



Town of The Blue Mountains Election - 2022 Candidate Questionnaire

Before we begin with our priorities, please tell us why you are running, what your priorities will be if elected, and finally, why BMVA members should vote for you?

The Blue Mountains is surrounded by the scenic shores of Georgian Bay, biodiversity of the Niagara Escarpment and rich agriculture land which adds to the landscape which change through the four-season cycle. Whether a local resident, day tripper, or enjoying a longer vacation we all are attracted by the environment. Protection of this our finite resource is paramount. The importance of our environment must be elevated in our town's decision making processes. Our town has as you know continues to experience unprecedented growth over the last four years and now more than ever, we need to be very thoughtful regarding the major decisions over the next few years. The decisions the town makes will shape our community for generations to come. I am running to bring, bold, creative leadership, grounded in common sense to deliver on environmentally sustainable growth and development which includes:

- An Official Plan which underpinned by the teeth necessary to deliver on its goals
- Infrastructure:
 - Affordable housing, in partnership with neighbouring towns and maximizing accessing federal and social financing in collaboration with developers
 - Water and drainage reconstruction to support current needs
 - Creation of green space and trails
 - Partnering with post-secondary education to provide pipelines for the needed work force to deliver childcare, healthcare, hospitality and construction trades

A. Have you worked with BMVA in the past and do you believe we add value to residents, businesses and government?

I was fortunate enough to be a participant in a focus group as part of the Blue Mountain Village Association Strategic Plan sessions in September 2021. While not working directly with the BMVA, having worked part time at the Blue Mountain Resort, I am acutely aware of the shared concerns regarding labor and affordable housing issues on staffing levels for residents and tourists, especially as my area of employment has been in food and beverage.

On April 7, 2022, I shared with Andrew Siegwart your President, a link to a program being provided elsewhere in Ontario for the purpose of create local capacity to support food and beverage needs of their local tourism and recreation industry. <https://muskokafutures.ca/community-partners/> I also shared this idea concurrently with an election official for the purpose of having this suggestion placed on the Labour Task Force agenda.

I know the BMVA understands the need for sustainable tourism which is both local and visitors enjoying our area without harming the local community and nature and having a positive impact on our environment, society and economy.

The BMVA does add value to the residents, business and government in many ways which include:

- Promotion of events, of which a number support local not for profits and charities, local healthcare providers etc.
- Advocacy for improvements in our local economic infrastructure, i.e., affordable housing and transportation etc.
- Grants awarded by means of the BMVA Foundation to members and organizations of our community to support programs making a difference to our local residents, i.e., recent support of the Tree Trust to plant trees in Heritage Park
- Ensuring the tourist industry lens is valued, as it is a key force for sustainable socioeconomic development

B. Did the outgoing council implement any changes/ bylaws /policies that you hope to reverse or change?

The Official Plan amendment proposed in principle, I would like to see revamped as it will not serve the residents as it stands for a variety of reasons which include:

- The underlying documentation infrastructure i.e., policies, protocols and by-laws are not present, nor are their plans in place for them to developed and or implemented. An absence of these only serves to create opportunities for developers to take the town to the Ontario Land Tribunal and escalate legal costs which are paid for by the residents. We as a town cannot afford not to the do the necessary work to give the Official Plan the necessary 'teeth'.

I was pleased to see my comments at the recent Official Plan public meeting reinforced by a recent article titled Ontario Land Tribunal decisions have favoured developers 97 per cent of the time <https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/analysis/2022/09/20/ontario-land-tribunal-decisions-have-favoured-developers-97-per-cent-of-the-time.html>

To emphasis my point it was reported on September 28th in Collingwood Today that the town has now spent more than \$110,000 on one appeal to the OLT and the

subsequent request to review that decision. This is equivalent of the annual 2022 tax bill paid by fifty-four homes. <https://www.collingwoodtoday.ca/the-blue-mountains-and-grey-highlands/tbm-faces-possible-10-tax-increase-in-2023-5876989> This needs to cease.

Economic Recovery & Development

BMVA supports continued growth and diversification of our local economy to assist businesses, municipalities and social agencies to meet the service needs of local residents and visitors. Predictable and equitable tax rates, employment lands development, key infrastructure improvements and innovative partnerships between private, public and social agencies are needed. The local economy will be in recovery and rebuilding mode over the full course of the next municipal term of office. All sectors of the economy will require time and support to rebuild; now is not the time to implement new taxes, increase costs to do business or to over-regulate.

C. Do you support the above statement?

Agree!

D. Will you continue to collaborate with and support BMVA's DMO/Tourism role as well as our arts, culture and sports programming?

Yes! As a result of the pandemic destinations such as the Blue Mountain Village and Resort are increasingly enjoyed by people who call this home. I have seen evidence of this during my employment at the Blue Mountain Resort as locals increasing come to and enjoy the amenities, especially those who live within walking distance.

As a local resident and active in volunteering, I regularly see the role the BMVA plays in both supporting and raising the profile of our arts, culture, sports and local charitable events in collaboration with the town and other volunteer organizations.

