



Photo by Minh Nguyen

Mike Benson waits for people to come to his campaign meeting at the Pirate Ship park in Belleville. This is the first time Benson is running for a city council seat in the Belleville municipal election.

Candidate wants to see change

(Editor's note:) Each of our second-year photojournalism students was asked to write a profile on a candidate of their choosing for the upcoming municipal election. Here is a sampling of their work.

By Minh Nguyen

"It's time for a change!"

That's the slogan of candidate Mike Benson's campaign in the 2022 Belleville municipal election. Benson is currently a full-time truck driver in Toronto, and lives in Belleville. This is his first time running for city council.

"(My goals are) getting some things

done for our children, our homeless, the housing situation. Our city also needs to look after our senior citizens because God knows they've earned it," Benson said during one of his campaign stops in Belleville's Riverside Park.

Benson posed four main issues to overcome for his vision when running for the election. "I would like to find out why we have so many in Belleville, and what we can do to help them get back on their feet and off the streets," Benson stated when talking about the issue that he is most interested in, the homeless.

"I was a homeless when I was 17, so I know how they feel. I understand what they went through. I was lucky to have someone come and help me through that

difficult time. Now, I will come back to help the homeless."

In addition, the three remaining issues of housing, our kids and our seniors were also addressed by Benson in his election platform.

"When I was a young boy, there were lots of things in Belleville for us to do. But now, there is hardly anything here for the kids. If we want people to move to Belleville and raise their families here and their kids to stay here once they grow up, we need to have something for the kids as well in place."

A voter at the campaign stop, who asked their name not be given, was supportive of Benson's platform.

"He actually is sincere and he wants to

make a change. He is a normal person. He is not the one who owns a business, who's not bought into it, and he's trying to fight for the people who we actually pay to work for us.

"He wants to fix the homelessness. And if you don't know how many we got, then you need to research how many we have in abundance now, way more than we have shelters for. We have one shelter in Belleville and we have massive homeless."

The voter said Benson's attention to the issue was the best approach.

"He's actually been out coming to say he's not going to be able to make a change overnight. Nobody's asking him to. But you have put forth the effort and nobody else has really given a darn about doing

that."

Benson works from Monday to Friday, so he has just two days on the weekend to campaign for city council.

Benson's wife Lynne said there have not been difficulties balancing his campaign and family life.

"(There are) normal things, like how to get a lot of it done in a short period. As you know, Mike is away all week, so the pressure was on to get as much done on the days he had off."

"Mike and I have had many conversations over the years regarding this. We felt this year was the time to run," she said. "Our family is tight-knit and stands behind him 100 per cent."

Affordable housing and doctor shortage among topics of Quinte West event

By Hunter Middleton

Support from the old, and in with some of the new, seems to be the theme for this year's Quinte West 2022 municipal election.

"I believe council's ready for some new faces and a fresh perspective," said Ward 3 candidate Tyler Rickey.

On Tuesday, Oct. 4, residents of Quinte West filed into Heroes Landing Conference Centre to hear what the political candidates had to say.

People living in Quinte West have no lack of people to vote for this election with a collective 23 councillor candidates to vote for between the four wards. Ward 1 has the largest pool of candidates with eight people running and Ward 4 has the smallest pool of candidates at three people. With a large number of choices comes a diverse range of experience and ages, with ages ranging from the late 20s to early 80s and experience ranging from their first time in the political ring to possibly being elected for their third-plus term.

With new faces entering the race, candidates are bringing new ideas and game plans to tackle the major issues that are currently affecting the area of Quinte West. From affordable housing, infrastructure needs, and the lack of health care providers in the area, the candidates each have a plan to tackle the big demands of the people.

Many of the newer candidates have been homegrown in the area and are not new to the current struggles faced in Quinte West and like their neighbours, they too are facing the same situations



Photo by Hunter Middleton

Duncan Armstrong takes to the podium for Ward One- Trenton. The candidates' debate was held at Heroes Landing conference centre. Armstrong was one of the 23 councillors that spoke as well as the three mayoral candidates.

with their families.

Although these politicians are running against each other, some of the more

seasoned candidates' speeches clearly expressed their support for the newer politicians.

