

What is your vision for Sault Ste. Marie? – Week 14 – Candidate Q&A

By **Dan Gray** - July 11, 2022 @ 11:04 am



Downtown Sault Ste. Marie

Do you have a question you would like to be asked of your candidates in the week's leading up to the election? Let us know at newsroom@saultonline.com or in the comment section!

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

Our team garners questions from the community, at times from a specific member, and at other times from multiple constituents as posed over the last 48 months on our social media platforms and present them to those wanting to lead our community.

If the individual(s) want to be identified, we will identify the asker, otherwise the queries are posed as general questions.

Currently, only those listed in [the City of Sault Ste. Marie website](#) as running for the respective positions as Mayor and Councillors are posed these questions.

As always the question is put forward early in the week and assigned 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 weeks question is one of those that comes from a community at large-

After 4 years, what do you hope to accomplish and what is your vision for Sault Ste. Marie as a whole and the ward you hope to represent (if applicable) or reside in (if not).?

Again, the answers are placed in a first answered, first presented format.

Do the answers here match yours? Let us know in the comment section.

Mayoral Candidates –

Tobin Kern-

The people of Sault Ste. Marie are ready to roll up their sleeves and find workable solutions for the significant issues that our city (like many cities) simply cannot overlook. Over the next four years, I will act to facilitate active community engagement on the most pressing areas of climate change, the addictions epidemic, and community safety. Once we tackle and move through the issues that face us, we will be in a better position to move toward a better and brighter future.

On climate change, mayor and council must take the lead, but need the rest of the community to be actively engaged to get results. As experts have said, all communities need to be on a war footing to appropriately reduce their carbon footprint and address climate change. This would include supporting and using expanded public transit, promoting and using active transportation (walking, biking, etc), supporting and promoting climate-friendly lifestyle changes: Eating more locally, eating less meat, leaving the car at home as much as possible (planning trips for shopping, etc.), reducing waste, changes in how we work, etc. Not only will adopting climate-friendly practices help the city address its climate change obligations, it will likely save citizens money. I envision a healthier future for our kids and money in our pockets if we pursue the right changes.

The addictions epidemic will require experts, community stakeholders, and citizens to advocate for, and implement workable solutions that address it. In discussion, all solutions should be given space to be explored, including increased local treatment options and harm reduction options. Mayor and council can provide opportunities for dialogue amongst stakeholders, and advocate for, and work towards a made-in-Sault Ste. Marie strategy.

Addressing the addictions epidemic will inevitably address community safety. If more ill people are actively engaged in treatment of various forms, they will have better health

outcomes, reducing stresses on emergency services. People more engaged in their personal wellness will also likely engage less and less (or not at all) with organized crime, and with crime related to supporting addictions, further reducing stresses on emergency services, and reducing crime overall. Effective solutions for the addictions epidemic will increase community safety for everyone.

Business as usual simply isn't up to meeting the challenges we face. Over the next four years, if we work together to address the issues before us, we will be working to ensure a brighter future for all of us.

Matthew Shoemaker-

After 4 years I hope we have a City that is attractive to tourists, lively for residents and safer for all, with more services available to those with mental health/addictions problems, more draws for people to come downtown and along the waterfront, revitalized tourist attractions that have recovered from the effects of COVID, and better roads due to increased investment in capital maintenance and improvements. I also hope we are thriving economically, though global economic factors are largely outside of City Hall's control. If we are thriving economically, I hope we are building more housing units for people to live in in our city so that we have enough supply to meet the demand and keep costs reasonable.

Ozzie Grandinetti

After 4 years, my vision is to make SSM a safer place to live, reduce crime and increase the quality of life for everyone. I have made a commitment to have satellite police stations in areas of high crime, lobby all levels of government for support with mental health and addiction and create more affordable housing. I will encourage and support festivals and events in the City and re-open Pointes Des Chenes Campground and explore options to expand on the services/ infrastructure.

I want to create an open, transparent, accessible and accountable municipal council and engage the community in order to close the gap in the disconnect that people are feeling between themselves and the leaders of our City. I will stop the wasteful spending and have committed to a zero tax increase and zero fee increases over the next 4 years. I have promised to conduct a 3rd party forensic audit of all city departments and implement efficiencies so that I can stay true to this commitment. My vision is to make SSM an attractive to businesses by cutting red tape and developing incentive frameworks.

After 4 years, I hope we are able to attract more people to move to SSM and make this City a vibrant, healthy, safe and strong community as it was in the past. Over the past 8 years, like you, I have watched the standards decrease and I am not happy with the direction we are going in. My vision is to change this direction, hold councillors, staff and agencies accountable to their legislated responsibilities.

Donna Hilsinger – No Response Submitted

Ward 1 –

William McPhee-

In my term on city council if elected I would like to see some improvements to the tennis courts in the parks in Ward 1 and throughout the city. Perhaps some could be converted to pickle ball courts as that seems to be the new popular thing.

Also for the city I think it would be good to get a splash pad like the one in Bellevue park constructed in the west end so that it would be more accessible for families. I would also like to get a handle on the always increasing property taxes.

We need to look at other ways to generate revenue especially now with inflation the way it is and people's wages staying at the current level or with just minimal increases it is hard for everyone. We also need to look at better ways of patching the streets as it seems that the same potholes are patched year after year. I do realize the city has a large budget for road work currently and the fact that our winters are hard on the roads is a large contributor to repairs.

