

Vicki Mink

Ward 1 Candidate

1. What is your vision for Port Hope at the end of the next four-year Council term?

My vision is for Port Hope to successfully manage growth while preserving the qualities that make our community distinctive. Growth is coming, and our responsibility is to prepare for it thoughtfully rather than simply react to it.

By the end of the next Council term, I would like to see a municipality that has maintained its heritage, character, agricultural landscape, riverfront, and waterfront while welcoming new opportunities, investment, and residents. Growth should enhance what makes Port Hope special, not diminish it.

A key priority is addressing the municipality's infrastructure gap while balancing the need for investment with affordability for homeowners. Port Hope must focus on essential services and infrastructure, ensuring roads, water and wastewater systems, and other core municipal assets are sustainable for the long term.

I also want to see a stronger and more balanced tax base through increased commercial and light-industrial development, particularly in existing employment areas. Expanding employment opportunities will allow more residents to work closer to home rather than undertaking lengthy and costly commutes.

Equally important is a municipal government that delivers excellent customer service, communicates clearly, responds in a timely manner, and makes decisions transparently. Council should listen with curiosity, consider differing perspectives fairly, and engage residents meaningfully in shaping Port Hope's future rather than assuming it already knows what the community wants.

2. What do you believe are the greatest opportunities and challenges facing Port Hope's economy?

Opportunities

Port Hope's greatest economic opportunity is to broaden its commercial and light-industrial tax base. As noted in Question 1, increasing employment lands development and attracting new employers would strengthen municipal finances while creating local jobs.

There are significant opportunities to encourage infill development within existing employment-designated areas, where development can often proceed more efficiently than identifying entirely new employment lands. This approach supports growth while limiting pressure on agricultural lands and aligns with the need to manage growth responsibly, discussed in Question 4.

Port Hope's heritage, historic downtown, waterfront, agricultural sector, and tourism appeal are also valuable economic assets. Supporting local businesses, expanding tourism opportunities, and exploring the economic potential of the harbour can strengthen the local economy while building on the community's unique identity.

Challenges

The most significant challenge is balancing affordability for residents with the growing financial demands of maintaining and replacing municipal infrastructure. Municipalities are increasingly expected to deliver services and infrastructure despite growing responsibilities and limited revenue tools.

Port Hope must also reduce its reliance on residential property taxation by broadening the commercial and industrial assessment base. Without that balance, infrastructure costs will continue placing pressure on homeowners.

Another challenge is ensuring residents have access to meaningful local employment opportunities. Too many residents commute outside the municipality for work, creating financial costs, lost time, and increased dependence on transportation infrastructure.

Finally, Port Hope must continue accommodating growth and economic development while protecting the heritage, character, and environmental features that make the community attractive in the first place.

3. What role should the Municipality play in supporting existing businesses and attracting new investment?

Port Hope has significant competitive advantages, including its location along Highway 401 and Lake Ontario. Because of these advantages, the Municipality should take an active and ambitious role in pursuing economic development opportunities.

The Municipality should empower its Economic Development team with the tools, authority, and support needed to actively attract investment and promote Port Hope as a destination to start, locate, and grow a business.

While continuing to support small businesses and entrepreneurs, Council should also focus on attracting anchor employers that provide stable, full-time employment opportunities across a range of skills and professions. This supports the broader goal of strengthening the tax base and reducing commuting pressures identified in Questions 1 and 2.

The Municipality should continue working collaboratively with organizations that already possess strong business expertise and networks, including the Port Hope & District Chamber of Commerce, Northumberland Manufacturers Association, Heritage Business Improvement Area, and Northumberland Federation of Agriculture.

Perhaps most importantly, Planning, Economic Development, and other municipal departments should embrace a solutions-oriented, "can-do" approach. Rather than focusing solely on obstacles, staff should work with prospective businesses to identify practical paths forward while ensuring municipal standards and community expectations are respected.

4. How should Port Hope accommodate growth while preserving the qualities that make the community distinctive?

Port Hope should manage growth, not oppose it. Growth can bring new opportunities, services, employment, and investment when it is planned carefully and aligned with community values.