Ward 1 candidate Duncan Armstrong finished his two minutes by saying, "I hope the voters for the city of Quinte

West give a full consideration for the new faces and new voices who've shown courage to stand up here on your behalf. It's time for a change and I hope I'm a part of that change."

Ward 2 candidate Hillary Robert finished her speech with a promise to the population of Quinte West, "Inclusion and basic human respect for members of our community. You will never find a blatantly racist, homophobic, or transphobic word come out of my mouth or accidentally get posted on my social media. I want the best for this community."

Alongside the broad candidate selection this year is a new way to vote. Rickey expressed his concern about the new way of voting and the possibility of losing more demographics at a previous candidate meet and greet hosted at the Grind and Vine about a week prior to this debate. His main concern was the difficulty that many older people have with advancing technology and the overwhelmingness of the process, along with the concern that younger demographics are not coming and getting as involved in the politics that shape the area they live in.

While there are no paper ballots this election, there is help for those who need it when it comes to voting online. Voter help centres have been set up at Heroes Landing, Batawa Community Centre, and Occasions by the Bay, all with various operation times.

For more information about operation times regarding the Voter Help Centres, please visit <https://quintewestvotes.ca/voters/#how-to-vote>



Photo by Danielle McPherson

Hillary Robert at the Quinte West All Candidate Meeting at Hero's Landing in Trenton on October 4th, 2022. Robert is running for one of the four seats in Sidney Ward's council. This is Robert's first year in politics.

Communication key for candidate

By Danielle McPherson

As one of the youngest candidates running for Quinte West council in Monday's municipal election, there are mixed views of Hillary Robert's campaign for councillor.

Some of her competitors believe she is too young and those she has spoken with are excited to see a new face in this fall's municipal election.

Robert believes that overall, her age has not hurt her race in the election, but does help foster better representation for the people in Sidney Ward, Quinte West.

"The majority of people who are running are not a fair representation of the people in Quinte West and while I still

feel a little disingenuous in that I am not a fair representation of the average (person) in this area, it just is a little bit of a different voice that I am hoping makes a difference," Robert said.

With the councillor position paying approximately \$26,000 a year, the average person in Quinte West cannot afford to leave a steady full-time job. Robert understands that she is fortunate enough to be able to step back from her real estate business Quinte Living, unlike other members of the community, and she feels that the best way to represent the community is to have a constant open line of communication.

"There is a need for a line of communication between people in the community and the people making decisions

on their behalf."

During her campaign, Robert has opened her email and cellphone to the community as well as having a dedicated social media page to be able to communicate with people and plans to continue it throughout being on council if elected.

Sidney Ward is more settled with farming families and seniors, rather than the larger youth population that Trenton has, but with those Robert has spoken with, the biggest concerns are affordable housing and access to healthcare. Affordable housing is a problem affecting almost every Canadian in all generations. While no one can fix the problem overnight, Robert has a plan to start a solution.

"I understand that no councillor can wave a magic wand and immediately solve the problem, but (council can) work with local construction on building new apartments or changing bylaws to allow existing partnerships with affordable housing projects and building an emergency safe shelter."

Robert was not the only candidate to mention affordable housing concerns or accessible health care in her two-minute statement, but she was the only one to speak about inclusivity and diversity directly.

"You will never find blatantly racist, homophobic, or transphobic words come out of my mouth or 'accidentally' get shared on my social media."

When asked during a phone inter-

view why Robert felt the need to talk about this when she only had two minutes, she shared she believes that some both current and past members of the municipal government in Quinte West have not always made public statements that were inclusive and in support of diversity.

Roberts added that her family was very forward-thinking and that all people should be treated equally and respectfully.

"I grew up with the belief that love is love, and (to) treat people like people."

From ages, to career backgrounds, the people of Quinte West's Sidney Ward could see a very diverse group of people sitting at that council table in city hall after Oct. 24, 2022.

Mayoral candidates share their visions for Belleville

By Kennedy Babutac

The three candidates running for city mayor highlighted their platforms at a mayoral candidates breakfast organized by the Chamber of Commerce on Sept. 28.

Throughout the event, attended by about 100 people, the candidates introduced themselves fully, gave their reasons for running for mayor and outlined their platforms.

