

Responses of Tina Comi

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) Management of our growth. Almost all my priorities flow from and are rooted to, the impact our growth and density is having on everything from affordable housing to our greenspaces to our heritage. It's imperative we are willing to go out of the box when it comes to how we are going to find solutions to manage the needs of our diverse community.
- 2) Affordable Housing. There's been strong community leadership with the Tourism Labour Supply Task Force presenting ideas and partnership proposals in an effort to tackle this issue. The Simcoe County Alliance to End Homeless has also come forward to shed light on the rental housing crisis. The development on sixth street has some very promising proposals put forth including the addition of a school, life skills centre and a community garden - we need to support and encourage this type of multiuse development.
- 3) Start a dialogue about a ward system. Our town has reached the point where it is reasonable to table this issue.
- 4) Protection of our greenspaces and natural environment. The very existence of Save our Shoreline is indication we need to do more to ensure we are putting conservation at the forefront of our planning decisions. From urban forestry to our shoreline, Collingwood should be a leader in best practices for conservation.
- 5) Prioritizing the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. Being an active and healthy community is part of our town's strategic plan; from traffic calming to crosswalks and bike lanes we need to make cycling and walkability a part of our planning strategy.

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?

The appointment of an integrity commissioner is certainly a good thing in terms of accountability and transparency. I think a lot of times it's less a matter of transparency and more one of communication. We can ease some of that burden by bringing back "coffee with a councillor" and giving people a chance to come out and speak with local representatives. I would also advocate for an increased role of public advisory committees, we certainly could use a sustainability committee now more than ever.

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?

My position on inter-governmental cooperation is that it is vital to our future. Recent inter-governmental initiatives such as the Tourism Labour Supply Task Force brought together several of our local municipalities and businesses to strategize on solutions from labour shortages to affordable housing and transportation.

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 is one of Canada's twenty-five fastest growing communities and that's why now more than ever it's important we vote for councillors committed to; protecting our green spaces, preserving our town's unique heritage and prioritizing the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. Many complex issues arise from this type of growth and density requirement including affordable housing, increased traffic and water and sewage needs. The key to our success is ensuring that development doesn't happen in a vacuum; we need to elect a council willing to facilitate partnerships, to seek out and engage with the knowledge base we have within our town staff, local residents and business owners to ensure our planning practices are innovative and sustainable.

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 community groups I have engaged with are in support of the continued process of presenting their concerns to the appropriate council committees rather than council. We have seen a variety of issues from the noise by-law to how to deal with our coyote population to Save our Shoreline come forward to present and their concerns in this manner. In terms of the adequacy of public consultation, I feel it can come back to communication and how best to reach the community as a whole. Social media has been a huge tool for Save our Shoreline and I wonder if we are using it to our full advantage as a town.

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?

There is little doubt that our residents wish to see our waterfront brought to its full potential while ensuring public access. The plan in its entirety represents \$50 million dollars over seventeen years. The community splashpad / skating rink which is part of the next phase will be very welcomed by local residents and families. One of the issues this council will deal with that involves both our heritage and our waterfront is of course, the terminal building. I'm in favour of making all reasonable efforts to preserve the terminal as an iconic symbol of our town's heritage. I also have a unique skillset as a wireless implementation engineer and would very much like to provide guidance on how to best manage the wireless antenna and microwave dishes that sit atop it and prevent a communication tower from ending up as part of our waterfront should the terminal building come down.

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?

The existence and support behind Save our Shoreline demonstrates the passionate commitment we have from our residents to shining a light on areas where we may not be holding our developments to the highest possible standards when it comes to environmental protection. For our wetland and shoreline areas we need to be listening to and working in conjunction with our conservation authorities with support from the ministries.

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?

I absolutely love the aspects you listed because of course, our shorelines and protected wetlands play a crucial role in the future of our town's social, cultural and economic future. We know that a top priority for our residents is ensuring continued public access to the waterfront.

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?

I attended the presentation given by SOS Collingwood and found the issues raised to be concerning. As you know, I wrote to SOS following the presentation to request further information, as I'm particularly interested in mapping out an if/then scenario should a new EIS be completed. We need to elect council representatives that demonstrate a willingness to learn about issues they are not familiar with – including those that have not yet familiarized themselves with the issues brought forth by SOS. (an excellent councillor is one that loves to read!) I strongly advocate for electing councillors that emphasize the need to consult with our conservation authorities on issues regarding our wetlands and shoreline.