OWEN SOUND MUNICIPAL ELECTION · 2026

What Owen Sound candidates said

2026 candidate questionnaire

Four policy questions · Nine written answers · Side by side

Nine of Owen Sound's 28 municipal candidates answered four policy questions in writing before voting opens on October 16; this edition sets their answers side by side, question by question.

PUBLISHED
October 15, 2026

PREPARED BY
Rob Maher, an Owen Sound resident, acting independently

Independent public information. No endorsements; no candidate rankings.

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Introduction

I asked every candidate for Owen Sound mayor and council, plus the acclaimed deputy mayor, the same four policy questions so residents could examine their stated positions before voting begins. The questions cover enforceable affordable-housing promises, financial disclosure of development assistance, the effects of multi-residential tax-ratio changes, and measurable outcomes in Vision 2050.

PREPARED BY	Rob Maher, an Owen Sound resident, acting independently.
QUESTIONNAIRE SENT	Saturday, October 10, 2026, during Thanksgiving weekend.
INITIAL RESPONSE DEADLINE	Wednesday, October 14, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. (Eastern).
FOR PUBLICATION	Thursday, October 15, 2026. Voting opens October 16 at 10:00 a.m. and ends October 26 at 8:00 p.m.
SCOPE	Candidates for mayor and council, plus the acclaimed deputy mayor. School-board trustee candidates were not included.

What this document is, and is not

This document reports what candidates wrote. It does not endorse anyone, rank or score answers, or independently verify the factual and legal statements in them.

The holiday-weekend response period was short. Silence is not treated as opposition to the questions or as a refusal to participate. Responses received after the initial deadline remain welcome and can be added in a dated update.

How to read it

- Sections 1 to 4 each cover one question, in the order asked.
- Each section gives the question as sent, then every candidate's answer to it in their own words.
- Candidates appear in the same order in every section: mayoral candidates first, then councillors, each alphabetical by surname.
- Length varies widely because no word limit was set. Space on the page does not signal weight.
- The complete replies, in the order each candidate wrote them, follow Section 4. The notes at the end explain how replies were edited, when each arrived, and what sources were used.

Who responded

Of the City's 28 certified candidates, 9 answered in writing, 2 replied without answering the four questions, 15 had no reply recorded in the supplied correspondence, and 2 could not be reached (one email bounced because the mailbox was full; one candidate had no email address on the City's candidate page). The absence

of a reply is not proof that a candidate read the email or chose not to participate. Status is as of the October 14, 2026, 4:00 p.m. deadline.

28	9	2	15	2
CERTIFIED CANDIDATES	ANSWERED IN WRITING	REPLIED, NO WRITTEN ANSWERS	NO REPLY RECORDED	COULD NOT BE REACHED

Status at the deadline	Mayor (6)	Deputy mayor (acclaimed)	Councillor (21)
Written answers (9)	Jodi King; Andrii Zvorygin		Thomas Arakal; Justin Bianco; Joe Carder; Dale Funston; Justin Melanson; Tamara Sargent; David Schinbein
Other reply, not a written answer (2)	Ray Botten; Carol Merton		
No reply recorded (15)	Mike Seiler; Richard Thomas	Scott Greig	David Adams; Ross Baker; Brock Hamley; Michele Hawkins; Jaret Koop; Suneet Kukreja; Melanie Middlebro'; Brian O'Leary; Meghan Robertson; Jeff Rockwell; David Walton; Michael Zimon
Could not be reached (2)			Jasmine Schnarr; Angela Stow

> **Jasmine Schnarr:** The questionnaire was addressed to the email on the City's public candidate listing, but Gmail returned a final undeliverable notice on October 13 indicating the inbox was full. This is not a non-response.
>
> **Angela Stow:** No email address appeared on the City's current candidate listing. The organizer checked with the City Elections Office, which reported no additional contact information it could provide. The questionnaire was not delivered. A previously proposed later deadline could therefore not be offered.
>
> **Ray Botten:** Replied October 10, referring the organizer to a planned October 13 mayoral radio discussion. This was an acknowledgment, not four written questionnaire answers.
>
> **Carol Merton:** Replied October 14, offering an in-person discussion and referring to her answers in other candidate forums and publications. This was not a written response to the four questions in this correspondence.

A reply in a different forum was not imported as a substitute for a direct questionnaire response. All candidates can still provide additions or corrections to the organizer for a dated update.

SECTION 1

Affordable housing and development incentives

The question asks whether affordable-housing promises tied to City incentives should be legally enforceable, and nine candidates answered it in writing.

THE QUESTION AS SENT

When the City provides discretionary financial incentives to private residential developments, such as development charge exemptions, grants, or property tax assistance, should any publicly promised affordable housing commitments be legally enforceable?

Would you support agreements specifying the number of affordable units, rent limits, deadlines, duration of affordability, and consequences if those commitments are not fulfilled?

Please explain your position.

ANSWERS

(the candidates' own words; mayoral candidates first, then councillors, each alphabetical by surname)

Jodi King MAYOR

Should publicly promised affordable housing commitments be legally enforceable? My answer: I believe it should be because it would allow our community groups, future and present residents of Owen Sound to take legal action if a developer fails to make good on their promises to deliver affordable housing units. I believe that it will also help prevent developers backing out, especially after receiving zoning approval and accommodations , access to public land or tax breaks.

My answer to the next question is:

The best result for our housing crisis is to see the clear numbers of our specific target community needs. To also ensure that housing is built for the income brackets that need it the most.

Andrii Zvorygin MAYOR

Yes. When the City offers public money to a private development, residents should see a public benefit. I support agreements that state the number of affordable units, rent limits, completion date, and how long those rents will stay affordable.

The agreement should connect the incentive to homes actually being delivered. When promised units are not built, the public value should return to the tax bill through a repayment clause. The results should be checked and reported.

Affordability also needs a clear definition before approval. My working standard is total housing cost at 30% or less of relevant income, using one living-wage income for a single-person home and household income for a family home.

The two main ways to put downward pressure on rents are returning vacant homes to use through a vacant-home tax and supporting affordable construction that adds supply. Market housing remains welcome because it adds homes and tax revenue. The public bargain is simple: public support helps create affordable homes, and the agreement protects residents when the promised homes are not delivered.

Links:

- https://helpos.ca/mayor/housing-homelessness-recovery
- https://helpos.ca/mayor/affordable-rural-communities

Thomas Arakal COUNCILLOR

Yes. I support legally enforceable agreements when the City provides discretionary financial incentives to developers in exchange for affordable housing commitments.

Owen Sound needs more attainable and affordable housing. I support encouraging responsible residential development, including reviewing development charges and other incentives that could help increase housing supply.

However, public financial assistance should never be treated as a blank cheque.

If a developer receives financial assistance because they promise affordable housing, those commitments should be clearly documented and legally enforceable.

I would support agreements that identify:

- The number of affordable housing units being promised.
- Maximum rents or purchase prices and how affordability is calculated.
- Construction and occupancy deadlines.
- How long those units must remain affordable.
- Regular progress reporting and verification.
- Appropriate repayment, recovery, or other consequences if commitments are not fulfilled.

These agreements should be reviewed for legal enforceability and financial practicality before approval.

I also believe we must distinguish between incentives intended to create affordable housing and those intended to encourage general economic development. Both may have value, but they serve different purposes and should be evaluated accordingly.

Every incentive program should have clear objectives, conditions, timelines, and a process to review progress and measure results.

If a project is not meeting its commitments, the City should be prepared to take appropriate action rather than allowing public assistance to continue without accountability.

Exploring Co-operative and Non-Profit Housing

I also believe Owen Sound should explore opportunities to encourage co-operative and non-profit housing.

Not every housing solution needs to depend on private developers receiving financial incentives.

Co-operative housing offers another approach where residents collectively participate in managing their housing, with the goal of providing long-term affordability and stability rather than generating profits for outside investors.

The City could explore partnerships with non-profit housing organizations, community groups, Grey County, and provincial and federal housing programs.

We should examine opportunities to use suitable surplus public land, where available, and consider appropriate development incentives or assistance with the approval process.

I would also like to explore whether existing buildings could be converted into co-operative or non-profit housing where financially practical.

However, any municipal contribution must be financially responsible, transparent, and tied to measurable housing outcomes.

We should involve experienced local residents, housing professionals, and community organizations before spending money on outside consultants.

My goal is to encourage different housing models, including private development, non-profit housing, and co-operative housing, rather than relying on one approach alone.

Co-operative housing is not automatically affordable, so any publicly supported project should have clear affordability targets and long-term protections.

My position is simple: If taxpayers are contributing to a project in return for a specific public benefit, that benefit must be measurable, enforceable, and protected.

Justin Bianco COUNCILLOR

Yes, I support legally enforceable agreements when developers receive discretionary financial incentives in exchange for providing affordable housing.

If taxpayer dollars are being used to encourage development, residents deserve assurances that the promised benefits will actually be delivered.

I would support agreements clearly outlining affordable housing commitments, including the number of units, affordability requirements, timelines, and consequences if those commitments are not met.

At the same time, we need to encourage responsible development and avoid creating unnecessary barriers to new housing construction.

Joe Carder COUNCILLOR

Yes. When discretionary City incentives are tied to promised affordable housing, those promises should be legally enforceable.

