



Questions for 2022 Municipal Council Candidates



Chris Collins

Councillor Ward 2

The Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce is the recognized voice of business in the Municipality of Port Hope. We support all businesses, not just our close to 200 members, and play a key role in advocating on their behalf regarding decisions made by levels of government that may impact them.

These questions are being asked as background research to form individual question(s) for our meet the candidate events and to keep the business community informed of your outlooks with regard to the future of the Municipality of Port Hope. Please be advised that your responses will be shared in full or in part with the community through our membership, community publications and Social Media networks.

1. What is your plan for the Municipality over the next 4 years?

There is a personal plan and a business/strategic plan.

My **personal plan** is to be an effective councillor, representing the rural community members by understanding the issues and concerns we face, such as road improvements and traffic, taxes, and quality of life items such as internet, cell service, and garbage service. Listening and representing the rural community at council and action through a collaborative servant leadership style.

The Business/Strategic Plan is just as important. It considers the personal plan within the larger vision and actions of the municipality. It safeguards the culture within the municipality and the distinct cultures within the urban and rural communities.

Growth is coming from the west. Those who do not think so are naive. We must plan, short term and long term. Just look to those municipalities west of Toronto as a historical lesson. It is inevitable. We must be proactive.

Increasing the resiliency of our infrastructure and incorporating green infrastructure when we can will reduce the risk to property and the elevation of costly repairs. I agree with the current Port Hope Strategic Plan in having infrastructure sustainable. It must go

beyond sustainability and incorporate expansion and improvement in its planning phase. Aligned with this planning and design is the visionary identification of those areas that require protection (heritage sites, conservation areas).

Predominant development must be outwards – urban to rural, at the urban and rural interface. The rural community does not currently have the infrastructure to support large density such as that proposed for Garden Hill (Condominium development) or other high-density footprints. This rural development has already been identified through research such as that identified in the Growth Plan, 2017 (Greenbelt Act, 2017), which has shown that the interrelationship between growth and water availability is critical. Unfortunately, a considerable portion of rural Port Hope is not allotted protected countryside per the provincial Growth Plan. It needs to be protected to maintain its robust agricultural economy and safeguard the current rural Port Hope culture. It can be developed through properly managed processes to allow development that suits the community. We can not stop development, but we can certainly control the footprint and standards.

Enhanced, more efficient servicing.

If we were a business, we would be failing. Luckily, we are not; we are a predominantly service-driven incorporated municipality. With that said, we must adhere to and ingrain business principles more assertively. Responsibility, accountability, and using capital and funds wisely, with constant improvement to streamlining processes such as permits and licences, will make us more effective for residential and business growth and development in urban and rural areas.

Cultural retainment, enhancement with equity and equality.

As mentioned, we have a Port Hope culture and individual rural and urban cultures. We will build both wards with a mindset of equity and equality within the two wards/communities. The disparity between services of the two wards is not proportionate to the tax base. We must do better for the rural community. Municipality allowances to modulate rural community members' tax base, especially those with agricultural requirements who usually have higher costs associated with operating equipment and machinery.

The rural community has a community hub, the Port Hope Community hub. With better community awareness, enhancement, and utilization of this facility, we can build upon the existing asset for community events and truly make it a community hub, with a visionary focus on recreation, festivities and other allowances for the rural community.

In examining our demographics, we are a mature community with members over 50, accounting for ~ 50 % of our population in urban and rural communities. We need to strategize for the needs of these community members. Housing appropriate for the needs and preferences, health care and support allowances for home. Socialization is crucial to maintaining health, with additives of lifestyle and recreational needs to support it. All these aspects for our mature community members should be addressed through strategic planning and action.

Communication improvement.

We must, as a municipality, communicate better. With all my experiences, locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally, we share this common finding as an area for improvement. We must improve in informing and educating all community members about what is occurring, when and where through multiple mediums. Not everyone has Facebook, looks at their internet, etc. We can strategically use other mediums, such as phone numbers, newspaper ads etc., to mass communicate. We must improve in this area for community awareness. This communication tree model will also assist in times of urgency for notification if/when required.

2. What do you believe is the biggest issue facing the business sector in the Municipality and how do you plan to address it?

Aligned with the previous answer, the streamlining of processes with business and strategic planning needs to occur. We must ensure those businesses supporting our community remain while opening and welcoming others. I will refer to this as an **economic issue**. As with any sector, it must be supported by proper housing, infrastructure, and service growth planning to support the current community needs and future while improving service delivery. An example is a barrier concerning the Waddell Hotel. The proposal of a boutique with upper residency is aligned with the provincial strategy, Port Hope heritage alignment and the Port Hope economic needs and wants. Instead of barriers, we need stewardship at the municipal level to support and guide what is needed to accomplish the goal for projects like the Waddell Hotel and others.

Also aligned with the business of the community is the rural economic support. Albeit different than urban, it is still a significant supporter of our overall Port Hope economy and needs to be improved and safeguarded. Again, what I will refer to as stewardship for this unique area is required to work through processes for streamlining and accomplishing goals without barriers is required.

