



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: Claire Holloway Wadhwani

Running for: ☐ Mayor ☒ Councillor

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.



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

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.	X	☐	☐	☐	☐
Investing in arts and culture helps Port Hope attract and keep workers, families and businesses.	X	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arts and culture contributes to residents' health and well-being.	X	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Municipality currently invests enough in arts and culture.	☐	☐	☐	X	☐
Port Hope would benefit from an arts council or umbrella arts organization that supports and amplifies the work of local artists and arts organizations.	X	☐	☐	☐	☐
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.	☐	X	☐	☐	☐
The arts are enjoyed by some people, but they don't need public support.	☐	☐	☐	☐	X



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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?

Arts and culture are a big part of what makes Port Hope feel like Port Hope. I love the festivals, the theatre and the live music, and as a parent of young children I love knowing there is always something hands-on to try on a summer Saturday. The arts bring people together across ages and incomes, and they support tourism and local jobs. They fit in my platform under A Community That Invests in Itself, and I want them highlighted in our economic development plans alongside core economies like agriculture.

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?

Creative activities bring people together, and connection matters for health at every age. A free show, a workshop or a community event gives seniors and people facing isolation a reason to get out and meet someone, and gives youth a place to belong and try something new. I would support that by keeping arts and culture free and accessible in our shared public spaces, with exhibits and displays in our recreation facilities, by connecting events to transit and shuttles, and by using our communication channels so everyone knows what is on.

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?

As we plan for growth, including whatever happens at Wesleyville, I want arts and culture in our economic development plans alongside other key sectors like agriculture, ideally connected to a more vibrant local food scene, manufacturing, and with heritage trades added to that mix. A strong arts scene helps attract and keep workers and families, brings visitors downtown and supports local jobs. I would carry that into the Cultural Plan



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update and the Tourism Strategy, and into how we use municipal space, so artists have affordable places to show and make their work.

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 like to bring the arts to where residents already are, with art shows, displays and teaser performances connected to live music events and festivals in our high traffic municipal spaces, including council chambers, our sports and recreation facilities and the new Municipal Hub at 39 Pine St. N. I would connect events to public transit with shuttle buses, support accessible venues and low or no cost options, and promote events across urban and rural Port Hope. This builds on my belief in the commons: free and accessible places that bring people together across incomes, ages and abilities.

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

I applaud the organizations already providing free access, like the pay what you can shows at the Capitol and free concerts and festivals in public spaces, free art shows, etc. Of course that is all made possible by those of us who have the means using our discretionary spending money to support arts and artists when we can. To make year-round space more affordable, I would like us to consider arts use as part of the new Municipal Hub at 39 Pine St. N, through a community partnership, and open more of our existing municipal spaces for exhibits and performances.

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?

Yes. I would like to see this as part of an overall move to multi-year budgeting. We can keep some funds aside each year for responsive grants, so new and emerging groups have a way in, and investments in our strategic priorities should be multi-year, because stable funding lets organizations plan and keep good people. I would increase investment where the evidence shows impact, and find room by reviewing what we already fund. Decisions should be fair and open, with published criteria and public reporting on what each investment achieved.

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?



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Yes. I fully support establishing an arts council, and I see it as worthwhile for the municipality to support through our strategic initiatives funding. I would be open to co-managing arts and culture funding with the council, so the people who understand the sector best guide its sustainability and growth, with recommendations coming to Council for final approval and public oversight. I support paying artists fairly, including CARFAC fees, for work the municipality commissions or exhibits. I will actively support a central arts hub space, including consideration for it in the new Municipal Hub at 39 Pine St. N.

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.

Yes, you can count on me. In my first year I will push for one central community events calendar on the municipal site, merging the tourism calendar and the what's on calendar, with active outreach to every group hosting events. I would encourage our communications team to circulate it weekly as a designed visual by email and social media. I also want the municipality to act as a communication channel for the whole community, using screens, billboards and free advertising space in our buildings.

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