

Candidate Questions – Full Responses

Maria Mavridis

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?

My approach is based on being accessible, informed and willing to ask difficult questions. I have served on Council for the past four years, so I am not going to suggest that everything Council has done is wrong simply because we are in an election.

I have supported decisions I believed were right and opposed decisions when I believed we could do better. What I would continue to bring is transparency, consistent communication with residents, careful review of staff reports and a willingness to explain my vote publicly—even when it may not be popular.

I also believe governing is about more than identifying problems. It is about doing the work to bring forward solutions, working with staff and fellow members of Council, and following an issue through to completion.

Q2 – 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 or gratuities from developers or related companies in connection with my role as a Councillor.

My decisions at the Council table are based on the planning merits, professional staff advice, legislation, public input and what I believe serves the municipality as a whole.

I take my responsibility as an elected official very seriously. Residents need to have confidence that when I raise my hand at the Council table, that decision has been made independently and for the right reasons.

My integrity is not for sale and will never be bought.

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?

The infrastructure gap cannot be solved through property taxes alone.

I would continue looking at a combination of responsible reserve contributions, provincial and federal grants, development-related funding where permitted, water and wastewater rates for those systems, partnerships with other levels of government, and alternative revenues that reduce pressure on residential taxpayers.

We also need to prioritize infrastructure based on condition and risk rather than simply adding projects.

Tourism-generated revenues can also play a role where legislation permits. Niagara-on-the-Lake welcomes millions of visitors annually, and revenues generated through tourism should, where permitted, help support the infrastructure and services required to accommodate that activity.

The solution is not one source of money. It is long-term financial planning, prioritization, advocacy to other levels of government and finding revenue sources that reduce the burden on the residential taxpayer.

Q4 – What does “transparency” mean to you?

Transparency means residents should not have to work unnecessarily hard to understand what their government is doing.

It means explaining not only what Council decided, but why, how we got there, what it costs and what the alternatives were.

It also means being willing to answer questions after a difficult vote, not just communicate the decisions that are popular.

I have tried to do that consistently throughout my entire term—not only during an election. I have put myself out there, answered questions, explained processes and engaged in difficult conversations from the beginning of my term.

Transparency does not mean everyone will agree with every decision. It means residents should have the information necessary to understand how that decision was reached.

Q5 – How would you describe your style of leadership?

Collaborative, accessible and hands-on.

I ask questions, research issues, speak directly with residents and staff, and listen to people who disagree with me.

Leadership does not mean always getting your own way. On a nine-member Council, it also means being able to work with eight other elected officials to move an issue forward.

I am also someone who is willing to bring an issue forward rather than simply talk about it. If residents identify a concern and I believe there is an opportunity for the Town to address it, I will research it, speak with staff and determine whether there is a path to action.

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

Integrity, accountability, fairness, respect and consistency.

I believe you should be able to explain why you made a decision, apply the same standards regardless of who is standing in front of you, admit when you need more information, and never allow personal relationships or political pressure to determine your vote.

You also have to be prepared to stand behind your decisions. Sometimes the easiest political decision is not necessarily the responsible municipal decision.

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

I read the reports and supporting documents, ask questions of staff, speak directly with residents and businesses, attend community meetings and events, and remain involved with organizations and boards both inside and outside Niagara-on-the-Lake.

I also believe strongly in getting out into all five villages.

Social media can tell you what some people are saying, but it can never replace face-to-face conversations with the people who actually live and work here.

I also believe Councillors have a responsibility to understand what is happening outside our municipal boundaries. Decisions made by Niagara Region, the Province and the federal government can have significant impacts on our municipality, so maintaining those relationships and staying informed is important.

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?

Major public assets require broad public engagement, but consultation also has to be informed by facts.

For the former hospital site, I support public consultation alongside professional analysis, financial modelling and a transparent competitive procurement process.

I support retaining Town ownership of the property and ensuring that whatever ultimately happens there provides tangible community benefit.

Residents should have meaningful opportunities to provide input as the process advances, with the financial implications and options clearly presented.

Consultation can include public meetings, surveys, stakeholder sessions, direct resident feedback and opportunities for people to comment on specific options once those options are known.

But consultation also means being honest with residents about costs, legal limitations and financial realities. Consensus does not necessarily mean everyone gets exactly what they want. It means people have had a meaningful opportunity to participate and Council has listened before making the final decision.

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

Constantly. It is one of the most important parts of the job.

I meet residents for coffee, speak with people at community events, visit businesses, attend association meetings and stop to have conversations when I am out in the community.

