

# Q&A – Week 10 – Candidates top priorities

By **Dan Gray** - June 11, 2022 @ 8:02 am



Our site is going into week ten of our question-and-answer feature in which SaultOnline poses a question from the community to those running for both Mayor and Councillor.

As of this week, we no longer include those currently sitting in these positions, instead we have only approached those listed on [the city of Sault Ste. Marie website](#) who are running for the respective positions.

As always the question is put forward early in the week and a deadline of Friday at noon is given for responses to be submitted. The responses are listed in the order in which they were received.

This week's question from the community was-

***If elected, what are the top three priorities you would like to see the city focus on during your term?***

Does the answers here match yours? tell us in the comments.

**Mayoral Candidates –**

**Ozzie Grandinetti –**

If elected I would like to focus on job growth, 0 % tax and fee increase and mental health/opioid crisis. Some will think this is 4 but really 3 as I consider mental health and opioid as one issue.

**Matthew Shoemaker –**

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide our input on these issues.

The top priorities will be new development, including and especially in the downtown area. We need to maximize the number of people that live and work in the downtown area if we ever want to have a hope at downtown revitalization. Without new units built in the downtown, we will continue to struggle. In order to encourage and incentivize new development downtown, we need to look at what other communities are doing right, and adopt similar programs or grants to make it happen. Not only will this help the downtown, but it will also increase the supply of housing in town, which will level off the skyrocketing house prices we are seeing in neighbourhoods east, west and north. This is good for the downtown and good for affordability throughout the community.

Second, keeping spending under control especially in a time of increasing inflation. In the past, when inflation was at 1% or 2%, I was comfortable supporting tax increases at or below the rate of inflation. However, with inflation now at 6%+, I would never accept a tax increase that is as high as the rate of inflation. We need to make sure that as the cost of groceries and housing and vehicles (and everything else ) goes up , that the cost of municipal services isn't forcing people to make decisions on either paying their city taxes or heating their home. I have a proven track record on keeping costs down, I have successfully brought forward millions in savings over my terms on council.

Finally, investing in quality of life improvements. This will include expanding the hub trail into James Street and into the west end, running a downtown trolley pilot project, developing a beach-like area at Bellevue Park for beach volleyball and other recreational activities, ensuring the Bay View splash pad gets completed and more. All this will be combined with a focus on the environment and doubling our tree planting locally, lobbying the province for additional mental health and addictions supports, working on a new downtown police station and much more that will form part of my vision heading into this municipal election.

**Tobin Kern-**

## Top Three Priorities: Climate Change, Strategic Investment, Inclusive Community

Climate change might not be the most immediately demanding issue, or causing the most distress right now, but it is the comet on course to disrupt humankind like no other. And the debris of that comet, before the motherload hits, is already impacting people in real ways around the globe now. Ask people watching their water disappear, people in communities like ours, across Canada, affected by record flooding and wildfires, or those currently battling to stay alive against intolerable heat in India and Pakistan, an all too routine affair.

I don't like to mince words when talking about climate change, because I know constituents are beyond that, and are ready to dig in. It's all of our responsibility, to our children, future generations, and to humankind, that we ensure everything we do, from now on, takes the impacts on those future generations into consideration. Any building, any planning, and any investment needs to be fully informed by how it will contribute to climate change from start to finish. Full stop.

The second priority, connected to the first and third priorities, is strategic investment. In a community with multiple pressing needs, from an affordable housing crisis, to a substance use epidemic, to youth retention, and isolation felt by many elders, every dollar invested from community coffers must be strategic, and address the needs of our community, and the outcomes our community desires.

In discussion with constituents, their primary concern has been with strategic investment as well. They are not concerned with the day-to-day operations of the city. Most I've spoken with don't mention a need for another layer of management for the work city departments already do well, they question investment choices. While there is little question Saultites will be the benefactors of the investments made by the current council, there is debate about whether or not investment was adequately focused to address the challenges the community faces. This debate will likely continue until the October 24th election.

