

thescope's

2013 ST. JOHN'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Sandy Hickman (At-large incumbent; at-large candidate)

Please describe yourself in a few words.

I am a person who enjoys interaction with people of all backgrounds and interests. I have a background in sport, education, the Boy Scout movement and, professionally, in recreation and tourism. My other interests are hiking, gardening, coaching and spending time with friends.

What is your present occupation?

I recently retired from the provincial Department of Tourism, Culture & Recreation in tourism marketing. I hope to work in tourism or sport part-time in the near future.

Why are you running in this election?

I have been interested in public service all my life and was fortunate to have an enjoyable and fulfilling career with the provincial government. My 12 years on council have been equally interesting and fulfilling. I would like to continue my work with the city for another term to see through major interests and concerns with the completion of the expansion to the convention centre, the beginning of our facilities plan and bid for the 2021 Canada Summer Games, the completion of flood remediation for the Rennies River system and other flood- prone areas and traffic planning for the University area and other major routes into and around the city.

I have an interest in affordable housing, the downtown and in keeping taxes in line which all require attention as our economy grows

What should be the city's top three priorities?

Difficult to say that there are only three priorities for council as responsibilities are so broad and the needs of the various sectors are so diverse.
I guess any council must ,first of all, respect the taxpayer and ensure that it endeavours to undertake all necessary capital work and provide quality programming to all sectors while ensuring that taxation levels are kept as low as possible.

Currently, affordable housing is major concern. The city has well recognized this and council and staff must continue to support initiatives that provide housing for those in need.

There is a growing, rather non- obvious, problem with underground infrastructure as pipes for storm sewer, sanitary sewer and drinking water are very old in many parts of the city. The city has undertaken a great deal of work in recent years and this will only expand in the coming years. The city must continue to access federal and provincial funding to take care of these needs to keep costs down for taxpayers.

Personally, I have always worked hard to keep our city clean and to develop parks and open spaces for the enjoyment of citizens and visitors alike. I hope the incoming council will agree that we can pay more attention to this and make our city an even better place to live.

What has been the present council's biggest blunder?

Being a member of the present council may make it difficult to assess. We have made several minor blunders, for sure, but I am not seeing anything major jumping out at me. I'm sure others will have plenty to say on this question! Are taxes too high, are the roads a mess, should the bandstand have stayed, etc. Lots of things for debate, for sure.

What has been the present council's biggest achievement?

Again, open for discussion.

I feel this council, and staff, have recognized the serious infrastructure challenges we are, and will, be facing and developed a plan to address it in a timely manner. There is an unprecedented three year plan underway that takes advantage of any and all federal and provincial available. Unquestionably, there will be many more needs that are identified in the near future and this kind of work will continue.

I also feel we have really started to get involved in the development of affordable housing. Recreation, I am pleased to say, has been given the attention it deserves, what with the new ball field in airport heights, a major park off Kenmount rd. and the decision to replace the Wedgewood Park recreation centre with a beautiful new facility.

What other candidates running in this election do you think you would work best with?
I am ready to work with any and all comers and have done so for three terms.

However, I feel that Ron Ellsworth will make a great deputy mayor, once again. I like what I see in Dave Lane and have worked well with Bernard Davis on Metrobus and other activities.

Opinions & Issues

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

Heritage building regulations

10 I would like to see tougher regulations on older buildings, even ones approaching heritage age. As well, new buildings in downtown areas need to have more sense of style and empathy for the downtown vernacular with modern architectural designs.

City support for the arts

8 Always a priority for me. I feel we fund the arts very well and must continue. I would like to see a new space for artists developed and seed funding for innovative projects and programs.

Downtown parking

7 This has been addressed very well by the current council with over 400 new public spaces, over and above the needs of the two buildings supplying them, on the horizon and another garage, potentially, in the works.

Public transit

7 This is a struggle without a regional plan support from the government and the adjoining municipalities. The next council must continue to push for this cooperation.

Urban density

6 St. John's is almost two different cities. The old one, south of Empire ave and the new, starting with the 1950's Churchill Park development and moving out to the more modern suburbs.

There will always be young families, and others, that want the suburban experience, but any city council must have an eye for unplanned sprawl and, at the same time, allow reasonable in-filling and development in older areas.

Full-time council positions

0 Inappropriate for a small city like St. John's. It also precludes career people and full-time business people from running for council. Not too mention the increased cost of ten more full-time salaries.

Amalgamation

5 Not a hot-button issue for me but it is something that St. John's needs more than the surrounding towns. We are responsible for the very old hilly part of the city and most of the major infrastructure in the region. It is conceptually wrong that subdivisions outside of the city proper do not support, through taxes, the servicing of this.

Height restriction for buildings

5 Not a killer for me around the city but must be controlled to certain areas downtown. There is always that height vs. urban sprawl discussion that pulls at council in its decision.

Sidewalk snow clearing

8 I pushed hard for this to be expanded and feel that it should be further enhanced with the sidewalk plows working more closely with the street plows, especially in clean-up immediately after a storm.

Affordable housing

10 More work must be done cooperatively with the various community groups, NLHC and other organizations