A successful approach begins with protecting the features that make Port Hope unique, including its heritage, agricultural landscape, natural environment, river, waterfront, and established neighbourhood character. These assets should be viewed as opportunities that strengthen economic development and tourism rather than as barriers to growth.

Growth should focus on appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities before expanding unnecessarily into agricultural lands. This complements the economic development objectives discussed in Questions 2 and 3 while making better use of existing infrastructure and services.

At the same time, the Municipality must ensure infrastructure, transportation networks, municipal services, and community facilities can support future growth. Roads, traffic management, utilities, and public services must keep pace with development.

Meaningful public consultation is also essential. Residents should have opportunities to shape major decisions before commitments are made, helping ensure growth reflects community priorities and preserves the qualities people value most about Port Hope.

5. What municipal services, infrastructure or policies are most important to a healthy business environment?

Reliable infrastructure is the foundation of a healthy business environment. Addressing the infrastructure gap, maintaining transportation networks, and investing in water and wastewater systems are critical to supporting both existing businesses and future investment.

Municipalities must prioritize core infrastructure and essential services while maintaining responsible financial management. As highlighted in previous answers, infrastructure investment should be balanced with affordability for residents and supported by a broader commercial and industrial tax base.

Businesses also depend on efficient municipal processes and strong customer service. Timely responses, clear communication, transparent decision-making, and streamlined procedures make it easier for businesses to invest and grow in Port Hope.

Reliable broadband and cellular connectivity are increasingly important business requirements, particularly in rural and waterfront areas where dependable service remains inconsistent. Connectivity is no longer a luxury; it is essential infrastructure.

Support for tourism, local businesses, accessibility, and inclusion also contributes to a strong business climate. In downtown Port Hope specifically, parking remains an important issue. I have long advocated for exploring the feasibility of a multi-level parking structure at the Cavan Street lot, potentially providing monthly parking options for employees and residents while increasing convenient, accessible parking for visitors and tourists.

6. How would you ensure the needs of businesses across the entire municipality — downtown, rural area and home-based businesses — are considered in Council decisions?

Council must recognize that businesses across Port Hope face different challenges and opportunities. A successful economic strategy cannot focus solely on the downtown core or urban area.

For rural businesses and agricultural operations, reliable roads, transportation infrastructure, broadband access, and cellular connectivity are essential. Just as municipalities consider truck access in urban areas, we must also recognize the importance of ensuring farm equipment can safely and efficiently access agricultural properties.

For home-based businesses, cottage industries, agri-tourism operators, and entrepreneurs, the Municipality should adopt the same solutions-oriented approach discussed in Question 3. Too often, individuals seeking to start or expand businesses receive a list of challenges rather than assistance navigating potential solutions.

The Municipality should continue working closely with organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, HBIA, and manufacturers' associations to identify gaps, opportunities, and emerging business needs across all sectors.

Council should also ensure businesses are aware of available funding, grant programs, and support services that can help them grow and invest locally.

Most importantly, decision-making should be informed by ongoing engagement with businesses throughout the municipality to ensure policies reflect the realities faced by urban, rural, agricultural, and home-based enterprises alike.

7. What changes, if any, would you support to make Port Hope's planning, building and development processes more efficient and predictable?

I support a continuous process-improvement approach that identifies operational inefficiencies and improves the customer experience for residents, businesses, and developers.

The Municipality should prioritize timely responses, clear communication, and processes that are easier to understand, navigate, and access. Predictability is often just as important as speed, particularly for businesses making investment decisions.

Planning and Economic Development should establish clear performance indicators and regularly report on successes, challenges, application timelines, and opportunities for improvement. This would help Council monitor service levels and identify areas requiring attention.

Many prospective applicants are discouraged by significant upfront costs combined with uncertainty about project outcomes. While the Municipality must maintain rigorous planning standards, it should also provide clearer guidance so applicants better understand requirements, timelines, risks, and expectations before making substantial investments.

Finally, Port Hope must continue identifying opportunities for employment-related development.

Businesses have expressed interest in expanding or locating in Port Hope but often face challenges finding suitable land. Improving land availability and readiness, particularly within existing employment-designated areas, will make it easier to attract investment and support the economic development goals outlined throughout these responses.