

ANDREA KAISER

Candidate for Lord Mayor

Response to TO NOTLRA / RESIDENT QUESTIONS

For both Lord Mayor and Councillor candidates

Q1 - Can you tell me how and why your approach would be different than what the existing council members have been taking in their governing?

I have a proven track record of being collaborative and transparent in my decision making. As a Municipal Councillor from 2003 - 2014, I always took the time to explain how I arrived at any decisions and would share my reasoning immediately following any public meeting. I have also done so at Regional Council over the past four years. As Lord Mayor, I would look at ways to improve public consultation and transparency in decision-making by reviewing the public planning process and look at the reinstatement of town committees.

Q2 - I have a question which of you have accepted money whether for performing services or as a gratuity from any developers or their related companies

I have not accepted money, gratuities or personal payments from any developers.

Q3 - Several studies that the Town initiated identified major gaps in planned investment vs actual funds available particularly gaps in infrastructure funding.

What steps will you take to find the required funds.

This is not a new challenge for municipalities or regional governments, particularly as a result of significant and continued downloading of responsibilities and costs by the Province.

That being said, I have always believed that municipalities need to invest in their capital budgets every year and plan proactively for long-term infrastructure needs. Staff and Council also need to be proactive and persistent in pursuing external funding opportunities from the federal and provincial governments and other sources to help bridge funding gaps.

I have demonstrated this approach as Regional Councillor. When the Region faced a funding gap for the cleanup of the retired sewage lagoons on Lakeshore Road, I met directly with the federal government to advocate for funding for the Region. As Lord Mayor, I would bring that same approach to NOTL: responsible long-term capital planning, annual investment and aggressive pursuit of every appropriate external funding opportunity.

Q4 - What does “transparency” mean to you?

To me, transparency means being open about processes, information, and decisions. I feel it is important to give residents the information they need to understand, not just what government decided, but how and why it arrived at a decision.

Q5 - How would you describe your style of leadership?

I would describe my leadership style as collaborative. I have always believed the best results come from bringing people together, listening and seeking to find common ground so that we can work toward practical solutions. I have always valued different perspectives and believe Council works best when everyone, including residents, has had an opportunity to contribute.

Q6 - What are the hallmarks of your personal code of conduct?

My personal code of conduct is driven by integrity, honesty, respect, accountability and service first. I have a proven track record as being transparent about how decisions are made, listening even when we disagree, taking responsibility for my actions, and always putting the interests of the community ahead of my own.

Service has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. Whether serving guests at our small family restaurant, raising my children, volunteering in the community or serving in public office, I have always believed in putting others first. It is a principle that has guided me throughout my life and continues to guide how I approach public service.

Q7 - How do you remain informed of issues that affect the greater good and wellbeing of our town?

I stay informed through my work as Regional Councillor, including the information, reports and discussions that come through Regional Council and its committees. I also stay current with correspondence and communications from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Just as importantly, I am present in the community to understand what is affecting residents. I attend local events, meet with community organizations and spend time speaking directly with residents. Those conversations provide an important perspective on the issues that matter most to the people who live and work here.

Q8 - What measures would you use to consult the voting public in order to reach consensus on major decisions, for example, on the future use of the old hospital site so that it serves the larger community?

Consultation and communication are vital to reaching consensus on major decisions that affect the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake. I will always be committed to meaningful opportunities for input from residents before major decisions are made. Depending on the issue, this could include Town Hall meetings, formal public meetings, community information sessions, surveys and opportunities for smaller group discussions with residents and stakeholders.

For a significant community asset such as the old hospital site, I would want to hear from residents about what they believe the community needs, provide clear information about the options being considered, and use that feedback to help shape the decision. Not every decision will result in complete consensus, but a transparent and inclusive process can help build understanding and trust around the outcome.

Q9 - How often and for what reasons do you engage in person with individual unelected residents of the Town of Niagara on the Lake?

I have been a resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake for over 50 years and have raised my family here. I engage with residents almost every day, through many different avenues, including supporting local businesses, attending community events, volunteering and, of course, through my service as Regional Councillor.

Being present in the community and having conversations with residents is something I have always valued. These everyday interactions give me an opportunity to hear directly about what is important to people, the challenges they are facing and their ideas for our community.

Q10 - As a rule, how soon after receiving a message from a NOTL resident do you respond to it?

I always seek to respond to residents as soon as possible and prioritize urgent issues. If I do not have an immediate answer, I will acknowledge the message and follow up once I have the information needed to provide a meaningful response.

Q11 - How would you approach deciding how to vote on issues of significance to residents of Niagara on the Lake?

I believe significant decisions should be made through a thoughtful and informed process. I would gather the relevant information including reviewing applicable policies and legislation, staff recommendations as well as engage with and listen to residents.

At the Council table, I would also listen to my colleagues and consider their perspectives and insights. Ultimately, I would weigh all of this information against the best interests of Niagara-on-the-Lake and make my decision based on what I believe is the right course for our community.

