

Candidate Questionnaire

2026 Municipal Election • Working People. Strong Communities.

Your voice. Our community. Stronger together.

Thank you for running to serve the people of Sarnia. The Sarnia & District Labour Council represents thousands of working people across our community. Your responses will help our Executive Committee review candidates and make endorsement recommendations to our members and affiliates. Please answer each question in the space provided; feel free to attach additional pages if you need more room.

Please return your completed questionnaire within 2 weeks of receiving it to Candace Young at candace.d.parsons@gmail.com, or by mail to 1086 Modeland Rd, Suite 249, Sarnia, ON N7S 6L2. This form is fillable — you may type your answers directly, save, and email it back.

ID CANDIDATE IDENTIFICATION

Candidate name:	Joshua (Josh) Coutts-Smith
Office sought:	City Council
Ward (if any):	N/A
Email:	coutts4council@gmail.com
Phone:	226-402-3886
Past elected office:	none
Date:	
In 75 words or fewer, tell us why you are running:	

I was born and raised in Sarnia. I now have two of my own children. Growing up, a lot of people my age had the sentiment that Sarnia was a boring city and that just about anywhere else would be better. I know Sarnia is a great city, I want my children to feel pride in the city they live, and I want to do something my children would be proud of me doing.

A LABOUR & DECENT WORK

1. Do you support keeping municipal services public and in-house rather than contracting them out or entering public-private partnerships? Identify any services you would protect or consider contracting out, and explain your reasoning.

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

The work should be done first and foremost by the people already in Sarnia. Any contracting of private businesses (especially outside of the city) should only be used for market research, and to ensure that the cost of work is fair to the tax payers.

2. How will you ensure municipal jobs — and jobs funded by the municipality — remain stable, fairly paid, and unionized? Include your position on temporary/contract labour and subcontracting.

Continue with completing municipal projects in a tiered manner, so that the labourers in our city can have some time to rest between projects, while also knowing in advance the next project. As previously stated, regularly performing market assessments to ensure not only fair price to the tax payers, but that wages, benefits, and all forms of compensation remain fair or better. Temporary/contact labour and subcontracting should only be used under extrenuous circumstances, and not relied on so our workers can depend on their jobs.

3. Will you support Community Benefits Agreements, fair-wage schedules, and local-hiring requirements on major municipal infrastructure and construction projects?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

These are easy ways to show appreciation to the labourers that make our city function, and is more than fair to provide. I would highly consider a payment schedule that is above market value, in order to keep skilled workers living and working in Sarnia, while also attracting new workers to relocate to Sarnia.

4. Do you support a living-wage policy covering all municipal workers, contractors, and subcontractors, tied to the City's procurement policies?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

Every worker deserves a wage that is reliable, and does not cause them to be over-worked. If our city workers are paid at least a living-wage, they will be less likely to show up to work over-tired, sick, or under any circumstance that may cause them to be a liability to themselves or others.

5. Sarnia's economy depends on turnaround and maintenance work in Chemical Valley. How will you use municipal levers (procurement, permitting, training partnerships with local contractors) to prioritize local, unionized skilled-trades labour?

I will make connections with the people who are already doing such work, find out what has been working for them, what has not, and what can be improved. I would also build relationships with the businesses in Chemical Valley and Unions in our city to understand their individual needs, and how the city can support them. I would also encourage projects and training that advance our workers for the future.

6. Will you commit to meeting regularly with the Sarnia & District Labour Council and its affiliates, and to consulting workers before decisions that affect them, if elected?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

First off, the job of the city council is to represent the people in the city. I also understand that I do not know everything about Sarnia & District Labour Council and its affiliates, and therefore would want to build a relationship of strong trust. I also believe not consulting SDLC and its affiliates prior to a decision could have negative impacts that I may not realize nor understand beforehand.

7. Lambton County's By-Name List identifies roughly 390 people experiencing homelessness in Sarnia-Lambton, including about 190 who are chronically homeless. What concrete actions will you take on homelessness and supportive housing?

I strongly back supportive housing. Food and shelter are the two most basic needs of any individual. When those are no longer a worry or uncertainty crime rates drastically drop, and our city becomes safer. Supportive housing also employs support workers (Social Workers, Nurses, Job Aids, etc.) which would therefore increase the job market in our city.

8. A County report warned that prematurely closing the Out of the Cold overflow shelter could more than double the unsheltered population. Do you support maintaining overflow and low-barrier shelter options while permanent supportive housing is built?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

As previously mentioned, if food and shelter is provided it will drastically drop the crime rate. The people using these facilities are just that, People. It would be inhumane to treat them as less than such, and to remove access to facilities "until" permanent solutions are in place.

9. Will you support zoning and parking reforms that make supportive and affordable housing easier to approve — rather than changes that stall projects like Indwell's proposed 353 George Street development in Mitton Village?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

If we had removed red tape for projects like Indwell earlier, we would already see less individuals on the street, and begin to see rehabilitation. Research has also shown that projects like Indwell have decreased strain on the police, and communities that already have one facility request more almost immediately.

10. With more than 900 households on the social-housing waitlist and demand for roughly 2,500 additional affordable units, how will you increase the supply of affordable and non-market housing?

