

In advance of the Municipal elections scheduled for October 13-26, 2026, The Wollaston Lake Home & Cottage Association invited each of the Wollaston Township Council Candidates to respond to the following, relating to the Watershed:

Please provide your views on the value of Wollaston Township's watershed to the community's future, and also describe your support for WLHCA initiatives and partnerships (including the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Watersheds Canada, the Invasive Species Centre and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Lake Partner Program) to promote lake and sport fishing health.

The question was issued on September 30, 2026, with responses due October 7, 2026 (an extension of the original October 5 deadline). Candidates were asked to limit their responses to 500 words, and all submissions met this requirement. The below responses have been captured in its entirety as shared by the respective candidates and are presented alphabetically by last name in the following order: 6 Councillor Candidates, 2 Deputy Mayoral Candidates and 2 Mayoral Candidates.

Councillor Candidates:

JD Fentie

Wollaston Township's watershed is central to the community's future. It supports the natural setting that makes the township an attractive place to live, visit and enjoy, and it underpins important opportunities for recreation and local economic activity.

Outdoor recreation is one of the main reasons people come to Wollaston and choose to make it home. The watershed is one of the foundations of that offer, alongside wilderness areas such as Nellie Lunn Park and the snowmobile and ATV trail network, including the Rail Trail. Wollaston Lake is the jewel in the crown, but the lakes, lands and waterways are connected. The health of the whole system matters.

The Wollaston Lake Home and Cottage Association contributes through education and advocacy. Its work helps residents understand the watershed and supports informed stewardship of an asset that is important to the whole township.

Nature-based economic development is a practical fit for Wollaston because our natural environment is one of the things we have to offer. Established businesses, including the two trailer parks, and the steady flow of visitors in both summer and winter show that people value Wollaston as a destination. Protecting the watershed helps sustain that appeal and the local activity that comes with it.

The watershed also has a direct financial value. Healthy and attractive waterfront areas support property values, which contribute substantially to the township's property tax base. Those revenues help fund services for the whole community.

As a member of the current Council, I have supported the WLHCA financially through grants, including assistance to address the milfoil problem in Wollaston Lake. This work matters because protecting the lake's health supports both the environment and the community's recreation and tourism opportunities.

Council also supported the Family Day Fishing Derby on Urbach Lake. The event paired a trek through Nellie Lunn Park with ice fishing on Urbach Lake. It was supported and sponsored by local business Charlie's Task & Tackle and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. It was a fundraiser for Nellie Lunn Park (reducing costs to taxpayers) and the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery. Nearly 100 visitors took part, and the event received a two-page feature in the local newspaper.

The derby showed how recreation, conservation and local economic activity can reinforce one another. Urbach Lake is stocked by the Ministry of Natural Resources to help direct fishing pressure away from Wollaston Lake. The event introduced more people to Urbach Lake as a fishing destination and to the trails and natural spaces around it.

On a personal level, I have worked with Watersheds Canada for several years on a plan to naturalize part of my Wollaston Lake cottage shoreline. Their planting plan selected flowers, shrubs and trees suited to the local environment while retaining grass and pathways. This is a long-term project, now entering its third year, and a useful example of how shoreline health and the way people use their properties can be considered together.

Jeanne Gibson

Good day,

The Wollaston Township watershed is central to the community's future. Healthy lakes, rivers, wetlands, and shorelines support drinking water, wildlife, recreation, tourism, property values, and the quality of life that residents and visitors cherish. Protecting the watershed is therefore both an environmental responsibility and a practical investment in the Township's long-term social and economic well-being. I support decisions grounded in sound science, responsible shoreline stewardship, public education, and cooperation among residents, Indigenous communities, local organizations, businesses, and all levels of government.