Agreements should clearly state the number of affordable units, rent limits, completion deadlines, how long affordability must last, and consequences if commitments are not met. Compliance should be checked regularly, with repayment provisions where legally available.

Public money should deliver a clear, lasting public benefit.

Dale Funston COUNCILLOR

Yes, I do believe that any agreement between the city and a developer's where a developer has received any type of incentive and has promised to include affordable housing should be legally binding and should be stated in the original contracts.

Yes, I would definitely support agreements specifying the number of affordable units, rent limits, deadlines, duration of affordability, and consequences if those commitments are not fulfilled? My explanation I guess is pretty simple, if the city and developer make a deal and the developer doesn't fulfill their part of the commitment within an allotted time frame, they would be expected to repay the city any and all charges that had been waived.

Justin Melanson COUNCILLOR

Yes. When the City gives discretionary incentives—development-charge exemptions, grants, or property-tax assistance—any publicly promised affordable housing should be legally enforceable. I would support written agreements that specify the number of affordable units, rent limits, deadlines, the period of affordability, and the consequences if those terms are not met. Consequences should include claw backs or repayment of the assistance provided.

A promise that is not binding is not a commitment. Taxpayers should not subsidize a project that later fails to deliver the units that justified the incentive. I support targeted, time-limited help that produces actual housing. I do not support open-ended relief that produces only a marketing claim. Agreements that can be enforced to protect both the public investment and the people in the housing are meant to serve.

Tamara Sargent COUNCILLOR

Any affordable housing commitments made in exchange for public financial assistance should be secured through legally binding agreements specifying the number of units, rent limits, deadlines, duration of affordability, and consequences for failing to deliver. A developer’s promise is not a binding commitment, and taxpayers are left without recourse when those promises are broken.

Harbour West is a clear example of why this matters. Owen Sound granted the development a $1.1 million development charge exemption, intended to encourage the project to move forward quickly. When the original exemption expired, the developer requested another break. Councillor Carol Merton raised the possibility of securing legally binding affordable housing commitments in exchange, but Council rejected that approach, relying instead on the developer's assurances that they would provide affordable housing anyway.

Now, Harbour West has begun pre-leasing apartments without any affordable units in its initial release. The City has confirmed there is no agreement requiring the developer to provide affordable housing.

This was a missed opportunity to use public investment to secure housing that local working-class people can actually afford.

The financial interests of the people who build and own housing are in contrast to the financial interests of the people who need somewhere affordable to live. Public subsidies should be judged by whether they

deliver real benefits to residents, not simply by whether they make a development more profitable for wealthy investors.

I would support agreements specifying the number of affordable units, rent limits, deadlines, the duration of affordability, and meaningful consequences if commitments are not fulfilled.

As a rule, I do not support development charge holidays. Working-class homeowners should not have to subsidize private development that makes rich investors richer. I would consider an exception only where there was a substantial, demonstrable benefit to working class people, such as a significant number of deeply affordable housing units secured through legally binding agreements.

Every dollar of public assistance has an opportunity cost. The $1.1 million exemption represented public resources that could otherwise have supported actual affordable housing. Owen Sound needs more housing people can actually afford, not public subsidies based on promises taxpayers have no way to enforce.

David Schinbein COUNCILLOR

My understanding is that during the development application process,if a development charge is granted or changed then there are conditions that are to be met and are approved by Council, then the developer is obligated to follow them. In a previous council I served on we made a requirement of the developer that a percentage of new units (condos or apartments) must be below market or the development would not be approved by council.

SECTION 2

Financial transparency and taxpayer return

The question asks whether the City should publish five kinds of financial information about each assisted development before Council approves substantial assistance, and nine candidates answered it in writing.

THE QUESTION AS SENT

Would you support publicly reporting the following information for each development receiving municipal financial assistance?

- The total value of fees, development charges, taxes, or other costs waived, reduced, deferred, or subsidized.
- How much assistance has actually been provided.
- Any amounts the City is legally entitled to recover.
- The additional property tax revenue projected from the completed development.
- The associated municipal infrastructure and servicing costs.

Should this information be available to taxpayers before Council approves substantial discretionary assistance?

Please explain your position.

ANSWERS

(the candidates' own words; mayoral candidates first, then councillors, each alphabetical by surname)

Jodi King MAYOR

My answer to the next question:

Regarding the support of publically reporting of each development receiving municipal financial assistance?

It's all about being PRO transparency. The public has an absolute right to know exactly how, where and whom our money is being spent.

Should this information be available to taxpayers before council approves substantial discretionary assistance?

My answer:

Again, it's all about transparent. We as taxpayers cannot participate in where our hard earned money is being spent if the numbers are being hidden from us

Andrii Zvorygin MAYOR

Yes. Before Council votes on substantial assistance, taxpayers should be able to see what the City is providing and what residents can expect in return.

Council should require a plain-language summary for each supported development. It should show which fees or taxes were waived or delayed, how much help was actually provided, what the City can recover, the expected new tax revenue, and the City's cost to provide roads, water, sewers, and other services.

The summary should make clear what was estimated, what was approved, what was paid, and what was built. It should also show the affordable units promised and whether they arrived.

That is the purpose of complete financial records and a Verified Savings Ledger: what something used to cost, what the City provided, what we expected, and what actually happened. Private and legally sensitive information can be protected while residents still receive a useful public record.

People need this information before the vote. Public assistance should come with a visible public return.

Links:

- https://helpos.ca/mayor/transparency
- https://helpos.ca/mayor/budget

Thomas Arakal COUNCILLOR

Yes. I support making the financial implications of substantial discretionary development assistance publicly available before Council makes a decision.

One of my campaign priorities is improving financial transparency and ensuring Council receives meaningful options and complete financial information before approving major expenditures or incentives.

For substantial development assistance, I would support publishing:

- The total estimated value of development charges, fees, grants, tax assistance, or other financial benefits.
- How much assistance has actually been provided.
- Any outstanding commitments or amounts the City is entitled to recover.
- Projected additional municipal property tax revenue.
- Estimated infrastructure, servicing, maintenance, and other long-term municipal costs.
- Anticipated housing, employment, and economic benefits.

I would also like staff reports to present alternative options wherever practical, including what would happen if the City provided no incentive or a smaller incentive.

Council should understand both the immediate cost and the long-term financial implications.

Not every development incentive is a bad investment. A well-designed incentive may attract investment, create housing, increase the assessment base, and eventually generate additional property tax revenue.

However, projected revenue is not guaranteed revenue. We must examine the assumptions behind the projections and account for future costs.

I also support reviewing major incentives after approval to determine whether the anticipated benefits actually materialized.

Concern About Audited Financial Statements

I would also like to raise a broader concern about the City's financial transparency.

As of October 10, 2026, I have not been able to locate the City's audited financial statements for the 2025 financial year on its publicly available financial reporting pages.

The financial year ended on December 31, 2025, more than nine months ago, and the latest audited statements I have been able to find are for 2024.

I believe residents deserve timely access to audited financial information.

If the 2025 statements have been completed, they should be easy for the public to find. If they have not, residents deserve an explanation of their status and expected publication date.

Financial transparency should not be limited to the annual budget. It should include audited results, actual spending, outstanding liabilities, and whether public investments are delivering their intended benefits.

Justin Bianco COUNCILLOR

Yes, I strongly support transparency and accountability when it comes to how taxpayers' money is being spent.

I would support publicly reporting this information to the greatest extent permitted by law, including the financial assistance being provided, potential costs to taxpayers, and the anticipated financial benefits to the City.

I also recognize that certain information may be legally protected or confidential, particularly when dealing with agreements, negotiations, or other sensitive matters.

Where legally possible, I would support making this information available before Council approves substantial financial assistance, along with regular updates showing whether developments are meeting their commitments.

Residents deserve to know where their tax dollars are going and whether those investments are producing meaningful results. I believe Council has a responsibility to be as transparent as legally possible.

Joe Carder COUNCILLOR

Yes. Before Council approves substantial discretionary assistance, taxpayers should see the full financial picture:

- The total value of assistance proposed and how much is actually provided.
- Any money the City is legally entitled to recover.
- Expected additional property tax revenue.
- Infrastructure, servicing and ongoing costs associated with the development.

This information should be written in plain language and updated as the project progresses. Council needs to consider both the revenue and the costs to determine whether taxpayers are receiving good value.

Dale Funston COUNCILLOR

The answer to this question is easy YES to all. If anyone is receiving any kind of financial benefit from the city and the taxpayers, it should be laid out for everyone to see. I'm surprised this information isn't already publicly available. I would bring up a resolution to make sure this would be available before council approves anything.

Justin Melanson COUNCILLOR

Yes. For every development receiving municipal financial assistance, the City should publicly report, before Council votes on substantial discretionary support:

- the total value of fees, development charges, taxes, or other costs waived, reduced, deferred, or subsidized;
- how much assistance has been provided;
- any amounts the city is legally entitled to recover;
- the additional property-tax revenue projected from the completed development; and
- the associated municipal infrastructure and servicing costs.

This information should be available to taxpayers before the decision, not afterward. Council cannot judge whether an incentive is an effective use of public money without seeing the full cost, the expected return, and the recovery terms. Transparency also makes it possible to check later whether the projected assessment materialized. I would support publishing this information in plain language as part of the staff report that accompanies any recommendation for discretionary assistance.

