



Town of The Blue Mountains Election - 2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Supporting Tourism Industry & Role of Blue Mountain Village Association

Supporting Tourism Industry & Employees

- a) *What initiatives would you support to grow, improve and protect the tourism economy & to help communicate our history and planning, economic impact, and the benefits & value we bring to residents' lifestyles, property values, etc.?*
- b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

Protecting our natural environment and preserving the rural heritage of our Blue Mountains is key to helping the tourism economy because it is what draws visitors to our area in the first place. BMR and BMRA have demonstrated long-term thinking which is vital to the sustainable choices we make about our future together. BMR and the BMRA are keen to foster public-private partnerships which I believe is a link we must further employ in strategy about the issues named in the questions below. The BMVA representation through Andrew at every Council meeting and weekly at Citizens' Forum is noted and appreciated! I always welcome his questions and comments because your organization and the work he does with the South Georgian Bay Tourism Labour Supply Task Force is a huge part of the business and economic picture here in our town. The tourism industry is thriving here thanks to your efforts over decades. I would like to see our budget accommodate a full-time Economic Development Officer because to realize our business and industry potential, we need public-private collaboration.

Blue Mountain Village Association Effectiveness

- a) *Do you believe that BMVA is effective in its Vision and Mission and that we add value to residents, businesses and government?*
- b) *Will you support continued partnership between BMVA and the Town?*

Yes, BMVA is definitely effective in its vision to be a 1st choice year-round destination because BMR and the Village are major reasons people choose our Blue Mountains for their weekends and holidays! This is not just the result of the facilities themselves but also the marketing that the BMVA executes worldwide so that it is not just left to the municipality. I do support continued partnership between the BMVA and the Town. I ask: do you feel there has been enough opportunity to meet with Council members and staff in the past four years to share vital information from the tourism industry you represent?

Leadership, Strategy & Economic Development

Leadership

- a) *Please share what your leadership approach will be and how you will ensure that all community voices – including the business community – will be incorporated into your work.*
- b) *Please share your thoughts on how the Town of The Blue Mountains can improve its approach to solutions, service and collaboration.*

My research in Community Studies (my MA specialization) and my demonstrated practice in leadership is collaborative and citizen-led. For example, in the past year I have taken workshops at the Tamarack Institute: *Cultivating the Power & Possibility of Citizen Leadership- Creating Caring & Resilient Communities* and *Turf, Trust & Collaboration*, as well as *Building Skills for Change* at the Ryerson University Institute for Change Leaders. Change happens when stakeholders come together and share in the leadership. There is nothing more exhilarating than creating a space in which everyone can bring their experience, skills and leadership together to find solutions to challenges and build a common vision. Our residents, organizations and businesses have valuable contributions to make to shared leadership of our community.

Communication and the trust it builds are keys to my platform. Council, staff, citizens, including the business and agricultural communities and our non-profit organizations, must feel invited, respected and heard in an inclusive dialogue. To foster that shift, I advocate for openness and transparency: recorded votes, reduction in closed door meetings, and strategic planning and Sustainable Path progress checklists that are regularly updated and accessible to citizens. I also want to see Town Hall meetings where all of Council attends to listen to residents. Holding open community meetings such the Citizens' Forum meeting about Communication at the Marsh Street Centre last fall should be an opportunity organized by the town, not left as a hole that community groups need to fill.

Economic Development Strategy for Future

- A. *What initiatives would you propose to ensure Town of The Blue Mountains has a robust and diverse economic strategy for short and long term growth?*
- B. *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

One initiative is to allow for a full-time Economic Development Officer as noted above.