I support WLHCA initiatives and partnerships that turn these principles into measurable action. Collaboration with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters can strengthen fisheries stewardship and responsible angling; Watersheds Canada can advance shoreline restoration and habitat protection; the Invasive Species Centre can support prevention, early detection, and education; and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Lake Partner Program can provide valuable long-term water-quality monitoring. I would encourage continued volunteer participation, transparent sharing of monitoring results, coordinated responses to invasive species, habitat restoration, and evidence-based planning so that our lakes and sport fisheries remain healthy and resilient for future generations.

Roxanne Lambert

Hello my name is Roxanne Lambert, and I am running for a Councillor position. Thank you WLHCA for providing this opportunity to answer your question.

We are all so fortunate to live, work and play in Wollaston Township with its beautiful lakes, rivers, wetlands and forests. Our watershed including, Wollaston Lake, many smaller lakes, the Deer River, along with the wetlands all connect and sustain the broader natural environment.

These natural resources contribute to the unique character of our community and our quality of life here. They provide valuable recreational opportunities year-round and bring seasonal residents and visitors / tourists into our community, supporting our local economy. Healthy lakes and waterways benefit all of us.

During my campaign I have said, **“Community comes first, and we need a plan”**. In my opinion, the Township needs to develop a community strategic plan.

A good plan would help Council make sound financial decisions. Together we can determine what needs to be done, what we can afford, what can be phased in over time, and if grants or partnerships may help us achieve our goals.

As a Councillor, I will encourage open communication with Wollaston Lake Home and Cottage Association and any other groups and volunteer organizations to discuss opportunities to collaborate on matters that would benefit everyone and plan effectively for our future together.

Wollaston is very fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers, that provide a variety of services, activities and events, that make our community a wonderful place to live.

I do appreciate the dedication of the WLHCA volunteers and for your organization taking an active and engaged approach in monitoring the health of Wollaston Lake. I am aware that the Association has established partnerships with all of the organizations listed in your question.

These partnerships provide access to valuable scientific expertise, education, monitoring programs and are also opportunities for WLHCA to seek external funding for projects.

I am pleased that the Association has successfully been pursuing grants, fundraising and securing other resources to support your initiatives. I also want to recognize that you have hosted several community wide events (BBQ's etc.) that help engage the entire community.

The Association has produced and shared important public education resources on your Facebook page and website. Your seasonal newsletters provide valuable information.

I believe is important for the Township to assist with the distribution of important educational material to the broader community. As a Councillor I would be proposing and supporting this type of partnership.

Thank you!

Larry Legault

Hi David

I think the Wollaston Watershed is our biggest asset to the Community. The lakes and forests attract new people to our area , for seasonal and permanent residences.

Many of those who first come to visit fall in love with the place, and then make it their home.

The WLHCA has done great work over the past years promoting and protecting the lake through their yearly water testing, and partnering and getting grants

from the many other organizations whose goals are in line with ours.

Council should continue to support and work closely together with WLHCA, to maintain the health of our lakes for the good of everyone.

Larry Legault

Wendy Mortimer

I can't say for sure that I've never gone fishing in Wollaston township, but I can say that, in 26 years, I've never caught a fish here. I am happy, nonetheless, that fishing is still a possibility in Wollaston's lakes.

Water for the forests, natural vegetation, and agricultural crops, falling as rain and snow, is stored in lakes, rivers, wetlands and underground aquifers. As wells went dry, last year's drought showed us how vulnerable we are to crop failures and forest fires. Our flora and fauna rely on a healthy aquatic ecosystem to survive. The Township must do what it can to protect our watershed from human-caused deterioration.

Even as the ecological value of "our" watershed is incalculable, its economic value can be measured. Our forests and waterways are essential to the attractiveness of this area to current and future residents, tourists and visitors.

Fishing, swimming, boating and watching sunsets are highly valued experiences. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the property tax collected here last year was paid by waterfront property owners. Along with their tax dollars, these property owners contribute to the local economy by hiring contractors for renovations and buying propane, firewood, food and other goods. Although much of this boost is seasonal, cottagers often become full-time residents, and their contributions continue year-round.