Tamara Sargent COUNCILLOR

I support stronger public reporting of municipal financial assistance provided to private developments, drawing on Toronto’s approach to publishing development information and financial impacts. Before Council approves substantial discretionary assistance, residents should have access to a clear accounting of the public costs, expected benefits, and obligations attached to the proposal.

Every dollar of public assistance has an opportunity cost. Residents deserve to know not only what a private development might deliver, but also what the public is giving up to support it and whether the community receives a fair return.

I recognize that there are legitimate legal limits on disclosure. Under section 239 of Ontario’s Municipal Act, 2001, certain confidential commercial or financial information may be discussed in a closed meeting where the statutory requirements are met. Solicitor-client privilege and other applicable confidentiality obligations may also restrict disclosure in particular circumstances. These safeguards are important, but they do not mean that all information relating to a private development must be kept confidential.

The City should disclose as much as the law permits, explain when information must be withheld, and publish the non-confidential financial information necessary for residents to understand the use of public resources. Taxpayers should not have to rely on scattered reports or piece together the financial implications of individual developments themselves.

Public assistance should come with public accountability. The key questions should always be: Who benefits, who pays, and what does the community get in return?

David Schinbein COUNCILLOR

I would support showing to the public the details of any development in terms of any tax break or reduction to a developer. I would like to see the city management declare what an increase in the tax base any new development would result in.

SECTION 3

Multi-residential property tax redistribution

The question asks whether the City should publicly account for the cumulative effects of lowering the multi-residential tax ratio between 2023 and 2026, and nine candidates answered it in writing.

THE QUESTION AS SENT

Between 2023 and 2026, Owen Sound progressively reduced the tax ratio applied to the existing multi-residential property class, reaching the same ratio as ordinary residential properties in 2026.

Would you support a public accounting of the cumulative financial effects of this policy, including:

- The amount of property tax responsibility redistributed among property classes.
- The estimated additional burden on residential homeowners.
- The extent to which tenants received documented rent reductions associated with property tax decreases.

Do you believe Council should evaluate and publicly report whether the policy achieved its intended outcomes?

Please explain your position.

ANSWERS

(the candidates' own words; mayoral candidates first, then councillors, each alphabetical by surname)

Jodi King MAYOR

Would I support a public accounting of the tax ratio.....

My answer:

I believe that 2 properties of the same value should pay the same amount of taxes. This would also ensure transparency. My taxpayer would be able to sleep better at night, I know that I would.

Should council evaluate....

My answer:

Yes, and this is why. It will provide accountability, continued improvement and most of all the public TRUST.

Andrii Zvorygin MAYOR

Yes. Tax ratios should reflect the services properties use and the results residents see. I support a clear public account of what changed between 2023 and 2026, who carried the shifted tax burden, and whether the policy achieved its purpose.

The account should use the City's tax and budget records, then look at the services different properties use: waste, downtown cleanup, public garbage cans, by-law response, roads, and infrastructure. A building without food-preparation facilities, for example, can place extra pressure on OSHaRE, downtown cleanup, and other shared services. County social supports should be shown separately from City costs.

Rent outcomes need their own evidence. Available rent data, new leases, vacancy information, and information from tenants and landlords should all be considered, with a clear explanation of what the evidence can show. Residents deserve to know whether a tax reduction reached tenants through lower rents.

The report should show the effect on homeowners, rents, new housing, investment, and City services together. Council can then invite resident review and decide whether the policy should continue, change, or receive safeguards.

Links:

- https://helpos.ca/mayor/tax
- https://helpos.ca/mayor/transparency

Thomas Arakal COUNCILLOR

Yes. I support a public accounting of the cumulative financial impact of the multi-residential property tax ratio changes between 2023 and 2026.

I understand the argument for treating residential property classes more equally. However, when the tax responsibility of one property class is reduced, the impact on other taxpayers must also be examined.

Residents deserve to understand who benefits, who pays more, and whether the policy achieved its intended objectives.

I would support a public report showing:

- The annual and cumulative redistribution of property taxes between property classes.
- The estimated additional burden on residential homeowners and other affected taxpayers.
- The financial benefits received by affected multi-residential property owners.
- Available evidence of whether those savings resulted in rent reductions or other measurable benefits for tenants.
- Whether the policy achieved its intended outcomes.

We should not automatically assume that reducing property taxes for rental property owners results in lower rents for tenants.

That may be one of the intended outcomes, but we need evidence to determine what actually happened.

I would also want the report to distinguish between changes caused by tax ratios, municipal spending, property assessments, and other factors.

I have proposed a two-year municipal property tax freeze as an opportunity to review spending, identify efficiencies, and examine how the City distributes financial responsibilities.

A freeze would require careful budget planning and finding savings rather than simply shifting costs into the future.

I believe Council should regularly review major financial policies and be willing to make adjustments when they are not producing the expected results.

Good intentions are not enough. We must measure outcomes and be prepared to change direction when the evidence shows a policy is not working.

Justin Bianco COUNCILLOR

Yes, I would support a public review of the financial impacts of this decision.

While I understand the reasoning behind creating more consistent taxation between residential and multi-residential properties, we also need to understand how these changes affect homeowners and tenants.

If the intention was to improve affordability for renters, we should examine whether those savings actually benefited tenants or remained with property owners.

I would support reviewing the financial impact on each property class, including homeowners, and examining any available evidence of rent reductions.

I believe Council should evaluate major financial decisions and report the results publicly, regardless of whether those decisions were made by the current Council or previous ones.

Joe Carder COUNCILLOR

Yes. I would support a public report showing the annual and cumulative tax shifts between 2023 and 2026, including the additional burden on homeowners and documented rent reductions received by tenants.

Fair tax treatment matters, but so does understanding who benefits and who pays more. We should verify whether savings reached tenants and clearly identify any missing information.

Council should publicly report whether the policy achieved its intended goals.

Dale Funston COUNCILLOR

Yes, I would definitely support a public accounting of the cumulative financial effects of this policy, including:

- The amount of property tax responsibility redistributed among property classes.
- The estimated additional burden on residential homeowners.
- The extent to which tenants received documented rent reductions associated with property tax decreases.

If the city is going to reduce these property taxes under the guise of reducing rents it should be mandatory for the landlord to show that rents have in fact been reduced and by how much and it should be followed up by city council.

Justin Melanson COUNCILLOR

Yes. I would support a public accounting of the cumulative effects of reducing the multi-residential tax ratio between 2023 and 2026 until it matched the residential ratio. That accounting should include the amount of tax responsibility redistributed among property classes, the estimated additional burden on residential homeowners, and the extent to which tenants received documented rent reductions linked to the lower tax load.

Council should evaluate and publicly report whether the policy achieved its intended outcomes. Changing ratios redistribute the levy. It does not create new revenue. If the goal was lower rents or a fairer system, the public should be able to see the evidence. If the evidence is weak or absent, the Council should say so and decide whether the policy continues to serve the city. I will not treat a past ratio change as automatically successful without that review.

Tamara Sargent COUNCILLOR

When Owen Sound became part of Grey County in 2001, the City advocated to retain control over its tax ratios. We succeeded, and Ontario Regulation 311/01 was passed, giving Owen Sound the exceptional ability to continue setting its own tax ratios independently of Grey County. However, that independence came with an expectation that Owen Sound would gradually move its tax ratios toward those of Grey County, without establishing a deadline for when that convergence had to be completed.

More than two decades later, I believe it is time for Owen Sound to challenge that expectation. Rather than continuing to migrate our tax ratios toward the County's, Council should advocate to the Province for the right to design a tax system that reflects the needs of our own community.

That authority gives Council a choice: ask wealthy business property owners to pay a fairer share, or continue placing a disproportionate burden on working class Owen Sound homeowners.

Instead, this past Council has moved in the opposite direction. When it took office, the multi-residential tax ratio was 1.6779. Council progressively reduced it to 1.0 in 2026. That doesn't reduce the amount of money the City needs to collect - it just reduces the amount that large landlords pay, while shifting more of the levy onto residential homeowners.

In other words, Council shifted the tax burden away from large multi-residential property owners and onto working class homeowners.

I disagree with this direction. I want Council to advocate for greater control over municipal taxation and use that authority to distribute the burden more fairly.

There are also serious questions about communication and accountability. The City's April 2026 staff report stated that required communications to affected rental units would be made in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act. However, tenants I have spoken with in multi-residential buildings that appear to qualify have told me they did not receive a letter. Residents deserve a clear explanation of how the notification process was carried out and why some tenants may not have received notice.

If the City continues down this path by migrating its commercial tax ratio from its current 1.71 toward 1.0, next commercial properties will pay a smaller share of the levy - and homeowners will again be forced to make up more of the difference.

We can make municipal taxes more affordable for working people without sacrificing the public services they rely on. The answer isn't simply lower taxes - it's fairer taxes.

David Schinbein COUNCILLOR

In most municipalities, landlords pay approximately 1.5% of the residential tax base. If the rate is reduced there must be a clear commitment from landlords that they pass the savings on to the tenants. If they don't then there is no reason to lower the taxes on that segment of the population. Any savings need to be conveyed to the public so they see the benefits of any change.

SECTION 4

Vision 2050: Measurable outcomes and public accountability

The question asks whether Vision 2050 should be amended to include measurable, publicly reported outcome indicators, and nine candidates answered it in writing.

THE QUESTION AS SENT

In October 2025, Owen Sound Council approved its Future Owen Sound: Vision 2050 long-term strategic plan.

