

Questions for Town Councillor candidates

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

I've had the privilege of serving Niagara-on-the-Lake in several roles over the years, and I continue to care deeply about this community and its future. I've been around long enough to know what works and what doesn't. But I also know the next four years will require new ideas, stronger communication with residents and a willingness to do some things differently. Residents can expect me to stick to my word and vote with integrity.

I will continue to ask the difficult questions, stand by my decisions, and be clear about where I stand. I will continue to work to protect our community from inappropriate development, ensure infrastructure keeps pace with growth, and prioritize our heritage, agricultural lands, and the unique character of our five communities. Most importantly, I want to protect what makes Niagara-on-the-Lake special while making thoughtful decisions about its future. My record shows what I have stood for. Residents can expect me to continue that work with the same independence, integrity and commitment I have always brought to Council.

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 never knowingly accepted money from a developer or a related company for services or as a gratuity. On March 4th, 2023, a developer handed me an envelope. I did not know it contained cash when I took it. When I discovered that it held \$10,000, I did not keep the money. I brought the envelope to the Town and reported

what had happened. Niagara Regional Police found that this was the correct course of action, as did the Integrity Commissioner. I understand why residents ask about this, and I want to answer it plainly.

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?

First, Council needs a clear, public picture of the problem: what infrastructure is required, what it will cost, when it is needed, what funding is already secured and what the actual shortfall is. Residents deserve to see those numbers and the choices facing Council.

Then we need to act.

I would push the Town to maintain four or five shovel-ready priority projects at all times, with engineering, costing and approvals sufficiently advanced that we can move quickly when provincial or federal infrastructure programs become available. We should prepare for funding opportunities; not start the work after they are announced.

I would also require infrastructure capacity to be considered alongside major development decisions. Growth cannot continue to outpace the stormwater, roads, water and wastewater systems required to support it. Where growth creates additional infrastructure demands, we need to ensure the appropriate development contributions and other available funding mechanisms are being fully pursued rather than automatically placing the burden on existing taxpayers.

I would work aggressively with the Region and provincial and federal governments on projects where responsibilities or funding opportunities overlap, backed by strong business cases and projects that are ready to proceed.

At the same time, Council needs to review its own capital priorities. Essential infrastructure and maintaining what we already own must come before projects that can reasonably wait.

Finally, I would support regular public reporting showing each priority infrastructure project, its estimated cost, funding secured, funding gap and progress.

We cannot promise residents everything without explaining how we will pay for it. My approach would be to identify the priorities, get projects shovel-ready, pursue every reasonable outside funding source, ensure growth pays its appropriate share, and be transparent with residents about what remains.

Q4 What does “transparency” mean to you?

It means residents can see what decision is being made, the evidence and costs behind it, who has been consulted, and how each Councillor voted. Reports should be available in enough time for residents to review and respond, with plain language explanations of the consequences. When information must remain confidential, Council should explain the reason and disclose what it can. I have asked for a recorded vote more often than any other current Councillor because I believe strongly that we must all be accountable for our voting record. We must go back to the electronic voting system that automatically records every vote.

Q5 How would you describe your style of leadership?

I listen first, do my homework, ask practical questions and make sure I understand the facts before taking a position. I don't believe in simply accepting what is put in front of Council — I read the reports, ask questions and seek additional information when needed. I have served as Lord Mayor, Regional Chair, Regional Councillor, and Town Councillor, and I know that experience only helps if you

stay open to being challenged and remain willing to keep learning. I'm prepared to take a position, explain it publicly and vote with integrity, while still working constructively with colleagues even when we disagree.

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

Honesty, integrity, respect, independence and accountability. I see public office as a position of trust. I do my homework, ask questions, declare conflicts when they arise, treat residents, staff and my Council colleagues with respect, and take responsibility for my decisions.

I believe in sticking to my word and voting with integrity, even when a decision is difficult or unpopular. A resident or developer may not always agree with my vote, but they deserve to know where I stand, why I made the decision I did, and that I made it based on what I genuinely believe is in the best interests of the community.

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

I read staff reports and background studies, ask questions of staff and outside experts, and hear directly from residents, growers, business owners and community organizations. I also look at the effects across the whole town, including Old Town, Queenston, St. Davids, Virgil and Glendale. A proposal can look sensible on paper and still create problems for a neighbourhood, a road, a farm or a drainage system. Those local experiences matter.

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?

I believe residents need a genuine voice in major decisions before those decisions are made, not simply an opportunity to comment after a preferred option has already been developed. I would start by making sure residents have the same information Council has: what is being considered, what constraints exist, what it will cost and what choices are realistically available. From there, consultation should fit the importance of the decision and include public meetings and open houses, surveys and written submissions, and, for major issues, resident advisory committees that can participate throughout the process.

I strongly support reinstating meaningful resident committees. Niagara-on-the-Lake has an extraordinary amount of knowledge, professional experience and commitment among its residents. Council should be using that expertise.

Consensus doesn't mean everyone will agree. It means residents have been heard, understand the choices and can see how their input influenced the final decision.

The old hospital site is a good example. I will support a proposal that allows this important public property to become a place that can serve and be used by the broader Niagara-on-the-Lake community. As that proposal develops, residents should continue to have meaningful opportunities to help shape the space and how it serves the community.

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 speak with residents regularly, both at public events and in ordinary conversations around town. They raise development proposals, drainage and flooding, traffic, municipal services, taxes, heritage and the daily effects of tourism (mostly in the Old Town). I

also seek out people affected by a decision rather than waiting for them to approach Council. Those conversations help me identify questions to put to staff and perspectives that may be missing from a report.

