

Keith Riel! For Mayor of Peterborough

2026 Election Platform

Ready to Lead

I grew up in Peterborough. I found work, bought a home and raised my son and daughter here. At General Electric, layoffs always seemed to be around the corner. I had a family depending on me, so I started businesses on the side. Over the years I built three of them, creating more security for my family and jobs for other people along the way.

At GE, I worked my way up to president of my union, representing 2,000 workers and 2,000 retirees. I sat across the bargaining table from one of the world's largest corporations in negotiations that affected thousands of people and their families. That is serious, high-stakes work. You have to know the file and the numbers, hold a team together, know where you can compromise and where you cannot, and find a way forward that people can live with long after the meeting ends.

I've also served four terms on City Council, working across nearly every City portfolio and serving on almost every major committee and board. I've taken on difficult files, asked hard questions and learned exactly how this organization works, as well as where it can stall.

Running businesses meant making payroll and living with the consequences of every decision. Union leadership meant negotiating under pressure and bringing people through hard choices. Council gave me the experience to turn public decisions into action.

Wolfe Street is proof of what can happen when we stop talking, build the right team and get to work. An idea became fifty transitional homes in six months.

That is how I intend to lead: set clear priorities, make the decision, bring people together and deliver.

I know Peterborough. I know City Hall. The work ahead will not always be easy, but I will be ready to get moving on day one.

Platform Key

Every promise below is marked for what it does. [C] gets better value from the money we already spend or lowers costs. [S] improves a service residents use. [F] builds Peterborough's future.

How this plan will be paid for

Peterborough does not have an unlimited property-tax base, and I will not pretend it does. Before any new initiative proceeds, residents will see the capital and operating costs, staffing requirements, funding source and expected tax impact. We will use existing staff and programs wherever possible, pursue provincial, federal and private contributions where appropriate, and phase major projects as funding is secured. One-time money will not be used to hide permanent costs.

1. Back to Basics

Improve the services you already pay for

You already pay for clean streets, maintained parks and trails, decent roads, reliable transit and responsive service. You should get what you pay for. Local government earns trust by getting the everyday things right, making the standards clear and fixing what is not working.

Fix the Roads We Have Let Fall Behind

- Fix our worst roads first. In my first year, the City will publish a priority resurfacing list with an early project in every ward. Engineering and asset-management criteria will still drive the work, but ward councillors and residents will have a clear voice in identifying what needs attention. The list, the reasons behind it and the schedule will be public. [C][S]
- Stop letting major corridors stall indefinitely. In addition to projects already committed when I take office, we will identify one long-deferred major corridor for full reconstruction, put it into a funded four-year capital schedule, publish the milestones and get construction underway during my term. These projects take years and cost tens of millions of dollars. That is exactly why we have to plan them and get them started. [C][S]
- Do not let a road disintegrate while we wait for the perfect reconstruction window. When a major project is delayed by funding, utilities or another issue outside the City's immediate control, staff will publicly recommend whether an interim resurfacing or repair makes financial sense. If it does, we will do it. [C][S]

Take Back Pride in Our Public Spaces

- Set a real standard for a clean downtown. Build on the City's existing Clean Streets Peterborough work and use the Public Works, Parks and Facilities teams we already pay for to tackle garbage, graffiti, weeds, sidewalks, public washrooms, lighting and other City-owned public spaces. Inspection frequencies, response standards and results will be public. [C][S][F]
- Tell residents what level of care they should expect. Publish maintenance schedules and service standards for parks, sidewalks and trails so people can see when the City is on track - and when it has fallen behind. [S]

Make City Hall Answer You

- Tell City Hall once. Make Service Peterborough and the existing Customer Service Portal the one front door for problems involving roads, sidewalks, parks, trails and other public spaces. Report it by phone, online or in person. City Hall owns the handoff between departments, tracks the file and closes the loop with you. [C][S]
- Make customer service human again. Set clear standards for answering calls and emails, following up, escalating unresolved problems and telling residents who is responsible for their file. [S]
- Show residents the score. Publish the results so people can see where the City met its service standards, where it fell short and what is being done about it. [C][S]

A Safer, More Humane Downtown

Compassion and public safety are not opposites. People in crisis need somewhere safe to go, and everyone has a right to use our downtown, parks and trails. Moving someone from one doorway to another solves nothing. Neither does allowing unsafe or illegal behaviour to become normal. We need both: clear expectations in public spaces and a real path out of homelessness.

