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Future-Proofing Guelph: Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Derek McCaughan

Ward: 4

Contact Email: derekmccaughanward4@gmail.com

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 is an important priority, but I would not identify it in advance as the overriding priority for the entire term. Guelph residents and businesses are facing significant affordability pressures, which makes disciplined prioritization even more important. Council needs to assess housing, infrastructure, reliable services and other municipal responsibilities together, rather than consider individual funding requests in isolation. My approach would be to make those choices based on demonstrated need, affordability, and the value residents receive for the taxes and fees they pay.

- 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?**

The gap demonstrates that approving housing and getting housing built are two different things. Some factors are outside municipal control, including interest rates, construction costs, labour availability and broader market conditions. Council should focus on the factors it can influence: approval processes and timelines, infrastructure readiness, municipal fees and charges, and whether City requirements create unnecessary cost or delay. That also requires a strong working relationship with the development and building industry so the City understands, from those actually delivering housing, where projects are stalling and why. Council should address demonstrated barriers rather than assume every delay is caused by the approval process. Where the City can reasonably remove a barrier to construction, it should.

- 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?**

Yes, I would support publishing clear end-to-end approval timelines by application class and reporting quarterly against actual performance. Those timelines should be meaningful performance standards, while recognizing that some applications require public consultation or encounter issues that can legitimately affect timing. When timelines are missed, the applicant, Council and the public should be told why, whether the cause was within the City's control, and what corrective action is being taken. I would not prescribe an automatic penalty without first understanding what form that penalty would take and whether it would actually improve the approval process. Repeated failure to meet established timelines should trigger management accountability and a public corrective-action plan.

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 already has established relationships with developers, builders and housing providers, and I would build on those rather than create another layer of consultation. Genuine working relationships require regular dialogue, candid feedback about where projects are stalling, and a willingness by both the City and the housing sector to identify practical solutions. With a number of new councillors expected to be elected, I see an opportunity to bring fresh perspectives and different backgrounds to those discussions. In my first year, I would support a focused review with the housing sector of the issues being raised, what is working, and where unresolved barriers remain. The objective should be to turn that dialogue into measurable improvements that help viable projects move from approval to construction.

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 would judge Council primarily on the parts of the housing process it can actually influence. First, the City should consistently meet its published approval timelines, while preserving meaningful public engagement where it is required. Second, I would establish and track applicant satisfaction — including predictability, fees, staff responsiveness, communication and whether both private and non-profit housing providers see the City as a constructive partner. Third, I would measure whether municipal infrastructure and other City-controlled requirements are creating avoidable barriers to otherwise viable projects. Success would mean strong performance against published timelines, measurable improvement in applicant satisfaction from a first-year baseline, and no recurring City-controlled infrastructure or process barriers preventing approved projects from moving forward. I would rather be accountable for those measurable municipal responsibilities than claim success or failure based on construction decisions Council does not control.

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?

The Province and federal government are actively responding to tariff and trade pressures, so the City's most useful role is to ensure Guelph businesses are heard and that their needs are reflected in those responses. I would ask Economic Development to maintain a structured, ongoing assessment of tariff impacts across Guelph's key sectors, identifying effects on investment, employment, supply chains and competitiveness and the specific supports employers say they need. I would ensure the department has the capacity necessary to do that work meaningfully and report regularly to Council on what it is hearing, what supports are available, and where gaps remain. Council can then use that information to establish clear, evidence-based advocacy priorities and work with our local representatives, the Chamber and industry organizations to advance them with the Province and federal government. Guelph's business voice will carry more weight when Council's advocacy is based on current evidence from the employers experiencing these pressures.

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?

Property tax increases need to be brought to a level residents and businesses can more reasonably afford, but that cannot be done responsibly by simply cutting an arbitrary percentage from the budget. I would start by identifying the major cost drivers, comparing Guelph's costs and service levels with similar municipalities, and determining where spending is growing faster than the value residents are receiving. Council also needs to distinguish between the cost of maintaining existing services and the additional costs created by growth, new initiatives and higher service levels. Those pressures should be considered together so that new funding requests are not approved in isolation from their cumulative impact on taxpayers. Where service reductions or deferrals are proposed, the public should understand the trade-offs and have an opportunity to comment. The objective is better control of spending while maintaining reliable core services and making deliberate choices about what the City can afford to add.

