone running a small business from their kitchen table. They all contribute to our economy, and they all deserve to have their voices heard. I would want to make myself accessible to those businesses—not just during an election. If a business owner wants to talk to me, I want them to be able to talk to me. I don't want every conversation to feel like a political sales pitch. I want to understand what they're dealing with. I also think Council needs to get better at asking **who is affected before we make decisions.** Before changing a bylaw, introducing a fee, changing parking, approving a major development or making a decision that affects how people operate their businesses, we should be asking the people who actually have to live with that decision what they think. And that consultation needs to happen across the municipality—not just with the most visible businesses downtown.

Our rural businesses and agricultural community matter. Home-based businesses matter. Tradespeople matter. Small storefronts matter. Larger employers matter. They may have completely different needs, but they all contribute to Port Hope. I would also like to see better communication after decisions are made. Consultation shouldn't mean asking people what they think and then never telling them what happened with their feedback. **If you ask people to take the time to speak, you owe them the courtesy of listening and explaining what you did with what they told you.** My goal would be for businesses across Port Hope to feel that Council knows they exist, understands the different challenges they face and considers those realities before making decisions. Because we're not just one downtown. We're a municipality made up of villages, farms, neighborhoods, businesses, home-based entrepreneurs and a downtown—and every one of them is part of Port Hope's economy.

Question 7:

Yes. I think there are changes we can make, and honestly, this is one of the areas where I hear a lot about frustration from people trying to build, renovate or invest in Port Hope. I don't think the answer is to get rid of responsible planning or lower our standards. We need good development, and we need to protect the things that make Port Hope special. But good planning and unnecessary bureaucracy are two different things. I would like to see a much clearer and more predictable process for residents, builders and businesses. When someone submits an application, they should understand what is required, what the expected timelines are, what the costs are and where their application is in the process.

I would also want Council to look at where applications are getting held up and why. If something is sitting on someone's desk for weeks because departments aren't communicating with each other, that's not good planning—that's an administrative problem. Where possible, I would support standardized application requirements, better online tracking and clear service timelines. And when something can't meet a timeline, the applicant should know why. I also think we need to distinguish between different types of development.

A homeowner doing a renovation, a small business expanding, a farmer making an investment on their property and a major subdivision shouldn't necessarily be treated as though they're all the same application.

Most importantly, I want there to be accountability for the process.

If we're asking someone to invest their money in Port Hope, we should respect their time and their investment by giving them a process that is clear, transparent and reasonably predictable. That doesn't mean saying yes to everything. It means making sure that when the answer is yes, we can get there efficiently—and when the answer is no, people understand why. I think Port Hope can protect its character and still become a municipality where people feel confident investing. We don't need less planning. We need better planning, better communication and a process that actually works for the people using it.