- Make visible downtown, park and trail policing a formal Police Services Board priority, with public reporting on results within the overall police budget. More consistent enforcement is not about criminalizing or stigmatizing homelessness. Being homeless is not a crime. It is about addressing unsafe and illegal behaviour so shared public spaces remain available to everyone. [C][S]
- Make sure enforcement leads somewhere. Coordinate the outreach, shelter, mental-health and addiction services, civilian crisis response, police and by-law resources taxpayers already fund so people in crisis are connected quickly to the right help. Moving someone from an unsafe public space has to come with somewhere safe and appropriate to go: shelter, treatment, supported bridge housing or another service that fits the person's needs. [C][S]

- Make the homelessness services we fund prove they are helping people move forward. As City-funded service agreements are renewed, build in clear, measurable outcomes, including where appropriate how many people move from homelessness into housing and remain housed. Publish the results, follow up when targets are missed and use performance alongside need, safety and legal obligations when future funding decisions are made. The housing solutions in Affordable Homes Now provide the permanent exits; the services we fund must help people reach them. [C][S]

Build Transit Around People's Real Lives

- Make transit work around where people actually need to go. Work with schools, service providers, employers and regular riders to identify gaps in routes and schedules around major employment, education and service hubs. Use ridership data, shift times and class schedules to improve connections so people can reliably reach work, school, appointments and essential services. [C][S][F]
- Make transit more accessible for people with low incomes. Start by converting the City's existing subsidized passes for Ontario Works and ODSP recipients to free passes, then expand to other groups whose income eligibility can already be verified through existing programs. Publish the cost, ridership and take-up before each expansion. A bus fare should never stand between someone and work, school or a medical appointment. [S]

2. Build Peterborough's Economy

We're open for business and ready to compete

Peterborough's economy is already being built by people who go to work, open businesses, master trades, earn degrees, make art and take risks every day. City Hall does not create their ambition and should not take credit for it. Our job is to make it easier for them to succeed: prepare land and infrastructure, make decisions on time, remove avoidable barriers and go after opportunities with confidence. Peterborough will be enthusiastically open for business.

Make Economic Development Prove Its Value

- Turn the new Economic Development division into a results engine. I voted with the majority of Council to bring Economic Development back into City Hall. It is now staffed and developing its next five-year strategy. The next step is delivery. I will make it a direct mayoral priority with clear public targets for business retention and expansion, investment attraction, employment lands, Cleantech Commons and job creation. [C][F]
- Put economic development on the Mayor's Delivery Table. Bring together the mayor's office and the people responsible for Economic Development, planning, infrastructure and approvals.

The job is straightforward: identify what is holding investment up, assign responsibility, track it and get decisions made. [C][F]

- Stay in direct contact with the people creating jobs. Meet with at least one local business every week, every year, and publish how the meeting list is built so any business can ask to participate. [F]
- Ask every business the same three questions: What's working? What's getting in your way? What can the City reasonably do to help you grow and hire more people? [F]
- Solve recurring problems instead of creating another committee. When businesses in the same sector keep hitting the same barrier, bring them together with the City people responsible for the file and work through it. [C][F]
- Publish what businesses are telling us - and what City Hall did about it. Twice a year, release a barrier-and-follow-up report showing the recurring problems businesses raised and the action taken. [C][F]

Faster Decisions. Investment-ready Land

Faster approvals do not mean weaker standards, less public input or automatic approval. They mean knowing the rules, coordinating the review and making decisions on time. People's jobs, and being an attractive destination for investment, depends on this.

