



29 August 2026

QUESTIONS FOR OWEN SOUND MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

1. Municipal leadership and management

Owen Sound's population has stagnated for more than two decades, while the size and cost of the municipal management structure have increased significantly. What changes would you make to ensure that the City's senior management structure is lean, accountable and focused on results rather than simply administering the status quo?

Would you support recruiting a City Manager with a demonstrated record of organizational transformation, cost reduction and successful change management?

Would you also support establishing fixed-term, renewable contracts for senior management positions, with a significant portion of compensation tied to measurable performance objectives established by Council?

2. Controlling property tax increases

Owen Sound taxpayers have experienced property-tax increases that, in our view, have exceeded what can reasonably be justified by inflation and population growth.

Would you support a policy limiting annual property-tax increases to the rate of inflation unless the City Manager can demonstrate a compelling reason to exceed it?

If you would support exceeding inflation, what circumstances would justify doing so?

3. Reducing the cost of government

Owen Sound's population today is smaller than it was in 2011, yet municipal spending and staffing have continued to grow.

Would you support requiring every municipal department to identify 5–10% in potential savings, including staff cuts, as part of the budget process?

Would you support using the City's 2011 budget, adjusted for inflation, as a benchmark for determining whether today's spending levels are justified?

If not, what alternative approach would you use to identify and eliminate unnecessary spending?

4. Council accountability and relationship with taxpayers

Many residents believe there is an increasing disconnect between City Hall and the taxpayers it serves.

What would you do to make City Council more transparent, accessible and accountable to residents?

Would you support greater public disclosure of the rationale behind major spending decisions, staffing increases, consultant contracts and significant policy decisions?

More importantly, what would you do to ensure that residents are treated as stakeholders in municipal government rather than as an obstacle to it?

5. Homelessness, addiction and the downtown

Owen Sound's downtown is facing increasingly visible homelessness, addiction and public disorder.

What specific actions would you take to address these problems?

Would you support a coordinated approach with the County that combines:

- increased access to addiction treatment and mental-health services;
- meaningful pathways into appropriate housing;
- stronger enforcement of existing laws and bylaws when public safety is affected; and
- clear expectations for individuals receiving publicly funded support?

What would you do differently from the current approach, and how would you measure whether your strategy is working?

6. Development charges and economic growth

Owen Sound needs more residential and commercial development if it is going to reverse decades of population stagnation.

Would you support reviewing the City's development-charge structure with the objective of making Owen Sound more attractive to developers and encouraging new housing construction?

Would you support targeted incentives or a temporary reduction or moratorium on development charges where appropriate, particularly where developers commit to including affordable or geared-to-income housing?

More broadly, what specific steps would you take to make Owen Sound a more attractive place to invest, build businesses and raise a family?

7. The true cost of municipal services

We believe taxpayers should be able to see the full cost of every municipal service, including the costs of administration, HR, payroll, facilities, information technology and other shared services.

Would you support fully allocating these costs to each municipal department, agency or shared-service arrangement so Council and taxpayers can see the true cost of each service?

Would you also support using this information when negotiating cost-sharing arrangements with organizations such as the Library and other agencies?

8. Water and wastewater costs

Water and wastewater charges have increased significantly, yet these costs are sometimes treated separately from the City's broader budget decisions.

Would you support requiring the Water Department to present Council with a complete explanation and justification for proposed rate increases as part of the annual budget process?

Would you also support requiring the Water Department to participate in the same cost-reduction and efficiency reviews expected of other municipal departments?

Ultimately, do you believe Council—not municipal staff—should be fully accountable to taxpayers for increases in water and wastewater charges?

Deadline for Submission is: Saturday, September 12, 2026