I advocate we provide the right environment for entrepreneurship in product and service businesses including tourism and agricultural-related enterprises. The next Council must track the progress of the SouthWestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) Network because the first phase of network build is scheduled from 2018 to 2022. Lack of reliable Internet puts rural residents and businesses at a disadvantage. We live in the southwest corner of the Blue Mountains just a 15-minute drive from Clarksburg and yet our Internet and cell phone coverage is horribly unreliable. Farming regularly relies on connectivity in equipment technology. Rural entrepreneurs cannot rely on home-based work space without consistent high-speed Internet. Entrepreneurs do not just create their own jobs but provide jobs for staff too as their enterprises grow, so let's make sure they are part of the dialogue.

I do not like that the *Sustainable Path* has been relegated to an "aspirational" document. The intent of the citizens, staff and Council of the time was to make this an actionable pathway and includes both short-term and long-term goals in *Economic Prosperity* integrated *Community Vibrancy* and *Environment & Ecological Integrity*. You will see my full platform is modeled after this balance.

I am happy that our staff reports refer to lines of our strategic plan, but the promise of an updated monitoring table and progress reports to Council in the *2015-2020 Corporate Strategic Plan* are not done or available to citizens. We need to know where we are to see where we can grow. Therefore, I propose we fully complete the objectives already named but track them, share the progress and update our course as required. The objectives of *Goal #1- Create opportunities for Sustainability* are to retain and attract business, promote a diversified economy, support value-added agriculture and culinary tourism and improve visibility and local identity. The *Sustainable Path's Economic Prosperity* section set numerous goals too. Council, staff, businesses, industries and citizens need to be on the same page. Council must insist that this reporting process happens, so we can measure what we have accomplished and what we still need to address.

Labour Market Issues

Labour Shortage

- a) *What initiatives would you support to attract and retain workers to the area?*
- b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

My experience with volunteer organizations has taught me that if you address housing needs first, other challenges in people's lives are improved or more manageable. This includes the ability to find a job and hold on to a job. Attainable housing for workers is a major ingredient, as is reliable public transportation that meets their shift needs. Please see my answers on these two topics below.

Furthermore, the established tourism industry we have is an excellent post-secondary learning environment. As a college teacher, I would love to see a partnership with Georgian College to offer an integrated cooperative program right here at Blue to attract and retain workers. To be able to earn while you learn and then expand your opportunities with post-secondary education in this field would attract potential students- it would be not just a job but a place to grow a career.

Housing Issues

Attainable Housing

- a) *What specific initiatives would you support to increase the supply of attainable housing in Town of The Blue Mountains & area?*
- b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

Attainable options are happening in both Whistler and Banff, so I advocate learning from these communities similar to ours. Specifically, the Whistler Housing Authority has effectively established a continuum of rental and ownership options for its tourism industry employees and retirees. They offer occupancy restricted rental units as well as resale price & occupancy restricted ownership units. They have a community engagement strategy to involve all key stakeholders in roundtable discussion to find solutions to challenges. Secondly, we could investigate the restricted price and equity share purchase options of the Banff Housing Corporation. Their newly built Ti'nu rental complex is also a model that would fit needs in our community too.

Our Attainable Housing Corporation (AHC) is a step in the right direction, but we need to keep working to create an attainable housing continuum for every age and stage of life. I concur with the AHC that we must consider and keep moving on possible inclusionary housing, private-public partnerships, increased density where appropriate. Development charge deferrals and expedited approvals of applications for projects featuring attainable housing are AHC suggestions that could be implemented as soon as possible.

I support the recent South Georgian Bay Tourism Labour Supply Task Force's Attainable Housing Study's recommendation for market-driven dormitory-style housing and I am excited about the possibilities that open up with public-private partnerships. I think the BMVA is poised to be a key player in those solutions, and I would look forward to working together if elected to council. What about a social enterprise model such as Options for Homes tailored to our town? I also believe there is merit in the tiny home movement in Ontario as groups of citizens across the province are coming together to explore cooperative ownership campuses. I commend the secondary suite zoning changes in our town and Grey County as another solution to the need for attainable housing and a way in which our residents can afford to keep a lifelong home in retirement age. All the above are opportunities for the Blue Mountains to be a leader in Ontario for creative solutions to housing.

