

# Alnwick-Haldimand Township

## 2026 Municipal Election

### Community Candidate Questionnaire

Prepared by AHRPA

### Purpose

This questionnaire has been developed to provide residents of Alnwick-Haldimand Township with an opportunity to better understand the views, priorities and leadership approach of each municipal candidate.

Every candidate has been asked the same questions and will have the same opportunity to respond. Responses will be published as submitted (subject only to formatting and the 2,000-character limit per question) to help residents make informed decisions at the ballot box.

### Candidate Information

|                                      |                                         |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>Name</b>                          | Sherry Gibson                           |
| <b>Office Sought</b>                 | Mayor                                   |
| <b>Email</b>                         | sherrygibson2026@gmail.com              |
| <b>Website / Facebook (optional)</b> | Facebook Page - Sherry Gibson for Mayor |

### Section 1 – About You

#### 1. Why are you running for municipal office?

What motivated you to seek election, and what do you hope to accomplish if elected?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

After serving 11 years on Council, including as Deputy Mayor, I believe I have the municipal experience, community knowledge and leadership skills to provide the steady, collaborative leadership Alnwick/Haldimand needs. I have previously served on Alnwick/Haldimand Council for three terms (1997-2000, 2014-2018, 2018-2022) and I have missed being involved. I am excited to take on this challenge.

I want to earn the trust and respect of our residents and staff, and build good relationships with the lower tier Mayors who I will work with at Northumberland County Council. I want to ensure that new development is contributing to the cost of growth. I will listen to and represent you, and attend events on behalf of the township.

Together with council, it is my intention to restore public confidence, protect our assets, and strengthen community involvement. I will review the committee structure and restore

meaningful resident participation. I support the growth of programming at our public library branches in Grafton, Centreton and Roseneath to enhance the opportunities for people of all ages to be involved.

We have a unique heritage in Alnwick/Haldimand with the Northumberland County Forest, Oak Ridges Moraine, Alderville First Nation and our wellness, tourism and agricultural businesses. I will work to protect our uniqueness.

I will not make promises I can't keep. It is my responsibility as the head of council to ensure that council sets good governance, has respectful discussion, and works to the benefit of all taxpayers. I will seek your involvement and listen.

## 2. What experience has prepared you for this role?

Describe the skills, education, professional experience, volunteer work or community involvement that you believe will help you serve residents effectively.

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

I have been elected to 3 terms of Council, totalling 11 years of service. I have participated in amalgamation, and I have made tough decisions. I have a good understanding of the complexities and the uniqueness of our township. I have represented council at various functions, committees, boards and know our governance and procedures. I have worked at maintaining our heritage and managing growth. I know that having good communication between staff and Council assists with good decision-making.

My council appointments include parks and recreation, heritage, Physician Recruitment, and the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce,

I am proud to now serve the Township as a Alnwick/Haldimand Public Library Board member and I value our libraries as community hubs.

I've worked for Community Care Northumberland for over 30 years which has given me valuable experience in finance, volunteer recruitment and development, coordination of programs and services. The past 5+ years in my current role as Director of Hospice Services at Ed's House has given me the opportunity to learn how to effectively interact, respond and support people at a stressful and emotional time in their lives. I have formed good relationships with our volunteers, and effectively managed volunteers in the delivery of service. I interact with funders and donors and have successfully learned the skill of negotiation.

My current role is directly responsible to the CEO for operations, human resources including volunteers, clients, programs, and assets of building and land. My budget totals over \$2m, with currently 52 staff working under me, including regulated health professionals, with 8 different staff roles reporting directly to me. I have extensive knowledge of Northumberland County, its people and its services.

## 3. What are your top three priorities?

Please identify the three most important issues you would focus on during your first term and explain why.

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

1.Fiscal Responsibility and Protecting What We Own.

I will lead Council in a review of our financial position, and work on building reserves. I will ensure the Township Asset Management Plan is followed and that roads, bridges, water, fire services and existing community facilities are priority. I will lead Council to develop an strategic plan that we can deliver on.

**2. Restoring Public Trust and Community Participation**

Greater participation of residents by moving at minimum one council meeting per month to the evening, and rotation of council meetings between township buildings.