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?

For major spending decisions, residents and businesses should have clear, understandable information before Council is asked to decide. That should include the objective, total cost, key cost drivers, alternatives being considered, expected benefits and how the proposal compares with other priorities competing for the same funding. The degree of advance public engagement should reflect the scale, impact and potential controversy of the expenditure so that transparency does not unnecessarily delay routine City business. For less significant expenditures, clear reporting after the decision may be sufficient. Once approved, major initiatives should be tracked against the outcomes and service standards Council was told to expect, with results reported publicly. Transparency means allowing taxpayers to understand both the choice Council is being asked to make and, afterward, whether the promised value was delivered.

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.

My non-negotiable condition would be that Council clearly understand that the senior-government funding and terms of the agreement adequately compensate for the development-charge revenue the City is committing to forgo. Because the reduction must remain in place for three years, the financial risk needs to be addressed before the agreement is signed, not after. I would require a fully costed contingency plan identifying how any funding shortfall would be managed without unexpectedly shifting growth-related costs onto existing taxpayers or utility customers. That plan should identify the available reserves, projects that could be deferred or reprioritized, and any limits on additional commitments during the three-year period. Regular reporting would then allow Council and the public to monitor whether those assumptions remain on track.

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?

Where a specific infrastructure constraint is preventing otherwise viable housing from proceeding, I would bring senior governments a clearly costed request identifying the infrastructure required, the municipal contribution available and the number of homes the investment would unlock. Guelph already has dedicated intergovernmental-relations staff, and Council should use that expertise to develop focused advocacy priorities and sustain relationships with provincial and federal officials. Those requests should be based on projects that are genuinely ready to proceed rather than broad appeals for additional funding. Council also has a role in maintaining direct relationships with our local representatives and in reinforcing those priorities through forums such as AMO. The objective should be for Guelph to be viewed as a prepared and credible partner with projects that can move quickly (shovel-ready) when funding becomes available.

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?

Wellington County is the provincially designated service manager for housing and homelessness programs, while the Province has primary responsibility for health care, including mental health and addictions services. The City is also a significant funding partner and, through the joint social-services governance structure, has influence over how local housing and homelessness services are planned and delivered. The City also has direct responsibilities for public spaces, by-law enforcement, policing, land-use planning and supporting community agencies. Its role should include working constructively with the County and health-care system, using its own municipal tools effectively, and advocating for resources and policy changes required from senior governments to adequately address these societal issues. Homelessness, mental health and addictions cross jurisdictional boundaries, and every level of government needs to fulfill the responsibilities within its control.

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 support supportive and transitional housing as part of the response to homelessness, and I would support expedited approvals for projects that meet clearly established criteria. Expedited should not mean bypassing legitimate planning, safety, infrastructure or public-engagement requirements, but unnecessary procedural delay should be avoided. I would not exclude any ward, including Ward 4, from consideration for such housing. At the same time, individual projects should be assessed on their merits, including site suitability, surrounding uses, access to services, public safety and the needs of the people who will live there. The objective should be to locate appropriate housing where it can operate successfully and in relative harmony within a neighbourhood rather than establishing either automatic exclusions or automatic entitlements based solely on geography.

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?

I support a comprehensive review of the provincial-municipal financial relationship, beginning with a clear agreement on which level of government should be responsible for particular services and how those responsibilities should be funded. There is evidence municipalities are carrying significant costs in areas that are primarily provincial responsibilities, placing additional pressure on the property-tax base. That review should also examine governance and accountability where municipalities are required to fund outside boards or agencies but have limited influence over their spending and service decisions. I also support more predictable infrastructure funding, particularly where provincial growth objectives create municipal infrastructure requirements. I would be cautious about endorsing new "growth-linked revenue tools" without knowing exactly what taxing or revenue authority is being proposed. Guelph should approach such a review with clear evidence and a willingness to demonstrate that municipal funding is being used transparently and effectively.