- Get out from behind the desk when it matters. Require appropriate City staff to visit planning, building and development sites when physical conditions or neighbourhood context are important to resolving a problem or making a sound recommendation. Drawings, databases and aerial photographs are useful; they should not replace seeing the site when a visit could prevent a bad decision. [S][F]
- Give businesses and development applicants one front door into City Hall. Turn the existing Plan-Build Peterborough service and online system into a true one-front-door experience, with Economic Development helping route business files when needed. Within five business days of a complete initial inquiry, you will know who owns your file, what information is still required and the target date for the next decision or milestone. No more getting bounced between departments. [C][F]
- Put common approvals on the clock. Publish service standards and report performance for municipal approvals such as patios, signs, facades and small expansions. [F]
- You have invested millions in Cleantech Commons. It is time to get results. Put those employment lands on a public delivery timeline with measurable targets for tenants, occupied land and outstanding infrastructure so taxpayers can see what their investment is producing. That also requires a committed and reliable partnership with Trent University. [C][F]

- Turn employment land into jobs. Finish and act on the Employment Land Development and Implementation Strategy already underway, then publish the servicing, financing and approval milestones needed to make new land available. Pursue a negotiated regional solution with the County, neighbouring townships and the Province. We do not need another study telling us we need employment land; we need a route to serviced land and a timetable to deliver it. [C][F]

An Arena Deal Taxpayers Can Afford

- Replace the Memorial Centre **only** when the deal is responsible. I support a new arena and event centre if the private sector and other governments come to the table with real capital. Before the City takes on major taxpayer-backed borrowing, residents will see a public business case, confirmed outside contributions, a realistic operating forecast and a financing plan that fits within the City's debt and tax capacity. Private participation must mean actual capital and contractual risk - not projected economic spinoffs that may or may not happen. Naming rights, facility revenues and future assessment growth can help, but they are not a substitute for real capital. [C][F]

Strengthen Peterborough's Creative Economy

Peterborough's musicians, theatre-makers, filmmakers, comedians, dancers, writers, spoken-word artists, visual artists and circus performers have built a remarkable cultural community in this city over generations.

Their work shapes Peterborough's identity, brings people together and makes this a vibrant place to live. It also creates jobs, draws people downtown and strengthens our local economy. That contribution should never be taken for granted.

As your mayor, I will:

- Implement a Professional Arts Organization Grant program that gives established local organizations stable, multi-year support, with funding increasing over the four-year term to keep pace with inflation. Organizations should be able to plan ahead, retain staff and invest in their work without returning to City Hall each year to defend their existence. This program will also have clear procedures to help new groups establish themselves.
- Protect support for individual artists and ensure the City's broader community grant system recognizes the distinct needs and contributions of professional arts organizations.
- Use the new Municipal Cultural Plan already underway as Peterborough's roadmap, not launch another study. Working with the artists and cultural organizations that helped shape it, we will turn the plan into funded priorities, measurable actions and a clear implementation schedule.

- Make Peterborough easier to work with for festivals, performances, exhibitions and community gatherings. That means clearer requirements, faster decisions and better coordination so organizers can use our streets and public spaces for events that bring people together.

- Strengthen and actively promote Peterborough's existing film service under a recognizable **Electric City Film and Media** banner. Producers will have one clear point of contact, straightforward requirements and timely decisions. Ontario attracts billions of dollars in film, television, commercial, and gaming production, but Peterborough is losing work to communities such as Oshawa and Port Hope because producers believe we don't want their business. We'll change that.

Peterborough's creative economy is broad, ambitious and economically significant. Our support should match its contribution and its potential. I will back the people already doing this work, remove the barriers holding them back and create the conditions for new ideas and investment to take root. When creativity thrives in Peterborough, its impact reaches far beyond any stage, screen, studio or gallery. It makes the whole city stronger.