**3. Building Team Alnwick/Haldimand and Stronger Communities**

Working collaboratively three ways - Council, residents and staff with mutual respect and open communication. I believe we have an opportunity to work with local business owners and community organizations to draw on their strengths and skills and how we can mutually benefit from their successes.

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## Section 2 – Transparency, Governance & Public Trust

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### 4. Restoring Public Confidence / Engagement

Many residents have expressed a desire for greater openness, accountability and public engagement. What specific actions would you take to improve transparency and rebuild public trust in Township government?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

My commitments:

Public Q&A and community engagement.

Evening accessibility.

Meaningful advisory committees.

Plain language explanations of major decisions.

Maximum reasonable and allowable openness for the sharing of municipal information.

I can't restore trust by promising transparency. What I can do is give you the opportunity to see how decisions are made, understand why the decision was made, and know that your viewpoint was taken into consideration.

### 5. Council Meeting Accessibility

Would you support returning regular Council meetings to evening hours to improve accessibility for working residents, families and business owners? Why or why not?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

Yes, I support holding at least one regular Council meeting or Committee of the Whole in the evening each month and rotating these meetings around the Township. Giving people an opportunity to attend council meetings is important to me and the overall functioning of the Township. I will work with my Council and staff to make that a reality.

## 6. Closed (In-Camera) Meetings

Ontario law permits Council to meet in closed session only under specific circumstances. What principles would guide your decision to move a matter into an in-camera meeting, and how would you ensure those meetings are used only when necessary?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

Municipal business belongs in the open unless there is a clear reason why it cannot be. Any time Council goes into a closed session the reason must be clearly stated and the closed session must only be for the purpose as stated as allowed within the Municipal Act 2001.

## 7. Council Culture

Healthy councils rely on respectful discussion and differing viewpoints. How would you contribute to a culture of collaboration, respectful debate and professional conduct around the Council table?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

As the Chair, I will make sure that every member of Council has the fair opportunity to ask questions, challenge assumptions and express their point of view, however different it may be. Respectful disagreement is healthy, however personal attacks, intimidation and being dismissive of a differing point of view is not.

I will ensure that Council follows the Procedural By-Law, and all procedures within the Municipal Act.

Council will engage in debate through staff reports, notices of motion or through public delegations.

I will ensure healthy debate at Committee of the Whole, and reserve regular Council meetings for formal decision making.

# Section 3 – Financial Responsibility

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## 8. Financial Stewardship/Efficiency

Property taxes continue to rise while municipalities face growing infrastructure demands. How would you balance maintaining essential services, investing in infrastructure and keeping property taxes affordable?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

Council works for taxpayers. It is essential there be good communication about what is important to taxpayers, as identified by them. It is the role of staff to work with council to find funding and grant opportunities and while this is an important revenue stream, it is not a

financial strategy. The CAO and Managers must prioritize projects and work collaboratively across budget departments to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. New projects cannot be added without identifying how they will be paid for and what their long term operating costs will be.

### 9. Independent Financial Accountability

Public confidence in municipal finances is essential to good governance. If elected, would you support commissioning an independent external financial review—or, where justified, a forensic audit—of the Township's finances to provide residents with an objective assessment of the municipality's financial position and financial practices? Why or why not?

Would you commit to implementing appropriate recommendations arising from the review, whether they identify strengths, weaknesses or opportunities for improvement?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

One of the first tasks that the new council must undertake is a line by line review of the existing budget and financial statements, including reserves, debt, asset management data and outstanding commitments. If it was determined from the review that there were inconsistencies that warrant the cost of an independent, external review or audit, then I would be in favour of taking that step.

It would be unreasonable to ignore recommendations that would improve efficiency and/or financial improvements.

### 10. Infrastructure Priorities

Roads, bridges, water treatment facilities, libraries, recreation facilities, municipal buildings and local halls (i.e. – Fenella) and other infrastructure all compete for limited funding. How would you prioritize infrastructure investments over the next four years?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

We must maintain what we own. This is especially important for public safety and any regulatory obligations, risk management, to determine the number of residents served, available grants and consequences of deferring projects.

Build reserves.

Apply for funding opportunities.

Provide the tools to the community to support fundraising, bringing back defunct volunteer committees that will help identify what needs to be done, and what can wait.

