

Responses of Brian Saunderson

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?

My campaign has published a survey of its own on my website asking residents to identify the top issues facing the next Council and we have received an overwhelming response from residents (available at www.briansaunderson.ca). The responses are very consistent with the results of the Community Based Strategic Plan (CBSP) adopted by the Council in 2015 which reflected the priorities identified by the residents of Collingwood in extensive public consultations. The priorities identified by the CBSP are accountable local government, access to a revitalized waterfront, economic development, healthy lifestyle and arts and culture. I am using this information to refine my own 10-point platform which is available on my website (see above for link). Based on my experience with the current Council, the importance of the CBSP and the results of my own survey, the following are my top 5 priorities for the next Council;

1. Honest accountable local Government;
2. Implementing the recommendations of the Judicial Inquiry;
3. Reducing debt and strong financial management;
4. Access to a revitalized waterfront; and,
5. Strategic and proactive growth management and strengthening Collingwood's planning processes.

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?

As indicated above, accountable local government is one of the five priorities identified by the CBSP in 2015 and is an ongoing priority of our residents and not just in election years. This Council has taken many steps to improve on accountable and accessible local government in the last four years;

- updated the Council Code of Conduct;
- implemented a new Committee structure so that all staff reports must pass through the relevant Committee before coming to Council to facilitate more public input through each Committee;
- updated the Procurement By-Law and hired a Procurement Compliance person;
- implemented live streaming of all Council and Committee meetings; and,
- implemented recorded votes on all substantive issues so that residents can track the voting records of each Councillor.

That said, improving transparency and accountability is an ongoing process and there is every reason for the Council of the day to examine best practices to ensure it is doing everything in its power to improve its processes. I will be proactive in advocating for the

next Council to adopt the recommendations of the Judicial Inquiry that is looking into the breakdown of municipal practices and due diligence that led to the 2012 sale of 50% of the Town's shares in the local utility, Collus, for \$8 million and how those funds were spent. In addition, I will advocate for the implementation of a lobbyist registry which will make public any interest of a lobbyist in any Town transaction. Had the Town had a lobbyist registry in place in 2012, the fact of the alleged payment to the Mayor's brother of a commission of \$756,400 on the purchase of the Sprung recreational bubbles would have been known at the time and not have come as a surprise to all involved five years later.

Those who are familiar with my athletic background (8 years with the national rowing team, 2 time Olympian and World silver medalist in 1990 as a member of the men's eight) will know that I am a strong advocate for drug free sport and served on the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport Anti-Doping Review Board for over 10 years. I have taught business law and ethics at Georgian College and am a strong advocate for ethical behaviour in all aspects of our lives from personal to professional. As your Mayor I will be, as I have been as your Deputy Mayor, a strong advocate for transparent, accountable local government.

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?

The adage we are stronger together is true both at the municipal level and the regional level. I believe in collaboration at all levels and as Deputy Mayor, served as a member of the Simcoe County Council as well as the Collingwood Council. We have done much through the County Council to advance the interests of Collingwood with the realization of a \$40 million affordable housing complex on High and Second Streets which is now in construction and the implementation of the Simcoe LINX intra-municipal transportation which will eventually link Collingwood with Clearview Township and the City of Barrie as the LINX lines are implemented. That said, Collingwood Council must be vigilant of Collingwood's interests and not allow the interests of our residents to be subordinated to the interests of other communities. The sale of the Collingwood Regional Airport is an example of this balancing of municipal versus regional interests. There is no doubt the airport is a significant regional asset but in the absence of a meaningful and equitable sharing of the operating costs of the airport, there was no business case for the Town of Collingwood to maintain its ownership of the airport. The residents of Collingwood were spending on average \$200,000 annually over the last 10 years for an asset that was not within your jurisdiction while during that same time period, the Township of Clearview was spending \$25,000 annually (and collecting approximately \$80,000 in municipal property taxes each year) and Wasaga Beach was contributing approximately \$11,000 annually. This Council explored all options from a sale to the host municipality or partnership with our regional neighbours and the County of Simcoe. However, in the absence of a meaningful and equitable arrangement had no option but to enter an RFP process for the sale of the airport and ultimately resulted in the sale of the airport for \$4.1 million to Winterland Developments Ltd., a company that is already active in the operations of the airport and was welcomed by many of the current stakeholders.

We must be open minded and progressive in our collaboration with all levels of government from our neighbouring municipalities, to our County governments and our Provincial and Federal Governments. However, we must also ensure that any opportunities we pursue are in the best interests of Collingwood and not benefitting some small interest groups in or outside of our communities. There must be a cost benefit analysis brought to bear on every collaboration regardless of the various levels of government or business interest involved. Ultimately, I am accountable to the Collingwood taxpayers and I must never lose sight of that as I believe others before me have.

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?

Our world is growing and under the Provincial planning policies, Collingwood is identified as a growth node in Simcoe County. Our population is projected to grow by approximately 11,000 over the next 15 years, which is an increase of over 40%. With this level of growth there are economic benefits such as a growing tax base and economic development. However, there will be significant stresses for our community in terms of infrastructure costs, increased traffic and changes in our community.

We must be proactive in our planning and other policies to ensure that as a municipality we do all that we can to ensure that the growth is managed strategically such that we leverage the economic benefits, create a diverse and inclusive community and protect our small town character and green spaces. I would like to see Collingwood revisit and update our planning by-laws and policies through the lens of our future growth and the impacts of that growth to be sure that we have the necessary tools at our disposal to manage that growth as proactively as possible. There is no doubt we have a housing inventory shortage both in terms of our vacancy rate which is around 1.4% (you need at least 3% to have a healthy supply) and in terms of the type of housing in our community. We need to address that by encouraging developers to build apartment buildings and semi-detached homes which are more attainable financially for young families and seniors living on fixed incomes.