Jobs, Skills and Growth on Peterborough's Terms

- Connect local people to real career paths. Work with Trent, Fleming, local unions, trades and employers to match local labour needs with training and opportunity. Much of this work is already happening. City Hall should connect the pieces, not build another silo. [F]

Set the rules for data centres before they arrive

Data centres can bring investment, but they can also place enormous demands on water, electricity and surrounding neighbourhoods. Peterborough should decide what we will and will not accept before an application is submitted. I will establish clear rules governing where these facilities can locate, how much municipal water and servicing capacity they can use, noise, impacts on nearby neighbourhoods and the other conditions the City can lawfully impose. If a proposal cannot meet Peterborough's standards, it should not be built here. [F]

Protect Peterborough's water. It is not for sale

Water is a finite, life-giving resource at the heart of our community's long-term security. No data centre or other private development should be allowed to consume it at a scale that threatens residents, future growth or the health of our watershed simply because it can afford to pay. I will have Water Services and City staff establish a large-water-user servicing standard based on actual system capacity, maximum demand and strict water-efficiency requirements, including closed-loop cooling where technically and legally appropriate. Large users must cover the full public cost of servicing them, but money alone will never be enough. If a proposal puts Peterborough's water security at risk, the answer is no. [C][F]

Use the authority City Hall actually has

Electricity connections are governed by the provincial electricity system and utilities, not the mayor. I won't pretend otherwise. But Peterborough does control land use, municipal servicing and local bylaws, and we will use those powers seriously. The rules will be clear in advance and enforced consistently. If a data-centre proposal cannot meet them, it will not receive the municipal approvals or services it requires. [F]

3. Affordable Homes Now

Homes people can afford to buy and to rent

Judge housing policy by one thing: does it actually get people into homes they can afford? The City cannot influence the entire housing market, but it controls land, approvals and a public housing corporation, and it can assemble financing and partners. I will use those tools aggressively, match the solution to the need and be honest about what requires provincial and federal support.

Three Housing Solutions for Three Different Needs

Homelessness ends when people have homes, but Peterborough does not have one housing problem. Someone living rough may need supported bridge housing before a permanent home. Someone else may be ready to move directly into deeply affordable rental housing. A first-time buyer or senior may need a kind of affordable home the private market is not building. These are parallel solutions for different people - not a single ladder everyone has to climb.

Solution One: Keep Bridge Housing Working

- Fifty bridge homes in six months proved Peterborough can move quickly when we decide to act. Keep the Wolfe Street modular community operating as a safe, supported first step out of living rough, and measure demand, outcomes, length of stay and whether residents can move into permanent housing when they are ready. If more bridge homes are needed, bring Council a fully costed expansion plan with proposed sites, unit count, capital and operating costs, funding sources, service capacity and a delivery timetable. If 50 is the right number, keep it working and focus on helping residents move forward. [S][F]

Solution Two: Get Permanent Affordable Rentals Built

- Get up to 1,500 new rental homes moving. Make the City/PHC affordable-housing redevelopment pipeline a top housing priority from day one. The updated PHC capital plan identifies seven publicly controlled sites with potential for up to 1,500 net new rental homes. At 1190 Hilliard Street alone, a 141-unit project is moving toward shovel-ready status. The land is

public. The opportunity is real. The job now is to secure financing and get construction started, including deeply affordable homes and the supports residents need to stay housed. [S][F]

- Take shovel-ready projects straight to the governments with the money to build them. Peterborough property taxpayers cannot finance this pipeline alone, and I will not pretend they can. As each PHC project becomes ready, take a phased financing package directly to Ottawa, CMHC and Queen's Park identifying the capital, low-cost financing and operating support required. Keep the applications moving, press for decisions and report publicly on what is holding each project up. [F]

- Build more housing without pushing current tenants out. Before redevelopment displaces an existing PHC tenant, secure a written relocation commitment and right to return. Nobody should lose their home because the City is building more affordable housing. [S]

Solution Three: Open a New Door to Home Ownership

- Use public land to help ordinary people become homeowners. Put the City's land inventory and Housing Partnership Policy into delivery by bringing Council a first group of City-owned sites for affordable homeownership, with what can be built, servicing and approval requirements, the municipal contribution and a timetable to start construction. Work with qualified nonprofit housing providers, local builders and trades to create starter homes for first-time buyers and smaller homes for seniors who want to downsize without leaving Peterborough. [C][F]

- Create a City affordable-homeownership stream built around practical models that already work. Use Peterborough County's Open Door program and Habitat for Humanity-style affordable homeownership as guides, and put the tools City Hall actually controls to work: City land, expedited approvals, applicable development-charge exemptions, available municipal fee and tax incentives, and secured, recoverable construction financing where Council approves it. [C][F]