Although the plan includes performance measures, concerns have been raised about the absence of specific, objective indicators for important community outcomes, including housing affordability, household incomes, poverty, transit ridership, and public safety.

Proposed amendments to add several of these measures were not adopted.

Do you believe Vision 2050 should be amended to include measurable, publicly reported indicators for these outcomes?

In particular:

- Housing affordability: The number and percentage of homes affordable to local households, rental costs relative to household incomes, and progress toward affordable housing targets.
- Economic well-being: Household income, poverty rates, and changes in residents' purchasing power.
- Transportation: Annual transit ridership and measurable improvements in transportation accessibility.
- Community safety: Objective measures such as crime trends and the Crime Severity Index, alongside residents' perceptions of safety.
- Accountability: Published baselines, numerical targets, reporting deadlines, and regular progress reports showing whether the City is meeting its commitments.

Would you support incorporating these measures directly into Vision 2050, rather than relying exclusively on separate plans, operational reports, or satisfaction surveys?

If you would prefer a different approach, how would you ensure residents can independently assess whether Owen Sound is becoming more affordable, prosperous, accessible, and safe?

Please explain your position.

ANSWERS

(the candidates' own words; mayoral candidates first, then councillors, each alphabetical by surname)

Jodi King MAYOR

Owen Sounds Vision 2050 amended?

My answer:

I would have to say yes, I think it should be amended, to ensure that these issues are resolved and addressed in a timely manner. It seems that these issues are similar to a revolving door....this has to be a priority to the leadership of our city Council and Mayor. If not now... when?

Andrii Zvorygin MAYOR

I support reviewing Vision 2050 in public and replacing it with a shorter plan with real costs if that is what the review shows. Owen Sound needs a plan residents can understand, with clear priorities, budgets, responsibilities, and deadlines.

The measures should follow the things residents can feel in daily life. On housing, show how many homes local households can afford, how rents compare with incomes, how many vacant homes return to use, and whether affordable-housing goals are being met. On the economy, show household income, poverty, purchasing power, and local jobs. On transportation, show ridership, accessibility, and reliable service. On safety, show crime trends, the Crime Severity Index when available, service information, and residents' experience of safety.

For every goal, the plan should show where we are starting, where we want to go, who is responsible, what it costs, and what changed each year. That information should be published with the budget and updated each year.

Residents should be able to follow the promise, the spending, and the result. That is how a long-term plan earns trust and helps build a more affordable, prosperous, accessible, and safe Owen Sound.

Links:

- https://www.owensound.ca/city-government/reports-studies-and-plans/future-owen-sound-vision-2050-long-term-strategic-plan/
- https://helpos.ca/mayor/transparency

Thomas Arakal COUNCILLOR

Yes. I support strengthening Vision 2050 by including clear, measurable indicators that residents can easily access, understand, and evaluate.

Long-term planning is important, but a vision should be more than a document describing what we hope Owen Sound will become.

It should provide a practical way to measure whether we are actually moving in the right direction.

I support incorporating key community outcome measures directly into Vision 2050, supported by more detailed operational plans where appropriate.

These should include:

Housing Affordability

- Housing costs compared with local household incomes.
- The number of affordable housing units created.
- Progress toward established housing targets.
- Changes in rental affordability.
- Progress on co-operative and non-profit housing opportunities.

Economic Well-Being

- Household income trends.
- Poverty indicators.
- Local employment opportunities.
- Changes in residents' purchasing power.

Transportation

- Annual transit ridership.
- Service reliability and accessibility.
- Whether transit meets the needs of workers, seniors, students, and other residents.
- Measurable improvements in transportation options.

I also believe the City should seriously examine whether bringing public transit operations back under municipal control could improve service and accountability.

One option worth examining is leasing buses instead of purchasing them outright to potentially reduce upfront capital costs.

However, I would want a proper financial and operational comparison before making that decision, including staffing, maintenance, insurance, leasing costs, service quality, and long-term sustainability.

My goal is better service and better value for taxpayers, not changing a system simply for the sake of change.

Community Safety

- Available crime statistics and the Crime Severity Index, where applicable.
- Residents' perceptions of safety.
- Measurable progress in addressing public safety concerns.
- Better coordination with community organizations and other levels of government.

We must also recognize that homelessness, mental health, addiction, and criminal activity are different issues that require appropriate responses.

Financial Accountability

- Municipal operating costs.
- Debt and long-term financial obligations.
- Infrastructure maintenance and replacement needs.
- Service delivery performance.

- Progress toward improving operational efficiency.

I support establishing clear baselines, realistic numerical targets, reporting deadlines, and regular public progress reports.

Residents should be able to compare what Council promised with what was actually achieved.

Not every outcome is directly controlled by municipal government. Household incomes, poverty levels, and housing costs are also influenced by provincial, federal, and broader economic conditions.

Nevertheless, these indicators help us understand whether our community is improving.

I would also support identifying which level of government or community partner is responsible for each major initiative.

Making Better Use of Existing Expertise

Another important part of my approach is how we develop and implement these plans.

I do not believe the City should automatically turn to outside consultants every time we need to study an issue or develop a plan.

We have experienced City employees, professionals, business owners, skilled workers, and residents who understand Owen Sound and its challenges.

Their knowledge and practical experience should be our first resource.

Before approving consulting expenses, Council should ask whether the work can be completed using existing staff expertise and local knowledge.

I am not opposed to consultants when specialized expertise is genuinely necessary. However, there should be a clearly defined need, cost, expected outcome, and accountability for the results.

I also believe residents' input must play a central role in shaping the City's future.

Consultants can provide technical advice, but residents are the people who live with the consequences of municipal decisions.

Use the knowledge and experience we already have first. Spend taxpayers' money on outside consultants only when there is a clear need and measurable benefit.

Making Council More Accessible

I also support moving Council and committee meetings to times when working residents can attend and participate.

At the October 6 all-candidates meeting, we saw strong public attendance at an event held after supper.

I believe that demonstrates why meeting times matter.

Residents who work during the day should have a reasonable opportunity to attend meetings, ask questions, and participate in decisions affecting their community.

Transparency is not only about publishing information. It is also about making decision-making accessible.

Residents should not have to wait until the next election to discover whether Council delivered on its promises.

Justin Bianco COUNCILLOR

Yes, I support incorporating clear, measurable outcomes into Vision 2050.

A long-term strategic plan is important, but it needs to be more than a document outlining what we hope to accomplish.

Residents should be able to see whether Owen Sound is actually becoming more affordable, economically stronger, more accessible, and safer.

I would support measurable indicators covering housing affordability, household income, poverty, transit ridership, public safety, and other important community priorities.

These measures should include starting benchmarks, realistic targets, and regular public reporting.

I would also support incorporating these measures directly into Vision 2050, with supporting information from other municipal plans and reports.

I believe residents should be able to easily understand what progress is being made without having to search through numerous municipal documents.

Joe Carder COUNCILLOR

Yes. I would support adding measurable outcomes directly into Vision 2050, including:

- Housing costs compared with local incomes and progress toward affordable housing targets.
- Household incomes, poverty rates and purchasing power.
- Transit ridership and improvements in transportation access.
- Crime trends, the Crime Severity Index where appropriate, and residents' perceptions of safety.

Each area should have a clear starting point, numerical targets and reporting deadlines. I would support an annual public progress report explaining what improved, where we fell short and what happens next.

Separate plans and surveys can help, but residents should have one accessible place to judge the City's overall progress.

Dale Funston COUNCILLOR

This is a tough question because I believe that some of these may have been left off the Vision 2050 because the city and council would not have any direct way to actually make a difference. I think that housing affordability and economic wellbeing would be something the province and federal government would have to address. However, the city is directly responsible for transportation and safety.

I would like to see the city busses run longer at night so people can get to and from work. I have spoken to residents that say that have no way home after work because the busses stop so early in the day.

As for community safety, the police could publish a short chart of what kinds of crime are rising and or falling within the city.

I would definitely like to see the police crackdown on the drug dealers and open drug use on the city streets.

I think any and all information about the city's information should be publicly available so that the residents of Owen Sound can judge for themselves if the city is becoming more or less affordable and safe.

Justin Melanson COUNCILLOR

Yes. I believe Vision 2050 should be amended to include measurable, publicly reported indicators for housing affordability, economic well-being, transportation, and community safety. Those indicators should include:

- the number and percentage of homes affordable to local households, rental costs relative to household incomes, and progress toward affordable-housing targets;
- household income, poverty rates, and changes in residents' purchasing power;
- annual transit ridership and measurable improvements in transportation accessibility; and
- Objective public safety measures such as crime trends and the Crime Severity Index, together with residents' perceptions of safety.

I would support published baselines, numerical targets, reporting deadlines, and regular progress reports that show whether the city is meeting its commitments. These measures should be incorporated directly into Vision 2050 rather than left only to separate plans, operational reports, or satisfaction surveys. Surveys can capture feelings. They cannot replace numbers on affordability, income, ridership, or safety.

Residents should be able to open one document and see whether Owen Sound is becoming more affordable, more prosperous, more accessible, and safer. If the existing plan lacks those objective indicators, it should be amended. Accountability means measuring results, not only stating aspirations.