Using the regional lens, I would like to see us work with Simcoe County and our neighbouring municipalities to lobby the Province to reduce the densification targets for Collingwood by distributing some of the anticipated growth to other municipalities in Simcoe County which are looking for additional growth.

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?

Public consultation in the planning context comes under two headings, the municipal consultation or engagement processes and the statutory Planning Act consultation

processes. The Planning Act consultation processes are triggered by the type of planning application at issue.

In terms of municipal engagement processes, as indicated above this Council has changed the Town's committee structure to create three standing committees, the Corporate and Community Services Committee, the Development and Operations Committee and the Strategic Initiatives Committee. Each committee is mandated to deal with specific municipal departments and receive all staff reports from those departments before those reports come to Council. The rationale for this committee structure was to provide a defined process for staff reports or initiatives to come before Council to permit more public consultation and discussion on those initiatives. There are significant opportunities for the public to address the committees on the individual items on the agenda and as general deputations on other issues not on the agenda. I believe this committee structure has increased the opportunities for public engagement significantly and for the positive. Recently on the issues of the noise by-law changes and the coyote control measures, there was significant community engagement both at the committee level and at the Council level with a significant number of deputations.

In terms of consultation required under the Planning Act, my understanding is that these statutory consultations are triggered by the type of planning application involved and whether there is zoning by-law variances or Official Plan amendments required. If a public meeting is required under the legislation, the public is given an opportunity to address Council and voice their concerns. The public is also provided an opportunity to have their name put on a list so they are updated on the application in issue as it moves forward.

I believe the current committee structure is effective and provides residents with adequate opportunities to come before Council to voice their opinions and I think we have seen many instances in which residents took full use of these opportunities. I do think that the Town must be more proactive through our communications department in reaching out and engaging our residents on a general level. With the decline of the media in smaller communities such as ours, Council must be more proactive in disseminating information about Council processes and activities to ensure residents are aware of the engagement opportunities and encouraging them to use these opportunities.

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 Waterfront Master Plan was identified as one of the five priorities by the residents of Collingwood under the Community Based Strategic Plan and I am firm believer in both proper planning and a redeveloped waterfront that offers something for all of our residents. As a rower I have competed in Canada, USA, France, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Yugoslavia, Korea, Spain and Britain, and have seen many waterfronts around the world. I can tell you without hesitation that Collingwood's is one of the most beautiful, pristine and healthy waterfronts I have had the pleasure of rowing, paddling, boating and swimming in. The fact that it is in the community I live in and serve as Deputy Mayor is a huge source of pride and responsibility. I would not allow anything to

happen to our waterfront that would jeopardize or threaten these qualities. I served as member of the Harbourlands Committee for two plus years, was one of the founding directors of the Collingwood Dragon Boat and Canoe Club and served as Commodore for approximately 11 years. I was instrumental in negotiating the donation of the historic Watts Bros. Boathouse to the Town of Collingwood for the exclusive of the Canoe Club and have fought vigorously for the protection of our waterfront as a healthy, vibrant multi-use facility for our residents and visitors alike.

I am absolutely in favour of the Waterfront Master Plan and will work vigorously as your Mayor to have the Plan implemented in a financially responsible and sustainable way, I will also work to ensure that we pursue all funding opportunities from other levels of government as well as explore public-private partnership opportunities.

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?

During the Waterfront Master Plan process I had a number of discussions with the principal architect Cal Brook and attended numerous public meetings. The discussion throughout was to develop our waterfront in a strategic and sustainable way to create a vibrant, active waterfront which integrates our shoreline into our community and intensifies residents access to the waterfront. Environmental sustainability and sensitivity is a critical part of that development process.

I think this question raises two issues, one relating to the type of development on the waterfront and the second relating to the protection of our natural assets and environment. In response to the issue of development, the Waterfront Master Plan (available at <http://www.collingwood.ca/wmp>), speaks to the types of development that will be going in on Town lands. Where private developers are involved, the Town's role is to ensure that any development complies with our zoning and building by-laws as stated above.

In terms of environmental protection, my understanding is that the Town works in conjunction with the Nottawasa Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) and that the NVCA is the approval authority on environmental issues for any building or development applications that may have negative impacts on our natural environment including the shoreline and environmentally sensitive areas in Collingwood. The recent Bear Estate application has brought to light some concerns with the operation of this chain of command or shared responsibility which need to be clarified. This is something as Mayor I would seek clarification on and, if there are gaps or problems identified, would work with staff and the residents to address.

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?

As indicated in my answers above, I see Collingwood's waterfront and wetland areas as a critical part of our future on all three levels, socially, culturally and economically. I think the residents of Collingwood feel the same way, which is why it was identified as one of five priorities under our CBSP. This Council moved aggressively to develop a Waterfront Master Plan and recently completed the first phase of Stage 1 of the plan with the completion of the Awen Gathering Circle that recognizes and celebrates our indigenous heritage. The next phase of Stage 1 is to develop a splash pad with concession stand and change rooms which will be a skating rink in the winter with a refrigerated skating trail through Harbourview Park. The Town currently has approximately \$2.8 million in reserve to complete that work and are working proactively to leverage additional funds from other levels of government.

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?

As you know the Developer asked that the application be deferred shortly after the public meeting and before Council received any staff report and the Development and Operations Committee had a chance to review that staff report. SOS Collingwood has raised a number of concerns relating to the development and the environmental impacts which are very concerning and need to be addressed. I believe in following proper process and in evidence based decision making and will wait for the application to come back through the proper channels, for staff to provide a report on the application and for the legitimate concerns raised by SOS Collingwood to be addressed. When that has been done, I will make a decision on the merits of the application taking into consideration the serious environmental issues which have been identified.