

# Council Q&A – WEEK 3 – Crime in Jamestown

By **Dan Gray** - April 1, 2022 @ 5:12 pm



*Heavy Police Presence in Jamestown, March 14, 2022 (Dan Gray/SaultOnline.com)*

This is week three of our series highlighting your questions to our councillors in lead up to the end of their term, or in some of the cases, the chances at Fall re-election.

As always, SaultOnline reached out to the community for a question to send to all councillors as well as Mayor Provenzano at the end of the week and gave each of them until Noon today to respond. Our reporter also tracks at the bottom the responses received and not received in terms of responding to constituents' questions.

This week we focused on a question brought to us by the residents of Jamestown-

**Crime in Jamestown has been an issue since before this council term. While the City of Sault Ste. Marie now funds extra security in the downtown, we as residents of this west end community feel neglected.**

**What are you willing to do with your time left to help deal with crime in Jamestown going forward?**

As always we are bringing them too you in the order in which we received their responses-

Matt Scott

**Ward 5 Councillor Matt Scott-**

*Crime is something I speak to constituents about a lot and it's always something I'm willing to work with them on. I know that our police services are probably busier than they ever been so I can appreciate the difficulty with allocating more resources in different areas of the city when the resources might not be available.*

*That being said, I would love to meet with members of Jamestown Strong to listen to what they have to say about their neighbourhood and their ideas about how we can improve the area together. I know what it's like to have residents and constituents feel like they're being neglected (Prince Township petition, for example) and want to ensure this feeling isn't one that is common or long lasting.*

Matt  
Shoemaker

**Ward 3 Councillor Matt Shoemaker –**

*First, for context in my response: The Honourable Justice Ray Stortini, who grew up in the area and wrote 2 books about the area, once advised me that the area has never historically been called "Jamestown". Rather, it was always either the west end (now the "old west end") or little Italy. So, while I had previously been referring to this area as Jamestown, and that seems to be a common name for it these days, I now only ever refer to it as either the James Street area, or the old west end.*

*The old west end has been a focus of mine over the course of the last term of council and this one. I believe there is much the city should be doing in the area. Much of it is underway, but there's more work to be done. The general thrust of my efforts has been based on the belief that the social ills that ail the old west end are the cause of many of the problems in the area, and with the right mix of health services in the area, access to the proper treatment, and a mix of redevelopment and investment in the area, the social problems will turn the corner, and the neighbourhood can thrive again. I will summarize the efforts I have spearheaded below:*

*On March 5, 2018, Councillor Ozzie Grandinetti and I brought a motion asking for a revitalization plan for the old west end that would include an expansion of Anna Marinelli park, the conversion of unused parking lot space into active green space/parkland, and a plan to use James Street as a public space. The James Street Market that ran for 2 years*

*before COVID was born of this motion.*

*On May 14, 2018, a motion by Councillor Niro and I sought to have stricter enforcement of the property standards by-law in the area, as it was an area of significant concern to the neighbours.*

*On May 28, 2018, Councillor Niro and I sought to have a health equity centre established in the old west end. This would have served a similar purpose to the former "Neighbourhood Resource Centre" on Gore Street.*

*On December 7, 2020, during the 2021 budget deliberations, I sought to have the expansion of Anna Marinelli Park put to the top of the list for park revitalization in our annual parks spending. Council agreed, and the park revitalization and expansion began last year and will be concluded this year.*

*In January of this year, despite the opposition of some Councillors, I was able to convince the majority of Council that a Hub Trail connection to the old west end should be the City's top active transportation priority, and we are hopeful that the new funding recently announced by the federal government will see this project built in 2023.*

*While these motions may not specifically speak to increased police presence, as I noted above, I believe they try to tackle some of the underlying social issues that cause the old west end to be a hub for crime and drug use. I do not think increased private security patrols are the answer for residential neighbourhoods. They work downtown because the downtown is a (mostly) commercial area that is essentially vacant overnight. Residential areas are different and the way we tackle problems in those areas must also be different.*

*I have, however, said that there should be a new police station downtown, and would love to see something akin to the former Neighbourhood Resources Centre on James Street so that there would be a permanent presence in the area, specifically one that could establish a rapport of trust with the neighbours.*

*Luke Dufour*

## **Ward 2 Councillor Luke Dufour –**

*Crime in Downtown neighbourhoods is one of the first issues that myself and Councilor Vezeau Allen began to address the first month of our term; holding a community meeting at the Soup Kitchen in Jamestown. Since then, crime, policing, punishment and the social issues that lead to criminality have been one of the top issues from residents.*

*Level of patrols is one of the most visible elements of policing, but it is also one of the least targeted and effective, especially in an environment where so few of those charged, ever see a timely courtroom or much less likely, a jail cell.*

*For citizens who want to see more accountability for policing in our community, they should also be putting these questions specifically to the Police Services Board, which has the governance responsibility over our local service. This Board also has two Provincially appointed members, who do not have the same level of daily contact with constituents who are concerned with these issues as Councilors do. While I have done my best to act as a channel for the concerns of my constituents who contact me, it is important that these folks hear these stories directly from those affected.*

*Policing in our community is also only a small part of the criminal justice system. Police can issue all of the charges they want, but once a person is charged, it is up to our Provincial Crown Attorney's Office to prosecute. It is up to them and the presiding judge, what consequences are levied against a criminal, and what message those consequences send to others in our community who may be on the brink of criminal behaviour and to residents who want to feel safe in their homes.*

*Many other communities in Ontario have received specific Provincial funds for reintegration officers, individuals who can help those transitioning out of jail sentences and back into the community. SSM needs this kind of resource to help those who may be willing to learn their lesson and start to help themselves. We need to advocate for these Provincial programs together!*

*We have made good strides in our local homelessness system. We have put a lot of new money into ensuring people have a place to go. But housing alone, cannot and will not solve these social issues. Some people need help, treatment for addiction, some people need hard consequences and others need more social workers. I'm committed to spending municipal dollars on the parts of the system that the City is responsible for funding and I'm committed to advocating for the Province and Federal government to properly fund the elements of this system that they are responsible for.*

Here is the running total in terms of responses received vs. not received.

Do you have a question you want asked of your councillors in the next 29 weeks leading up to the election?

Let SaultOnline know and our staff will do their best to get answers for not just you, but the community as a whole.

Thank-you for choosing SaultOnline/ONNTV as your source of news in Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding area.

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**Dan Gray**

A native of Centre Wellington, Ontario, I have worked as a freelance journalist all over the province of Ontario. Most recently I ran a local news page in my hometown of Fergus, Ontario. I look forward to bringing my experience covering breaking news, municipal matters and general interest stories to the team at Superior Media and communities we serve.

