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Future-Proofing Guelph: Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Dan Gibson

Ward: 1

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Priority One: Build More Homes, Faster:

- 1. Will housing be your first priority for the 2026–2030 term? If so, name one current city priority you would subordinate to it when they conflict. If not, what ranks ahead of it and why?**

Housing will be A top priority for me in the coming term but first and foremost, my first priority will be trying to tackle the unaffordable increases in our City budget. Reducing the annual increase in the property tax level will be my top priority.

- 2. Guelph has unlocked over 22,000 potential units but issued permits for a fraction of that. What do you believe explains the gap, and which parts of your explanation are within Council's power to change?**

Approving “potential units” through zoning approvals in is a good thing. Getting those units to market however, takes much more than zoning approvals and is based on numerous other factors. Many of those market factors are not within the City’s control. Factors such as interest rates, labor availability, materials costs, provincial and federal incentives etc. I am committed to doing everything the city can do to approve more housing, and when site plan and building permits are applied for, our staff need to be response and turn these approvals around quickly.

- 3. Would you support publishing binding end-to-end approval timelines by application class, reported quarterly against actuals? What consequences should follow when the city misses them?**

The provincial government already has municipal approval timelines that must be met, otherwise applicants can appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal. I will be the first to hold our staff accountable for creating delays in approvals. I am open to the conversation on creating further end-to-end accountability but I would need more details and discussions before committing.

- 4. Getting approved housing built depends on strong working relationships with the people who build it — both for-profit developers and non-profit housing providers. What would you do to build genuine working relationships with both, and what's one concrete step you'd take in your first year to strengthen them?**

The city is here to approve and help facilitate homes being built through timely reviews, informed planning and building services. Relationships matter but (in my experience), relationships are generally best when both sides are setting appropriate expectations and delivering on them. That's my commitment to the developers. If something isn't working on the city side, I'm committed to fixing it. That's how we strengthen the relationship.

- 5. What three housing metrics should residents use to judge the next Council — and you — at the end of the term? State the values you would consider success.**

I believe the Provinces Development Charge Reduction program has set the stage for the next term of council. The province has already removed/reduced HST and Development charges on numerous housing classes (rentals and affordable units). Now with the reduction in development charges across the board, the market needs to respond. If the home building environment is still untenable for developers to build it becomes a much larger conversation (nationally), about what's gone wrong over the past 10 years to land us here.

Priority Two: Make Guelph More Competitive

- 6. Guelph is one of Ontario's most tariff-exposed communities because of its manufacturing and agri-food base. What's one specific thing you'd do as a councillor to help those employers weather this period, and how would you work with the Province and Ottawa to bring supports to bear and ensure Guelph's business voice is at the table?**

Federally, Guelph's Liberal MP is aligned with the current Liberal Government. This is important from a "having a seat at the table" perspective. Locally however, it's not necessarily about what I would do and more about what I would not do. Recently, the Guelph and District Labor Council endorsed a slate of candidates (two in Ward 1), that committed to tying Guelph business licenses and building permits only to companies that paid a prescribed "living wage". This is centralized control of our local economy and I would NOT put our, already strained, local employers under more strain by enforcing such top down control over their businesses.

- 7. Guelph businesses and residents consistently raise the cost of property taxes as a concern. How would you approach property tax increases while ensuring the City can continue to deliver the services residents expect?**

The city must "stay in our lane" when it comes to local government. Too often we are pulled into services areas that are outside our jurisdiction and it ends up costing us significantly on the budget each year. Refocusing on our council on the basics of local government is critical to managing the city budget increase every year.

- 8. What would you do to make major municipal spending decisions more transparent and ensure residents and businesses can clearly understand the value they are receiving for the taxes and fees they pay?**

Through this election I have begun producing long form videos on my web site (www.DanGibson.ca) to help voters understand the nuance of some of our larger, more complicated files. I've had nothing but a positive response on these videos and as such, I will commit to continue doing them following the election.

Priority Three: An Effective Strategy to Advocate for a Fair Deal

- 9. Guelph's pending development-charge reduction trades short-term relief for long-term financial risk if the offsetting funding falls short. Name one non-negotiable condition you'd require before supporting a deal like this, and one safeguard you'd put in place to protect taxpayers if it doesn't pan out.**

As seen recently in Hamilton and Vaughn. The province has been making good on their commitments to support local governments in their efforts to get homes built through the development charge reduction program. My response is simple.....we want our share. Growth cannot be subsidized indefinitely without significant impacts on local taxation. This is non-negotiable for me. If the province does not provide back stop funding, our city will have no choice but to A) raise taxes, or B) reduce our zoning approvals. Because roads, parks, sewers, water, schools and public services rely on development charges to help pay for growth.

- 10. When infrastructure capacity is the reason a housing application stalls, the City's real power may lie in advocacy for provincial and federal funding rather than in saying no. What specific ask would you bring to Queen's Park or Ottawa to unlock that funding, and what would you do to build the kind of relationship that gets a yes?**

Supporting infrastructure upgrades and renewal that unlocks housing has been a central focus of city hall for the past 4-5 years. We have done a significant amount of work, through our intergovernmental affairs staff, highlighting this to the provincial/federal governments to attract partnership funding.

- 11. Describe, in your own words, the division of responsibility among the City, Wellington County as service system manager, and the Province on homelessness, mental health, and addictions. What is the city's job, specifically?**

The city's role is to support the funding requests of Wellington County for social services as prescribed by the provincial arrangement. We have members of council that now serve on this committee and we (the city), are within our rights to continue seeking clarity and transparency on where funding ultimately is spent. We have (at times) worked outside this relationships (for example funding for daytime shelter services in our downtown), but these instances should be rare and only when justified to the public based on a clear need in the community.

12. Would you support supportive and transitional housing, with expedited approvals for qualifying projects? Would you accept such a project in every ward, including your own?

Yes, I would support and have been supportive of this housing type. Each location requires careful consideration. I am not opposed to having supportive housing in my Ward however.

13. Do you endorse the municipal sector's case for rebalancing provincial-municipal finances (cost uploads, predictable infrastructure funding, growth-linked revenue tools)? What should Guelph offer in return?

There has been a lot of discussion about provincial downloads over the past term of council. But it's important to note that there have also been uploads (i.e. recycling pickup is now provincially run). I think the biggest piece missing from the provincial/municipal financing arrangement at the present is clarity, stability and confidence. The relationship is changes too fast. With too many changes. This causes the most confusion and "slow downs". Infrastructure renewal funding has historically always been about 30/30/30 between the Federal/Provincial/Municipal Governments. I think, on the whole, this continues today. But the rules, parameters and conditions must be predictable and clearly communicated.