The strategy and tactics to complete this action are collaboration, design, planning, and then action – business/strategic plan with identified support stewards who can assist vs. hinder.

3. Explain your understanding of economic development and describe the significance to our community.

Picture a typical wheel. At the centre of the wheel is the hub or focal point. It supports movement. This visual is the model for economic development. It is required for the communities to survive and maintain their cultural uniqueness and prosperity. It provides employment opportunities for its community members, generating revenue to provide and enhance services, and maintaining a balance on taxation. Economic development supports our quality of life and is why we chose to be a community members of Port Hope. We can enhance our quality of life by developing good programs, policies, and activities and streamlining processes by efficiency and a robust proactive and visionary business/strategic plan.

Each spoke or portion of the wheel should be balanced to ensure longevity and smooth operations. If an imbalance occurs, the wheel or economic development starts to falter, affecting the other portions and becoming unbalanced and may result in a crisis. It is an essential element of a community.

4. The downtown core is an integral part of the business community, however there are businesses throughout the municipality including, but not limited to, home based and agri-businesses. What do you believe the municipality can do to support the businesses throughout the entire community and not just in the downtown core?

As already mentioned, steward's vs hindrance. This will support growth and development vs stagnant.

There are two distinct communities in Port Hope. Rural and urban. Streamlining bureaucratic processes with a more supportive environment will aid growth and development in this area. Instead of educating community members by instructing them to read governance (policies, procedures, laws etc.) have a devoted point of contact for support and aid, steward. Have this point of contact open for meetings, listen to what is proposed, and then guide and coach the person to achieve the goal by working within permissible allowances. Visiting the site and having personal contact will improve understanding of the community member's vision or goal. This personal contact has now become an ambassador and sponsor for the business community, community members and ultimately, the township's economic development with increased sustainability. A simple closing statement of "no, not allowed," as is currently being stated, is not conducive to promoting and supporting businesses.

I have been misguided by municipal representatives who are not genuinely knowledgeable of laws, bylaws, and others. This ignorance hinders relationship building and promotes disharmony. If we are going to be one municipality, let us take steps to promote and harness the community. We have a great township; let us work together for progress versus hindrance.

5. The municipality has been restructuring and reconsidering their approach to economic development, building and planning. What do you think the best thing the municipality can do in the short, mid and long term to better support growth and development in a fair, timely and financially sound way?

We are once again examining strategies and tactics. We must endorse and expand upon collaboration from all our stakeholders.

As part of our strategy, we must streamline and make our processing more efficient. We must streamline and harmonize regulations and initiate County wide approaches to business licencing

With this collaboration, we know that no plan will be sustainable without monitoring, so the plan is more aligned as a project to ensure staying power and sustainability. We should examine County alliances and partnerships to develop, implement and monitor. This County alliance will engage all businesses, and sectors. We know a failure of one sector impacts all other sectors. Like the previously mentioned wheel hub, the sectors like wheel sectors must be balanced to achieve success.

In the long term, we should examine County initiatives to reduce costs and examine processes that would benefit county initiatives, such as a model of streamlining services. This will reduce the redundancy within the two municipalities. Shared responsibility and accountability will reduce expenditure in this area, which can be better used in promoting the development of business opportunities in those areas slated for industrial and economic development. This will not be accomplished in one term but should be examined with an open mind and strategy to support the future.

6. Agriculture and rural businesses are a key piece of the economic viability of this community. What do you think the Municipality should be doing to better support this sector?

This question is one of emotion for most of the rural community.

Our rural community must be protected. We are not yet at a stage of maturity with infrastructure to support high-density development. We made a tactical error years ago with the taxation increase. I can not undo this, but we must learn from it. There are several mechanisms to safeguard what we have currently.

Proper land use planning. As mentioned, proper classification of what the land can and cannot be used for must be embedded in our bylaws and zoning with standardization.

Land property assessments and taxation. Ontario farmland incurred increased taxation between 2017-2020, increasing over 60 % in many areas. Residential units were for the most part, not escalated as high. This imbalance is causing a tax burden. Eligible farmland is taxed at no more than 25 % of residential tax. The municipality has the full right to lower this tax standard to a more manageable rate. As mentioned, higher costs are usually associated with operating agricultural land because of associated costs with machinery and fuel. The savings can then be put back into the growth and economy. It makes it a win-win.

We can also offer financial incentives and reduced costs for agriculture use and development. This is an easy one for the rural community.

Infrastructure support again in this sector is essential. Roads, water supply, and other sectors all impact the rural community. The culture of the rural community is a cornerstone of what Port Hope is. It needs to be maintained and improved.

It is time to bring equity and equality back to the rural community.

References

Greenbelt Act, 59/05 Ontario Regulation 59/05 (2017). <https://files.ontario.ca/greenbelt-plan-2017-en.pdf>

Ontario farmers seek tax relief as land values rise—The Globe and Mail. (n.d.). Retrieved September 11, 2022, from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-money/ontario-farmers-seek-tax-relief-as-land-values-rise/article38271546/>