



Port Hope Votes

October 26, 2026



2026 Candidate Arts & Culture Survey — Port Hope

Critical Mass is asking every Mayoral and Council candidate in Port Hope's October 26, 2026 municipal election the same questions about how art and culture fit in your platform. All responses will be published in full and unedited so residents can compare them. Critical Mass does not endorse any candidate. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with Port Hope's creative community.

Candidate name: Amelia Bray

Running for: ☐ Mayor ☒ Councillor

Ward: Ward 1

Context & Background:

The arts are a major economic driver of the economy, with a \$131 billion dollar impact nationally. The 2025 *Artworks* report from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Business Data Lab found a \$29 return in economic activity for every federal arts dollar invested. The study also identified that the arts and culture sector growth rate (8%) was double the rate of growth (4%) for the entire economy. Arts and culture creates about 13 jobs per \$1 million of output, more than traditional sectors like oil and gas, manufacturing or agriculture.

Critical Mass recently completed a community survey, where 195 residents rated the arts as essential to a thriving community, scoring them 9.8 out of 10. Funded by a Work-In-Culture grant, we also led more than 82 hours of consultation, with regional and local arts organizations, artists, community partners, elected officials and municipal staff – where the need for stable funding, year-round space, coordinated advocacy and more paid opportunities for working artists were raised. Artists named making a living, exhibition opportunities, and recognition as their biggest challenges, and most also identified the need for an arts council or umbrella arts organization in Port Hope that could offer support.

The Municipality of Port Hope is increasingly incorporating arts and culture into its strategic pillars, including its new Tourism Strategy and the review of its Public Art Policy, with recommendations forthcoming from Critical Mass. Updating its decade-old Cultural Plan and preparing for potential growth from Wesleyville will also require a strong, well-supported arts community. The next Council will play a key role in turning these priorities into funded, actionable commitments.

Please take a few minutes to complete the 2026 all candidates arts & culture survey.



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Part 1: Please rate the following statements:

Please mark one box per statement.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Arts and culture are essential to Port Hope's quality of life and identity.	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Investing in arts and culture helps Port Hope attract and keep workers, families and businesses.	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arts and culture contributes to residents' health and well-being.	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Municipality currently invests enough in arts and culture.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Port Hope would benefit from an arts council or umbrella arts organization that supports and amplifies the work of local artists and arts organizations.	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Municipality should prioritize hiring artists, rather than using generative AI tools as a substitute for human designs which undermine and exploit the local creative economy.	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
The arts are enjoyed by some people, but they don't need public support.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒



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Part 2: Open questions

Please keep each answer to 100 words or fewer.

1. **Role of the arts.** Do you think art and culture add value to Port Hope? If so, how? Where do arts and culture fit in your platform?

Absolutely! Arts and culture add tremendous value to Port Hope and our quality of life while strengthening connections with neighbours. A thriving arts and culture sector creates opportunities for local artists, entrepreneurs, residents and visitors alike. My platform focuses on supporting local businesses, growing tourism and making responsible investments that celebrate what makes Port Hope unique, while creating opportunities for arts, culture, and community organizations to thrive.

2. **Health and well-being.** How do you see arts and culture supporting residents' health, especially seniors, youth and/or people facing isolation? How would you support that role?

Arts and culture create opportunities for people to connect, express themselves, learn new skills and feel a sense of belonging. For seniors, youth and anyone experiencing isolation, accessible programs and welcoming community spaces can make a meaningful difference to their well-being. I would support partnerships between the municipality, local arts organizations, community groups and service providers to expand access to inclusive, affordable programming.

3. **Economic growth.** As Port Hope prepares for future growth (especially with the potential Wesleyville project), how will arts and culture feature in your plan to attract and keep workers, families and businesses? How would you support arts and culture as an integral part of Port Hope's local economy?

I support stronger partnerships between the municipality, local arts organizations and businesses to promote festivals, live music, theatre and cultural events that bring people downtown, fill restaurants and shops and attract visitors. I would also look at opportunities to make municipal spaces available for programming, reduce barriers for community-led events and connect local artists and cultural organizations with economic development initiatives. Arts and culture should be recognized as economic drivers.

4. **Access.** How would you improve access to arts and culture across rural and urban wards, including addressing cost, transportation and disability-related barriers?

I would focus on bringing programming closer to residents, not expecting everyone to travel to the downtown core. This could include pop-up arts programs in the Canton Hub, free or pay-what-you-can events in accessible venues. I would also work with arts charities to identify funding opportunities and develop joint applications where eligible. For example, the Ontario Trillium Foundation supports eligible



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community arts, culture and accessibility projects, while Ontario's EASE grant supports accessibility improvements for seniors and people with disabilities. By combining municipal support, community expertise and outside funding, we can make arts and culture more accessible across Port Hope.

5. **Affordability.** What municipal tools and support would you implement to make accessible, year-round arts spaces more affordable?

I would explore using existing municipal spaces during off-peak hours with reduced rental rates for non-profit arts organizations. As I mentioned above, the municipality can work with arts charities on joint applications like the Ontario Trillium Foundation to support space improvements, equipment and programming. Rather than relying solely on municipal tax dollars, we can combine town resources, community partnerships and external funding to make year-round arts spaces more affordable and accessible to all residents.

6. **Stable arts funding:** Do you support predictable, multi-year municipal funding for local arts and cultural organizations? If so, would you maintain, increase, or reduce that investment, and why?

I support exploring predictable, multi-year funding agreements with measurable goals, regular reporting and reviews. I want organizations to plan ahead while allowing residents to see the value of their investment. Before committing to increasing or reducing overall spending, we'd need to review existing agreements and community needs to ensure that smaller organizations and emerging initiatives are given a fair opportunity.

7. **Advocacy.** Would you support the creation of a local arts council to help artists and cultural organizations access funding, share resources, and pay artists professional (CARFAC) fees? What Municipal support would you advocate for?

Yes, I would support exploring an independent arts council that brings together arts and cultural organizations across Port Hope. It could assist in coordinating resources, sharing equipment and spaces. I would advocate for exploring joint funding opportunities through the Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts and Ontario Trillium Foundation. I would want transparent governance, broad representation and measurable community benefits before committing to ongoing municipal funding.

8. **Commitment to the arts.** If elected, can the arts community count on you to advocate for it at Council? Name one concrete action you would take in your first year.

The arts community sure can count on me!! In my first year, I will advocate for a formal roundtable bringing together artists, cultural organizations and municipal staff to identify shared challenges and funding opportunities. I would want that conversation to include organizations of all sizes from all disciplines so we can build a more connected, accessible arts community.



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Please return by Friday, October 16, 2026 to info@criticalmassart.com.

Responses will be posted on the Critical Mass website and social media sites before election day.

Thank you kindly for taking part!

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criticalmassart.com