

2026 SAUGEEN SHORES MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE SURVEY

Section 4: Municipal Projects & Meaningful Consultation

QUESTION 17

What commitments would you make to ensure municipal projects or policy changes affecting the business communities are well communicated, transparent and developed collaboratively with those who will be impacted?

Brian Putman (Not Putnam)

Mayor

As mentioned previously, the Town will be embarking on a review of its Strategic Plan. I will ensure that policy frameworks are embedded in the Strategic Plan. Frameworks that are developed with all rights holders.

Jeffrey J James

Mayor

I would ensure collaboration by bringing the BIAs in at the earliest planning stage following the High Street model of weekly updates and early engagement so that business insights shape the outcome before decisions are made, not just during final review.

Luke Charbonneau

Mayor

The Town will communicate through Council's BIA representatives as well as through our Community Development Officer. We will also continue to communicate with the public through the local media and using our online engagement platforms like Engage Saugeen Shores and Flash Vote. Council is committed to transparency in our decision making. As Mayor, I will continue to ensure that all Council decisions are made publicly and in accordance with the Municipal Act.

Diane Huber

Deputy Mayor

I commit to continuing to ask for, and expect, improvements in the Town's communications program, website content, public engagement opportunities and relevant staff interaction potential. If I were appointed as a Council rep on a BIA Board I commit to being an active participant on that BIA Board.

Odette Bartnicki

Deputy Mayor

I would support designating a Council liaison to each BIA to strengthen consistent, two-way communication. Over a four-year term, all members of Council could serve one year on one of the BIAs to raise awareness across all of Council regarding issues impacting local business. The liaison(s) should identify matters that may affect businesses, share information early and bring BIA concerns back to Council. Staff reports should also clearly describe business impacts, consultation undertaken and how feedback influenced the recommendation.

Don Matheson

Vice Deputy Mayor

I've touched on this in some of my earlier answers, because for me it really comes back to communication.

Keep people informed. Talk to them early enough that their input can make a difference, and make sure the BIA and Council representative are keeping that communication going both ways.

And when Council makes a decision, explain what we decided and why.

People aren't always going to agree with us, and that's okay. But they should know they were listened to and had an opportunity to be part of the conversation.

Jordan MacKinnon

Port Elgin

The expectation needs to be that the BIAs and businesses will be consulted as a regular and ongoing part of the decision-making process. It's not just something that happens when we think there might be controversy or if we think they will agree with us.

The expectation is that there will be regular communication between municipal staff, council, BIAs and businesses.

Patricia Corrigan-Frank

Councillor Port Elgin Ward

I believe in early engagement with BIA members. Clear timelines are needed and decisions clearly documented to show the Town's intent to show accountability and transparency with all municipal projects.

Rachel Stack

Port Elgin Ward Councillor

I have long supported a strong emphasis on public outreach on key issues with our community. We should continue to enhance our use of the Engage Saugeen platform to seek public input and feedback on important policy decisions, and lean on the Council representatives on the BIA boards to community key policy updates regularly.

Tamara McDonald

Councilor- Port Elgin Ward

1. Shift from late stage notice to early stage co-design - By bringing businesses into the room during the concept phase rather than the final vote, we build smarter policies, protect taxpayers and avoid costly mid-project corrections.

2. Meet business owners on their ground - Standard council meetings don't fit the reality of running a shop or a restaurant. I think we could host regular corridor walk throughs and utilize quick digital pulse check-ins. This gives entrepreneurs a simple, direct way to provide meaningful feedback on their own schedule.

3. Guarantee transparency and closing the loop - Advocating for staff reports that explicitly reflect local business and BIA feedback before Council takes a final vote. Local owners deserve to see how their input shaped a decision, or hear the rationale if a suggestion couldn't be accommodated. Transparency builds trust, fosters genuine collaboration, and delivers responsible economic growth across Saugeen Shores.

Eric Tolton

Saugeen Ward Councillor

Major projects affecting businesses should have clear timelines, regular updates and an identified Town contact person. When circumstances change, affected businesses should hear it promptly and directly from the Town. Proposed policy changes should require consultation in advance as the policy is being developed.

Neil Sarginson

Saugeen Ward Councillor

I would advocate assigning a staff member to act as a single point of contact, ensuring all pertinent information is shared and discussed with the BIA.

Brenda Reeves

Southampton Ward councillor

I would commit to early notice, plain language information, public timelines, and regular updates from the beginning to the end. Businesses, BIAs and residents should help shape options before decisions are made with public reports showing what was heard and how it influenced the outcome. People may not always agree with the final decision, but they deserve an open, honest process with no surprises.

Cathe McIntosh

Councillor, Southampton Ward

I believe a core responsibility of the Council representative is to be an active, reliable two-way link between the BIA and the municipality; given my small business experience, I believe I would be a good fit for that role and would express my interest in serving as the Council representative. When items come before Council that may affect the BIA or its members, I would make sure that information is relayed at regular BIA meetings - or sooner when necessary - so businesses have an opportunity to provide input.

Cheryl Grace

Southampton ward councillor

Council should not be micro-managing staff projects, but I have found that our staff is very responsive if a member of the public raises a concern with me. For example, I met a resident on Tuesday night while I was walking my dog. I asked her about her experience with a recent road reconstruction in her neighbourhood. She described some concerns, I sent a note to the staff in charge and they contacted her within several hours. Reach out to your local Council members about your concerns. Again, BIA Council reps and economic development staff are there for the specific purpose of updating the BIA on key policies and projects, especially those that directly impact our businesses.

Harry Mazmanian

Southampton Ward

By committing to take as long as it takes to hear, record and publish discussions at town hall meetings. Minutes of these meeting should be recorded and published. I would never say that we need to eliminate public consultation, or eliminate public consultation that is proposed by the Community Planning Permit System.

John Divinski

Councillor, Southampton Ward

Communication, communication, communication! It's one of the trending topics of this year's election campaign. Meetings between the municipality and the business community, through the BIA's should happen at the very least, once quarterly if not once a month.

The left hand has to know what the right hand is doing!

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