

## Responses of John Trude

### 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?**

- Hospital redevelopment initiative
- Initiation of an action plan to address the Waterfront Master Plan recommendations
- Deal with the culmination and recommendations of the ongoing current Judicial Review
- Fiscal management of Municipal Services to continue to pay down debt while ensuring adequate and effective levels of service delivery are maintained
- Enhance the current levels of communication between Council and our community stakeholders, including our neighboring municipalities to ensure timely and accurate information on developing issues of municipal concern.

#### **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?**

Transparency has become an overused word in recent years, to the point it has lost its meaning. I prefer to call it open and honest business. Quite simply, every effort should be made to ensure that as many decisions as possible remain in the public realm. The rationale and process to arrive at the decision quite often remove any doubts or mistrust that usually accompanies decisions made in private or without sufficient public scrutiny. Continuation of the practice of broadcasting Council and Committee meetings should also be continued with efforts made to find alternate sources of media to assist in getting the messages and processes out to the taxpayers.

The same process applies to Department Heads reporting back to council on issues assigned to them for review – these reports are presented in open council, and should continue to do so, again with every effort made to ensure these reports remain in the public realm.

The Municipal Act stipulates when a Council “may” go in camera (private), but it does not state “shall” go in camera. Under certain circumstances this action is prudent and required – but more effort is required to ensure what should remain public does remain public.

**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?**

I am a very big advocate for inter agency cooperation, on many levels. On matters of mutual concern, a unified front of support from four municipal governments speaks much louder than four individual voices, and if presented as a united front, even more so.

On more operational levels, there may be savings to be realized through cooperative buying of materials required to operate the municipality and down the road, perhaps cooperative provision of services where shared services can be provided from one municipality to the other thereby maximizing the efficiencies of service delivery and ensuring efficient and affordable services can be maintained.

On a more political level, more cooperation between the four noted municipalities should realize benefits to all. Currently, dividing lines exist between all four municipalities that people transit every day – in many cases not realizing they have “left” one area and entered another. People live in Wasaga, Clearview and Blue Mountains and work, shop and participate in recreation in Collingwood, and likewise with residents of Collingwood going to and from the neighbouring municipalities. A more cooperative, regional concept of cooperation and support will only have positive effects on all participants.

**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?**

In reference to the rate of growth, the Collingwood area (and neighbouring municipalities) is one of the top twenty-five fastest growing areas in the country, and I don’t see this changing significantly in the near future.

With such growth, at unprecedented rates, comes the pressure for quicker decisions and approvals so projects can get started and finished more quickly. This pressure must be resisted to ensure adequate and effective review is completed on new projects to the satisfaction of the Town having regard for input from all parties concerned.

The Council, in cooperation with the Chief Administrative Officer, has to work to ensure that the staff of both the Planning and Building Departments are well equipped to handle such a workload – as well as maintaining their level

of expertise and education to ensure decisions remain current with legislation as it rolls out. That determination must be undertaken by the CAO who will report back to Council with his findings and recommendations for Council to approve such actions be implemented to address his operational concerns.

The Official Plan and Zoning requirements (including Heritage considerations and designations) and Urban Landscaping policies are already in place within the Town, and those documents provide good opportunities for control on development issues – as long as they are acted upon – again a process where Council reviews recommendations of Department Heads through Staff Reports and then goes back to the Staff through the CAO to resolve any questions or concerns.

My understanding is the current Head of Planning is planning on retiring in the very near future, and in cooperation with the CAO this is an excellent opportunity to revisit and revamp internal policies and practices to ensure applications are dealt with in a timely manner having regard for safeguarding those issues identified as most important to the Town.

**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?**

In many instances, the public consultation requirements are stipulated by Provincial Legislation, and to that point, the Town is compliant with the laws. Where the difficulty arises is ensuring advertising of applications for development is ensuring effective communication is in place. Even prior to the demise of one of the local newspapers, ensuring effective communication between the Town and the public was less than great. Part of that issue lies with the changing manner in which communications is done – from the media of community television, community radio to digital communication. It is apparent that a more effective, efficient method of communication is required.

