



2022 Municipal Election Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name:

Municipality

Date:

Dana Tuju

Ramara

September 15, 2022

Please return the completed questionnaire to the sender as soon as possible, but no later than September 15, 2022. The answers will then be posted on the AWARE Simcoe website.

N.B: As this is a Word document, you can take as much space as you wish to respond.

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1. AWARE Simcoe considers the preservation of farmland, the protection of water resources and natural heritage, and providing transparency and accountability in government decision making to be the primary issues of this election.

Our goal is to elect representatives who support those objectives. Do you agree with this?

ANSWER

I wholeheartedly agree with Aware Simcoe's statement. Government decisions should be viewed through the lens of environmental sustainability and protecting our water resources in order to ensure the health, happiness, and economic success of this region. Voters give us agency to act on their behalf, so there cannot be true representation without transparency and accountability.

2. Do you feel there is a need to protect water, wetlands and recharge areas from development, aggregate extraction and other intrusive activities in your municipality? If so, how will you achieve this?

ANSWER

As a mom, I have been working very hard as a community advocate to protect our precious water resources long before thinking about running for office. We need to act now to ensure we don't leave a mess for the next generation. Most of my knowledge of current policy and legislation comes from my experience fighting a quarry that proposed to expand dangerously close to a thriving community and sensitive wetland. Among other negative impacts (such as drawdown) to water and wells, quarries play a role in causing extreme water level fluctuations which can adversely affect wildlife in wetland habitats, which require relatively stable water levels for purposes of nesting, spawning, migrating, and hibernating.

During the quarry fight, I was fortunate to have made so many valuable connections in helpful environmental agencies, collaborating with [Aware Simcoe](#), [Environmental Defence Canada](#), and [Simcoe Country Greenbelt Coalition](#). I would not hesitate to draw on their vast knowledge and research to strengthen our natural heritage system protection within Ramara's Official Plan, utilizing (for example) [Ontario Nature's Best Practices Guide](#), rather than seeking (expensive!) opinions from a consultant in the development industry. For the best result in this type of battle rarely won by citizens, it is best to try to prevent these applications *proactively*, with clear policy guidelines that are already in black and white.

3. Ancient deposits under the Simcoe Uplands in Simcoe County's Tiny, Springwater, Oro-Medonte and Tay townships contain pristine groundwater.

This water is the purest water known to science, and is the gold standard for water worldwide, a national and global treasure.

Ongoing gravel pit extractions on French's Hill, the water recharge area, now threaten to destroy this precious water. Will you work to protect this important local resource?

ANSWER

I will always fight to protect water, as it is all connected, flowing through all our townships.

One thing that I have learned from the quarry fight is that the support of a municipality carries a lot of weight compared to a handful of concerned citizens. As a councillor, I would request that Ramara Council not only extend their support to the affected municipalities, which might convince those municipalities to do whatever they can to fight the extraction, but also encourage other municipalities to do the same. This would send a clear message to the Province that there is an overwhelming groundswell in municipal support.

As someone whose community has experienced this first hand, I would happily share the playbook with those municipalities, or anyone facing this type of injustice.

4. Do you support/oppose expansion of the Greenbelt into Simcoe County? In either case, please explain why.

ANSWER

I support the expansion of the Greenbelt into Simcoe County. Again it is about being proactive - it is so much easier to protect natural heritage features *before* sprawl threatens to take a foothold into an area, rather than reactively deal with the consequences later on.

5. What are your plans to combat climate change in your municipality?

ANSWER

As easy as it is to feel immune to climate change in the rural and idyllic surroundings of this beautiful township, people are starting to notice signs, such as the extreme temperatures and weather events of which we are already feeling the effects.

50% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions are directly linked to municipal decisions (land use, transportation planning, and building standards), so it is necessary to look at the big picture when making these important decisions.

People sometimes feel helpless in the face of what seems like such an insurmountable problem, but there are so many things that can be done as a municipality to reduce our carbon footprint. To start us on the right path, I would:

- establish a Climate Action Citizen Advisory Committee;
- set aside funds in the budget for climate mitigation and adaptation;
- set a vision for the municipality that is energy, food, transportation and housing resilient; and
- promote keeping natural / naturalized shorelines.

6. Every municipality in Ontario is faced with row-on-row sprawl-style development, and surrounding farmland is being destructively gobbled up with little regard for future agricultural needs. Ontario is losing 319 acres of farmland every day, it needs to be protected before it's too late. We need to ensure we have the land to grow food for today and future generations. Once it's paved over, it's gone forever! How will you protect agricultural lands within your municipality?

ANSWER

This is another example that highlights the importance of supporting the expansion of the Greenbelt, to protect exactly these types of irreplaceable lands from urbanization.

We should support the farmers we have by promoting buying locally. Farmers Markets are becoming more popular as people would rather feed their families fresh organic produce and unprocessed whole foods without having to travel far to find it.

With regard to both farmers and community food security, the township could play a key role by ensuring that agricultural initiatives (i.e. community gardens, farmers markets etc.) are supported within the Official Plan.

7. Simcoe County Council chose a county forest in Springwater Twp – zoned Agricultural, as the site for a (much needed) waste handling facility, the Environmental Resource Recovery Centre (ERRC). Many residents in Simcoe County objected to this location, pointing out that this is an industrial use and there are suitable properties zoned Industrial where the facility should be built. What is your view?

ANSWER

It is never ideal to “pave paradise and put up a parking lot.” According to a [report](#) by Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition and Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition, 50% forest cover in a watershed is likely to support most potential species and aquatic life, but Simcoe County only has 22% and that number is dropping.

As you point out, there are Industrial zoned properties that would have been much better suited to house this facility. This type of oversight is frustrating, and again, one that we struggled with in the community fight against the quarry: yes, quarries are needed, but not in that location – clearly the same can be said about this waste handling facility. Had there been better policy protection for Simcoe County's natural heritage system, this could have been avoided from the get-go.

8. If elected, what are your top three priorities?

ANSWER

1. Protect the water, green spaces, and the communities that live within them
2. Accountable, accessible, inclusive, and transparent governance
3. Responsible growth that respects community and natural heritage systems

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Thank you for completing the AWARE Simcoe candidate questionnaire.