Tamara Sargent COUNCILLOR

Yes. I support amending Vision 2050 to include measurable, publicly reported indicators of whether Owen Sound is becoming more affordable, prosperous, accessible, and safe. I would have supported Councillor Jon Farmer's amendments in October 2025 to include measures of housing affordability, transportation, household income, and community safety. Those amendments were defeated.

The plan should include clear indicators for housing affordability, household income and poverty, transit ridership and accessibility, and community safety, including crime trends and residents' perceptions of safety. Each should have a published baseline, measurable targets, and regular public progress reports.

Some of these outcomes are influenced by provincial and federal policy, but that is no excuse for failing to measure them. The City should report honestly on local conditions and identify what it can do within its own authority to improve them.

My platform includes concrete proposals that should be assessed against measurable outcomes: expanding public transit service, improving library access, providing free garbage bags, and using a vacant residential property tax to help address housing affordability and fund local priorities.

A growing economy is not enough if working people cannot afford housing, must spend an unreasonable share of their income on necessities, or cannot get to work because public transit is inadequate. Prosperity should mean that people who live and work in Owen Sound can afford to live here and enjoy a decent quality of life.

Vision 2050 should be more than a statement of aspirations. Residents deserve to know whether the City is meeting its commitments and improving people's lives. I support annual public reporting and clear explanations of what needs to change when targets are missed.

Owen Sound's success should be measured by whether the people who live and work here can afford to live decent lives, not simply by whether property values rise, investment grows, or developers receive incentives. People over profit.

David Schinbein COUNCILLOR

The one issue I have with the 2050 plan is that the comparisons that the city used in their briefing document uses cities that are not peer municipalities. They referenced Surrey BC and Vancouver BC. You are talking about what is being done in an urban area of over one million as compared to an urban area (catchment area) of only 40,000. Their study does not reflect the reality of a large urban area vis-a-vie a small urban area to accomplish their stated goals.a, thus in my opinion the comparisons are not accurate. compared areas have a much larger tax base.

To achieve what is in the plan as it does not have a costing attached to it and is hard to judge whether anything could be measured

When it comes to transportation, correct me if I am wrong, Owen Sound has been having issues with its transit for as long as I can remember. Transit and accessibility can be improved through additional funding, however the funding must be linked to ridership. If any measures taken do not increase ridership then I find it hard to increase the spending on transit.

Full responses by candidate

Each reply appears here as one piece, in the order the candidate wrote it, including remarks that were not tied to a question. Mayoral candidates come first, then councillors, each alphabetical by surname.

Jodi King MAYOR

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Should publicly promised affordable housing commitments be legally enforceable? My answer: I believe it should be because it would allow our community groups, future and present residents of Owen Sound to take legal action if a developer fails to make good on their promises to deliver affordable housing units. I believe that it will also help prevent developers backing out, especially after receiving zoning approval and accommodations , access to public land or tax breaks.

My answer to the next question is:

The best result for our housing crisis is to see the clear numbers of our specific target community needs. To also ensure that housing is built for the income brackets that need it the most.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

My answer to the next question:

Regarding the support of publically reporting of each development receiving municipal financial assistance?

It's all about being PRO transparency. The public has an absolute right to know exactly how, where and whom our money is being spent.

Should this information be available to taxpayers before council approves substantial discretionary assistance?

My answer:

Again, it's all about transparent. We as taxpayers cannot participate in where our hard earned money is being spent if the numbers are being hidden from us

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Would I support a public accounting of the tax ratio.....

My answer:

I believe that 2 properties of the same value should pay the same amount of taxes. This would also ensure transparency. My taxpayer would be able to sleep better at night, I know that I would.

Should council evaluate....

My answer:

Yes, and this is why. It will provide accountability, continued improvement and most of all the public TRUST.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Owen Sounds Vision 2050 amended?

My answer:

I would have to say yes, I think it should be amended, to ensure that these issues are resolved and addressed in a timely manner. It seems that these issues are similar to a revolving door....this has to be a priority to the leadership of our city Council and Mayor. If not now... when?

CLOSING REMARKS

As a potential candidate for Mayor, I would use the Mayoral veto if it means that the decisions made will benefit the overall community members. For example:

Cutting red tape and set timelines to expand our housing commitments. Invest in local business and will look into tax relief breaks in order to keep local dollars circulating in OUR community where it belongs. Transparent communication between city Hall and our community members. Protecting vulnerable spaces and increasing lighting in the downtown core, and including CCTV system in the same areas.

I hope this gives you an idea of what is in my mind and heart for the city of Owen Sound. I am not a politician, I'm an ordinary citizen that has seen our city fall apart from within, and I know what hard work is as I'm an old farm girl, worked in security, and own a property maintenance business with my husband for the past 33 years. It's time to get down to business and make Owen Sound great again. Miigwetch for your time and questions. If I have missed something, please let me know.

Andrii Zvorygin MAYOR

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Yes. When the City offers public money to a private development, residents should see a public benefit. I support agreements that state the number of affordable units, rent limits, completion date, and how long those rents will stay affordable.

The agreement should connect the incentive to homes actually being delivered. When promised units are not built, the public value should return to the tax bill through a repayment clause. The results should be checked and reported.

Affordability also needs a clear definition before approval. My working standard is total housing cost at 30% or less of relevant income, using one living-wage income for a single-person home and household income for a family home.

The two main ways to put downward pressure on rents are returning vacant homes to use through a vacant-home tax and supporting affordable construction that adds supply. Market housing remains welcome because it adds homes and tax revenue. The public bargain is simple: public support helps create affordable homes, and the agreement protects residents when the promised homes are not delivered.

Links:

- https://helpos.ca/mayor/housing-homelessness-recovery
- https://helpos.ca/mayor/affordable-rural-communities

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

Yes. Before Council votes on substantial assistance, taxpayers should be able to see what the City is providing and what residents can expect in return.

Council should require a plain-language summary for each supported development. It should show which fees or taxes were waived or delayed, how much help was actually provided, what the City can recover, the expected new tax revenue, and the City's cost to provide roads, water, sewers, and other services.

The summary should make clear what was estimated, what was approved, what was paid, and what was built. It should also show the affordable units promised and whether they arrived.

That is the purpose of complete financial records and a Verified Savings Ledger: what something used to cost, what the City provided, what we expected, and what actually happened. Private and legally sensitive information can be protected while residents still receive a useful public record.

People need this information before the vote. Public assistance should come with a visible public return.

Links:

- https://helpos.ca/mayor/transparency
- https://helpos.ca/mayor/budget

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Yes. Tax ratios should reflect the services properties use and the results residents see. I support a clear public account of what changed between 2023 and 2026, who carried the shifted tax burden, and whether the policy achieved its purpose.

The account should use the City's tax and budget records, then look at the services different properties use: waste, downtown cleanup, public garbage cans, by-law response, roads, and infrastructure. A building without food-preparation facilities, for example, can place extra pressure on OSHaRE, downtown cleanup, and other shared services. County social supports should be shown separately from City costs.

Rent outcomes need their own evidence. Available rent data, new leases, vacancy information, and information from tenants and landlords should all be considered, with a clear explanation of what the evidence can show. Residents deserve to know whether a tax reduction reached tenants through lower rents.

The report should show the effect on homeowners, rents, new housing, investment, and City services together. Council can then invite resident review and decide whether the policy should continue, change, or receive safeguards.

Links:

- https://helpos.ca/mayor/tax
- https://helpos.ca/mayor/transparency

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

I support reviewing Vision 2050 in public and replacing it with a shorter plan with real costs if that is what the review shows. Owen Sound needs a plan residents can understand, with clear priorities, budgets, responsibilities, and deadlines.

The measures should follow the things residents can feel in daily life. On housing, show how many homes local households can afford, how rents compare with incomes, how many vacant homes return to use, and whether affordable-housing goals are being met. On the economy, show household income, poverty, purchasing power, and local jobs. On transportation, show ridership, accessibility, and reliable service. On safety, show crime trends, the Crime Severity Index when available, service information, and residents' experience of safety.

For every goal, the plan should show where we are starting, where we want to go, who is responsible, what it costs, and what changed each year. That information should be published with the budget and updated each year.

Residents should be able to follow the promise, the spending, and the result. That is how a long-term plan earns trust and helps build a more affordable, prosperous, accessible, and safe Owen Sound.

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- https://helpos.ca/mayor/transparency

Thomas Arakal COUNCILLOR

OPENING REMARKS

I appreciate the time and effort you have put into preparing these questions. Housing affordability, responsible spending, financial transparency, and accountability are among the main reasons I decided to run for Owen Sound City Council.

I believe public money must deliver measurable public benefits. Residents deserve to know what Council approves, how much those decisions cost, why they were made, and whether the promised results were achieved.

I do not believe Council should approve something simply because it sounds good on paper. We need to examine the numbers, consider alternatives, listen to residents, and measure results.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Yes. I support legally enforceable agreements when the City provides discretionary financial incentives to developers in exchange for affordable housing commitments.

Owen Sound needs more attainable and affordable housing. I support encouraging responsible residential development, including reviewing development charges and other incentives that could help increase housing supply.

However, public financial assistance should never be treated as a blank cheque.

If a developer receives financial assistance because they promise affordable housing, those commitments should be clearly documented and legally enforceable.

I would support agreements that identify:

- The number of affordable housing units being promised.
- Maximum rents or purchase prices and how affordability is calculated.
- Construction and occupancy deadlines.
- How long those units must remain affordable.
- Regular progress reporting and verification.
- Appropriate repayment, recovery, or other consequences if commitments are not fulfilled.

