

## CANDIDATE &amp; COMMUNITY BRIEFING

# ELECT RESPECT

Strong debate. Real accountability. Respect for people.

For candidates, members, media and residents | October 6, 2026

**Respect does not mean agreement.  
Accountability does not require abuse.**

## 1. What Elect Respect asks of us

Elect Respect is a civic pledge to foster respect, inclusion and safety in public life. It asks candidates, elected officials and the public to reject harassment and intimidation while focusing political discussion on ideas and policies. The Chamber applies that commitment to an election conversation that is rigorous, evidence-based and open to different views.<sup>1,2</sup>

## 2. Chatham-Kent has already made a commitment

The **Chamber Board adopted its Elect Respect pledge on May 21, 2026** and asked Municipal Council to support the campaign. **Council endorsed the resolution on June 8, 2026**, on a motion moved by Councillor B. McGregor and seconded by Councillor Crew:<sup>3,4</sup>

"That Chatham-Kent Council endorse the Elect Respect Resolution and forward a copy of the letter to AMO and Ontario Municipalities." **Motion carried.**<sup>3</sup>

## 3. The six principles endorsed by the Chamber

The Board resolution commits to the following principles:<sup>2</sup>

- Treat others with respect in all spaces - public, private and online.
- Reject and call out harassment, abuse and personal attacks.
- Focus debate on ideas, records and policies, not personal attacks.
- Help build a supportive culture where people of all backgrounds feel safe to run for and hold office, including during municipal, provincial and federal elections.
- Call on relevant authorities to help protect elected officials and candidates who face abuse or threats.
- Model integrity and respect by holding one another to the highest standards of public conduct.

## RESPECT AND ACCOUNTABILITY BELONG TOGETHER

### 4. Elect Respect is not a request to avoid difficult questions

Candidates and residents can disagree strongly, criticize a voting record, question a budget, oppose a development, challenge an explanation or advocate for a change in leadership. The Chamber's candidate communication explicitly supports debate, disagreement and scrutiny of ideas, records and policies.<sup>3</sup>

The distinction is **between testing a decision and attacking a person's dignity or safety**. Criticism of conduct in public office remains legitimate. Respect should not be used to silence dissent, dismiss a credible concern, discourage a complaint or shield misconduct from examination.

Passion, frustration and firm questioning are not, by themselves, harassment. Equally, disagreement does not justify threats, discriminatory abuse, intimidation or targeting someone's family.

#### Better questions strengthen the public conversation

The following examples apply the Chamber's principles; they are not additional terms of the official pledge.

| Issue                               | An accountable, issue-focused question                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Budget and taxation                 | What service, cost or funding decision explains this increase, and what alternatives were assessed?                                     |
| Confidential investment discussions | What information legitimately requires protection, what has been decided, and what public costs, risks and approvals must be explained? |
| Infrastructure and development      | What evidence supports the proposal, who benefits, who pays, and how will the effects on residents and businesses be addressed?         |
| Leadership and performance          | What did you commit to, what was delivered, what fell short, and what would you do differently?                                         |

### 5. Social media: apply the same standard online

**Check before sharing.** Read the original report, motion or source where available. Distinguish facts, opinions, allegations and findings. Do not treat repetition, a cropped image or an anonymous claim as verification.

**Correct and respond.** Address the substance of a question, correct an error clearly, and acknowledge what remains unknown. Do not amplify abusive messages simply because they attack an opponent.

**Moderate conduct, not disagreement.** On pages you manage, publish clear participation rules and apply them consistently. Welcome criticism while responding to threats, discriminatory abuse and exposure of private information. Ask campaign teams and supporters to follow the same standard.

These are practical ways to apply the Board's commitment to respect in public, private and online spaces.<sup>2</sup>

## LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

**6. What candidates and future Council can demonstrate**

**Show how you would govern.** Explain evidence, costs, alternatives and trade-offs. Answer challenging questions without treating the questioner as an enemy. Be prepared to change a position when the evidence warrants it.

**Set the example within your own campaign.** Brief volunteers and people communicating on your behalf. Address disrespectful conduct from your own side, not only from opponents. A pledge should be visible in everyday behaviour, including when a discussion becomes difficult.