Your question is directed to attainable housing, but I would like to expand the perspective to affordable housing as well. A key stakeholder to be part of this dialogue about housing options is Beaver Valley Outreach. They are tapped into the needs of our residents who need affordable housing options. It is a Council's responsibility to represent all the residents and we have needs in this community for both attainable and affordable housing solutions.

Short-term Accommodation (STA)

- a) *What initiatives would you support to protect occupancy levels of existing operators of STAs?*
- b) *What initiatives will you champion in relation to the STA program in the future?*

I support leaving the STA regulations as is to protect the existing occupancy levels but also to enforce the distance requirements, reporting and demerit systems for disturbance or property infractions. Two-way communication with our regulated STA operators who contribute to our accommodation options and local economy while following the rules can provide us with important input in the next four years as we tackle the Air BnB sweep through every destination town.

Town Services & Municipal Taxes

- a) *What Town services would you increase or decrease?*
- b) *Would you favour increasing or decreasing the tax rate of residents and businesses?*

The Attainable Housing Corporation is a step in the right direction, but we need to devote more public budget or land to match private contributions in partnerships to create attainable and affordable housing options for every age and stage of life. See answer above.

Regional transportation services (including our contribution) need to be expanded and continued beyond short deadlines like this December. How can employees commit to winter positions if they have to rely on public transportation and don't know if it will end in the middle of the season? I know employees who have to spend 25% of their daily earnings to arrange for taxis between Collingwood and BMR. We are headed in the right direction with the pilot project, but I hope to see the service continued and expanded. See further answer below.

I would like to see a prioritization road and bridge infrastructure needs to support the agricultural community as well as residents and tourists, but this and the aforementioned services and programs depend on a new Council and all departments reviewing the books and planning a sustainable future from 2018 onward.

Transportation Issues

Public Transit

- a) *What initiatives would you support to increase transportation options for visitors, residents and workers in the area?*
- b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

Public transportation is a service that could benefit many in our community: residents who do not drive or both residents and visitors would choose not to drive if there were a transportation alternative. That would cut down on the traffic strain and its environmental impact as well as meet the needs of seniors and others who may not be able to drive. The best route financially is to fully participate and contribute to a regional strategy with funding from the County and its application for funding to the province. At the moment, we cannot sure if that provincial funding will continue be available with the new government.

Active Transportation/Cycling

- a) *Do you support increased cycling options for the region, including the Collingwood/Village cycling route?*
- b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

Active transportation includes a seamless connection between walking, riding a bike or wheelchair and public transportation. Therefore, our regional public transportation strategy needs to include accessible hubs. I support coordination and enhancement of the existing cycling options in our region, including the walking/cycling route between Collingwood and the Village. As you mentioned, it is ready to go- let's provide a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists. Trails in Collingwood are named after private donors. Can we not make use of that funding option?

Road Safety

- a) *What road safety improvements would you prioritize and why?*
- b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

County Road 19 has been greatly improved in safety since they have properly corrected the initial added-on shoulders and repaved the whole surface together. I drive that road on a regular basis from my home and am concerned about the MTO suggestion that it and Grey Road 2 through Ravenna becomes the alternative for the Highway 26 traffic. It can be a very dangerous road because bad weather can literally

spring up on you halfway up or down the mountain and increased traffic will not help. None of us have the perfect solution to the Highway 26 traffic yet, and I do not believe the answer is making it five lanes wide. For safety, can we urge the MTO to slow the limits to one consistent speed? Can we disperse the traffic to several optional routes depending on the destination? I think the incorporation of roundabouts improves safety and improves congestion and difficulty in feeding into the traffic flow, so funding and coordination between the province, County and Town (and our respective roads) is paramount. I am glad to see the County has agreed to the roundabout at Roads 19 and 21.