Ensure senior staff work together cooperatively to determine projects that must be completed.

Using the asset management data will allow Council to make choices that are disciplined rather than popular or politically attractive.

## Section 4 – Growth & Economic Development

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### 11. Responsible Growth

What does responsible growth look like for Alnwick-Haldimand Township over the next decade?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

I will lead Council to direct growth to appropriate areas; protect agricultural land and our rural character; make growth pay for its fair share; provide a mix of housing and ensure that our growth does not come faster than our infrastructure can handle.

In Alnwick/Haldimand, we play an important role within Northumberland County putting food on tables.

### 12. Supporting Business & Agriculture

How would you support local businesses, agriculture, tourism and economic development while preserving the Township's rural character?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

We have champions already in place with Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce, Northumberland Land Trust and Roseneath Agricultural Society to name a few. As I have connected with residents, I have noted a wealth of experience and skill set in Alnwick/Haldimand.

I would like to draw on the experience of both existing organizations and interested residents to help determine the best ways to support agribusiness, tourism, wellness and economic development in the Township, while preserving our rural roots.

I want to ensure reasonable processes, economic development partnerships, tourism promotion, support for agriculture and small and home based businesses, and ensure community partnerships are undertaken and fostered.

### 13. Housing

What role should the Township play in encouraging appropriate housing opportunities for seniors, young families and first-time homebuyers?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

I believe Council should work with developers to ensure a good mix of housing, following the Provincial Planning Statement.

This may be accomplished by encouraging additional secondary residential units on existing residences or determining if closed buildings could act as multi-unit housing.

We must ensure that our infrastructure supports expansion, specifically the water system in Grafton and task staff with finding provincial and other funding opportunities.

The Township must ensure that any new growth is aligned with existing schools and roadways, and encourage age-friendly communities. We can work with Habitat for Humanity to offer affordable housing.

As a rural municipality, we cannot solve the housing crisis on our own, but we can work to remove unnecessary barriers to appropriate housing.

## Section 5 – Community Services & Quality of Life

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### 14. Recreation & Community Facilities

What improvements would you like to see in Township parks, recreation facilities, trails, libraries and community spaces?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

We have great facilities that are in need of some TLC. Bring back volunteer committees to beautify parks, trails and community spaces. Review user fees, and promote our facilities to surrounding organizations and clubs. I want to see the Township bring back the Nauwatin Nature Sanctuary to its former glory. I will ensure that the maintenance and upkeep plan for the sanctuary is a priority and upheld.

As a library board member, I have seen the struggle for staff to offer good programming and literary material on a limited budget. The library board fundraising committee works diligently to hold events throughout the year to both promote services and fundraise. It is our responsibility to support them.

The gardens at the Alnwick Civic Centre and the 4 corners in Roseneath has become overgrown and unsightly and some of our boat launches have dangerous entries.

I have been disappointed to see A/H park signage has become faded and difficult to read. Replacing the signage is a first step in pride of ownership.

This is in no way an exhaustive list, but I have tried to provide some examples to support community engagement and input for remediation of our recreation and community facilities. Many hands make light work.

### 15. Volunteers & Community Organizations

Volunteers contribute significantly to our community. How can Council better support local volunteers, service clubs and community organizations?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

Volunteers need to know their time, expertise and contributions to the Township are respected. Council must commit to clear committee mandates, appropriate staff support, timely communication, recognition, reasonable reporting expectations and consultation before changes to mandates are made.

Volunteer contributions must be valued, and I will ensure that volunteer involvement is honoured by inclusion in our strategic plan.

## 16. Healthcare Recruitment

Access to family physicians and other healthcare professionals remains a challenge across Ontario. What role, if any, should the Township play in attracting healthcare professionals and supporting local healthcare initiatives?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

Having been a member of the previous West Northumberland Physician Recruitment Committee appointed as a member of council, I am pleased to see that efforts are now coordinated across Northumberland County and involving both our hospitals - Northumberland Hills and Campbellford Memorial along with services in Quinte West. I support our continued involvement in the Physician Recruitment Advisory Committee and feel council should strongly advocate for the need for support from the Province around the recruitment of family physicians. The Township must commit to partnership, advocacy, recruitment support and enabling the organizations and local services that provide this leadership to do their job. I am involved in my current role at Ed's House with the Ontario Health Team - Northumberland and they are doing great work connecting organizations and working to make community and health care services for residents more user-friendly and accessible throughout the County. I feel it is important that we recognize the wonderful resources offered at the Grafton Pharmacy, and I will strive to provide a similar outreach for residents in the north end of our township.