Q12 - What three specific issues that affect the Town do you deem priorities to take action on?

1. Climate resilience

Taking action to ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake is prepared for the environmental impacts of extreme weather, including flooding, stormwater management and other climate-related risks, while protecting our residents, infrastructure and natural environment.

2. Transparency and public consultation

Improving transparency in decision-making and ensuring residents have meaningful opportunities to understand, participate in and provide input on major decisions that affect their community.

3. Appropriate development and resident services

I am committed to developing clear policies that guide appropriate growth while protecting our agricultural lands, heritage, natural environment and cultural landscapes in each of Niagara-on-the-Lake's villages and building on existing services for residents.

Q13 - What action would you be inclined to take on short-term rentals in NOTL?

I believe short-term rentals need to be managed in a way that protects neighbourhoods and long-term housing while recognizing their role in Niagara-on-the-Lake's tourism economy.

I would support clear, consistently enforced rules around short-term rentals, with appropriate consideration for issues such as noise, parking, occupancy, property standards and neighbourhood impacts. I also believe we need to understand the available data and hear from residents, operators and the tourism sector before making significant changes to the current framework.

The goal should be a balanced approach that protects the quality of life of residents while ensuring that tourism remains an important part of our local economy.

Q14 - What strategies would you use to ensure that longtime Town of NOTL residents are fairly considered and able to continue living in the area if they wish to do so?

I believe people who have built their lives, families and businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake should have a realistic opportunity to continue living in the community they call home. This includes all generations so this means putting a strategy in place that supports a greater range of housing options for seniors and families. It also means ensuring that new development is planned with the infrastructure and services needed to support it, rather than allowing growth to put additional pressure on existing residents.

Q14 - How often do you shop in a Town of Niagara on the Lake supermarket or small business?

Almost every day.

Q15 - Have you ever been arrested for any reason, accused of fraud or offered a bribe?

No.

Questions for Mayoral Candidates

Q1. In what circumstances would you resort to applying strong mayor powers?

I will always seek to work collaboratively with Council and build consensus wherever possible. I see strong mayor powers as a tool to be used selectively, not as a substitute for collaboration.

There may be circumstances, for example during budget process, where using this tool would be appropriate to clearly identify priorities in the draft budget. This could include prioritizing investments in climate resilience, stormwater management or critical infrastructure where timely action is important to protect our community and its long-term interests. The draft budget would then be reviewed by all of council for possible amendments and ratification.

Q2. What measures would you use to consult the voting public and reach consensus on major decisions?

See Q11 above:

I believe significant decisions should be made through a thoughtful and informed process. I would gather the relevant information, engage with and listen to residents, review applicable policies and legislation, and carefully consider staff recommendations and professional advice.

At the Council table, I would also listen to my colleagues and consider their perspectives and insights. Ultimately, I would weigh all of this information against the best interests of Niagara-on-the-Lake and make my decision based on what I believe is the right course for our community.

Q3. How would you describe your style of leadership?

See Q 5 above:

My leadership style is collaborative. I believe the best results come from listening, bringing people together, finding common ground and working toward practical solutions. I value different perspectives and believe Council works best when everyone, including residents, has an opportunity to contribute.

Q4. What steps would you take to prevent the Town of NOTL from being amalgamated into a larger entity?

I would use every available measure to protect Niagara-on-the-Lake's independence. My four years as Regional Councillor have given me direct experience and a strong understanding of the people, processes and relationships involved in protecting our community. I would use every tool available to me as Lord Mayor to defend the community we have built and the local decision-making that comes with it.

Q5. What does "transparency" mean to you?

See Q4 above:

Transparency means being open about processes, information and decisions, giving residents the information they need to understand not just what government decided, but how and why it got there.

Q6. What are the hallmarks of your personal code of conduct?

See Q6 above:

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See Q9 above:

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Q9. Roughly what percentage of your income do you annually donate to registered charitable organizations that support vulnerable populations?

I support a number of local charities and organizations each year, contributing to causes that are important to me and that support people in our community including vulnerable populations. My charitable giving is ongoing and reflects the organizations and causes I feel are making a meaningful difference locally.

Q10. When was the last time you shopped in a Town of Niagara on the Lake supermarket or small business?

Today.

Q11. What efforts do you put forth to ensure that you are aware of and engaged sufficiently to know how the voting public feels about specific issues?

I believe the best way to understand how residents feel about specific issues is to speak with them directly. Canvassing throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake has been an important part of my engagement with the community, giving me the opportunity to listen to residents in their homes and hear their concerns, priorities and ideas firsthand.

I also stay engaged through conversations with community organizations, attending local meetings and events, and listening to residents throughout the year. I believe elected officials need to keep their ear to the ground, not just during an election campaign.

Q12 - If you are elected Lord Mayor, will you go on record as answering media and residents' questions when appropriate?

Yes. I believe accountability and transparency require elected officials to be accessible and willing to answer questions from both residents and the media. As Lord Mayor, I will always make myself available to respond to questions and provide clear, factual information.