These agreements should be reviewed for legal enforceability and financial practicality before approval.

I also believe we must distinguish between incentives intended to create affordable housing and those intended to encourage general economic development. Both may have value, but they serve different purposes and should be evaluated accordingly.

Every incentive program should have clear objectives, conditions, timelines, and a process to review progress and measure results.

If a project is not meeting its commitments, the City should be prepared to take appropriate action rather than allowing public assistance to continue without accountability.

Exploring Co-operative and Non-Profit Housing

I also believe Owen Sound should explore opportunities to encourage co-operative and non-profit housing.

Not every housing solution needs to depend on private developers receiving financial incentives.

Co-operative housing offers another approach where residents collectively participate in managing their housing, with the goal of providing long-term affordability and stability rather than generating profits for outside investors.

The City could explore partnerships with non-profit housing organizations, community groups, Grey County, and provincial and federal housing programs.

We should examine opportunities to use suitable surplus public land, where available, and consider appropriate development incentives or assistance with the approval process.

I would also like to explore whether existing buildings could be converted into co-operative or non-profit housing where financially practical.

However, any municipal contribution must be financially responsible, transparent, and tied to measurable housing outcomes.

We should involve experienced local residents, housing professionals, and community organizations before spending money on outside consultants.

My goal is to encourage different housing models, including private development, non-profit housing, and co-operative housing, rather than relying on one approach alone.

Co-operative housing is not automatically affordable, so any publicly supported project should have clear affordability targets and long-term protections.

My position is simple: If taxpayers are contributing to a project in return for a specific public benefit, that benefit must be measurable, enforceable, and protected.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

Yes. I support making the financial implications of substantial discretionary development assistance publicly available before Council makes a decision.

One of my campaign priorities is improving financial transparency and ensuring Council receives meaningful options and complete financial information before approving major expenditures or incentives.

For substantial development assistance, I would support publishing:

- The total estimated value of development charges, fees, grants, tax assistance, or other financial benefits.
- How much assistance has actually been provided.
- Any outstanding commitments or amounts the City is entitled to recover.
- Projected additional municipal property tax revenue.
- Estimated infrastructure, servicing, maintenance, and other long-term municipal costs.
- Anticipated housing, employment, and economic benefits.

I would also like staff reports to present alternative options wherever practical, including what would happen if the City provided no incentive or a smaller incentive.

Council should understand both the immediate cost and the long-term financial implications.

Not every development incentive is a bad investment. A well-designed incentive may attract investment, create housing, increase the assessment base, and eventually generate additional property tax revenue.

However, projected revenue is not guaranteed revenue. We must examine the assumptions behind the projections and account for future costs.

I also support reviewing major incentives after approval to determine whether the anticipated benefits actually materialized.

Concern About Audited Financial Statements

I would also like to raise a broader concern about the City's financial transparency.

As of October 10, 2026, I have not been able to locate the City's audited financial statements for the 2025 financial year on its publicly available financial reporting pages.

The financial year ended on December 31, 2025, more than nine months ago, and the latest audited statements I have been able to find are for 2024.

I believe residents deserve timely access to audited financial information.

If the 2025 statements have been completed, they should be easy for the public to find. If they have not, residents deserve an explanation of their status and expected publication date.

Financial transparency should not be limited to the annual budget. It should include audited results, actual spending, outstanding liabilities, and whether public investments are delivering their intended benefits.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Yes. I support a public accounting of the cumulative financial impact of the multi-residential property tax ratio changes between 2023 and 2026.

I understand the argument for treating residential property classes more equally. However, when the tax responsibility of one property class is reduced, the impact on other taxpayers must also be examined.

Residents deserve to understand who benefits, who pays more, and whether the policy achieved its intended objectives.

I would support a public report showing:

- The annual and cumulative redistribution of property taxes between property classes.
- The estimated additional burden on residential homeowners and other affected taxpayers.
- The financial benefits received by affected multi-residential property owners.
- Available evidence of whether those savings resulted in rent reductions or other measurable benefits for tenants.
- Whether the policy achieved its intended outcomes.

We should not automatically assume that reducing property taxes for rental property owners results in lower rents for tenants.

That may be one of the intended outcomes, but we need evidence to determine what actually happened.

I would also want the report to distinguish between changes caused by tax ratios, municipal spending, property assessments, and other factors.

I have proposed a two-year municipal property tax freeze as an opportunity to review spending, identify efficiencies, and examine how the City distributes financial responsibilities.

A freeze would require careful budget planning and finding savings rather than simply shifting costs into the future.

I believe Council should regularly review major financial policies and be willing to make adjustments when they are not producing the expected results.

Good intentions are not enough. We must measure outcomes and be prepared to change direction when the evidence shows a policy is not working.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Yes. I support strengthening Vision 2050 by including clear, measurable indicators that residents can easily access, understand, and evaluate.

Long-term planning is important, but a vision should be more than a document describing what we hope Owen Sound will become.

It should provide a practical way to measure whether we are actually moving in the right direction.

I support incorporating key community outcome measures directly into Vision 2050, supported by more detailed operational plans where appropriate.

These should include:

Housing Affordability

- Housing costs compared with local household incomes.
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- Progress toward established housing targets.
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Transportation

- Annual transit ridership.
- Service reliability and accessibility.
- Whether transit meets the needs of workers, seniors, students, and other residents.
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I also believe the City should seriously examine whether bringing public transit operations back under municipal control could improve service and accountability.

One option worth examining is leasing buses instead of purchasing them outright to potentially reduce upfront capital costs.

However, I would want a proper financial and operational comparison before making that decision, including staffing, maintenance, insurance, leasing costs, service quality, and long-term sustainability.

My goal is better service and better value for taxpayers, not changing a system simply for the sake of change.

Community Safety

- Available crime statistics and the Crime Severity Index, where applicable.
- Residents' perceptions of safety.
- Measurable progress in addressing public safety concerns.
- Better coordination with community organizations and other levels of government.

We must also recognize that homelessness, mental health, addiction, and criminal activity are different issues that require appropriate responses.

Financial Accountability

- Municipal operating costs.
- Debt and long-term financial obligations.
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Nevertheless, these indicators help us understand whether our community is improving.

I would also support identifying which level of government or community partner is responsible for each major initiative.

Making Better Use of Existing Expertise

Another important part of my approach is how we develop and implement these plans.

I do not believe the City should automatically turn to outside consultants every time we need to study an issue or develop a plan.

We have experienced City employees, professionals, business owners, skilled workers, and residents who understand Owen Sound and its challenges.

Their knowledge and practical experience should be our first resource.

Before approving consulting expenses, Council should ask whether the work can be completed using existing staff expertise and local knowledge.

I am not opposed to consultants when specialized expertise is genuinely necessary. However, there should be a clearly defined need, cost, expected outcome, and accountability for the results.

I also believe residents' input must play a central role in shaping the City's future.

Consultants can provide technical advice, but residents are the people who live with the consequences of municipal decisions.

Use the knowledge and experience we already have first. Spend taxpayers' money on outside consultants only when there is a clear need and measurable benefit.

Making Council More Accessible

I also support moving Council and committee meetings to times when working residents can attend and participate.

At the October 6 all-candidates meeting, we saw strong public attendance at an event held after supper.

I believe that demonstrates why meeting times matter.

Residents who work during the day should have a reasonable opportunity to attend meetings, ask questions, and participate in decisions affecting their community.

Transparency is not only about publishing information. It is also about making decision-making accessible.

Residents should not have to wait until the next election to discover whether Council delivered on its promises.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

My approach to municipal government is based on three principles:

Responsible spending. Transparent decisions. Measurable results.

I would add one more important principle:

If something is not producing results, we must be willing to review it and make changes. We cannot keep doing things the same way and expect different outcomes.

I believe Owen Sound has tremendous potential, but realizing that potential requires careful financial planning, collaboration, and accountability.

I do not claim to have every answer.

I believe good Council members must listen, ask difficult questions, examine evidence, respect different perspectives, and work together as a team toward the common good.

Council members may have different ideas and visions, but they must be able to work together toward a shared goal: making Owen Sound a better place to live, work, raise a family, and retire.

I am running as an independent candidate because I believe every resident deserves a voice, and every elected councillor has one vote and a responsibility to use it wisely.

I believe public service must always come before personal interests or profits.

Justin Bianco COUNCILLOR

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Yes, I support legally enforceable agreements when developers receive discretionary financial incentives in exchange for providing affordable housing.

If taxpayer dollars are being used to encourage development, residents deserve assurances that the promised benefits will actually be delivered.

I would support agreements clearly outlining affordable housing commitments, including the number of units, affordability requirements, timelines, and consequences if those commitments are not met.

At the same time, we need to encourage responsible development and avoid creating unnecessary barriers to new housing construction.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

Yes, I strongly support transparency and accountability when it comes to how taxpayers' money is being spent.

I would support publicly reporting this information to the greatest extent permitted by law, including the financial assistance being provided, potential costs to taxpayers, and the anticipated financial benefits to the City.

I also recognize that certain information may be legally protected or confidential, particularly when dealing with agreements, negotiations, or other sensitive matters.

Where legally possible, I would support making this information available before Council approves substantial financial assistance, along with regular updates showing whether developments are meeting their commitments.