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

While I make my personal email address and cell phone number widely available, I prefer residents to email when possible. That gives me their own wording and understanding of the issue and allows me to follow up properly. I try to respond within one or two days. If I don't have the answer, I will often forward the email to our CAO so it can be directed to the appropriate staff member. Many questions also come to me by text, and I respond to those directly.

Q11a How would you approach deciding how to vote on issues of significance to residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake?

I review the evidence, costs, and legal or planning advice; hear from those directly affected; and assess the long-term effect on the whole town. Since we have an Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw to guide both individuals and developers, I would ask how many variances the application requests. I ask whether the proposal protects farmland, heritage, neighbourhood character (streetscape), and infrastructure capacity, and whether the financial burden is fair. I would disclose any conflict of interest. Then I would vote on the merits and explain my reasons, including when I disagree with the majority.

Q11b What three specific issues that affect the Town do you deem priorities to take action on?

My three priorities are responsible growth that protects the character of Niagara-on-the-Lake; infrastructure and stormwater that keep pace with our needs; and accountable local government that puts residents first.

These aren't new priorities for me. They reflect the issues I have consistently worked on and the positions I have taken around the Council table.

First, responsible growth. Niagara-on-the-Lake will continue to grow, but growth must respect our Official Plan and bylaws, protect our Greenbelt, agricultural lands and heritage, and fit the character of our five communities. I believe our Official Plan should require contextual design so that new development respects the scale, character and streetscape of the neighbourhood around it. New buildings don't have to look old, but they should fit where they're being built. Growth also has to be supported by the infrastructure already in place or planned. I have been prepared to challenge development proposals when I believe they go too far or don't adequately respect those principles. My approach is straightforward: plan before we grow.

Second, infrastructure and stormwater. This has become one of the most urgent issues facing the Town. I have been raising concerns about stormwater capacity and the relationship between development and infrastructure for years. In 2021, for example, I moved the motion authorizing engineering work to extend and improve the Four Mile Creek Municipal Drain. The Town is now undertaking broader work on Four Mile Creek to address flooding, erosion, water quality, and future land-use pressures, and recent flooding has made the need for action even clearer.

We need to identify the trouble spots, determine the work required and establish a realistic, funded capital plan. I also believe the Town should maintain several shovel-ready infrastructure projects so that when provincial or federal funding becomes available, Niagara-on-the-Lake is ready to apply rather than beginning the planning process after the opportunity appears.

Third, residents first and accountable government. With a smaller Council, I believe it is increasingly important that residents have meaningful ways to participate in their local government. I support stronger public consultation and meaningful resident committees that bring the considerable knowledge and professional expertise within this community back into the decision-making process. I currently serve on the Municipal Heritage Committee, one example of the Town's existing committee structure that includes both councillors and citizen members, but many other committees have been disbanded and need to be brought back.

Accountability also means being careful with taxpayers' money. Major projects should come with clear costs, priorities and funding plans, and Council needs to distinguish between what we need and what we would simply like to have. Residents should be able to understand what we're spending, why we're spending it and what they're getting for their money.

These three priorities are connected. Good planning protects our community, reduces pressure on infrastructure and taxpayers, and gives residents a greater say in how Niagara-on-the-Lake changes. That has been a consistent focus of my work on Council, and it would continue to guide my decisions in the next term.

Q12 What action would you be inclined to take on short-term rentals in NOTL?

Short-term rentals need clear, enforceable rules that protect residential neighbourhoods while recognizing the important role visitor accommodation plays in our local economy. The issue came before Council in 2021 with clear direction, and it needs to be brought back early in the new term. Enforcement exists, and penalties must be increased for proven offenders. The current rules for “hosted” and “unhosted” must be clearly outlined to the operators and the neighbouring residents.

Q13 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?

The Town cannot control every housing cost, but it can make choices that help. I would support a mix of appropriate housing options for different ages and incomes, including smaller homes and places where older residents can downsize without leaving their community. The Provincial rules for ADUs already exist, but the new Council needs to ensure that they are clearly explained to our residents and processed in a timely manner

In our Town, the only “affordable land” that could be used for housing for seniors and staff working in our businesses is probably owned by government – both local and upper tier. We need to explore some form of partnership, and I have heard several interesting ideas from residents that deserve serious investigation.

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

I owned and operated the Oban Inn for 30 years, so I know firsthand what supporting local businesses really means. Behind every local business are owners, employees and families who are part of this community.

Supporting them keeps jobs and dollars here, but it also does something less tangible: it helps keep Niagara-on-the-Lake a community, not simply a destination. That matters to me.

So I may not be the main shopper in our house, but I am the main cook and between cooking, home projects and everyday life, we do a lot of our shopping right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. In fact, some days Penner Lumber feels like my second home.

Our family has shopped locally for decades. We've long supported Tony and the team at the Independent on Queen Street, as well as Phil at the Independent in Virgil. My whole family loves Irish Design, and we've known Paul, Maureen and their family for years. They've done a tremendous job bringing quality products to Queen Street and contributing to the vitality of the Old Town.

I prefer to cook at home, but I'm always happy to get takeout from The Sandtrap or The Garrison House, and we love Friday fish-and-chips night at the Legion. We're looking forward to being back once the Legion has recovered from the recent devastating flood damage. My wife Sarah is a regular at The Stagecoach, where she stops most mornings to visit the local crew with our dog, Gilly. My daughter is a loyal customer of Itty Bitty Farmstand, where she gets the best sourdough I have ever had. And my granddaughter loves working at The Outpost at Pillar and Post Gardens. Ravine Vineyard is a special spot for our family— particularly for pizza nights with the dog in tow. We buy our meat from Kent Farms and Theodore's in St. Davids, and I'm also a fan of the new barber shop at the Four

Corners. This is really just a small list of the amazing businesses we enjoy in Town.

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

No, I have never been arrested or accused of fraud. I have never knowingly accepted money from a developer.