**Carry the standard beyond election day.** Listen to delegations, respect colleagues and staff, and explain decisions to residents who disagree. Represent the needs of all Chatham-Kent communities, including people who did not support your campaign.

**7. A shared responsibility, not a standard for candidates alone**

**Residents and community participants** can ask direct questions, request evidence, challenge decisions and support respectful participation by others. No one needs to agree with a candidate to reject harassment directed at them.

**Businesses, not-for-profits and community organizations** can apply the same principles to meetings, advocacy and online channels: make room for different views, discuss evidence, and address conduct consistently.

**Media and online discussion hosts** can strengthen public understanding by distinguishing allegations from findings, providing relevant context and enabling scrutiny without encouraging personal abuse. These are applications of the Chamber's call for constructive, inclusive public discourse.<sup>2,4</sup>

**8. Why the Chamber connects respect with community prosperity**

The Chamber's resolution recognizes that hostile public discourse can discourage qualified people from seeking office and narrow the voices participating in public life. Its letter to Council supports an environment where people are encouraged, rather than discouraged, to serve.<sup>2,4</sup>

For the Chamber, this has a practical connection to the wider election series. Infrastructure, financing, business growth, housing, tourism and community services involve competing needs. We need people willing to bring forward evidence, discuss disagreements and work with one another after a decision is made. Respect supports that conversation; it does not guarantee agreement or make a weak proposal sound.

The Chamber's election program is **non-partisan**: it does not endorse, rank or campaign for or against candidates. Its role is to provide information, encourage constructive discussion and work with whoever is elected.<sup>5</sup>

**"CHANGE is just a slogan? Leadership is the work."**

**Elect Respect asks us to demonstrate that leadership in how we treat one another.**

## FROM PLEDGE TO EVERYDAY CONDUCT

### 9. Questions to carry into the campaign - and the council term

**Evidence:** Am I challenging an idea, decision or record with information that can be checked?

**Consistency:** Would I accept this conduct from my own supporters if it were directed at an opponent?

**Inclusion:** Does this exchange help people participate, or make them afraid to speak or serve?

**Accountability:** Have I answered the concern, explained the trade-offs and corrected any mistake?

### 10. Read the pledge. Put it into practice.

The Chamber encourages candidates, elected officials, businesses, organizations and residents to review and sign the Elect Respect pledge. Signing is a starting point, not proof of conduct or a Chamber endorsement of any candidate.<sup>1,2</sup>

Learn more and read the official pledge: [electrespect.ca](https://electrespect.ca)

A civic pledge does not replace public accountability or the processes for addressing alleged misconduct. Chatham-Kent publishes its Council Code of Conduct and related complaint resources. Consult current municipal guidance on the appropriate procedure, jurisdiction and timing.<sup>6</sup>

**Challenge decisions. Test promises. Expect results.**  
**Protect the dignity and safety of people participating in public life.**

**Elect Respect is not about making politics comfortable. It is about making democratic participation possible - and leadership accountable.**

#### Sources and further reading

1. [Elect Respect. Official campaign and pledge.](#) Current pledge and local-action resources. Accessed October 6, 2026.

2. **Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. Board of Directors Resolution: Support for the Elect Respect Campaign.** May 21, 2026, pp. 1-2. Source: CKCC Elect Respect Resolution.pdf.

3. **Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. Candidate Email: Elect Respect (revised).** Records the Board adoption and reproduces the June 8, 2026 Council motion, mover, seconder and carried result. Source: CK\_Chamber\_Candidate\_Email\_Elect\_Respect\_Revised.docx.

4. **Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. Elect Respect Council Letter.** May 21, 2026, pp. 1-3. Request for Council adoption and rationale for safe, inclusive civic participation.

5. **Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. Introductory candidate communication.** August 14, 2026, pp. 1-2. Election theme, non-partisanship, equal information and collaborative purpose.

6. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. Council Code of Conduct.](#) Official code, complaint process and related guidance. Accessed October 6, 2026.

Public-facing, non-partisan education resource. Practical applications are offered for discussion; this briefing does not determine whether any individual has breached a law, code or pledge.