E. Will you commit to not increasing taxes or implementing new taxes?

I commit to doing anything and everything I can to ensure that the Town of The Blue Mountains does not increase their tax rate for property taxes. This will mean scrutinizing the budget for 2023/2024 in detail for where increases are not warranted, savings can be realized. Further to that I have questioned overruns in budgets for projects and will hold staff accountable for how your and my taxpayer dollars are spent.

Having a MBA, coupled with experience of being accountable for budgets larger than the town within multi-site healthcare systems and undertaking operational reviews I come prepared with the skill set and experience necessary for budget reviews. I prefer zero based budgeting and enhanced oversight on the fiscal position of the town and ensure that items previously financed do not unnecessarily stay within a budget line year on year, in the absence of demonstrated need.

I commit to being supportive of our new Mayor and Deputy Mayor in working with Grey County to not raise their upper tier tax rate.

The residents of the town are at risk because of the next MPAC assessment currently scheduled for 2024. I will further commit to asking for our council and county to advocate for the need to address property tax (MPAC) reform to address artificial inflation of housing prices created by the COVID-19 pandemic real estate market fueled by the acceleration of remote working and retirements.

Local Labour Market Development

Our local labour market is insufficient to meet the needs of businesses, municipalities, social agencies and consumers across the region. This is the result of population growth by demographics that do not participate in the local employment market, the size of Canada's workforce approaching retirement, high cost of living, out-migration of local youth, low local immigration settlement and more. The Town of The Blue Mountains needs to strengthen the local labour market by stimulating local infrastructure investments in: attainable and workforce housing, regional public transportation, local post-secondary programs, supports to welcome new Canadians and their families, childcare, productive relationships with upper- and lower-tier regional municipalities and more.

What initiatives would you support to attract and retain workers to the area and will you prioritize this issue?

We are experiencing the tightest labour market in memory. Therefore, talent retention, attraction, and engagement is key, therefore, the overall initiative for not only the BMVA but for our town is to elevate the employee value proposition and this includes the following key interdependent initiatives which need to be undertaken concurrently and include:

- Affordable homes,
- Improved public transportation,
- Childcare and
- Co-operative training programs in collaboration with Georgian and other colleges

Supportive of the inclusion of staff housing within the Town's Official Plan amendments as the provision for opportunities for purpose-built employee housing as it is long overdue.

It is extremely sad that the lack of affordable housing continues to be a pressing issue since the release of the South Georgian Bay Tourism Industry Workforce Housing Research and Business Case in May of 2018. Four years have passed, and the only difference is the cost of building affordable/attainable has increased.

While housing markets are cyclical by nature, the factors that have made The Blue Mountains and surrounding municipalities so attractive to external buyers are unlikely to change. Remote workers are increasingly a new resident and visitor segment in our

area. While the town did take action with the first board meeting of The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation in April 9 2019, there is only one home which has been rented out and that is the home purchased by the town adjacent to the Beaver Valley Community School in Thornbury. What saddens me is the following:

The Town's current Official Plan referenced affordable housing coupled with every mandatory planning justification report makes reference to the provision of affordable housing the Town only took action in to address this in the late winter/early spring of 2022.

There remains a need for a sustainable robust transportation system to ensure and there has been a substantive start to this with the recent presentation to the Committee of the Whole meeting on September 6, 2022.

F. New Canadians often look for unique supports (i.e., places of worship, community centres) when choosing a place to settle. What role do you see for the municipal government to assist in this regard?

There should be a community handbook and this would see the development of this community resource to be positioned within the Community Services portfolio. I have recognized both the need and value of this through the following areas:

- As an employee at the Blue Mountain Resort given I have worked directly with front line workers new to our area and new to Canada. I took the initiative to personally provide them with relevant information to facilitate easier access to local amenities including groceries from their native country, virtual physician access, regional and wider Ontario information to enhance their knowledge and enjoyment of our area and province
- As previous Chair, Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee I developed a welcome information package outlining about the location and offerings of schools and childcare in addition to places of worship and community centres.

Transportation

Getting around South Georgian Bay and the Blue Mountains efficiently and safely has become an issue that urgently needs to be addressed. We believe the following priorities are critical: improved safety measures on local roads, new highway capacity, expanded public transit service, and increased active transportation and trails (particularly in the Craigeith/Village community).

G. Public transit, bike paths, highways and public parking often compete for the same municipal dollars, How will you juggle these competing transportation and transit priorities?

Cost benefit analysis which involves comparing the explicit and implicit costs of taking or not taking an action versus expected benefits or missed opportunities. Our need for a vibrant workforce is paramount therefore, transportation for workers

is an immediate priority. Other modes of public transportation need to be planned and executed in tandem with the building of affordable housing for those whom having a vehicle is not an option and or cycling in the winter months is problematic.

H. What road safety improvements would you prioritize and why?

Intersection safety, dedicated paved bike paths because it creates more distance between the motorized and especially electric vehicles as they are quieter. There is also an imperative need for improved road safety to be undertaken on a regional basis, as cyclists in our area travel across municipal and county borders.