- Make every public housing dollar work more than once. Bring Council a revolving construction-financing envelope with clear security and repayment terms. Potential sources could include available housing reserves, proceeds from surplus City property that is not suitable for housing and eligible senior-government housing funds; the source and amount will be public before Council commits a dollar. As financing is repaid, put it straight back into the next nonprofit homeownership project. [C][F]

- Keep affordable homes affordable for the next family - and the next. For at least 20 years, require a registered Habitat for Humanity-style buyback agreement: when an owner sells, the home must return to the nonprofit housing provider under an agreed resale and equity-sharing formula and be offered to another eligible household. After that period, the provider keeps a registered right of first refusal. Homeowners still build equity, but the public contribution stays

protected instead of becoming a one-time windfall. One public investment can help family after family become homeowners. [C][F]

Protect Renters and the Homes We Already Have

- Fight for meaningful rent control. Push the Province to restore it to all rental units. [C]
- Make bad-faith renovictions harder. Add a Rental Renovation Licence to the City's existing licensing and Municipal Law Enforcement system for landlords seeking vacant possession for major renovations. Require the permits and professional documentation needed to prove the work, enforce tenant-notification requirements and respect provincial compensation and right-to-return protections. Necessary renovations can still happen; bad-faith displacement becomes much harder. [C][S]
- Give renters one clear place to understand their rights and where to get help. Update and consolidate the City's existing information into a current plain-language guide, with one City contact that can direct renters to the right municipal or provincial authority. [C][S]
- Stop waiting for every serious rental problem to become a crisis complaint. Strengthen the City's existing rental-licensing and property-standards system with proactive, risk-based inspections focused on buildings with complaint histories, repeated violations or other signs of risk. [C][S][F]
- Make repeat non-compliance carry its regulatory cost. Design licensing and inspection fees on a lawful cost-recovery basis so, as far as the law reasonably permits, the landlords who require the regulatory service pay for it, with higher reinspection costs for repeated violations. [C][S]

Publish the Housing Scoreboard

- Show residents what is actually getting built. Twice a year, publish the status of the PHC redevelopment pipeline, City-land homeownership projects and the other housing commitments in this plan. For every major project, report the number of homes, affordability mix, municipal land or cash contribution, outside capital leveraged, partner selected, funding gap and next milestone. Nobody should be able to quietly let these files stall again. [C][S]

4. A City Hall that Delivers

Clear priorities. Public accountability. A better political culture

None of the other sections of this plan matter if City Hall cannot turn decisions into results. Residents elect Council to make major decisions on their behalf. Professional staff administer the City and carry those decisions out. The mayor's job is to provide leadership, keep priorities moving, tell residents the truth about the money and make sure the organization delivers.

Put Every Major Promise on a Delivery Plan

- Put every major commitment on a clock. Within 90 days of taking office, turn this platform into a public four-year delivery plan. Every major promise will have a named lead, milestones, a target date, its budget status and any dependency on another government or outside partner. [C][S][F]
- Create a Mayor's Delivery Table to keep priority files moving. Led from the mayor's office, it will bring senior City leadership together around deadlines, barriers and decisions. Its job is to keep ownership clear, drive follow-up and stop important work from stalling. [C]
- Let residents track us. Publish a simple progress dashboard using the City's existing website and reporting tools so people can see what is on track, what is late, what changed and why. [C][S]

Tell Taxpayers the Truth About the Budget

- Show the full four-year picture, not just next year's percentage. Extend the City's existing multi-year capital forecasting into a rolling four-year corporate financial forecast showing the expected tax requirement, operating pressures, capital needs, reserve use, debt and known outside-agency pressures. Ontario law requires Council to adopt a budget every year; that is no excuse for hiding the longer-term consequences of today's decisions. [C][F]
- Stop using one-time money to disguise recurring costs. If reserve money is proposed to stabilize a tax increase, the budget will show plainly what that decision does to the following year's base budget and how the City intends to end or replace the draw. [C]
- Cost major initiatives before Council approves them. Show the operating cost, capital cost, staffing requirements, funding source and expected tax impact up front. [C]
- Make efficiency mean better value - not worse service. Act on the City's Effectiveness and Efficiency Review wherever it identifies a way to deliver the same or better service for less. Publish which recommendations are being implemented, the savings actually achieved and where those savings went. Cutting a service and calling it an efficiency does not count. [C][S]
- Put the trade-offs on the table. Present budgets around clear priorities so residents can distinguish the cost of operating City services from infrastructure requirements, external agencies, sewer costs and other major pressures instead of being handed one percentage at the end. [C]