Finally, Saultites want an inclusive community. There are many people, myself and my family included, who are doing well and thriving. But we all have a family member, or a friend who is not, who is struggling, feels isolated, and pushed to the margins. When I speak with constituents, they want to see the conditions where all community members can thrive. They want a community in which all people can access affordable housing, quality and timely medical services (including addiction services), and engaging and affordable programming for the young and the elders. While there is no magic wand to bring about these things, which require significant funding from other levels of government, Saultites still want municipal leaders to strive for them, to invest strategically to support inclusion where possible, and to advocate strongly and publicly for the investments our community needs from our provincial and federal counterparts.

**Donna Hilsinger-** No Response Submitted

**Sandra Hollingsworth** – Not on the mailing list for this week as she only joined after the question was sent out.

## **Ward 2 –**

**Luke Dufour** –

If elected, my top three priorities will be addressing the mental health and addictions crisis by building on the investments we have made in our shelters/new NRC and funding/providing new supportive housing in SSM.

My next priority is to see a new Community Improvement Plan that targets established neighborhoods for redevelopment incentives. Coupled with our new low income home ownership program, this will ensure neighborhoods are renewed and that established folks have an opportunity to be part of that growth. We need population growth to go into established neighborhoods in order for our whole City to be sustainable.

My third priority is to build on the success of the new Bay St and see the Downtown plan continue with the relocation of the Mill Market, renovation of Queen St and hopefully the Spring St project too. Our City does not invest anywhere near the money other comparator cities invest in their Downtowns. How can we expect citizens and businesses to invest in Downtown if the City will not also do our share?

**Lisa Vezeau-Allen** – No response submitted.

## **Ward 3 –**

**Kurtis McDermid**–

1. Fill our city

Our city needs a strong team working bookings, promotions and leasing for all our city amenities and complexes. We hear time and time again about how we want to see Queen St. extend their hours or how we need to pull business to our city. We cannot expect that of our private sector without leading by example as a municipality.

Far too often our city amenities sit closed. Our canteen at Bellevue Park is only open for 2 months at limited hours regardless of the toddlers who flood the park with their parents/caregivers daily in the spring and fall filling our trash cans with Tim Hortons cups as they walk past a boarded up canteen. Our Pavilion and attached canteen sits empty and closed as cruise ships dock on site and the canteen closed while community groups celebrate PRIDE month under the tent. Our sports fields and complexes sit empty for far too many days. Most importantly, we cannot keep shoving our city into a 2-3 month season of summer weather regardless of being one of the most unique cities in the world to experience all four seasons to their fullest.

We need to get these locations open and get these venues rented. It is going to take a team of creative and driven individuals. We need to work with not-for-profits, community groups and charities to donate vacancies in our Bellevue Park bandshell, our waterfront Pavilion and our sports fields/complexes and ensure they are kept full of life and activity.

Fill The Pavilion, The Bandshell, Community Centers, Sports Complexes and City owned venues. Expand the hours and services/products of our canteens, marinas and splash pad. Lease space along our boardwalk, Hub Trail, parks, Fort Creek, sports fields and Downtown Core to vendor carts and food trucks.

Fill Our City and watch us come alive.

2. Clean up the effects of our ongoing crises; Opioid, Housing, Crime, Vacancies, Mental Health...

Treating the multiple crises that our city and country faces is a massive undertaking to span all sectors and levels of government. Far too often conversations around these crises turn to larger overarching conversations surrounding problems and solutions that require years of time, other levels of government involvement and funds. In this the conversations turn away from the immediate need to mitigate and minimize the collateral damage the crises are causing to our community. This is where the municipal government should step in and shine and where we have the most power to do so over any level of government.

We need boots on the ground and now. While we tackle the overarching problems of society let's do what we can right here and now with good old fashioned manpower. Graffiti control, litter cleanup, needle and paraphernalia disposal and clean-up, property standards enforcement specifically on absentee landlords, and vandalism repair. We can't have needles and vandalism where our children play, we can't have small businesses bear the brunt of becoming trash bins for needles and garbage after hours and we can't have homeowners worried about safety in their own backyards from theft and disposal of needles. We need our city to be safe of immediate hazards and stay clean and maintained as the overarching problems are worked on.

