

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2022 MUNICIPAL ELECTION



Without Prejudice: The author does not support the BMAHC asking the 2022 municipal election candidates questions I have prepared my replies for the residents and businesses of the Town of The Blue Mountains including links to government funding for the purpose of informing residents and businesses of the range available.

With the upcoming election, The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation (BMAHC) is interested in learning more about how you will respond to the attainable housing challenge as an elected representative. We have prepared an information page about us and attainable housing and a questionnaire for your response.

Please submit your responses to info@thebluemountainshousing.ca at your earliest convenience. Your responses will be posted on our website as they are received.

Thank you in advance for your time and interest in attainable housing.

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you see as the top two barriers to creating and sustaining an adequate supply of attainable housing in our community? (i.e., cost/time to construct, planning approval processes, Official Plan/land use plans, politics, community opposition, funding, etc.) How do you propose to address these barriers?

During the 2018 election the need for affordable/attainable housing (AH) was paramount and therefore, is incredibly sad as those who were to have benefited the most are still waiting, others have joined them, and some who have left employment opportunities due to the lack of AH to live.

There are many barriers to creating and sustaining an adequate supply of attainable housing are and not limited to those cited below:

Use of Current Tools

With the urgency to act timing was key to developing solutions, therefore, it was imperative to make use of existing tools and unfortunately opportunities were missed early on to approach Council regarding the need to commence leveraging the current statements in the Official Plan (OP) as outlined below:

The Strategic Objective statement on page 35 of the OP states:

- Assist in the achievement of *residential intensification* and *affordable housing* by encouraging opportunities for mixed-use *development* in appropriate locations.

Further to that this on page 117:

- It shall be a policy of this Plan that there be a mix and range of housing, including housing affordable to a wide spectrum of households through a variety of building types and densities to provide housing choices for families, seniors, single person households and other residents.

Lastly, on pages 256-257 under E10 Complete Application Requirements, it states that:

- During the pre-submission consultation process the nature and scope of studies to be prepared in support of the application shall be identified. The studies required may include, but are not limited to, any of the following:
 - Affordable/Attainable Housing Report/Rental Housing Conversion Study

To my knowledge an Affordable/Attainable Housing Report/Rental Housing Conversion Study the above report has not been required by a developer given what is available under submitted reports on the town's website. Given the planning process involves Grey County this would have created an opportunity to fully engage their plans and therefore avoid a misalignment as appears to have happened at a recent Ontario Land Tribunal Hearing.

In addition to this Planning Justification Reports have routinely over the last four years paid unchallenged lip service to AH. There was also nothing to have been lost by asking developers as early as 2019 when some Planning Justification Reports were submitted about a percentage of affordable/attainable housing stock.

In fact, even as recent as February 2022 there was a deputation to Council which presented a development proposal. As a candidate I am unable to provide the link, however, at one point during the deputation the developer stated words to the effect that 'attainable housing has now been included and they would sell for under \$1m.' Three years on developers do not seem to understand or have fully grasped the concept of AH.

While I understand recent progress is being made, valuable time has been lost and during that time, costs have escalated – which will only in turn present another unintended barrier.

Nature of Solution

Simply stated the BMAHC focused all efforts on one project, when there was a suite of options to choose from. The rationale for this approach remains unclear.

2. What solutions can you suggest to help the Town and The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation increase the speed of bringing attainable housing to market?

The role of the Town is to ensure:

- The Official Plan identifies the need for AH and beginning with the pre-consultation process and throughout the planning process to ensure developers understand, are engaged, and are mandated to submit an Affordable/Attainable Housing Report/Rental Housing Conversion Study
- Grey County is on the same page as the town
- Other master plans such as Transportation align with AH strategies, potential solutions and neighbouring municipalities as residents travel horizontally within Southern Georgian Bay

- To understand and track the needs of current and potential businesses employees as it relates to housing and should be incorporated into the Economic Strategic Plan measurements and monitoring

Separate and distinct the role of the BMAHC is to deliver on solutions based on the needs of the town, first by means of accessing CMHC funding of which there are several streams currently. I understand the following to be true because of correspondence with the BMAHC:

- The Gateway project has received funding through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMCA) <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/> Seed Funding program and Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Green Municipal Fund <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/> for predevelopment activities.
- The BMAHC has plans to apply for the CMHC National Housing Strategy (NHS) Co-investment Fund (NHSCF) <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/co-investment-fund> for construction/takeout grant and financing.