Use Strong-Mayor Powers to Deliver, not to Silence Council or Residents

- Use the powers of the office when they are the right tool to move important work. I will use the budget, organizational and written staff-direction powers available to the mayor where appropriate to advance priority files. [C][S]
- I will not use strong-mayor powers as a shortcut around democracy; winning the support of Council and the public is non-negotiable. Plus, I will not use the special by-law powers to force through a by-law that could not win an ordinary majority of Council. [S]
- Explain every use and show what it accomplished. Whenever I use a strong-mayor power, I will publish the decision required by law, a plain-language explanation of why I used it and, afterwards, what it achieved. I expect to be held accountable for those decisions. [C][S]

Prepare the Next Council to Govern

The political culture at City Hall needs repair. The next Council does not have to agree on everything, but it does have to understand its responsibility, have confidence in its role and be able to work together when members disagree. The mayor, as head of Council and the municipality's chief executive officer, has a particular responsibility to help create that environment.

- Give the next Council the preparation this job deserves. Working with the Clerk and senior staff, make sure councillors get serious orientation and time together to build an effective working relationship. I expect many members will be new. It is neither fair to them nor good for Peterborough to hand them responsibility for hundreds of millions of public dollars and expect them to figure it out as they go. They need a shared grounding in municipal law, finance and governance, a clear understanding of the roles of Council and staff, and time to learn how to work constructively with one another. Disagreement is part of democracy; dysfunction does not have to be. [F]

Give the Public its City Hall Back

City Hall belongs to the people of Peterborough. Residents should be able to participate while decisions can still change, capable people should feel able to serve, and the Council they elect should have the information and authority required to do its job.

- Restore meaningful public delegations and real Council debate. Bring forward changes to the procedural by-law so public participation is genuinely workable, not merely technically available. City Hall is the people's house. Its rules should reflect that. [S]
- Make public service something good people can see themselves doing. I am heartened to see so many women and people from diverse backgrounds putting their names forward in this election, but we also need to understand why capable people step away from public life, leave

a race or decide not to run at all. Harassment, threats and online abuse cannot simply become the price of participating in democracy. Early in the term, I will ask Council and staff to review meeting practices, security protocols and supports for elected officials, and listen directly to people who have run or considered running - especially women and people from under-represented communities - about the barriers they faced and what would make public service safer and more sustainable. Peterborough belongs to every resident. City Hall should feel like it belongs to every resident, too. [S][F]

- Put major public decisions back where they belong: in public, before the people residents elected. Review the authority Council has delegated to staff. Routine operational and technical decisions belong with qualified professionals. Major questions of policy, public spending and community trade-offs belong before Council. Delegation should let staff administer effectively without moving consequential public choices beyond Council's reach. [C][S]
- Make portfolio chairs own their files. Every quarter, each chair will publicly report on major files, upcoming decisions and performance. Council should know what is happening inside the organization it governs, and residents should hear about important projects while there is still time to influence them - not once they are effectively complete. [C][S]
- Put City Hall in front of the people it works for. Once a year, the mayor and senior City leadership will report directly to residents at a public meeting at a venue such as Market Hall: what was promised, what got done, what did not and what comes next. Presentation first, then a real public Q&A. [C]

Ready on Day One

Peterborough should be building, growing and competing - not making excuses for standing still. This plan is ambitious because this city is capable of more, and it is disciplined because taxpayers deserve to know what things cost, who is responsible and whether the work is getting done.

We have a lot of work ahead of us, and some of it will be hard. I know this city and the job at hand. I know how to bring people together around difficult decisions and move from talk to action. Peterborough is ready to move again, and I am ready to lead on day one.