Residents deserve to know where their tax dollars are going and whether those investments are producing meaningful results. I believe Council has a responsibility to be as transparent as legally possible.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Yes, I would support a public review of the financial impacts of this decision.

While I understand the reasoning behind creating more consistent taxation between residential and multi-residential properties, we also need to understand how these changes affect homeowners and tenants.

If the intention was to improve affordability for renters, we should examine whether those savings actually benefited tenants or remained with property owners.

I would support reviewing the financial impact on each property class, including homeowners, and examining any available evidence of rent reductions.

I believe Council should evaluate major financial decisions and report the results publicly, regardless of whether those decisions were made by the current Council or previous ones.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Yes, I support incorporating clear, measurable outcomes into Vision 2050.

A long-term strategic plan is important, but it needs to be more than a document outlining what we hope to accomplish.

Residents should be able to see whether Owen Sound is actually becoming more affordable, economically stronger, more accessible, and safer.

I would support measurable indicators covering housing affordability, household income, poverty, transit ridership, public safety, and other important community priorities.

These measures should include starting benchmarks, realistic targets, and regular public reporting.

I would also support incorporating these measures directly into Vision 2050, with supporting information from other municipal plans and reports.

I believe residents should be able to easily understand what progress is being made without having to search through numerous municipal documents.

CLOSING REMARKS

Throughout my campaign, I have emphasized the importance of accountability, transparency, and responsible financial management.

If elected, I intend to review spending carefully, ask tough questions, and work toward ensuring residents receive real value for their tax dollars.

Council must be prepared not only to make decisions but also to evaluate whether those decisions are delivering the results residents were promised.

Joe Carder COUNCILLOR

OPENING REMARKS

Thank you for putting these questions together. Accountability is central to why I am running. Residents deserve to know what their tax dollars are supporting and whether promised benefits are being delivered. You are welcome to publish my responses.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Yes. When discretionary City incentives are tied to promised affordable housing, those promises should be legally enforceable.

Agreements should clearly state the number of affordable units, rent limits, completion deadlines, how long affordability must last, and consequences if commitments are not met. Compliance should be checked regularly, with repayment provisions where legally available.

Public money should deliver a clear, lasting public benefit.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

Yes. Before Council approves substantial discretionary assistance, taxpayers should see the full financial picture:

- The total value of assistance proposed and how much is actually provided.
- Any money the City is legally entitled to recover.
- Expected additional property tax revenue.
- Infrastructure, servicing and ongoing costs associated with the development.

This information should be written in plain language and updated as the project progresses. Council needs to consider both the revenue and the costs to determine whether taxpayers are receiving good value.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Yes. I would support a public report showing the annual and cumulative tax shifts between 2023 and 2026, including the additional burden on homeowners and documented rent reductions received by tenants.

Fair tax treatment matters, but so does understanding who benefits and who pays more. We should verify whether savings reached tenants and clearly identify any missing information.

Council should publicly report whether the policy achieved its intended goals.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Yes. I would support adding measurable outcomes directly into Vision 2050, including:

- Housing costs compared with local incomes and progress toward affordable housing targets.
- Household incomes, poverty rates and purchasing power.
- Transit ridership and improvements in transportation access.
- Crime trends, the Crime Severity Index where appropriate, and residents' perceptions of safety.

Each area should have a clear starting point, numerical targets and reporting deadlines. I would support an annual public progress report explaining what improved, where we fell short and what happens next.

Separate plans and surveys can help, but residents should have one accessible place to judge the City’s overall progress.

Dale Funston COUNCILLOR

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Yes, I do believe that any agreement between the city and a developer's where a developer has received any type of incentive and has promised to include affordable housing should be legally binding and should be stated in the original contracts.

Yes, I would definitely support agreements specifying the number of affordable units, rent limits, deadlines, duration of affordability, and consequences if those commitments are not fulfilled? My explanation I guess is pretty simple, if the city and developer make a deal and the developer doesn't fulfill their part of the commitment within an allotted time frame, they would be expected to repay the city any and all charges that had been waived.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

The answer to this question is easy YES to all. If anyone is receiving any kind of financial benefit from the city and the taxpayers, it should be laid out for everyone to see. I'm surprised this information isn't already publicly available. I would bring up a resolution to make sure this would be available before council approves anything.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Yes, I would definitely support a public accounting of the cumulative financial effects of this policy, including:

- The amount of property tax responsibility redistributed among property classes.
- The estimated additional burden on residential homeowners.
- The extent to which tenants received documented rent reductions associated with property tax decreases.

If the city is going to reduce these property taxes under the guise of reducing rents it should be mandatory for the landlord to show that rents have in fact been reduced and by how much and it should be followed up by city council.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

This is a tough question because I believe that some of these may have been left off the Vision 2050 because the city and council would not have any direct way to actually make a difference. I think that housing affordability and economic wellbeing would be something the province and federal government would have to address. However, the city is directly responsible for transportation and safety.

I would like to see the city busses run longer at night so people can get to and from work. I have spoken to residents that say that have no way home after work because the busses stop so early in the day.

As for community safety, the police could publish a short chart of what kinds of crime are rising and or falling within the city.

I would definitely like to see the police crackdown on the drug dealers and open drug use on the city streets.

I think any and all information about the city's information should be publicly available so that the residents of Owen Sound can judge for themselves if the city is becoming more or less affordable and safe.

Justin Melanson COUNCILLOR

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Yes. When the City gives discretionary incentives—development-charge exemptions, grants, or property-tax assistance—any publicly promised affordable housing should be legally enforceable. I would support written agreements that specify the number of affordable units, rent limits, deadlines, the period of affordability, and the consequences if those terms are not met. Consequences should include claw backs or repayment of the assistance provided.

A promise that is not binding is not a commitment. Taxpayers should not subsidize a project that later fails to deliver the units that justified the incentive. I support targeted, time-limited help that produces actual housing. I do not support open-ended relief that produces only a marketing claim. Agreements that can be enforced to protect both the public investment and the people in the housing are meant to serve.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

Yes. For every development receiving municipal financial assistance, the City should publicly report, before Council votes on substantial discretionary support:

- the total value of fees, development charges, taxes, or other costs waived, reduced, deferred, or subsidized;
- how much assistance has been provided;
- any amounts the city is legally entitled to recover;
- the additional property-tax revenue projected from the completed development; and
- the associated municipal infrastructure and servicing costs.

This information should be available to taxpayers before the decision, not afterward. Council cannot judge whether an incentive is an effective use of public money without seeing the full cost, the expected return, and the recovery terms. Transparency also makes it possible to check later whether the projected assessment materialized. I would support publishing this information in plain language as part of the staff report that accompanies any recommendation for discretionary assistance.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Yes. I would support a public accounting of the cumulative effects of reducing the multi-residential tax ratio between 2023 and 2026 until it matched the residential ratio. That accounting should include the amount of tax responsibility redistributed among property classes, the estimated additional burden on residential homeowners, and the extent to which tenants received documented rent reductions linked to the lower tax load.

Council should evaluate and publicly report whether the policy achieved its intended outcomes. Changing ratios redistribute the levy. It does not create new revenue. If the goal was lower rents or a fairer system, the public should be able to see the evidence. If the evidence is weak or absent, the Council should say so and decide whether the policy continues to serve the city. I will not treat a past ratio change as automatically successful without that review.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Yes. I believe Vision 2050 should be amended to include measurable, publicly reported indicators for housing affordability, economic well-being, transportation, and community safety. Those indicators should include:

- the number and percentage of homes affordable to local households, rental costs relative to household incomes, and progress toward affordable-housing targets;
- household income, poverty rates, and changes in residents' purchasing power;
- annual transit ridership and measurable improvements in transportation accessibility; and
- Objective public safety measures such as crime trends and the Crime Severity Index, together with residents' perceptions of safety.

I would support published baselines, numerical targets, reporting deadlines, and regular progress reports that show whether the city is meeting its commitments. These measures should be incorporated directly into Vision 2050 rather than left only to separate plans, operational reports, or satisfaction surveys. Surveys can capture feelings. They cannot replace numbers on affordability, income, ridership, or safety.

Residents should be able to open one document and see whether Owen Sound is becoming more affordable, more prosperous, more accessible, and safer. If the existing plan lacks those objective indicators, it should be amended. Accountability means measuring results, not only stating aspirations.

Tamara Sargent COUNCILLOR

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Any affordable housing commitments made in exchange for public financial assistance should be secured through legally binding agreements specifying the number of units, rent limits, deadlines, duration of affordability, and consequences for failing to deliver. A developer’s promise is not a binding commitment, and taxpayers are left without recourse when those promises are broken.

Harbour West is a clear example of why this matters. Owen Sound granted the development a $1.1 million development charge exemption, intended to encourage the project to move forward quickly. When the original exemption expired, the developer requested another break. Councillor Carol Merton raised the possibility of securing legally binding affordable housing commitments in exchange, but Council rejected that approach, relying instead on the developer's assurances that they would provide affordable housing anyway.

Now, Harbour West has begun pre-leasing apartments without any affordable units in its initial release. The City has confirmed there is no agreement requiring the developer to provide affordable housing.

This was a missed opportunity to use public investment to secure housing that local working-class people can actually afford.