Continue to work with organizations that build and bring in support and affordable housing. Remove red tape, so projects like Indwell and affordable housing can be approved and started quicker. Where needed, build relationships with Provincial and Federal organizers to bring more funding and projects to Sarnia.

11. Do you support a humane, housing-focused Encampment Response Protocol that connects people to services and housing rather than relying primarily on displacement or policing?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

Making homelessness a crime does not reduce homelessness, it only builds stress on our police and justice system. Connecting people quickly to housing and required services will help reduce homelessness quicker, and cause little to no stress on our justice system.

12. Major industrial investment (such as the proposed Northern Shield Energy Corridor pipeline) may add capacity while creating relatively few permanent jobs. How will you ensure new industrial investment translates into good, lasting local jobs?

Build relationships with the businesses, local unions, and SDLC to understand how investments and projects will impact our local workforce, and prioritize approving projects and investments that have a high positive impact (especially long lasting jobs). Work especially with the unions and SDLC to ensure that projections provided by a business or investor are accurate, and that jobs will not be cut after the project is approved.

13. The closure of INEOS Styrolution affects local workers. What role should the City play in supporting displaced workers and ensuring a fair transition and retraining?

Help provide training to encourage a broader range of skills for the workers. Apply this to both workers currently out of work and in work. Provide job aid services that help workers know quickly what new positions are open, and how to translate current skills into other trades.

14. How will you attract and retain diversified jobs, commerce, and investment beyond petrochemicals — for example downtown, the port and waterfront, clean technology, and small business?

Encourage a broader spectrum of training for labourers to promote Sarnia as a location where many types of energy and technology businesses can thrive. Work to remove red tape and provide incentives for businesses to open in downtown. Work along small businesses to ensure their needs are met, and that the city is doing what it can to provide a stable and bolstering economy.

15. Will you support apprenticeships, Red Seal skilled-trades training, and youth and local hiring through municipal projects and procurement — and if so, how?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

Work with the school board to inform youth as soon as high school about opportunities and programs available to them. Build stronger relationships with Lambton College to encourage students to stay local throughout their education, and work with the unions to ensure students are able to meet all requirements within our city.

16. How will you support revitalization of downtown Sarnia and Mitton Village and strengthen local small businesses?

Support projects that make travelling around downtown and Mitton Village more accessible. Work with the current small business to grow their business in a substantial and manageable method. Create incentives that encourage business in downtown and Mitton Village to open, and use spaces that are already available.

17. Aamjiwnaang First Nation and nearby Sarnia neighbourhoods face benzene and cumulative air-pollution exposure. What actions within municipal jurisdiction will you take to protect residents' health?

Build a relationship with the Chief, Council, and People of Aamjiwnaang to better understand the causes, hear proposed solutions, and work with all local municipalities to ensure the health and safety of all our citizens is top priority. I would personally love to build a relationship with Aamjiwnaang where I can be trusted to be a good representative of that community in Sarnia Council. It would be unfair of me to commit to consulting with SDLC and affiliates on projects that affect them, but not do the same for our First Nations communities.

18. Will you advocate to provincial and federal governments for cumulative-effects air-pollution assessment and stronger monitoring and enforcement in Chemical Valley?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

Long lasting jobs includes protecting the people doing the work along with all the people living near by that would be effected.

19. What specific actions will you take to implement and accelerate Sarnia's climate and emissions-reduction plans?

Create incentives for businesses to complete the work as needed (or ahead of schedule), as well as deterrents to ensure the work is completed as needed. Making a healthy balance between the two to ensure the right work is done while also protecting the workers, their jobs, and the broader communities.

20. How will you protect and expand access to affordable public transit and safe active transportation?

Invest more in public transit to make it more reliable and make travelling around the city more affordable. I would like to research the potential and affordability to create a public transit system that can connect all the communities in our county.

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GOVERNANCE, SERVICES & RECONCILIATION

21. Which public services (water and wastewater, waste, transit, libraries, recreation, emergency services) do you believe must always remain publicly delivered, and how will you strengthen them?

All mentioned services should remain public. I would research to find out which cities have success with strengthening and delivering the service effectively, and make connections with these cities to find out what they're doing and how the same ideas can be applied here. Listen to the people working in the services (in Sarnia) to understand what changes are needed, and also consult with them before implementing new ideas.

22. How will you advance meaningful reconciliation with Aamjiwnaang First Nation and the broader Indigenous community at the municipal level?

Work alongside the leadership and people of Aamjiwnaang to ensure that they are getting the support they need from the city, be a good advocate to the First Nations communities in all council meetings, and ensure they are afforded the respect and dignity I would expect for every person.

23. How will you ensure transparency, accessibility, and meaningful public engagement in municipal decision-making — and how will residents know whether you are delivering on your commitments?

I strongly believe in honesty and integrity. I want to make all my decisions as informed as possible, and never want to make a decision that I would not stand behind. I understand that some decisions can have a very passionate response from the community, but I would still commit myself to meet and converse with anyone.

24. What is one decision you would make that may be unpopular in the short term but necessary for the long-term well-being of working people in Sarnia?

Advocate for the health and well-being of all our citizens. It may sounds like a non-issue, but I will not lower standards in an attempt to attract more jobs or business. Growth does not come from lowering our standards, instead we need more people who are committed to raising standards in order to make the work and workforce more resilient for the future.

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and for your commitment to building a stronger community for working people in Sarnia.