It will be useful for the residents to know going forward if the BMAHC will be making applications to the Affordable Housing Innovation Fund <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/affordable-housing-innovation-fund> and their new rent-to-own steam funding option.

I am not aware of any applications to either The Housing Accelerator Fund and Rent-to-Own program, the Government of Canada's commitment to implementing effective housing solutions that drive real results which were required by January 31, 2022, by visiting placetocallhome.ca/callforideas. If this did occur, it would be beneficial to share with the residents and businesses.

I took the opportunity to list the current and past government funding streams/options available above as it is important for residents and business to know that these were and currently are available to municipalities and developers.

Lastly, the Town, BMAHC and developers have a shared role in listening to the needs of the residents and businesses of the town.

3. What role do you think the municipal government should play in developing and delivering attainable housing?

The answer to this question has been provided in the above.

4. What is your understanding of the role of The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation and its relationship to the municipality in terms of governance, funding, and attainable housing objectives?

Role:

This is an interesting question. While the Not for Profit is deemed to be independent, yet the ask for AH during a recent Ontario Land Tribunal hearing was undertaken by elected officials/BMAHC with costs incurred by the town.

Relationship:

This is an interesting question. While the Not for Profit is deemed to be independent, it would be beneficial for the following to be clarified:

- *Board of Directors shall consist of nine (9) directors, two (2) of whom shall be any one of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or any Councillor of The Town of The Blue Mountains, and the remaining seven (7) shall be Public Directors.*
- *Public Directors which are individuals that are not employees or members of the Council of the Town of Blue Mountains.*

31. Class of Membership. *There shall be two (2) classes of membership: Municipal Member and Members (collectively referred to as "members").*

I. MUNICIPAL MEMBER a. There shall be only one Municipal Member and it shall be The Town of The Blue Mountains, and the Town of The Blue Mountains shall delegate a representative to attend the meetings of the members or provide a proxy as per Article 39 of this by-law.

b. The Municipal Member shall have voting rights and shall be entitled to forty-five (45) votes at all meetings of members.

II. MEMBERS a. All Public Directors shall be or become Members within 10 days of their appointment as a Director.

b. Members shall have voting rights and shall be entitled to one vote at all meetings of members.

c. Members shall consist of anyone whose application for admission as a member has received the approval of the Board of Directors of the Corporation.

d. There shall be only up to twenty (20) Members.

e. Members shall cease to be Members upon resignation from the Board of Directors.

5. What do you think The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation is doing well? What can be improved? What changes would you propose be made to the organization?

The BMAHC relationship with the public needs to be benefit from being open, transparent in their communication, including progress in delivering solutions. This is extremely important given lack of public trust which has been magnified by negative media coverage.

Where BMAHC business is discussed and voted on at Committee of the Whole or Council in open or closed session, municipal elected officials who are a board member of the BMAHC must recuse themselves as there is a definitive conflict of interest.

The Gateway Project is underway and the legal issues regarding discontinuing this path or dissolving the not-for-profit are uncertain. There would be economies of scale as the need for AH or transportation etc. does not stop at municipal or county boundaries – rather they are independent and therefore would benefit from a regional approach.

6. Which of the following would you support if required for the financial viability of The Gateway Attainable Housing Project? Please rank in order of preference.

1. capital funding in the form of **federal or provincial** grants/~~for~~**forgivable loan**

x. ~~an increase in height above the three storeys currently permitted in the Official Plan as it is already proceeding with three and the current Official Plan provides no direction regarding where anything over three stories would go and is reinforced with vague language such as 'as appropriate' etc.~~

2. an expedited planning approval process

4. reduced property taxes for attainable rental units – **dependent on successful completion of project and being appropriate assessed by MPAC relative to the rent charged.**

~~none of the above~~

3. other: change of governance and move to a regional approach, increased transparency, and videos of minutes posted

Please comment on your response.