Those conversations range from drainage and roads to planning, taxes, recreation, tourism and sometimes simply helping someone understand how to navigate Town Hall.

Some of the most valuable conversations I have had during this term have been one-on-one conversations with residents. You learn things by being out in the community that you will never learn by simply sitting in Council Chambers.

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

I try to acknowledge messages as quickly as possible, generally within 24 to 48 hours.

Some questions require research or information from staff before I can provide a complete answer, and I would rather tell someone I am looking into something than provide an answer I have not verified.

During particularly busy periods the response may take longer, but accessibility has been a priority for me throughout this term.

Even when I cannot immediately solve someone's problem, I believe they deserve acknowledgement and an explanation of what the next step is.

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

I start with the facts: the staff report, legislation, financial implications, planning policy where applicable, professional advice and public input.

I ask questions when something is unclear and consider both the immediate impact and the long-term consequences.

Public opinion matters, but Council also has a responsibility to understand legal, financial and regulatory obligations that may not be immediately apparent.

I also look at consistency. If we make a decision for one property, business or resident, we need to understand what precedent that decision could establish for the next one.

Ultimately, I need to be able to explain and stand behind my vote.

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

My three priorities would be infrastructure and stormwater resilience; responsible growth and protection of community character; and long-term financial sustainability and affordability.

They are interconnected.

Growth needs adequate infrastructure. Infrastructure requires sustainable funding. And both ultimately affect what residents pay in taxes and whether Niagara-on-the-Lake remains a community people can afford to call home.

Recent flooding has also demonstrated why infrastructure cannot simply be something we discuss during the annual budget. Stormwater, drainage, ditches, culverts, wastewater capacity and changing weather patterns require long-term planning and investment.

At the same time, growth needs to occur responsibly within the infrastructure capacity of our communities while protecting the character and heritage that make Niagara-on-the-Lake unique.

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

This is an issue I have already taken action on. I was the Councillor who brought forward the motion to address limits on Short-Term Rentals in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

My objective has always been to find a responsible balance between supporting tourism accommodation and protecting our residential housing stock and neighbourhoods.

Recent accommodation data identified an estimated shortage of approximately 800 rooms in Niagara-on-the-Lake. When approved hotel projects are factored into the future accommodation

supply, that estimated gap could be closer to 300 rooms. It is also important to clarify that the approved White Oaks towers are residential units, not hotel rooms, and therefore should not be counted toward hotel accommodation capacity.

Through conversations with several associations and residents, it has also become clear that illegal, unlicensed short-term rentals continue to operate in our community. Before simply looking at how many more licences should be permitted, I believe we need to ensure that the rules we already have are being followed and that legal operators are not being put at a disadvantage by those operating outside the licensing system.

Ultimately, I did not receive sufficient Council support for the STR limits I was seeking. That does not mean the work stopped.

I have continued working with staff toward the longer-term goal of having a system where we know who is operating, where they are operating, and whether they are operating legally. Enforcement of illegal operations needs to be part of that work.

For me, the end goal is not eliminating short-term rentals. They are part of our tourism economy and many operators follow the rules and contribute to our community. The goal is responsible limits, effective enforcement, protection of residential housing and neighbourhoods, and a fair system for the legal operators who are doing things properly.

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?

Affordability is about more than building additional units.

We need a range of housing options for young people, families and seniors who want to downsize without leaving their community. That includes appropriately located attainable housing, secondary units, age-in-place options and thoughtful infill while protecting established neighbourhood character.

We also need to recognize the impact municipal costs have on residents living on fixed incomes.

Controlling operating costs, diversifying Town revenues and addressing our infrastructure needs strategically are all part of keeping Niagara-on-the-Lake livable for the people who already call it home.

I want our young people to have the opportunity to stay here if they choose, our families to be able to put down roots here, and our seniors to be able to age in the community they helped build.

Q15 – How often do you shop in a Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake supermarket or small business?

Regularly.

I live here, work here and have deep roots in our local business community. Supporting local is not something I talk about only during an election.

Whether it is groceries, restaurants, retail, printing or professional services, I make an effort to spend locally whenever practical because those businesses employ our neighbours, support community organizations and contribute to the local economy.

Having grown up in a family that operated businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake, I also understand firsthand what supporting local actually means to the families behind those businesses.

Q16 – Have you ever been arrested for any reason, accused of fraud or offered a bribe?

I have never been arrested or accused of fraud. I have also never accepted a bribe.

If the question is literally whether I have ever been offered a bribe, I would answer that separately and precisely, because being offered something and accepting something are two very different questions.