As always, every benefit comes with a cost. Relatively wealthy cottagers bring big city incomes, and big city ideas, and the next thing you know, the local grocery store is selling oat milk and Dijon ketchup.* More people on, and around, the lake means more pollution (motor exhaust, noise, sewage and garbage).

Your local council has limited means to control harm done to our lakes, but protection of the watershed is always a priority. The WLHCA rightfully monitors and defends the quality of the big lake that attracts the most people to our township, but we know that the overall health of the lake is not separate from the health of the entire watershed. Too much road salt, phosphorus from septic beds, and run-off from pavement have deleterious effects on water quality. These things do not get better on their own, and those effects are cumulative.

As a small community, we rely on our network of various government programs and non-governmental partnerships for research on issues, as information hubs, and for project funding. I once spent a summer on the tundra putting leg bands on geese, and I know how they can foul a shoreline. I was happy to see the

Watersheds Canada project to plant shrubs to keep geese off the beach and E. coli out of the water where kids swim.

Collecting information on best practices from lake health programs and putting it into practice, monitoring water quality, and communicating with others in the watershed are three valuable services that the WLHCA performs for the benefit of Wollaston residents and visitors.

*If I Had a Million Dollars, Bare Naked Ladies

Teresa Van Dyke

Hello David,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to your questions.

I believe Wollaston Township's watershed is an important natural asset and an important part of our community's future. Our lakes, rivers, wetlands and surrounding environment contribute to our quality of life, recreation, tourism and the overall appeal of Wollaston. Maintaining healthy waterways is important to our residents, visitors and local economy.

Wollaston is fortunate to have many volunteer groups and organizations that work hard to make our community a better place to live. I am inspired by the passion and commitment of the people who volunteer their time to help our community, and I believe these organizations are an important part of what makes Wollaston strong. Each brings its own interests, knowledge and priorities, and I believe they all deserve to be recognized and appreciated for the contributions they make. Understanding the work of these organizations, the partnerships they have developed and how they interact with the Township is something I would like to learn more about.

I appreciate the work being done through the Wollaston Lake Home and Cottage Association and its partnerships with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Watersheds Canada, the Invasive Species Centre and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Lake Partner Program. These initiatives address important areas such as water quality, invasive species, fish habitat and lake and sport-fishing health. I appreciate the volunteer commitment behind this work and the importance of having good information and monitoring to help understand the health of our waterways. Their efforts, knowledge and passion are valuable contributions to our community.

At the same time, I would like to learn more about these initiatives, their results and the roles and responsibilities of the various organizations involved before determining what role, if any, the Township should play. I believe it is important for Council to understand the facts, listen to different perspectives and avoid making commitments before fully understanding the issue. If elected my approach would be to look at the watershed issues from a community-wide perspective. I believe we can value and protect the natural resources that make Wollaston special while also considering responsible development, recreation, tourism, economic opportunities and the financial realities of our municipality.

I look forward to learning more, listening to the many people who contribute to our community, and working collaboratively to make thoughtful and informed decisions that are in the best interests of Wollaston and its future.

Thank you

Teresa Van Dyk

Deputy Mayoral Candidates:

Editor's Note:

The Wollaston Lake Home and Cottage Association (WLHCA) has not in the past nor currently advocated for the use of aquatic herbicide to manage invasive Eurasian Milfoil. For further information, refer to the 2026 fall newsletter Lake Steward article results of the 2025/2026 opinion survey.

Mary Byrne

Deputy Mayor is a leadership position. I am a professional civil engineer, with 30 years of leadership experience in infrastructure design, construction, operations, and asset management.

Ontario municipalities manage local infrastructure, community services, and support public safety that directly impact the daily lives of residents. As Deputy Mayor, I will be focused on our core operations, services, and legislated commitments.

Service delivery must be our priority. As Council we must be supportive of staff, to ensure that services continue to be delivered to the expected level. In practical terms, this means that Council should not impose new ideas or workload on our staff that is not budgeted and is not aligned with our municipal responsibilities. Wollaston is a lean township. We cannot afford to risk any waste of time, money, and resources. We must focus on our core operations.

