

thescope's

2013 ST. JOHN'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Jennifer McCreath, Deputy Mayoral Candidate

Please describe yourself in a few words.

I am a strong independent person who won't back down from a challenge and will never back down from standing up for what I believe in. At the same time, I feel I am a good listener and a team player who takes pride in reaching decisions based on consensus. I am not afraid to think outside the box or challenge norms. I want what's best for this city and I am willing to devote full time attention to making this city all that I know it is capable of being. I do whatever it takes to engage people on issues that matter. I take pride in battling indifference and getting people to care and develop passion for their city. I have overcome some of the most difficult challenges and stigma known to mankind, as I have managed to survive hatred, discrimination, and phobia, as someone who has gone through a medical sex and gender transition. This experience has taught me how to lead and manage change in a challenging situation, and has also given me extensive experience dealing with Government policies and red tape. I like to think that my ability to engage and delegate, makes me a good leader. I take pride in having a strong record in taking diverse groups of people and finding ways for them to reach consensus and solve problems on various matters. I expect near perfection out of myself and I have always set very high goals. I am proud of my accomplishments in life as a marathon runner, a founder of non-profit organizations, an advocate and activist for citizen's rights, and my professional accomplishments as a policy adviser with and for various government entities. I also take pride in my love for animals and the environment.

What is your present occupation?

I've been a public servant for most of my working life. I have held a variety of policy and analyst positions with the Federal Government, and Provincial Governments of Ontario and Newfoundland. I have also founded and managed non-profit organizations. I have worked in a planning environment as well as in operations. I am currently employed full

time with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, where I work in the Communications Centre as a 'Communications Technician.' I take phone inquiries from both the general public and other Government agencies, including emergency 911 calls for service. I assess calls for service, classify them in terms of type and priority, and ensure the police dispatcher has the information needed to ensure that police services are applied in a timely and safe manner. I also take internal inquiries via two-way radio to police cars and play a key role in officer safety. I also spend some time as police service dispatcher, where I oversee the management of police calls for service and deploy suitable police resources to attend situations and incidents. This is a 24/7 operation and I have worked my fair share of days, nights, evenings, overnights, weekends, and stat holidays. It is a selfless job that has helped make me an overall better public servant. I have also worked in the field of information management, information accessibility, and information privacy and security. I will also state openly that should I be elected to City Council, I will resign from my job in order to devote full time attention to my work as a Councillor.

Why are you running in this election?

I am passionate about this city. I feel I have the skill set and experiences to add value to City Council during this critical time period of extreme growth and prosperity. I grew up in Toronto during the 1980s and watched a very similar type of growth, which included a wide range of diversity coming to the City from all over the world. I feel I can relate to the common men and women of this City much better than many of the older and richer candidates who don't seem to understand the challenges faced by the lower and middle class. I also feel our citizens have lost confidence in politics and the political system and I feel I have some ideas that will help give this city back to its citizens and give them the tools they need to have more involvement in their City.

What should be the city's top three priorities?

Before we can even look at priorities, we need to find a way to restore public confidence in municipal government and the municipal governance system - this includes taking drastic steps to be more transparent and accountable, as well as being more proactive in terms of citizen engagement. While the eleven City Councillors may act as stewards to the City, it is the entire City population who needs to take ownership of their City and city issues.

In terms of actual priorities:

Smart Growth: We need a careful balance of preserving our history and allowing for development needed to keep up with demands. This includes paying attention to downtown as well as taking steps to better manage other parts of the city so that more products and services can be available and accessible without having to go downtown.

Collaboration: This city needs to do a better job developing solid working partnerships with neighbouring city and town councils. We need to stop arguing and finger-pointing and start working together to build products and service that benefit all. We also need to do a better job liaising with the prov and fed government to ensure that they are aware of the impact their legislation has on the city government and the city's citizens.

Managing Crime and Safety: Growth and prosperity brings additional population and additional challenges. There are more cars on the roads than ever before and dangerous driving has become a huge problem. We need to take steps to ensure that the roads are safe for both drivers and pedestrians. There also appears to be a developing concern over illegal drug activity in the City. Drugs have proven to increase instances of violent crimes in this City. We as City need to develop a stronger working relationship with the Provincial and Federal Departments of Justice, as well as The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to ensure that we make this City as safe as possible.

What has been the present council's biggest blunder?

I really think the City blundered by providing City money for the Federal Port Authorities' harbour fence-building project. The Port Authority would have likely built this fence on their own and/or raised money through user fees. There was no need for the City to pay for this at all. Even worse, the City did not properly engage their citizens on this issue. The massive outcry after the deal was made, clearly demonstrated to me that this is not what the City wanted!

What has been the present council's biggest achievement?

I'll give them a huge back-handed compliment here. I have noticed that city council seems to have no trouble breaking their own rules, when they see fit to do so. While I'd much rather see them change policies that need to be updated, rather than breaking them, it demonstrates that they have been open to change when necessary. The challenge for the next council, is to find ways to keep policies and procedures up to date, so that they don't become obsolete.

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

I am ready and willing to work with anybody. I think my professional and volunteer experience demonstrates that I have a proven record of working well with a variety of people from many different demographic, backgrounds, and political affiliations. I have the utmost confidence that I can develop a strong working relationship with whomever our citizens elect into office. I am also proud to say that I am a politically neutral independent candidate who has no political party affiliation. A vote for me really is a vote for me. I am not a puppet of anyone else. I am here to work for the people!