Furthermore, we need property standards enforcement for the facades of commercial buildings. A look back on Google Earth shows storefronts in our downtown core boarded up since 2007 (the earliest images available). High traffic commercial properties should not sit vacant for decades and when they do sit vacant, specifically in our core, there needs to be standards upheld for their facades to at minimum look maintained and tenanted. We cannot allow for the appearance of a ghost town while we pour investment after investment, private and public, into our core and city at large.

3. Ensure the completion of ongoing projects and neglected incomplete projects

Whether we agree or not on the merits of some of the city's current projects there is an undeniable truth that if cut short or not fulfilled to their intentions it will be a massive waste of our hard earned money, labour and time. The only thing worse than a budget overage right now is a budget overage coupled with an unsupported and incomplete project essentially throwing our investment out the window. We must not allow projects to become watered down or constrained because of short term economic turbulence. Short term, short-sighted budgetary decisions should not be allowed to ripple generations into the future. We've seen this happen in the past and now years later we would have never felt the weight of the spending but we certainly feel the ongoing weight of the compromises made by councils in the past.

Our downtown revitalization hinges on an overarching plan far greater than the controversy of the plaza. We need to see the vision of Spring St, Bay St, Mill Market, Queen St. and The Plaza come together into fruition so that our kids' generations don't feel the ripples of short term compromises. Our downtown needs to complete the transition from a separate industrial waterfront and downtown core of the pre 1960s to a cohesive and connected city core.

We also need to not lose sight of other city projects that have fallen from the limelight under current controversies and projects. Jamestown has a still incomplete park that seems to be neglected and a watered down version of the renderings in the news some time ago. It is fenced off, incomplete and is going days on end with no construction or landscaping crews in sight. This is unacceptable. There was a time where Jamestown Revitalization was the trendy news article and talking point and once that trend faded Jamestown has been left in the dark and it is all completely unacceptable. We need to see projects through and complete them as originally intended.

Hubtrail expansions and connecting links, the mountain bike trail system expansion, bike lanes and so many other projects currently in development cannot become victims of the same fate we are seeing in Jamestown. The signs are there and the past flies the flags we need to watch for.

Without all of these priorities taken care of we would be flushing years of investment into our city down the drain. The money spent on FutureSSM, Shape The Sault, Tourism, downtown consultations and the new branding and vision for our future as a city where the people of today want to live cannot be wasted. The investments in our tourism sector and our city's persona to the world has been evident over the last council's terms but without the city rising to the vision and expectations that we have created over the last several years it would all be putting our hard earned tax dollars to waste.

**Angela Caputo**– No response Submitted

**Ward 4 –**

**Marchy Bruni** – No response submitted.

**Ward 5 –**

**Matt Scott –**

The top three priorities I have for a second term on city council are:

1. Open data. I want the City of Sault Ste. Marie to embrace the availability and use of data. I envision a city where you could go onto our website and see a real time map of whichever city operated vehicle you want. You could select buses and see where they are, you could select graders and see where our snow graders are, complete historical availability of the data as well. Ideally this open data idea would spill over to police services as well where anyone could access crime data openly. I am willing to bet that most, if not all, candidates this election will mention the words transparency and accountability – open data is the apex of that idea.
2. Infrastructure maintenance prioritized over new projects. I mentioned at a recent council meeting when I voted against the plaza project that I believe we should be more focused on spending taxpayer money on maintaining our current infrastructure over projects that could very well be duplicating existing amenities in the city. We have a beautiful city with a lot to offer, I think we should focus on what we have before adding onto that.
3. Focus on Ward 5. It's been no secret that I am extremely vocal about the western most ward and that will always be one of my top priorities. I can appreciate that all city projects and initiatives are beneficial to all residents, but I have mentioned before and will continue to bring up that I would like to see more done to include the far west end of our city (example, Ward 5 does not have any publicly funded hockey rinks within its boundaries). As a lifelong Ward 5 resident I feel strongly connected to the community and have seen from my own experience how things have changed so it's important for me to be the voice of our area in all matters discussed at the city.

**Corey Gardi –** No response submitted.

**Dave Mornix –** No response submitted

Starting next week there will be a running bi-weekly score kept of who answered and who didn't, with a nod to those who participated in the first 9 weeks of the previous format included.

Do you have a question you want asked of your candidates in the 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 us 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.