Wollaston has a small population, with a high property tax burden. Not all the expenses of the township are in the control of the Township, as some expenses flow from the county or other provincial agencies. Therefore, it is essential that Wollaston Council always consider the impact on property tax increases for all new expenses.

This can be done by:

- (a) ensuring that expenses are only incurred if they are necessary.
- (b) creating a financial plan to internally fund new capital expenses, so that there is no sudden property tax shock.

In 2017, Ontario enacted Regulation 588/17 Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure. Now, all Ontario municipalities must strategically plan for the maintenance, replacement, and financing of their infrastructure.

Wollaston Township has not completed the required asset planning. This risks operating in a 'run-to-fail' mode for its roads, bridges, and Coe Hill hamlet infrastructure. We must create financial reserves of at least 2.5% of asset value, so that we can afford to maintain our assets. Our budget must be inclusive of both our capital and operating needs.

This is not an easy task. We are not alone in struggling to meet the obligations of the legislation. Yet we must start planning for the long-term future of our infrastructure. Creating a plan supports our staff, reassures our citizens that we are managing risk, and adds credibility to grant applications and discussions with the County and the Province.

The authority to manage the watershed is with the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority. Property tax dollars fund this agency. Wollaston Township has a vote on the board. Wollaston tax payors fund the management of our watershed.

I am personally concerned about the water quality of Wollaston Lake. I draw my drinking water from the lake. In 2025, after several years of multiple executive roles on the WLHCA, I stepped away from this organization, when it became apparent that other members of the executive determined to pursue using chemical herbicides in the lake, which would result in residents not being able to use the water for drinking, or swimming. I disagree with the proposed use of herbicide.

Janet Whiteway

Thanks WLHCA for your questions.

Protecting our watershed should be of the utmost importance to anyone who calls Wollaston home, whether they're a seasonal property owner, a local business operator, a seasonal camper, a traditional angler or a full-time resident, the health of our water directly impacts our quality of life, property values and local economy.

Clean water and sustainable fisheries are such an integral part of the rural lifestyle that attracts a lot of people to Wollaston. Responsibly maintaining shorelines, protecting sport fishing habitats and safeguarding water quality adds to healthy long-term sustainability.

I know that the WLHCA has been instrumental in educating people about invasive species such as the Eurasian watermilfoil and has initiated targeted control measures against it; and is supporting ongoing water sampling programs such as the Lake Partner Program and has been involved in voluntary shoreline naturalization. I applaud your association and its volunteers for the work you are doing to protect the health of our lakes and to help maintain healthy habitats and biodiversity.

As a candidate for Council, my duty is to serve all residents and stakeholders across Wollaston Township equally. I believe that volunteer community groups like yours perform valuable work on the ground, and in partnership with other local associations, local businesses and year-round working families, we come together to create practical and fiscally responsible environmental protections for our watershed, therefore paving the way for sustainable development and strong public services for everyone in Wollaston.

Thanks again for the question.

Please note this submission is provided as a complete and balanced statement. If the WLHCA wishes to publish or distribute this response - whether in print, online, or via newsletter- in part or in full, it may only do so with prior written permission and final editorial oversight by Janet Whiteway, to ensure context and accuracy are preserved.

Janet Whiteway

Mayoral Candidates:

Darlene Colton

Thank you for giving candidates the opportunity to address this important question. Providing citizens with accurate information is essential so that they can make informed decisions with the upcoming election starting October 13 – 26, 2026.

All watersheds in our community are important to me as a citizen of Wollaston Township. We have a responsibility to protect the health and future of our watersheds-not only for ourselves, but for future generations and for the fish, wildlife, and organisms that depend on these ecosystems.

Wollaston Lake Home & Cottage Association (WLHCA) has played an important role in educating residents about invasive species, boat washing, and shoreline restoration, all of which contribute to healthy lakes.

