

Responses of Ian Chadwick

SOS Collingwood Questions for Candidates for Collingwood Town Council

1.) In order of priority how would you rank the top five (5) priorities for the Town of Collingwood over the next 4 years?

1. Financial sustainability. We cannot build, we cannot create, we cannot start new projects if we cannot afford them – and we have to keep the impact on the taxpayers at a minimum and reduce town spending (but not to lower our quality of life here).
2. Restore public trust in council and rebuild our regional relationships. We must return to an open, ethical council and partner with our regional neighbours for cooperative initiatives.
3. Restore our community's support for local healthcare services with unquestioning support for the hospital's plans for redevelopment.
4. Our environment. We need to protect our greenspaces, and our urban forest and develop some strong, coherent environmental policies that look further ahead. As a municipality on the Great Lakes, we need to be in forefront of discussions about the Great Lakes, water diversion, microplastics and water protection. We should also work with community groups and businesses to develop responses to climate change. Collingwood has the talent and the incentives to be a leader in this movement, not a follower.
5. Economic development. Collingwood needs more low-impact/green businesses. We should be supportive of our excellent economic development and marketing team and allow them to be more aggressive in pursuing potential businesses and industries to come here. We also need to make a decision about cannabis sales here – but only after public consultation.

2.) Much has been said recently about the need for greater "Transparency" in how the Town conducts its affairs. What changes do you think are necessary to improve transparency in how Council, and Town staff, make decisions?

First, elect new people who are committed to openness and accountability, not merely give it lip service. Second curtail the number of closed-door (in camera) meetings and go back to fully informing the public as to what council's intentions are and why decisions are made. Third: hold public consultation meetings for all major decisions, especially when selling public assets. Fourth: restore public advisory committees (such as recreation, culture, economic development, sustainability, and utility boards). Residents should be able to *participate* in our government, not simply observe it. Fifth: council must go back to communicating regularly with the public and keeping residents fully informed and engaged. And sixth: we should consider

implementing a ward system for voting; we are large and mature enough to leave the at-large system behind. Ward systems make it more difficult for cliques to be elected.

3.) What is your position on inter-governmental cooperation between the Town and its neighbouring municipalities (e.g. the Town of Blue Mountains, Clearview and Wasaga Beach) and where and how do you think such cooperation would most benefit Collingwood?

Regionalism is crucial to our wellbeing. Issues and environments do not start and stop at map boundaries. In Simcoe County we are in the same watershed as our neighbours, and a part of our town is in the same watershed as the Town of the Blue Mountains. Policies and development that affect these watersheds in their areas will also affect us.

We all share common challenges and we are stronger if we cooperate and work together on them. We can use resources more effectively if we share them. Regionalism is also important in supporting our hospital's redevelopment and we need to get it back on track with a show of regional support. In fact, I would even like to discuss merging with our three neighbours to form a new municipality.

4.) Collingwood is under intense development pressure like it has never seen before in its history. What increased complexities and pressures do you think this presents, and how will you ensure the Town's planning and building departments are equipped to address them? Are there any additional skills and experience you feel are required to manage these pressures?

Collingwood was designated a growth area by the province, so that puts considerable strain on us to accommodate the rapid development we're seeing here. We have current challenges like increased traffic, downtown parking, Sunset Point parking, greater demands on water and sewer systems, more stress on facilities and infrastructure from increased use. The greying demographic puts new stresses on healthcare and requires more hospital beds. We also face demands for better and safer cycling routes on our streets. There is more traffic going through town and more visitors (using infrastructure but not contributing to the costs of maintenance), which underscores the need for new traffic signals, roundabouts and stop signs to manage and calm traffic. More traffic also means increased runoff and pollution, which affects our environment and water.

Plus, as we grow, developments consume the very green spaces that attract people to move here in the first place.

How do we preserve our identity within the confines of the Places to Grow Act? That's a discussion we need to have with the community at large.

Perhaps we even need a new vision; a revised Vision2020 for a new generation.

The planning department can only operate within the framework of the Planning Act, our Official Plan, provincial policy statements (PPS) and similar

policies and legislation. We need to look at our OP and determine if it still meets the needs of a rapidly evolving community. Does the OP adequately protect the environment or the urban canopy? Or the wetlands? Does it have a vision that complements the changing demographics here?

More staff might make the permit process move quicker, but we also need enhanced policies that better define what we want to be. What we want to keep and preserve, what should change? This needs public consultation and engagement.

And more staff means more expenses – which means higher taxes. That’s always the balancing act: improving services vs. mitigating tax hikes. We want to maintain our quality of life but not make it too expensive to live here.

