

thescope's

2013 ST. JOHN'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Geoff Chaulk, Mayoral Candidate

Please describe yourself in a few words.

I am a 54 year old, chronically-single man who started my 30 year career in health care, in my hometown, St. John's, before moving to 'the mainland'.

I lived in Toronto, from 1987 to 2004, and 'lived to tell the tale'. I worked for the ON public service, for 15 years, as a health policy and program analyst, under all three major political parties.

I have a master's degree in social policy, had a great career, including psychiatric social work, and executive director of our province's mental health association. I was, and I am still, an active volunteer, and activist, on issues that concern me as a citizen. I'm a reader, quasi-cook, gardener, flawed-christian, walker, and Himalayan (Tim and Chase) lover, but not in that order.

What is your present occupation?

Upon finishing my 30 years in health care (2011), I started what I call, 'Phoenix-Rising Consulting'. Other than some health-planning work, my biggest accomplishment, under Phoenix-Rising, was to research, develop, and sell the intellectual property rights to a documentary film on mental illness and stigma, to Eastern Health. Phoenix-Rising still exists today, but I want, and would much prefer, to be Your mayor, of my hometown.

Why are you running in this election?

I'm running, in this election, because my hometown needs a Mayor who can lead, advocate, strategize, and work, in partnership, on resolving issues important to the people who live here, and the city, itself. In my almost-ten years since moving home, I've been

disheartened by the lack of, or just plain bad, leadership at the political level of our city. I have done, in my career, and will do, as your Mayor the job of advocating for, and addressing, the needs of people, and our city, for us to be the greatest we can all be, together.

What should be the city's top three priorities?

1. Build more affordable housing for our young adults just starting-out in life, our seniors, our single parents, new Canadians, and our poor. On the housing front, the city needs to get the province to implement legislation that helps tenants find and maintain their housing, of fair price, while living up to their tenant obligations.

2. Charge the commuter-communities, who have 1000s of people commuting here each day to our city, but do not pay, a commuter-fee. Commuters into our city need to help with all infrastructure costs that they use each day. It's only fair, these services are shared by us, in St. John's, with the commuters, and, in turn, those services and supports, must be cost-shared by daily commuters into St. John's.

3. Given the recent report by our university geographers, and the prediction that we will become a wetter, warmer, windier place, we need to have the best emergency preparedness plan possible. We must be made fully aware of our city's emergency plan, as citizens, know what to do when the next big weather event happens, and always be preventative, and environment-friendly, in our everyday, day to day living.

What has been the present council's biggest blunder?

Last time I checked, our city's current capital budget had very minor funds allocated to social housing (maintenance), and a 17 million dollar 'surplus' of unallocated funds. These unallocated funds, in a city where the vacancy rate is around 1.5 per cent, need to be allocated to a public-private partnership, in order to build much needed affordable housing for us.

If we can get the province, the feds and other groups to add to the pot, by matching funds, we can develop significant affordable housing over the next few years. To me, that is just obvious.

What has been the present council's biggest achievement?

The present council's biggest achievement, under the leadership of Councillor Danny Breen, was to move to a three year budget planning cycle for money/revenue and service management, forecasting and predictability.

The fix-able flaw to the current budget plan was to not build-in a dollar/fund contingency for municipal areas where cost over-runs can happen on the whim of mother-nature. This flaw will need to be fixed in the next budget cycle or, for the coming budget year.

What other candidates running in this election do you think you would work best with?

At this time, I don't know any of the other candidates very well, if at all. But in my professional life one of my strengths was to work well with others, build consensus on complicated issues, such as, homelessness and mental illness in Ontario, tackling issues related to the Waterford Hospital, and getting government funds to start a unique support program for those with mental illness, at HMP.

Please rate the importance of each subject on a scale of 0 to 10, and then add your comments.

Heritage building regulations

10 - but we still have to allow development that protects, honours and strengthens what we have now, and boldly mix the old with the modern. We need to engage more creative architects/engineers who can draw on our heritage and land/sea-scapes and reflect these back to us in modern day form. Fogo is a good example.

City support for the arts

3 - I think modest support of the arts is fine, but the best of our arts community can, and do, support themselves in the broader marketplace. Grants for our young, under 30, artists should be the priority.

Downtown parking

5 - yes this is a problem, but it wont be fixed by adding more parking to downtown alone. We need to ease the traffic pressure on our downtown by having better public transit, car-pooling and work-at-home programs, and developing more office and hotel space outside our downtown. As per my platform, we also need to make Water and Duckworth Streets one way and use angle parking to increase the number of spaces. And, two-way traffic on the Harbourfront where all heavy equipment must travel, except for deliveries.

Public transit

10 - this is an embarrassment in its current state. Lets talk with the drivers, users, and would-be users about how to bring our public transit into this century.

Urban density

10 - 'denser' is better with walk-able communities and neighbourhoods, mixed land use that brings residential and commercial amenities, and green space together to make for a community, and a self-sufficient place to live.

Full-time council positions

0 - for the size of our city population I would support full time councillors if we cut the number of councillors by half, plus one or two, maybe, and make those all full time positions.

Amalgamation

5 - incorporating the coastal commuter communities into St. John's might be nice, and financially and/or service-wise, better for all. But unless reason, and not emotion, prevails, I'm not optimistic about amalgamation. A financial benefit analysis for St. John's will need to be done. Therefore, in the meantime, I expect all those commuter communities to pay a commuter fee for using St. John's services every freakin' day!

Height restriction for buildings

3 - we need to work with better, more creative architects and engineers and protect/preserve our heritage, but move boldly into the future. There are parts of the downtown where adding a few heritage-honouring but modern stories/floors can add to the downtown in positive architectural and people friendly ways. In various areas in the city, higher and denser, with amenities nearby and green space built-in, is better.

Sidewalk snow clearing

10 - this is a chronic issue and hazard, across the city now, and can be better once we charge the commuter communities for using our city, and have more funds to spend on day-to-day city up-keep.

Affordable housing 10 - please see my platform.