WLHCA has also supported several community initiatives, including promoting the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre, supporting luncheons and suppers at St. Andrew's United Church, and events held at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 581. They have organized a poker run and community BBQ featuring educational speakers for Wollaston residents. Their commitment to giving back to the community is also demonstrated through a \$1,000 donation to the Tri County Foodbank and support for the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery to help them purchase necessary equipment.

I would like to thank WLHCA for its continued dedication to conservation. On September 1, 2026, WLHCA volunteers and community volunteers worked with Watersheds Canada to restore a lake trout spawning bed on Wollaston Lake. This important project was made possible through partnerships and financial support from iA Financial, OFAH Community Conservation Fund, and J.P. Bickell Foundation.

These efforts demonstrate the importance of community partnerships in protecting our natural resources. Activities such as these contribute to the maintenance, preservation and long-term sustainability of our watershed and the fish and wildlife that depend upon it.

As a candidate, I believe protecting our watersheds requires continued education, responsible stewardship, strong community partnerships, and a commitment to making decisions that consider both current residents and future generations.

Our lakes and watersheds are an important part of what makes Wollaston Township special, and protecting them is a responsibility we all share.

Michael Fuerth

**Statement from Mayor Michael Fuerth
To the Wollaston Lake Home and Cottage Association**

As Mayor of Wollaston Township, I recognize that protecting Wollaston Lake and its watershed is essential to the long-term health, prosperity, and character of our community. Our lakes, wetlands, streams, shorelines, and forests are interconnected. Together, they support water quality, healthy fish populations, wildlife habitat, and the natural beauty that makes Wollaston a special place to live, to cottage, and to visit.

A healthy watershed benefits everyone. It supports recreation, tourism, local businesses, and the enjoyment of waterfront properties. It also contributes to our community's ability to respond to environmental pressures. Protecting these natural resources requires ongoing attention, responsible decisions, and cooperation among the people and organizations who share an interest in their future.

I appreciate the important role of the Wollaston Lake Home and Cottage Association. Your members bring valuable local knowledge, volunteer commitment, and a direct understanding of the lake and its changing conditions. Your efforts help connect residents, identify concerns, and encourage practical actions that contribute to a healthier lake.

Mayor and Council support the Association's stewardship initiatives and the development of partnerships with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Watersheds Canada, the Invasive Species Centre, and Ontario's Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. These relationships offer opportunities to bring expertise, educational resources, and coordinated action to local conservation efforts.

Through these partnerships, we can encourage water-quality monitoring, shoreline protection, fish habitat stewardship, and greater awareness of invasive species. Public education can help property owners and visitors understand how their everyday choices affect the lake, including maintaining natural shoreline vegetation, preventing pollutants from entering waterways, and taking precautions to avoid spreading invasive species.

Supporting healthy fish and lakes means looking beyond the water's edge. Activities throughout the watershed can influence the condition of Wollaston Lake. This makes thoughtful land-use planning, responsible development, and care for wetlands and drainage areas important considerations for our municipality's future.

My approach is to listen, maintain open communication and work collaboratively with Council, municipal staff, the Association and our conservation partners. Where opportunities arise, I support exploring appropriate grants, shared educational activities and practical projects that reflect local priorities and responsible municipal budgeting.

I also believe full-time and seasonal residents should have meaningful opportunities to contribute. Both bring experience, knowledge and a strong connection to Wollaston. Working together strengthens our ability to recognize emerging concerns and develop realistic solutions.

Protecting our watershed is a shared responsibility and a lasting investment. We must consider the needs of today while preserving the lake's health and enjoyment for those who follow us.

My commitment as Mayor is to keep watershed protection an important part of our community's future, support the Association's constructive initiatives, and encourage partnerships that turn shared concern into meaningful action. Together, we can help protect healthy fish, healthy lakes, and the quality of life that defines Wollaston Township.

Michael Fuerth

Mayor, Wollaston Township

The WLHCA thanks all candidates for their participation and wishes them well in the election and, for those elected, throughout their term on Council.