The financial interests of the people who build and own housing are in contrast to the financial interests of the people who need somewhere affordable to live. Public subsidies should be judged by whether they deliver real benefits to residents, not simply by whether they make a development more profitable for wealthy investors.

I would support agreements specifying the number of affordable units, rent limits, deadlines, the duration of affordability, and meaningful consequences if commitments are not fulfilled.

As a rule, I do not support development charge holidays. Working-class homeowners should not have to subsidize private development that makes rich investors richer. I would consider an exception only where there was a substantial, demonstrable benefit to working class people, such as a significant number of deeply affordable housing units secured through legally binding agreements.

Every dollar of public assistance has an opportunity cost. The $1.1 million exemption represented public resources that could otherwise have supported actual affordable housing. Owen Sound needs more housing people can actually afford, not public subsidies based on promises taxpayers have no way to enforce.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

I support stronger public reporting of municipal financial assistance provided to private developments, drawing on Toronto’s approach to publishing development information and financial impacts. Before Council approves substantial discretionary assistance, residents should have access to a clear accounting of the public costs, expected benefits, and obligations attached to the proposal.

Every dollar of public assistance has an opportunity cost. Residents deserve to know not only what a private development might deliver, but also what the public is giving up to support it and whether the community receives a fair return.

I recognize that there are legitimate legal limits on disclosure. Under section 239 of Ontario’s Municipal Act, 2001, certain confidential commercial or financial information may be discussed in a closed meeting where

the statutory requirements are met. Solicitor-client privilege and other applicable confidentiality obligations may also restrict disclosure in particular circumstances. These safeguards are important, but they do not mean that all information relating to a private development must be kept confidential.

The City should disclose as much as the law permits, explain when information must be withheld, and publish the non-confidential financial information necessary for residents to understand the use of public resources. Taxpayers should not have to rely on scattered reports or piece together the financial implications of individual developments themselves.

Public assistance should come with public accountability. The key questions should always be: Who benefits, who pays, and what does the community get in return?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

When Owen Sound became part of Grey County in 2001, the City advocated to retain control over its tax ratios. We succeeded, and Ontario Regulation 311/01 was passed, giving Owen Sound the exceptional ability to continue setting its own tax ratios independently of Grey County. However, that independence came with an expectation that Owen Sound would gradually move its tax ratios toward those of Grey County, without establishing a deadline for when that convergence had to be completed.

More than two decades later, I believe it is time for Owen Sound to challenge that expectation. Rather than continuing to migrate our tax ratios toward the County's, Council should advocate to the Province for the right to design a tax system that reflects the needs of our own community.

That authority gives Council a choice: ask wealthy business property owners to pay a fairer share, or continue placing a disproportionate burden on working class Owen Sound homeowners.

Instead, this past Council has moved in the opposite direction. When it took office, the multi-residential tax ratio was 1.6779. Council progressively reduced it to 1.0 in 2026. That doesn't reduce the amount of money the City needs to collect - it just reduces the amount that large landlords pay, while shifting more of the levy onto residential homeowners.

In other words, Council shifted the tax burden away from large multi-residential property owners and onto working class homeowners.

I disagree with this direction. I want Council to advocate for greater control over municipal taxation and use that authority to distribute the burden more fairly.

There are also serious questions about communication and accountability. The City's April 2026 staff report stated that required communications to affected rental units would be made in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act. However, tenants I have spoken with in multi-residential buildings that appear to qualify have told me they did not receive a letter. Residents deserve a clear explanation of how the notification process was carried out and why some tenants may not have received notice.

If the City continues down this path by migrating its commercial tax ratio from its current 1.71 toward 1.0, next commercial properties will pay a smaller share of the levy - and homeowners will again be forced to make up more of the difference.

We can make municipal taxes more affordable for working people without sacrificing the public services they rely on. The answer isn't simply lower taxes - it's fairer taxes.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Yes. I support amending Vision 2050 to include measurable, publicly reported indicators of whether Owen Sound is becoming more affordable, prosperous, accessible, and safe. I would have supported Councillor Jon Farmer’s amendments in October 2025 to include measures of housing affordability, transportation, household income, and community safety. Those amendments were defeated.

The plan should include clear indicators for housing affordability, household income and poverty, transit ridership and accessibility, and community safety, including crime trends and residents’ perceptions of safety. Each should have a published baseline, measurable targets, and regular public progress reports.

Some of these outcomes are influenced by provincial and federal policy, but that is no excuse for failing to measure them. The City should report honestly on local conditions and identify what it can do within its own authority to improve them.

My platform includes concrete proposals that should be assessed against measurable outcomes: expanding public transit service, improving library access, providing free garbage bags, and using a vacant residential property tax to help address housing affordability and fund local priorities.

A growing economy is not enough if working people cannot afford housing, must spend an unreasonable share of their income on necessities, or cannot get to work because public transit is inadequate. Prosperity should mean that people who live and work in Owen Sound can afford to live here and enjoy a decent quality of life.

Vision 2050 should be more than a statement of aspirations. Residents deserve to know whether the City is meeting its commitments and improving people's lives. I support annual public reporting and clear explanations of what needs to change when targets are missed.

Owen Sound's success should be measured by whether the people who live and work here can afford to live decent lives, not simply by whether property values rise, investment grows, or developers receive incentives. People over profit.

David Schinbein COUNCILLOR

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

My understanding is that during the development application process,if a development charge is granted or changed then there are conditions that are to be met and are approved by Council, then the developer is obligated to follow them. In a previous council I served on we made a requirement of the developer that a percentage of new units (condos or apartments) must be below market or the development would not be approved by council.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

I would support showing to the public the details of any development in terms of any tax break or reduction to a developer. I would like to see the city management declare what an increase in the tax base any new development would result in.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

In most municipalities, landlords pay approximately 1.5% of the residential tax base. If the rate is reduced there must be a clear commitment from landlords that they pass the savings on to the tenants. If they don't then there is no reason to lower the taxes on that segment of the population. Any savings need to be conveyed to the public so they see the benefits of any change.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

The one issue I have with the 2050 plan is that the comparisons that the city used in their briefing document uses cities that are not peer municipalities. They referenced Surrey BC and Vancouver BC. You are talking about what is being done in an urban area of over one million as compared to an urban area (catchment area) of only 40,000. Their study does not reflect the reality of a large urban area vis-a-vie a small urban area to accomplish their stated goals.a, thus in my opinion the comparisons are not accurate. compared areas have a much larger tax base.

To achieve what is in the plan as it does not have a costing attached to it and is hard to judge whether anything could be measured

When it comes to transportation, correct me if I am wrong, Owen Sound has been having issues with its transit for as long as I can remember. Transit and accessibility can be improved through additional funding, however the funding must be linked to ridership. If any measures taken do not increase ridership then I find it hard to increase the spending on transit.

Notes and sources

Candidate wording, spelling and punctuation appear exactly as written; only layout, greetings and sign-offs were edited.

How the replies were edited

- Wording, spelling and punctuation are as the candidates wrote them, including errors. Nothing in the full answers was corrected, reworded or summarized.
- In Sections 1 to 4, each reply was divided by question and placed under that question. The complete replies, including remarks not tied to a question, follow Section 4.
- Omitted: email headers, quoted copies of the original questionnaire, mail-software text, lines that were only a greeting, a thank-you or a sign-off, signature blocks (including email and website addresses), and one personal aside. Links a candidate placed inside an answer are kept. Contact details for every candidate are on the City's website, owensound.ca.
- Formatting is standardized. Original fonts, colours and bold type are not reproduced, bullet lists are shown as bullets, line breaks caused by email wrapping were removed, and paragraph breaks were added where an email ran separate lines together (Dale Funston, David Schinbein).
- Justin Melanson's reply came as an attached Word document; all other replies were written in the body of an email.

AI assistance. AI tools were used to help compile and format this document. The candidates' answers are reproduced in their own words and were not written, summarized or altered by AI.

When replies arrived

Candidate	Office	Received
Jodi King	Mayor	Saturday, October 10, 7:12 p.m.
Andrii Zvorygin	Mayor	Saturday, October 10, 8:27 p.m.
Thomas Arakal	Councillor	Saturday, October 10, 10:05 p.m.
Tamara Sargent	Councillor	Sunday, October 11, 7:23 p.m.
Justin Bianco	Councillor	Monday, October 12, 10:40 p.m.
Dale Funston	Councillor	Tuesday, October 13, 3:00 p.m.
Joe Carder	Councillor	Tuesday, October 13, 8:11 p.m.
Justin Melanson	Councillor	Tuesday, October 13, 11:30 p.m. (Word attachment)
David Schinbein	Councillor	Wednesday, October 14, 2:26 a.m.

Publication and update policy

The original invitation acknowledged Thanksgiving weekend, requested replies by October 14 at 4:00 p.m. if possible, allowed candidates to ask for extra time, and offered to include later replies in updates. The invitation stated that lack of a reply would not be characterized as refusal. This publication follows those terms. Later responses or documented corrections may be incorporated in a dated revised edition.

What has not been checked

No independent audit of the underlying municipal budgets, tax ratios, housing projects, statutory interpretations, or electoral claims has been performed for this compilation. A candidate's assertion should be checked against primary records before being presented as a settled fact elsewhere. The policy background stated in the questions is not presented as an independently verified finding.

Sources

Candidate names, contact details and voting information: City of Owen Sound, owensound.ca.

Independent public-information work. No endorsements; no candidate rankings.