5.) The mounting development pressure in the Town is generating a heightened level of community interest in the Town’s planning and development process and decisions. Do you think the Town has adequate public consultation processes in place to deal with these decisions or do you think changes are required, and if so, what changes?

The town operates under the rules established through the Planning Act: these provide what the legislation considers adequate consultation. However, perhaps these public meetings could be better and more widely communicated than just notices in the weekly newspaper. Sometimes small changes like lot severances or changes to setbacks do not get sufficiently explained or communicated to neighbours, so that process could be improved. Again, I believe that more regular communication - such as newsletters or email blasts - will help inform residents better about the processes and where and when they can be involved.

One of the things we could use here is a bylaw about tree preservation. We need stronger protection for our urban forest, with rules about managing boulevard trees.

6.) The Town has recently approved a Waterfront Master Plan. What is your perspective on that plan? Do you think it contains the right priorities or are there changes you feel are required? Should its implementation be a priority for the new Council?

It is an ambitious plan but at more than \$50 million, it can only be implemented in small increments and phases. Our first priority should be to determine – with public consultation and open debate – what to do about the Terminals. Then we can prioritize the rest. Council must always ask where the money’s coming from before initiating any project.

The plan also recommends a multi-use facility which I suggest is not necessary at present and could be postponed, but other elements like the proposed splash pad, music strategy study, arts policy study, new and extended trails and so on should be discussed and each one prioritized according to need and cost.

Since the final version of the plan won’t be presented until Oct. 15, it’s

somewhat premature to comment on what it contains. And with an election only a week after that, it would be premature (and arrogant) of the current council to approve anything expensive or ambitious; this council should pass it on to the next council.

7.) Both the Waterfront Master Plan and the Town's Official Plan state that the protection of Collingwood's sensitive wetlands and shoreline areas are a top priority. How would you rate Collingwood's performance in protecting these areas to date? Do you think Collingwood currently has appropriate processes and controls in place to protect these areas (especially from development), or do you think improvements are required, and if so, what improvements?

To date, our town has a mediocre record and has often missed opportunities. For example, when I was on a previous council, I advocated for the town to expropriate the shoreline Silver Creek wetlands and preserve it as a natural space. That was voted down and development will be allowed in it. This council turned down an opportunity to trade a vacant lot on Huron Street ("Block 9") for six acres of shoreline EP land that could have connected the trails network from the harbour to Sunset Point.

But I am heartened to see these areas get more emphasis in the new plan. I appreciate that most of the shoreline is in private hands and we are limited as to what the town can do, but at least EP lands are fairly well protected and overseen by the NVCA.

Environmental protection controls are generally put in place by outside agencies – the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources, the NVCA, etc. Collingwood has limited authority to affect these. I have always understood them to be adequate, but the town can always lobby these ministries and agencies for stronger controls and bigger setbacks from EP areas, rivers and streams or advocate for stronger measures when a particular development creates issues. Again, communication is important to keep residents informed when issues arise.

8.) What role do you see Collingwood's protected wetland and shoreline areas playing in your vision of the Town's social, cultural and economic future?

Collingwood is a community on the water and should do everything in its power to retain and preserve water features and EP areas. Some of them should have enhanced but limited public access, too – boardwalks and trails, and maybe guided tours, so they can be appreciated by everyone.

I understand that all municipalities are constrained by provincial legislation, but we should be more pro-active in how we manage and even how we obtain such lands.

We have to take water more seriously. Not just the shoreline – there are many challenges to our water: runoff, microplastics, wastewater treatment, flooding, algae. We won't have any shoreline worth protecting if we don't also ensure our water is clean, safe and protected.

I would like to see Collingwood take a lead role in developing policies and practices that both help mitigate climate change effects and that protect our water.

As a background note, I sit on the regional Lake Simcoe-South Georgian Bay Source Water Protection committee and I do communication work for the Ontario Municipal Water Association. I have a keen awareness of the issues and challenges surrounding water, especially our drinking water. Since in Collingwood that comes from the bay, I am very interested in what happens to our waterfront because it could affect our drinking water.

9.) SOS Collingwood has raised specific concerns regarding the recent development proposal for the Living Waters/Bear Estate property. While the developer has asked the Town of defer consideration of the application until 2019, a decision on the matter will likely come before Council early in its next term. What are your views on that proposal and what level of public consultation and input do you feel needs to occur?

To be fair to the issue and to all sides, I would want to read all the documentation, see any presentations, hold public meetings and speak to both the developer and staff, as well as the stakeholders who expressed concerns, before I commented.

Planning applications are often very contentious and council should approach them objectively and only make informed decisions. I will not pre-judge any application without doing the due diligence and research that is a Deputy Mayor's responsibility.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Ian Chadwick

Candidate for Deputy Mayor.