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Future-Proofing Guelph: Council Candidate Questionnaire

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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?**

No. First for me is a City that runs well: one that answers people, knows what its big projects bought, and gives an applicant one answer. Housing sits right on top of that. When Hopewell opened a home for adults with developmental disabilities in Ward 5 this spring, the house was ready and the people moving in had waited years, and then they waited on a permit question the City eventually settled in our favour. Fix the system behind that and housing moves faster with it. I don't expect the two to conflict often.

- 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?**

A lot of the gap is the market. Construction started on 531 homes in Guelph in 2025, the fewest since 2011, because costs, supply chains and labour turned against builders right across Ontario, and an approval doesn't make a project pencil. Council can't change that part. What it can change is the stretch before the permit, where a site plan goes to thirteen City disciplines and up to ten outside agencies, and the comments from different departments don't always line up. It can also get the pipes and roads in ahead of the streets zoned for apartments, so an approved project can start the day its financing does.

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

Yes. Publish them by application type and report every quarter against what actually happened. I'd add one more number: how many times each file went back to the builder for another round of comments. On bigger projects, much of the delay is spent in those rounds. When a timeline is

missed, the file should move automatically to a senior manager with the authority to settle the disagreement between departments and give the builder one answer. Council should see that list of late files every quarter, with the reason beside each one.

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?**

I've worked on both sides. Six years on Hopewell's board, three as chair, put me on the non-profit side of housing, and through Bidmii I work with contractors and the permit rules they deal with every day. Both groups ask for the same thing. One set of rules, fixed at the start, and one answer from the City. In my first year I'd sit down every quarter with builders and non-profit housing providers, go through what's slowing projects down, and bring it back to council as motions.

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.**

Three numbers, all public. Housing starts: 531 in 2025, and success is reaching the provincial target of 1,800 a year by the end of the term. Resubmissions: the average number of times a file goes back to the builder, published from early 2027, and success is half that by 2030. Permits: the first test comes weeks into the term, when the Chamber's count says the City needs about 2,400 more before January 2027 to secure its last federal housing money, and success is getting them.

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?**

Give tariff-hit employers a fast lane for permits, whether that's retooling a line, adding space or expanding to serve new customers. A company replacing an American customer can't lose a season. I'd also protect the land zoned for jobs. A firm that's ready to grow needs somewhere to go. With Queen's Park and Ottawa, I'd want the City's asks built with the Chamber and the big employers, carrying their own numbers on jobs and orders at risk, and the Chamber in the room when the City makes them.

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?**

Taxes are going to go up this term, and I won't promise otherwise. Most of the budget is locked in before council sees it: multi-year wage agreements, long-term contracts, debt payments and the cost of serving new neighbourhoods. The goal I'd hold council to is keeping increases in line with inflation without cutting the services people count on. That means questioning every line

every year, rebuilding the in-house skills we now rent from consultants, and checking what the big projects delivered before approving more money for them. For scale: the 2026 increase was 7.87 percent, about \$402 on the median single detached home. About \$171 of that was City services, and the rest went to local boards like police and the library, and a hospital charge the City collects.

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?

Give Guelph an Auditor General who reports to council, using the auditors the City already has, the way Hamilton did it in one by-law. The City has spent \$9.8 million trying to replace the software it uses to run repairs, a \$935,807 licence isn't being used, and the finish date is now mid-2029. When a councillor asked in 2023 what the City would get back for the money, staff said they'd come back with more, and the City now says those figures were never worked out. Guelph's two-person Internal Audit department has never reviewed the project. Twenty-two candidates, me included, have signed on to fixing that, including three running for mayor. I'd also want every major spending report to say, before the vote, what the money should deliver and how council will know if it did.

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 deal Guelph applied for cuts development charges 30 percent for three years in exchange for \$73.6 million toward three water and wastewater projects. Staff have called the financial impact highly uncertain. If more homes get built than expected, the grant may not cover what's given up. If fewer get built, the province can claw money back. My condition is a written estimate, in dollars, of what taxpayers carry if building comes in well above or well below the forecast, before council signs anything further. The safeguard is a quarterly report showing charges given up, grant received and homes actually started, so any shortfall comes to council as its own decision instead of turning up later in tax bills or higher charges for builders.

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?

The ask to Queen's Park and Ottawa is the one Guelph already made in June. It asked for \$73.6 million for three water and wastewater projects, the kind of capacity that holds homes up. Close behind it, the heads-and-beds levy, which Queen's Park pays Guelph at \$75 a year for each university student and has been frozen since 1987; inflation alone would put it past \$170. I'd go in with a costed ask and a count of the homes it unlocks. Whoever says yes gets the credit. I'd

work with our MP and MPP whatever their party, and team up with the other university towns and the Chamber, so Guelph isn't asking alone.

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 Province funds health care, including mental health and addictions treatment, and sets income support rates. Wellington County runs social housing and Ontario Works, and funds and oversees homelessness programs and shelters, for Guelph and the County, and Guelph pays its share through the County's social services levy, with four Guelph members on the joint committee that oversees it. The City's own job is narrower. Land, zoning and permits, so supportive housing can actually get built. Its own public spaces, bylaws and paramedic service, plus programs it funds itself like the daytime drop-in and the cold-weather grant. And telling Queen's Park and the County, with numbers, when the need outruns the money.

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, and yes. Hopewell opened a group home for adults with developmental disabilities in Ward 5 this year, and I'd welcome supportive housing for people coming out of homelessness the same way. Expedited approvals, yes. The permit process should treat a group home as a home. The supports have to be funded alongside the building, or it doesn't work for the people living there.

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?

Yes. The clearest local example is the County social services levy, which rose sharply again this year over the objection of all four Guelph members of the joint committee that oversees it. Predictable infrastructure money, and transit operating funding tied to ridership, would let the City plan instead of chasing one-time grants. In return, Guelph should offer proof. Published results for what each dollar bought, an Auditor General with the power to check, and housing numbers reported every quarter.