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Future-Proofing Guelph: Council Candidate Questionnaire

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Ward: 3

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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 cannot be my first priority. Before we address that, we must address the budget. Housing, must therefore, be a top priority. We must address the over 6,000 currently approved homes that have yet to be constructed and consider how best to address with approvals that have remained unfilled for up to 20 years.

- 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 greatest challenge we face is currently addressing the need for infrastructure construction revitalization. As the Chamber is aware, Guelph is embarking on a multi year, multi million-dollar infrastructure renewal program that in tandem with the development of new infrastructure will have a significant impact on our tax base. Without provincial funding being forthcoming to address these infrastructure funding shortfalls, we will not be able to meet the provincial targets for growth. In other words, the province has given us an unreachable target. We can approve all we want but without the revenue to establish infrastructure, we cannot build.

- 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 multifaceted challenge this creates means this is not a simple yes no answer. Currently our staff are reviewing, making recommendations on, and addressing the challenges associated with issues such as

these. We must build better with a mind to growth for a dynamic vital community where our ground water is secure and we avoid urban sprawl.

- 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?**

A joint Council, Builder, Staff charrette would be a good first step to seeking common ground on community development.

- 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.**

Listed below are my values and my metrics. The specific metrics would need to come to Council for approval as a single Councillor cannot determine these alone.

1. Is Guelph affordable to all it's residents - this is clearly measurable via Stats Canada on Guelph Incomes and Housing Costs. However, the challenge for the Chamber is to address: how can Guelph enforce affordability in a Supply Demand Economy when housing and both Federal and Provincial financial input into the housing market is extremely limited?
2. Is our working relationship with builders, staff and the community a positive, dynamic relationship founded upon openness and mutually agreed targets. This too is measurable via the interactions Council has and will have with both community and builders from outside the community.
3. Have we provided the needed amenities for the new housing being built and for those currently residing within the City? This is more challenging and can only be assessed as we build for the future.

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?**

Great question: I am currently attempting to foster a closer relationship with the University of Guelph via President Rene Van Acker - a long term friend - to address these very issues and to come to some understanding of what will ensure a secure economy in Guelph where the University plays a key role. I am quite prepared to listen to what all business needs to and to support businesses in securing the support necessary for sustaining the international crisis caused by our neighbours to the south. I would maintain zoning regulations and protections for buffers between expanding housing and existing 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?**

First I would advocate that the provincial government assist municipalities by reforming the antiquated property tax system. Ontario has 30 or more revenue sources. Municipalities are largely dependent on property taxes and grants tied to provincially specific objectives. We, as a city, with the support of the Chamber and our local business community, must lobby to stop provincial downloading that inflates taxes every year. We must collectively call upon the provincial government to upload programmes like public housing and social services support, court services and even police funding. Gas taxes, casino revenue, virtually every fiscal programme of the provincial government should come with a dedicated percentage earmarked to municipalities to offset the onerous property tax increases we experience.

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?

I am committed to continuing holding weekly meetings such as I do now where our City Treasurer can and will attend to outline the spending and the revenue sides of our budget. These meetings have been so successful that the most recent past chair of the Chamber attended and we greeted positively for his enthusiastic embracing of a collective approach to solving Guelph's financial challenges.

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.

The Development Charge Reduction Program that municipalities were invited to apply for, with a very short time frame was thoroughly reviewed by staff. They estimated we could reduce development charges by 30% for three years, for over 5000 units, only if the province provided \$73.6 million for three projects. I wouldn't support the change unless the province actually provided the full amount or more that staff have outlined. If the funding was cut short, then the development charges would be reinstated.

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?

Guelph has been very successful in its efforts to gain access to these funds. I would continue this. Good examples to cite are receiving \$70+ million for waste water treatment and funding for the transit depot.

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?

This has been a failure. The province must assume reassume responsibility for housing and social services and fund both properly. Currently the City's only role is to provide the funding the county. The

city has virtually no say in how the funds are used creating a serious problem. Although I would like to, the City cannot force audits on the county or enforce our priorities.

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?

I do support precisely what is stated above. Ward 3 has more housing of this type than anywhere. I happily support this being distributed throughout the city.

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?

Absolutely! Our provincial government only seems fiscally responsible because it downloads costly programmes to municipalities that hard pressed to finance and staff these. Guelph already signed on to the expanded population mandate the province made in 2023. We are still waiting for the provinces part in the financial impact to be realized. It's not a situation where we need to offer anything, it's the situation where we need to be reimbursed for living up to the legislation imposed on us already.