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2022 Municipal Election Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name:

Municipality

Date:

Tony Pheko

New Tecumseth

Sept 19th 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

Yes, absolutely. I believe in managed economic growth which considers the affects on our precious environment. Growth must be tempered with much thought given to the preservation of our farmland.

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

Yes, these assets must be protected through strict by laws and regulations with harsh penalties limiting any form of exploitation or encroachment. I will support any by laws for and organization who acts against these interests.

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

Yes. Absolutely. I will work to protect this resource with whatever power I am allotted.

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

ANSWER

Our region has some of the world's most significant wetlands, and numerous water features tied to the Lake Simcoe watershed, Georgian Bay and the Great Lakes. Simcoe County is geographically massive, and we must protect our watershed at all costs. Unfortunately, there are gaps in governmental policies that allow for unchecked development, leading to a loss of greenspace. We must address this gap at the local and provincial levels. Urban sprawl is eating up valuable farmland. Paving over greenspace threatens the availability of water supply to wells, households, and farms. Water is a precious resource, and we must protect the land to protect the water.

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

ANSWER

Climate change is one of the most serious challenges we are facing today. One of the things I need to learn further as a new Councillor is about the environmental initiatives that are already in place. Currently, there are water conservation and source water protection programs in place to ensure safe, drinking water. We are seeing an increase in invasive species, both flora and fauna, and we must work to limit their spread.

There is much we can do at the local level to combat climate change. For example, we can protect forests by planting new trees so that stored greenhouse gases aren't emitted into the atmosphere. And we can better manage forests so that carbon-rich trees have more years to grow. We can reduce carbon emissions by passing by-laws that prohibit idling of car engines. We can restore greenspaces within our communities so that they are natural place for beauty and enjoyment, as well as allow for natural growth cycles to take place. Protecting ecosystems is vital for animal and plant habitat. Each of these actions help mitigate climate change by allowing nature to store and sequester more carbon.

These are some questions I will be asking:

*Can the existing plans and budgets include any of the climate action plan costs?

*How many of these initiatives will require new expenditures and what is the cost?

*What is the real cost savings/benefits from implementing this climate plan?

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 number is double of the loss that was reported in 2016. So, from 2016 to 2021, we have doubled the rate of agricultural land loss. During this same time, we lost over 1000 farms in Ontario alone to urban sprawl. Loss of farmland comes at a huge cost, both at the human and planet levels. Over 860,000 Ontarians are employed by the agri-food sector, not to mention families who for generations have solely relied on farming as their means of income. Do we have a solution to offer to them? Moreover, farms provide habitat for species and protect local ecosystems. We are losing all these benefits when we lose farmlands. First, we must ensure that provincial policies are strengthened to protect the farms and farm workers. I truly believe that implementing a food and farm coop is a promising idea because it supports our local farms, neighbours, and the community. It also contributes to economic development as it supports those who grow, raise, produce, and transport our food. Providing locally grown products to residents right here in our municipality is one of the best ways to supporting our agricultural sector. Finally, it is vital that farmers, government, and conservation partners work together to protect farmland by entering into farmland easement (a voluntary agreement) so that development cannot encroach upon agricultural land.

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

Recognizing the fact that our population has grown incrementally resulting in a need for more waste management sites to accommodate all the waste that is being produced daily. The costs of contracting are rising but the need to divert waste from landfill is imperative. We must balance this need with the urgent need to protect our forests. I am not aware of the nature or size of properties that are zoned Industrial to comment on its suitability, but it would be prudent for the County to conduct a feasibility study on this land before venturing to take 5% of the 207-acre Freele Tract even if it is owned by the County.

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

ANSWER

1. Keep Property Taxes Low
2. Road and Public Safety

3. More Youth and Children Services

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Thank you for completing the AWARE Simcoe candidate questionnaire.