Opinions & Issues

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

As a preamble, it is my goal to consider each and every issue brought to my attention by citizens and businesses of this city, as a 10. All of these issues are very important and I won't take any of them lightly. It would be a disservice to declare any of them below a 10.

Heritage building regulations:

I think it is very important to preserve historical buildings for the sake of culture and tourism. I also feel that this is more than a city issue. We need to work with other cities and towns, as well as the provincial government, to ensure that historical building all over the province, are given the respect and attention they deserve. At the same time, I think this city needs to be open-minded and flexible, when it comes to considering developmental proposals. Ultimately, I'd like to see more citizen engagement on this issue.

City support for the arts:

I definitely think there's a role for the city to demonstrate support for the arts. at the same time, I think it is also a responsibility of the provincial and federal governments, as well as individual artists, to take steps to demonstrate support. Arts and culture brings this city to life, and distinguishes our city from others as a desired tourist destination, as well as a place to live.

Downtown parking:

Some people say we need more parking spaces, some people say we need fewer cars downtown. I honestly think our City needs to do a better job finding alternate methods to transport people in and out of downtown. I also think the City needs to do a better job making products and services more available and accessible in other parts of the city, so that fewer folks have to rely on going downtown to get what they need - this includes places to live and places to work.

Public transit:

Current public transit is a disaster, but at the same time, if it were an easy problem to fix, it would have been fixed. What I do know, is that we seem to have maximized our potential for the volume of cars. We can't have more cars downtown, so we have to come up with public transit that is more efficient and effective. I'd also like to suggest that we do a better job making it easier to get in and out of St. John's from neighbouring towns, via public transit.

Urban density:

We have to do a better job making the most of the new space that we develop. This includes building up, as well as building out. We need to do a better job growing as a City. The good news is that many other cities have already gone through growth and we must study how they grew - take advantage of implementing things that worked, and watching out for the pitfalls that they experienced.

Full-time council positions:

As this City grows, it will require more attention and more resources to grow properly. Although the position I am running for may be considered a part time job, it will be my intent to treat it like a full time job and will devote full time attention to it. While I don't think we should be over-paying City Councillors, be them part time or full time, I think we need to take steps to ensure that Councillors won't be forced to hang onto day jobs, in order to keep their bills paid. Provincial and Federal politicians are expected to devote full time efforts and many large Cities around the world also employ City Councillors full time. I think our City is big enough now that it requires a team of full time dedicated professionals. I also feel that by making full-time positions, we will get a higher quantity and quality of candidates to step up to the plate and run. Right now, it seems that only the rich can afford to run. By making this a career choice option, rather than a hobby, I suspect the City will benefit.

Amalgamation:

It is my understanding, that most of the neighbouring cities are against amalgamation. So with this in mind, I have no reason to push for amalgamation. However, I do feel that regardless of whether we are one big city or several neighbouring cities, we need to do a better job collaborating and getting along. Amalgamating and collaborating on product and service delivery, should be the priority - not worrying about whether we are one big city on paper.

Height restriction for buildings:

It frustrates me to know that while this City has a restriction policy, it does not get enforced - not necessarily because I agree with the policy, but because I feel inconsistent policy adherence leads to lack of credibility and integrity. Current and past city councils have broken their own rules on this whenever they felt it appropriate. With this in mind, we really need to review and amend this policy to bring it in line with what this City wants and needs.

For those who argue that tall buildings will block their view of the harbour, I recommend you take a walk down Duckworth Street and notice that your view of the harbour is already blocked for most cases! We have already erected several tall buildings, including Scotiabank Tower and Atlantic Place. Another one is currently being built on the old Woolworth's site. It's too late to preserve our harbour view, in many cases! Further to the

concern about urban density and urban sprawl, I think we must take a closer look at this. We need to consider building up, rather than building out, in the suburbs. While many folks seem intent on developing downtown, it
will be a goal of mine to better develop other parts of the city.

Sidewalk snow clearing:

This has been a major concern for me since the first winter i lived here. it's bad enough that we can't keep our city sidewalks cleared, but even worse that we waste tax payer money to drive large tractors over the sidewalks. these tractors, while supposedly clearing snow, actually packs down the snow, so we get a thick layer of compressed ice on our side walks. First of all, we need to clear snow, and secondly, we need to clear it properly. Not only will clear sidewalks make it easier to get around, it will literally make an inaccessible city, accessible, to the many folks who can't negotiate snow.

Affordable housing:

As someone who has been a renter all my life, I can attest to the challenges of rental rates skyrocketing faster than inflation. While there clearly appears to be a boom in property development in St. John’s and surrounding areas, there seems to be very little focus put on the development of condos and apartments. In addition to the many houses and townhouse complexes being build, I’d like to create a program that will give developers an incentive to create more affordable housing units. I would also be open to the idea of the City taking on a role as a developer, to create sustainable housing developments and oversee the management of these units, once they are built.

Rent control has often proven an essential policy in times of extreme growth, in other jurisdictions. I feel that tenants of our City have suffered unfair harsh rental increases as of late, given the economic boom. I would like to conduct a review of other jurisdiction that have implemented rent control. I am respectful of the needs and the rights of private businesses in property rental industry, to make a living, and make a fair profit. At the same time, we need to take steps to ensure that rental increases are not disproportionately higher than the general rate of inflation and the general rate of wage increases**.**