## Section 6 – Communication & Leadership

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### 17. Communication

If elected, how will residents hear from you between elections? Please describe how you intend to communicate regularly with the community.

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

I have had great engagement with residents during this campaign and want to continue to hear from people. Communication must go both ways. I will ask Council to include a Q&A period in one council meeting per month, hold public consultations on any decisions that require direction from residents, host an evening council meeting and continue to work to make our website easy to use. I will commit to updating you annually on the progress of our strategic plan. I will publish a Mayor and Council e-blast newsletter that people can subscribe to and ensure it gets sent out monthly. I will make myself available, and encourage Council to make themselves available for scheduled appointments one day per month at community centre and township locations around the Township.

### 18. Listening to Residents

Describe a time when listening to another perspective changed your opinion or improved a decision.

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

I am a collaborator. I have made it a practice to listen to other perspectives prior to forming an opinion or making a decision. The only deviation from that is when I am legally bound to follow a certain set of rules or procedures. I believe I enter into discussions with an open mind. As head of Council, it will be my responsibility to ensure that everyone has a voice around the table, that discussion is respectful, and that we do our best to ensure the right decisions are made, for the right reasons. I make it a habit to consult with my Managers at Ed's House on decision making. While I cannot share explicit circumstances, I am open to ideas and change.

### 19. Difficult Decisions

Tell residents about one difficult decision you expect Council will face during the next four years and how you would approach it.

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

One of the hardest decisions we will face will be determining what we can afford to maintain, what must be renewed immediately, what can wait and what taxpayers can reasonably afford. I want the elected Council to focus on strengthening what we have. Using the analogy of building a house, you ensure the foundation is built first and is strong enough to hold the house before you begin erecting the walls. Maintain. Improve. Strengthen.

### 20. Working with Others

How would you work with fellow councillors whose opinions differ significantly from your own?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

Each council member will bring a unique perspective, and I recognize some opinions will differ significantly from my own. Disagreement should be about ideas, evidence and outcomes - not personalities. It will be my responsibility to allow for thoughtful and respectful discussion on issues, and accept when the majority vote differs from my own. And once a decision is made, everyone, including the Mayor, has an obligation and responsibility to respect the decision and help Council move forward unified.

## 21. Measuring Success

At the end of your term, what accomplishments would you hope residents use to judge your performance?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

Stronger reserves and financial position; progress on priority infrastructure; following the asset management plan; improved staff/council/volunteer relationships; better public participation; accessible Council; progress on the strategic plan; taxation that is reasonable and justified. In spite of these measurable outcomes, I'd like to know that residents felt they were listened to, treated respectfully and were kept informed of council activities.

## 22. Why Should Residents Vote for You?

In 250 words or less, tell residents why you are the best person to represent them.

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

I know municipal government. I know this Township. I know how to lead people, manage resources and make difficult decisions.  
While there is good work underway, residents deserve what I can offer - experienced leadership, respectful interactions, financial discipline, transparency and genuine openness to community participation.  
I have built skills of negotiation, collaboration, community programming and fiscal responsibility in my almost 35 years working in non-profit leadership.  
I believe in collaboration, building a strong team, listening to our community and making thoughtful decisions that are right for our Township.  
I'm ready to work for you.

## Optional Closing Statement

Is there anything else you would like residents to know that was not covered in this questionnaire?

*Maximum 2,000 characters.*

I appreciate the time and effort that went into compiling this questionnaire from those that submitted thoughtful questions and the AHRPA who built this questionnaire. I appreciate you are providing Alnwick/Haldimand residents the opportunity to get to know their candidates.  
With gratitude,  
Sherry Gibson

## Submission Guidelines

- Responses exceeding the 2,000-character limit per question may be truncated. All candidates who submit responses by the deadline will be posted on the AHRPA website.

- Responses will be published without endorsement or editorial comment.