

2026 SAUGEEN SHORES MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE SURVEY

Section 3: Business Growth & Economic Development

Healthy local business areas contribute to employment, municipal assessment, tourism, investment, community identity and overall quality of life. As Saugeen Shores grows and evolves, municipal decisions can play an important role in creating an environment where independent businesses can continue to invest, adapt and compete.

QUESTION 10

What is your approach to reducing red tape, including permits, approvals and access to municipal programs or funding?

Brian Putman (Not Putnam)

Mayor

I would need to explore these issues in greater detail. I would listen to the concerns of the business community and explore reasonable alternatives to improve conditions.

Jeffrey J James

Mayor

I would work to finish the work being done on the CPPS so that it not only tightens up it's shortcomings but actually helps to protect our heritage and affordability needs while streamlining the permitting process. I would also actively promote existing supports like the Spruce the Bruce grant program and the Business to Bruce one-on-one advisory service to make municipal funding and resources more accessible.

Luke Charbonneau

Mayor

I have always been a strong proponent of efforts to limit and reduce regulation where possible. An example of this is the success we had in the last term of Council in introducing a 'two-zone' approach to flood plain management. This policy significantly reduced the regulatory burden impacting property owners and businesses in large parts of Southampton while continuing to protect those properties and the community from flooding. I am eager to continue work to ensure that the municipality and the County issues permits in a timely way and to ensure that municipal permits are not required where adequate protection is already provided through provincial, federal or other regulation.

Diane Huber

Deputy Mayor

There are dedicated staff members who work in dedicated 'paths' - is there a path and a staff member or members that BIA members know is the best/preferred way for them to access information and support efficiently and effectively? If not, there should be. This channel would quickly show what red tape is problematic within a number of relevant areas and this gives the Municipality information that could lead to improvements. I think it would be great if there was a portal that included a variety of programs and funding sources that would be relevant to a BIA member. Sometimes it seems as though information is scattered and not able to be found. A consolidation section on the Town website with active, working links to internal and external resources and programs could be a great start.

Odette Bartnicki

Deputy Mayor

Reducing red tape should make municipal processes clearer and more predictable without weakening environmental safeguards or meaningful public participation. A pre-development checklist and early meetings with staff would identify requirements, address design considerations and prevent unexpected delays or work stoppages.

Permits, inspections and funding applications should have clear steps, identified contacts and reasonable response timelines. A well-designed Community Planning Permit System could further streamline appropriate development while protecting community character and ensuring residents have opportunities for input.

Don Matheson

Vice Deputy Mayor

I believe we need rules, but we also need to make them easier to understand and work through.

If someone is applying for a permit, looking for an approval or trying to access a Town program, they should know what they need, who they need to talk to and how long the process should take.

We also have knowledgeable staff who can help businesses identify and work through grant programs and other funding opportunities that may be available.

Sometimes reducing red tape isn't about changing the rules. It's simply about making the process clearer and helping people through it.

And if we find something that isn't working, we should be willing to take another look at it.

For me, it's about making it easier to work with the Town while still making sure we do things properly.

Jordan MacKinnon

Port Elgin

To be clear, safety, accountability and environmental responsibility should never be sacrificed for the sake of doing business.

What we should do is work with the BIAs, municipal staff and business owners to see what, if any, red tape exists where potential business investments might be getting stalled or held up.

Clear communication is again important, so when applications for things like rezoning are received, the applicants know exactly what has to happen and how long that may take.

Patricia Corrigan-Frank

Councillor Port Elgin Ward

1- Possibly use the CPPS to reduce approval times. This needs to be studied carefully. If the CCPS is approved it will replace the Zoning By-law and Site Plan Control By-law for the downtown areas and would require only one comprehensive permit. My concern is that, if implemented, it would put more control of applications in the hands of staff only and would cut Council and the Public from many of the decisions regarding new development.

2- The Town already offers Building Permit fee reductions for accessibility and facade improvements in the commercial core.

3- Spruce the Bruce helps businesses with their applications and approvals. It provides one-on-one advice. The Town could make this a part of the Business Support Centre. Every BIA member would know they have a specific person to guide them through permits, grants, and licensing.

Rachel Stack

Port Elgin Ward Councillor

Ensure we review policies and programs on a rolling 5 year basis to ensure the programs are achieving the right result with the appropriate level of bureaucracy, and seek opportunities to continue to improve processes/procedures.

Tamara McDonald

Councillor- Port Elgin Ward

While I believe the town has started to take initial steps, I believe small business owners are still facing paperwork delays and runarounds. I think it would be great to have a single point of contact. Someone who is guiding people through building permits, fire inspections, sign bylaws, and licensing all at once. I believe applicants still have to navigate separate departments and every week spent waiting on permits is another week paying rent on a closed building. I think Council's job isn't to slow people down, but to clear a path so that local entrepreneurs can open their doors.

Eric Tolton

Saugeen Ward Councillor

Rules should exist for a reason. I support reviewing permits and approvals from an applicant's perspective to make municipal processes clearer, faster and easier to navigate without compromising necessary standards.

Neil Sarginson

Saugeen Ward Councillor

Similar to the previous answer, assign dedicated municipal staff to serve as a single point of contact for new and expanding businesses, guiding them through planning, building, fire, and health approvals simultaneously

Brenda Reeves

Southampton Ward councillor

I would remove red tape while maintaining important safety, environmental and community protections. I would support plain language requirements, one clear point of contact, coordinated staff reviews, and predictable timelines. Municipal programs and funding should also be easy to find and understand with turnaround times and business feedback used to identify and fix delays.

Cathe McIntosh

Councillor, Southampton Ward

I would ask small business owners: What are the main "red tape" obstacles getting in your way or keeping you from growing your business? In principle, I would aim to avoid regulations that unnecessarily burden small businesses with additional administration and take owners away from what they want to be doing - running their businesses. If required, I would support exploring a timelier municipal permit approval process for events or activities undertaken by the BIA that require Town approvals.

Cheryl Grace

Southampton ward councillor

One hurdle, as we've recently witnessed with the CPPS public consultation, is to improve public trust in staff, and to improve communication about processes related to municipal programs and policies. Our economic development staff should collect and promote information about available grant programs, and to provide assistance with preparation of the paperwork.

Harry Mazmanian

Southampton Ward

Permit and approval processes are necessary to ensure all aspects of new construction, signs, streetscape projects etc are well published, and good faith public consultation is not only enacted, but recorded and published. This is red tape I suppose to anyone wishing to push through a specific project as quickly as possible with the least amount of public consultation. To me this is not red tape, it is protection for our entire community, The Cedar Crescent Village and the "South" sign is a prime example of why "red tape", or what is usually referred to as the permit and approval process is necessary. We need take take our time and get it right the first time.

John Divinski

Councillor, Southampton Ward

This is a municipal responsibility and recently the CPPS program was presented to council. The program is not ready for implementation yet but if it can be refined, it could cut red tape and quicken permits, approvals and access to municipal approval or grant approval.

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