"Part of making sure we have a good community with his restaurant and the people he met. In 2013, he was the Belleville Chamber of Commerce's president and said he believed in "a stronger city through stronger partnerships."

He said he believes that although the city of Belleville has had hard times throughout the years, it is time to regroup and build a stronger community.

Neil Ellis was the second candidate to speak at the Chamber of Commerce breakfast.

"Well, first, I want the chamber to hold this event for the community," Ellis said in his opening remarks.

In 2015, Ellis became the first member of Parliament for the new Bay of Quinte riding. He served as chair of the standing committee on Veterans Affairs for four years. Upon re-election in 2019, Ellis was named Parliamentary Secretary to the minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Ellis went to Carleton University for a degree in law and psychology and professional designations through



Photo by Kennedy Babutac

Jill Raycroft, chief executive officer, with candidate Mitch Panciuk, during a mayoral candidates breakfast organized by the Chamber of Commerce.

McMaster University's Directors College Executive program.

"Some of the things I ran on back then was the doctor recruitment that was one of the first in Ontario."

Ellis grew up in Belleville and had his own business called Doug's Bicycle, where he worked for nearly 30 years, from 2006-2014.

After his run for MR, Ellis took time off to focus on spending time with his family before running for mayor.

Kyle Thomson was the last candidate to speak at the Chamber of Commerce mayoral candidate's event.

Thomson was the last to enter the race for mayor of Belleville. Thomson grew up in Belleville, but moved away after some time. He later opened a business downtown, Park Provisioners, Barber-shop & Haberdashery on Front Street.

He said his platform "focuses on community unity after COVID, nurse and physician recruitment, addressing homelessness, accountability for spending and finding additional resources, com-

munity wealth, and access to prosperity to build living standards."

Thomson started his opening remarks highlighting healthcare and central services that he believes need to be improved.

"I feel like it's only going to grow, and fortunately, we have to want to be optimistic."

"That being said, this community needs a space to bring our community together and understand both sides of the community."

Jill Raycroft, the CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, was one of the organizers of the candidates breakfast.

"We host both public and this ticketed event to provide the community access to the candidates and their platforms," she said. "It's a chance to hear more about who they are and what they have to offer regarding vision and experience to move our city forward."

Chamber of Commerce officials thanked everyone who could attend the mayoral candidates breakfast and reminded the audience that Oct. 24 is municipal election day.

Variety of issues covered at all-candidates event

By Shelby Holmes

Affordable housing, improvements to infrastructure and doctor recruitment were some of the issues discussed at a recent Quinte West All Candidates Night.

The Quinte West Chamber of Commerce hosted the Oct. 4 event at which all official candidates for mayor and for councillor in all four wards were invited to say what they stand for and answer some questions from the audience.

The councillor candidates of the Quinte West wards were each given two minutes to give a speech and give people a chance to know what they would be voting for. They presented in alphabetical order so it was fair, and went in order of the Frankford Ward, Murray Ward, Sidney Ward, and Trenton Ward. The event was also streamed on Facebook for those who couldn't attend in person.

Many of the candidates spoke of the changes they want to make. Some of the candidates grew up in the area, currently live in the area, or are raising a family in the area. They have seen issues in the area firsthand and are willing to listen to what people have to say.

"It's important to keep Quinte West strong and growing by continuing to attract new businesses that will create new jobs," said candidate Tyler Rickey, who is running in Murray Ward.

After the council candidates gave their speeches, the mayoral candidates were given three minutes to make their opening remarks and two minutes for their closing remarks. Many of the councillor and the mayoral candidates seem interested in working together and with Quinte West residents to make the changes that need to be made.

"I remain committed to working together on matters of concern and interest impacting our community both locally and regional," stated Karen Sharpe, one of the mayoral candidates during her opening remarks.

Before the event began, there was a box for the audience to submit questions. The questions were then given to the moderator and grouped by topic. Moderator Suzanne Andrews asked the business questions first and followed them up with the audience's questions. Many of the questions focused on issues in the area and how the mayoral candidates intend to fix them. Candidates were each given two minutes to give their answers.

There was a meet and greet with the candidates beforehand, and there was another opportunity to speak to them after they gave their speeches.