Further – in some instances it is not a matter of “obligation to notify” but a matter of “should be notified”.

There is nothing wrong with the processes in place from initial application through to site plan and implementation – the issue is the communication to the public of those processes at each stage.

**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?**

The recently approved plan is not the first one, and is a living document (as it should be) going forward. It is a very high view, long term and ambitious plan that will take many years to implement. Overall, the plan covers the concerns and input of the community well. The glaring issue with the implementation is, of course, the funding to initiate. To that end, it is imperative that an action plan be developed at the earliest possible stage, to begin to put the plan into reality. To accomplish that, prioritization of the steps in the plan has to be completed having regard for the input from the community, the overall goal of the Plan and the reality of the funding available.

I believe that the beginning of the implementation of the Plan is very important for the new Council – for a couple of reasons. First, too many plans and strategic studies have been undertaken over the years that have never come to any level of fruition, so for the sake of credibility tangible results are required as soon as possible on this plan to show action is occurring. Secondly, some progress with build momentum from one success to the next, and support will gather and enhance as the project moves along.

**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, Collingwood has taken some steps to protect sensitive wetlands and shoreline areas, and where the Town has property under their ownership and control, they have done an adequate job. The implementation of the Trail System around the Harbour (currently still in development into reality) is ensuring where the development of property is occurring public access through the deeding of public access trail systems and walkways is part of the approval process.

Designation of many areas of waterfront property and wetlands areas as Environmental Protection lands adequately eliminates development on those designated properties and appeal from those decisions is possible but very expensive and time consuming. Such lands in the area of Silver Creek and the West end shoreline have effectively preserved those areas to date.

Further restrictions and regulations on development or changing of sensitive properties is place by the Province (Ministry of Natural Resources), in some cases Federally (Ministry of Fisheries) and input from area Conservation Authorities on development in waterfront and watershed areas further assists in the protection of these natural sanctuaries.

Adherence to the master plan, the advice of the stakeholder groups and maintenance and enhancement of the Official Plan to ensure protection and access to waterfront and watershed lands will guarantee protection. Continual review and updating of the status of the lands noted in regards to water level and changing status of flora and fauna will further ensure the safeguards in place remain current.

**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?**

The waterfront/shoreline areas have long defined the previous and current vision of Collingwood. In the past, having regard for the Marine nature of the Town, shipbuilding and shipping were the driving force of the economy for many years. These activities were centered on the Harbour and the Terminals. While the economy has changed drastically since the mid 1980's, the heritage and tradition must be preserved. The Harbour will be the core of the Waterfront Master Plan and a large block upon which to build a vibrant and attractive waterfront for the use of all.

The shoreline is every bit as important as a Natural refuge and habitat for fish and wildlife and the natural beauty that makes the Collingwood region so attractive to both residents and visitors.

The shoreline and wetlands together are vital to maintaining the history and character of Collingwood as a community with strong ties to the natural beauty of the region. They form a strong base to enhance the continued development of the tourist industry in the area as well as a cornerstone of the reasons many people wish to move to this area and make it their home.

**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 am aware of the concerns of several groups of residents with the proposal. Some input has been received at the early stages of this proposal and concerns have been expressed in relation to height, impact on environmentally sensitive areas of waterfront parking availability and noise to name a few. The impact of the proposal requires an overview of the whole development – namely what has already occurred and what is proposed, with a view to examining the impact on the entire area of the property – neighbouring communities to all sides. Concerns of increased traffic, parking, possible impact on waterfront environment and quality of life are vital issues to be addressed.

The level of public consultation, as expressed earlier in questions relating to communication, is an area that requires review quickly. Collingwood is not the only municipality that has seen the decline in printed media, which was the generally accepted medium of communicating information to the municipality in planning and building matters from local government. Other municipalities have moved forward to other means of electronic and digital communication to facilitate effective communication relating to such development proposals.

When any development is proposed that has the potential to impact the lifestyle of so many people, it is important for local decision makers to hear all views and comments from all sources, and using the regulations and safeguards in place ensure the best interests of all are considered in making the decision of any approval.