

thescope's

2013 ST. JOHN'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Walter Harding (Ward 3 candidate)

I am pleased to answer your questionnaire. My answers will be brief as requested.

I don't like talking about myself but if I have to folks say I am genuine, honest, generous, compassionate and offer I common sense and logic to any conversation. Hard- working is a given as it's the way I was raised by my single-parent mother of six children.

I have worked for the same company for almost 30 years in the areas of marketing and sales. Dealing with the public is what I love to do.

I am running in this election because I want to represent my neighbors in Ward 3 in an open-minded, accountable, accessible and inclusive way for the next 4 years and beyond. I do see myself as a responsible, intelligent, energetic, eager and enthusiastic choice for Ward 3 councillor.

Three of the city's top priorities should be holding the line on property and water tax as residents are burdened enough as it is, affordable housing and a fairer taxation situation for our senior citizens in our city and the need to address the issue of congestion in the downtown. Obviously there are many other issues that could vie for one of the top three spaces such as the increase in crime, speeds of vehicles on our roads, a new fiscal agreement with the provincial government and more but these are three that I feel are in need of immediate attention.

When it comes to the present council and possible blunders, I respectfully say that I would never have voted to give hundreds of thousand of dollars to help pay for a harbor fence. I do agree that a working port must have security but I would not have agreed to handing over so many of our dearly needed tax dollars for such a project. With all due respect, I believe it was the wrong decision and we must remember it was a unanimous decision by all members of the current council.

The present councils biggest achievement , I feel , was the long overdue decision to have councillors finally start paying into their own pension plans.
When it comes to what other candidates running would I best work with, I respect all candidates that are running and made a point to reach out to each and every candidate for a face-to-face meeting on city issues and possible solutions to these problems as they announced their candidacy. I can, and do, work with anyone and everyone and have so for almost 30 years. I am a people person, as most folks that know me will attest to, and if I am fortunate to have worked hard enough to earn the Ward 3 seat for the next four years I will make certain that I communicate openly, frankly, honestly and completely with all members of council and city staff and work to provide the residents of St. John's with the most respectful, cohesive council possible as residents deserve this.

It's imperative as councillors that we all have our say on matters facing our city and residents and we can do so intelligently and respectfully as independent, mature representatives of the residents of St. John's.

Ratings 1 to 10.

Heritage building regulations. 9

St. Johns is an attractive tourist destination worldwide because of our history , our scenery and the fact that we are " different " and we must do our utmost to respectfully and responsibly retain that historic attraction and keep giving tourist a reason to come farther east than Halifax.

City support for the arts. 9

What is a city or community without the pleasure of the various "arts "?
St. John's and NL overall are world leaders in the various arts and a continuing commitment to the arts is imperative.

Downtown Parking 9

Along with obtaining more downtown parking we must seriously discuss and openly converse on possible ways to keep vehicles outside of the downtown core whether by a shuttle service, car-pooling or parking garages. This issue will be front and center with our new council and rightly so. New ideas and fresh approaches are required.

Public transit. 9

Our public transit, most will agree, is in need of some serious introspection. Regional partnerships are a must and every idea possible should be evaluated in order to help improve the public transit system. No idea or suggestion should be dismissed out of hand and all angles covered. Smaller buses might be an option but again, a close and clear look into our public transit is called for.

Urban density. 9

Urban "sprawl" is very expensive on municipalities when it comes to providing services. At the same time that our urban density ratio is similar to other municipalities the need for us to "grow up" as opposed to "grow out" is a topic for in-depth discussion. The costs of providing basic municipal services are skyrocketing and with no end in sight to the increases the discussion on urban density will be an important and regular one in the coming months.

Full-Time Council Positions 10

For me personally, I have more than enough time to allot to my council duties and look very much forward to it. As a husband but not a father, my wife and I find ourselves with lots of spare time that I will be allocating for my council duties. I wrote an article for The Telegram on just that issue asking candidates to make sure they have the time to actually put into the demanding job of council member. It's funny that one of things that comes free to us in life is probably the most valuable thing we posses...our time. Rest assured, time management is not, and will not, be an issue for me should I earn the seat as Ward 3 councillor and I am confident that every candidate that is running for council is confident they too have the time for the demanding job.

Amalgamation 9

As the entire region grows in all directions, we are becoming one big metropolitan area with each passing day and the need for sharing of the expenses of running the region is long overdue in certain areas. Namely roads. Mount Pearl, CBS, Paradise, and St. Johns used to have visual and clear borders but with growth and expansion there is no denying that this entire region and its borders are clouded and almost invisible. The sharing of costs is a needed and important issue for all the new councils coming in September and discussions should start immediately on the sharing of those costs.

Height restriction for buildings 9

Responsible development. Maintaining our identity. Urban sprawl and density. Historic importance. All key phrases that require focused and detailed discussion and all rely, sometimes, on how high a building should be. It is a case by case basis and its importance cannot be devalued or taken lightly.

Sidewalk snow clearing 9

For the taxes residents and businesses pay, the best possible services including snow clearing should be maximized within the revenue allotted for the service. In some instances , its not how much of something we provide but how we provide it. Schedules, pieces of equipment available, expected snowfall and other variable play in to how efficient services can and should be provided. There is always a better way of doing

things and I believe snow clearing, and in particular, sidewalk snow clearing is an area we can possibly do better in. Not regarding staff however as I think we have the best of the best in operators, but perhaps in the finer details of the service provided.

Affordable housing 10

I could go on and on about the need for more affordable housing for our less advantaged and more vulnerable in our city, our newly graduated and young families and especially our senior citizens, our middle class and minimum wage earners but I think everyone knows the problems facing our city regarding this huge issue. There have been baby steps taken to ease a little of the pressure of much needed affordable housing but much is to be done and I hope to be part of the team that comes up with the strategies and solutions to combat the problem. Affordable housing either affects us now or will affect us very shortly as we age so it's imperative we make this a priority.