Mike Jefford is officially a **certified candidate for Ridout Ward in the 2026 Lake of Bays municipal election**, running against incumbent George Anderson for the ward's single seat. The Township confirms his candidacy, and election day is October 26.

What kind of candidate is he?

Jefford comes across much more as a **businessman/operator running for council** than somebody who has built a career around politics.

According to his platform, he's been in Muskoka for 17 years and Lake of Bays for seven. He describes starting his landscaping business at 17, running an adventure-tourism business, maintaining outdoor rinks for the Town of Bracebridge, doing volunteer work and owning substantial property in Lake of Bays.

That background matters because it seems to drive his political philosophy. A lot of his proposals have an almost **contractor/project-manager mentality**: identify a specific problem, devise a relatively simple solution, implement it, and don't create a huge regulatory system around it.

His criticism of government isn't really *"government is bad."* It's more **"government should be useful."**

That's actually an important distinction.

His underlying philosophy

Personal freedom/property rights. This is probably his strongest ideological position. He repeatedly talks about personal agency, avoiding blanket bylaws and preventing government from micromanaging rural residents

But he isn't taking an absolutist property-rights position. His waterfront policy is a perfect example: he owns considerable waterfront himself, yet argues against severing existing waterfront lots because he believes preserving larger lots benefits lake health, natural character and property values.

So his position is essentially:

"Leave people alone unless there's a legitimate community reason not to."

That's considerably different from either pure libertarianism or highly regulatory environmentalism.

Pro-development economically, conservative physically. This may be the most distinctive feature of the platform.

Jefford wants **more economic activity without necessarily wanting substantially more physical development**.

He wants more tourists, more businesses, more entrepreneurs, more employment, more winter activity and more investment in Dorset and Baysville. But he simultaneously says the growth Lake of Bays needs is *not* a large increase in new lots.

Instead, he's trying to squeeze more economic productivity out of the community that already exists: winter tourism, trails, cycling, snowshoeing, outdoor recreation, accommodations and existing businesses.

That's a fairly coherent rural economic-development philosophy.

He's surprisingly interventionist in certain areas

This is where simply calling him "conservative" becomes misleading.

He opposes excessive regulation, but he's quite willing to use municipal government **actively** when he thinks there's a tangible payoff.

For instance, his garage proposal isn't "abolish the by-law and let everybody do whatever they want." He's proposing pre-approved designs, regulatory openings and cooperation with planners to encourage residents to replace shipping containers and temporary plastic structures with proper garages.

Likewise, he's talking about accommodation incentives, MAT/STR relief during the off-season, trail investment, recreational infrastructure, tourism promotion and supporting the brewery pavilion proposal.

That's closer to **incentive-based government instead of prohibition-based government**:

Instead of making undesirable behaviour illegal, make the desired outcome easier or more attractive.

That's actually one of the more intellectually consistent themes running through the platform.

Environmentally, he's more conservationist than I initially expected

He's certainly not presenting as an only Green-style environmental candidate. But he's clearly **conservation-oriented**.

There is a distinction between modern environmental politics and traditional conservationism. Jefford's language is much more the latter: preserve lakes, shoreline buffers, forests, natural character and recreational opportunities because these things are intrinsically valuable **and** because they're fundamental to property values, tourism and the Lake of Bays lifestyle.

That's an old-school rural conservative environmental argument rather than an ideological climate-politics argument.

He's very focused on year-round Lake of Bays

The Doppler interview independently emphasizes exactly what the platform says: Jefford said he entered the race partly because he sees an opportunity to strengthen the economy during the shoulder and winter seasons, particularly creating meaningful employment for younger residents.

And there's a logical chain behind his proposals:

Outdoor recreation → visitors in winter → customers for businesses → businesses stay open longer → more year-round jobs → stronger permanent communities.

That's why things that initially seem unrelated—bike lanes, snowmobile infrastructure, trails, winter accommodations, ice rinks, Dorset, Baysville businesses—keep appearing together.

His political personality

Based on his *public material*, I'd describe his political style as **energetic, entrepreneurial, informal and unusually specific for a municipal candidate**.

He isn't hiding behind phrases like "responsible growth," "strong communities" and "fiscal responsibility" without explaining what those mean. He's putting potentially controversial positions in writing: don't sever waterfront lots, reduce blanket regulation, consider some STR by-law and Municipal Accommodation Tax exemptions during the off-season, make basic garages easier to build, improve particular roads, promote particular recreational assets… but it also lets voters know what they're voting for.

Even his language—**"chill," "happy, fun life," "laser focused,"** is much less institutional than normal municipal-government language.