



## Questions for 2022 Municipal Council Candidates



# Betsey Price 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?**

My plan is to represent the interests and concerns of Ward 2. The plan for the Municipality over the next 4 years should never be MY plan; it should be the plan created by the collective wishes and voices of Wards 1 and 2, as they project, in the best possible way, how to consider all the important variables for which planning is considered appropriate. What can any plan for a Municipality offer? Planning wisdom has it that a municipal plan, in serving as a framework, can assist municipalities to address in a responsible way possible/probable changes within a set time-horizon. The major issues to tackle in a plan for Port Hope's Ward 2 are certainly community development, land use, and growth. 4 years is a very short duration within which to address a Municipality's best approach to long-term sustainability for all, but in the continuum, each day of that 4 years counts!

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

As a farmer and small-business owner myself, I believe the biggest issue facing the business sector in the Municipality is its labour shortage. I will address the question, however, as the representative of Ward 2 I intend to be and rephrase it a bit: What do you believe is the biggest issue facing the business sector in the Municipality **that local government could and should address**, and how do you plan to address it?

Small business, which is the category most represented by business in Port Hope, has traditionally identified "taxation, effective control of local spending, fair bylaws and regulations,

quality public service, and understanding the realities of running a business” in its list of considerations, which should be of importance in the context of Municipal government. Growth in municipal spending has steadily increased; while the present rate of inflation is giving every entity a run for its money, small businesses are concerned about the impact it could have for needed increases in municipal revenues.

Local government spending should translate into local business success. Addressing translating local tax-dollar spending into business success means understanding the realities of running a business and easing encumbrances to those realities within reason. If business access is constrained by lengthy municipal roadwork, if timeframes for issuing permits find inordinate delays, if small niggly concerns do not have a listening ear... taxes will not seem to be well spent. In addition to being fully engaged in hammering out the annual budget for the Municipality, I plan to be extremely attentive to the health of businesses in Ward 2. Creating momentum in Council to address concerns arising would be my main focus to bring local government to improve the strength of local business.

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

A good working definition of Municipal Economic Development could be the totality of the steps (programs, policies or activities) that a municipality adopts to seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for the people who live and work in that community.

Economic development is a subpart of municipal planning. It is absolutely critical to handle development well, largely because it signifies change, with its key words of ‘improvement’, ‘growth’, and/or ‘job creation’. The implications of economic development can yield profound and often disturbing changes to a community, which is the most important reason why it is a significant concept in municipal government. It requires understanding what currently drives the economy of a municipality and what would/could lead to economic growth in its economy. It usually encompasses analysing how new job opportunities could be created. Since the ‘basics’ of life in a modern social setting have extended well beyond food, clothing, and shelter, to education, employment and mobility, and access to the internet, just how municipalities can realise an improved quality of life for all residents, requires facilitating increased access to opportunities for obtaining each one of these. They might well already be available save for logistical snags, but the general tenor of the time is that providing them entails economic growth in order for them to reach all present residents, let alone future comers to the 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 we all appreciate, in the Municipality of Port Hope, it has been legislated as being more efficient for certain services to be provided over an area that includes more than one municipality. In the case of Port Hope, the County of Northumberland is intricately involved in rural Ward 2 in providing certain services to residents and businesses. Ward 2 Councillors might be able to play a greater role, just as the Port Hope and District Chamber does, in providing tools, information, and resources to local businesses throughout the Municipality, much of which information emanates from County rather than direct Municipal support. The Municipality has taken steps toward a more interactive approach for contacting businesses by proposing a business registry. It could well serve for direct e-mail updates to be sent to businesses from Municipal staff, along with alerts to new posts on the Municipality's website and Facebook page. A very simple idea in this digital age is to sustain its series of Port Hope promotional videos, systematically attempting to showcase all of the Municipality's businesses, who desire the spotlight, rural and in-town.

**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?**

If there is collective interest in supporting community growth and economic development, a solution must be found that will keep residents happy and motivated to stay with the process through the long term. My intention in running is to support preservation of the rural way of life. The approach I would suggest for the Municipality as it looks to support growth and development in its rural ward, in the short term, is through prioritising the voices and interests of its 192 farmers and their families, to see them as the core constituency to guide such actions. The Municipality can support growth in Ward 2 only by creating a culture that recognises and encourages communication and listening among its residents. How Municipal (and County) staff actively support and develop their reports matters immensely in the mid-term, especially those concerning financial expenditures, as theirs must be the timely data which is provided for Municipal and collective consideration and sound review. Showing farmers that they have the support of both Municipal Councillors and staff in their business advancement will lead to better acceptance of Municipal growth overall.

**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?**

Farmers do not as a rule turn to the Municipality for support. They have many organisations to represent their interests: at the federal level (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)), at the provincial level through the ministry (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMFARA)) and their respective farm business registration associations (Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) National Farmers Union-Ontario (NFU-O), Ontario Federation of Agriculture) and at the local level, farm chapters and associations of all stripes. All of these provide programs and services of support.

Where does the Municipality come in then? I would propose, through an intersectoral approach. Innovation, sustainability, business development, risk management, trade and market development are concerns of virtually all businesses in the Municipality and beyond. Could we not create and implement cross-sectoral working groups to foster and support the co-development, testing, and enabling of the adoption of technologies and practices in the agricultural sector, which would enhance the viability of farms and rural businesses alike? Developing good business practices that sequester carbon and/or mitigate greenhouse gas emissions is not to be left to the expertise nor the production locale of farms alone. In order for all businesses in the Municipality to stay competitive and to be prepared for unforeseen situations, creativity and cross-fertilisation will be required and ought to be fostered.