Continue and advance discussions with both Grey and the Ministry of Transportation for intersection safety improvements along their respective corridors.

I. What initiatives would you support to increase transportation options for visitors, residents and workers in the area?

Leveraging the work of the Town of The Blue Mountains Master Transportation Plan as it highlights a huge opportunity to tie in with resort Travel Demand Management programs (e.g., bus pass includes ski lift tickets). Also a higher level of service between hotels, towns and resorts.

Improve transfers between transit systems in parallel with continuing to monitor and evaluate the performance of the Blue Mountain Link and GTR Route 4 coming out of the pandemic as decisions need to be data driven.

Would be support of closing the gaps in the existing transportation networks which have been identified in the Draft Master Transportation Plan to create a complete and interconnected cycling and walking network, especially between Craighleith and Thornbury.

E-scooters/bikes & electric cars, both privately owned and rental, are more available than ever before, do you support these modes of transportation and will you invest in infrastructure to allow the safe operation of them?

Yes and yes. I support these modes of transportation and as a cyclist and frequent pedestrian myself recognize the need for increased safety. I would commit to being supportive of investment in the necessary infrastructure, i.e., dedicated bike lanes and charging stations, however, as I also commit to being fiscally responsible, I would ensure that town staff explore all avenues of federal and provincial funding and would extend to having all RFPs require respondents to do the same to reduce the balance the need for infrastructure at the lowest cost for taxpayers.

Also, developers should be engaged to support this type of infrastructure within their respective developments, especially open spaces.

This would also serve to progress the town's ability to reduce their overall carbon footprint.

Housing

The Town of The Blue Mountains lacks attainable home ownership, rental supply and workforce housing options. Numerous strategies have been created over the last decade by industry, local municipalities and our local not-for-profit Attainable Housing Corporation. We do not need to develop more strategic plans. We need changes to our Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw to permit development of a greater range of attainable residential and workforce housing options, as well as balanced and appropriate increases in density and height in the right places. A strengthened partnership between the Town and The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation can accelerate the right policies and implementation plans.

A. Will you champion the implementation of changes to our official plan and zoning bylaws to expedite the development of attainable and workforce housing? What else do you envision can be done to meet this need?

Yes, I am currently supportive of the inclusion of staff housing within the Town's Official Plan amendments as the provision for opportunities for purpose built employee housing as it is long overdue. As with any Official Plan amendment the 'teeth' comes with the underlying zoning bylaw changes and would be supportive of that taking place.

Having the BMVA and the Blue Resort as out other key stakeholders in the community at the table is important as otherwise the town cannot be responsive to changing needs of workforce.

Sustainability/Whole Communities

BMVA believes that a collaborative approach on key initiatives can make a big difference, including: financial incentives for businesses and residents to implement green technologies and upgrades, increasing electrical vehicle infrastructure, and joint municipal/private sector service delivery to achieve economies of scale (e.g. snow removal, waste, recycling).

Public greenspace, parks, family amenities, waterfront access and trails are lacking in the Craigleith/Blue Mountain Village community. With the recent boom in new residential development (and associated development charge and property tax revenues), residents want a more integrated, safe, green and accessible Craigleith/Blue Mountain Village community.

B. What commitments will you make to the residents of Craigleith and Blue Mountain Village to address these concerns?

Increase provision of zoned open space by the town being required by developers within and adjacent to residential developments. Enforcement of Open Space: In the

Town's Official Plan, on page 71 (pre proposed amendments) and 87 (post proposed amendments) of forty.

Improve and maintain the physical and aesthetic amenities of the streetscape, especially in the commercial core areas of **Craigleith**; as noted on page 246 of the Official Plan.

Further proposed amendments to the Official Plan on page 226, while

The objective of the shoreline acquisition and access policies of this Plan is to eventually create an appropriate number of public waterfront parks distributed along the length of the shoreline. Lands acquired should have sufficient size and depth so as to provide adequate access and parking.

Acquisition of shoreline lands adjacent to existing public holdings shall be encouraged. Shoreline walkways shall be especially encouraged as part of the development of plans of subdivision. Particular regard shall be given to the acquisition of larger Proposed Park areas along the shoreline. need to do more than Shoreline walkways shall be especially encouraged as part of the development of plans of subdivision.

To meet an objective of 'shoreline acquisition' there needs to be an underlying plan against which progress can be measured. How one measures 'encouragement needs to be defined' or replaced with more measurable terminology. The same applies to development plans, i.e., 'encouragement' of shoreline walkways needs to be replaced with the word 'must'!

C. Are there any current municipal services you would increase or decrease?

Virtual meetings need to continue past the December 2022 date as it enables weekenders and other seasonal resident to participate.

Further to this it would be beneficial if the town hall could be open one weekend a month during peak seasons to accommodate weekenders and or seasonal residents to access services which can only be carried out by means of a face-to-face interaction.