That is why I think we need to investigate and see if there is a different material we could use or a different method of paving to help limit the damage done by winter. We need to look at providing more options for our young people not only in what is available to do but making the city an attractive place so that when our youth go off to college and university they want to come back here and raise a family here because it is a great place to work and live.

Sandra Hollingsworth – No Response Submitted

Brent Derochie –

I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the current and past City Councils. My vision over the next four years is to see our city come together as a community, respond to priorities identified by constituents and create some clear progress forward to improve our quality of life.

I continue to hear our downtown businesses needing support to be safe, attract business and thrive. The city needs to develop a comprehensive, transparent strategy that is informed and created in collaboration with owners and employees to implement real change that moves the city forward.

I hear from people that they are disappointed in the lack of new industry. We need to explore ways to attract profitable business to the Sault that creates lasting positive impacts. Businesses that will provide sustainable and livable employment and opportunities for community members are desperately needed and can be achieved with new and innovative ideas.

Sault Ste. Marie is a sports-oriented community with strong athletes in many disciplines. Let's make the Sault a place-of-choice for sporting events. We can build or renovate existing infrastructure to meet requirements and then market our beautiful city to host national and international events, bringing revenues to local businesses.

Emergency response services are critical to our safety and wellness. It will be imperative to act on the Dillon Consulting Report (as previously discussed at a City Council Meeting) to build a new firehall and implement a new staffing plan that is required by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). I also believe that with the changes to the fire hall plan, it will be incumbent to review the best way to support the paramedic services – specifically, where they will be housed. The Police Services Building has recently been identified as in need of change – the plans to address this should be a priority.

In 2020, McLeans Magazine printed a "Canada's Most Dangerous Places" report where Sault Ste. Marie was listed in 63rd place out of the 237 communities reported on. I want to first thank our police services and other service providers that work tirelessly to keep us safe and provide support to those in need. I believe the crime rate is a multi-faceted issue and want to explore how City Hall can support our community partners to improve our safety in the community. We could learn from other cities who have had success in reducing crime rates. Let's figure out how to improve our situation here.

Sault Ste. Marie has seen an obvious increase in addiction issues and substance abuse. This is a multi-faceted issue that leads to serious health concerns, housing issues, homelessness, violence, crime, financial issues, and much more which in turn all have an impact on family and community wellbeing. We can attack the problem in various ways, including enhancing access to community oriented initial support through first responder agencies, developing resources to confront the epidemic through a regional approach, and providing more social service workers and community resources to support individuals facing barriers and obstacles. It will be important to research other Northern communities' successes and lessons learned from their approaches to addressing the same addictions issues that our community is facing. More public education, lobbying for provincial/federal supports and a collaborative approach to solutions is desperately needed.

There is a housing crisis in our city. Sault Ste. Marie has a joint responsibility with stakeholders to develop solutions for those in need of affordable housing. We know that housing crisis is a multi-factored issue and should be addressed as a multi-stage epidemic. Solving the issue is not just about putting roofs over people's heads. It is about creating programming that supports homeless people to be successful. Singular approaches to solving the crisis isn't the solution. We need to come together to offer comprehensive solutions that will create safe and affordable housing.

Constituents have told me again and again that they want more transparency in city planning, spending and hiring. We need to ensure accountability is in place to change the perception and gain the confidence of constituents that nepotism and favouritism is eliminated or does not exist.

Sault Ste. Marie is a place of choice to live and raise our families. Continuous improvement will enhance our quality of life and create a solid future for every citizen. Let's keep moving forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your important questions.

Ward 2 –

Lisa Vezeau-Allen – No Response Submitted

Luke Dufour – No Response Submitted

Ward 3 –

Luis Moreno –

I love Sault Ste. Marie and I'm proud to call it my home. This election is about making our City better. We can change City Council by embracing creativity, fresh leadership, and forward-thinking, and that is why I hope to earn your support.

There's a lot of work that goes into making a City, like the Sault, a liveable and affordable place. The challenges we face today have been growing for many years, but too little has been done to address them. Young people can't start a career, our roads are not drivable, and our streets feel less and less safe with no plan to address the root causes. Let's fix it.

My vision for Sault Ste. Marie is about looking into the future. I believe City Council must plant partnerships with community leaders, local organizations, small businesses, education institutions, as well as the Provincial and Federal governments, to understand the challenges we face in our City. We can move Forward Together to discover solutions that could move our City back into the right direction.

In the coming weeks, I will be going door-to-door to hear your concerns, and I hope to earn your vote by listening, learning, and developing long-lasting connections with you and your family, so that together, we can move Forward as a Ward, and as a City!

Kurtis McDermid –

As a councillor my job, as I will treat it, will be to represent the people of ward 3 and not simply the geographical boundaries of ward 3. The needs of residents in Sault Ste. Marie are not tethered to the geographical ward they live in.

In a city the size of Sault Ste. Marie our council always performs at its best when our councillors act as city councillors without tethering themselves strictly to a single ward's boundaries. Some of the best actions and resolutions in our city have been put forward by councilors from outside their geographical ward.

With that said, I have some overarching goals for the next four years that pertain to Ward 3, Ward 3 residents, and our city as a whole.

1. Increase our population and our tax base.

Our budget is not sufficient for our needs as a city. We've seen council try to make it work every year and the decisions they have made have helped propel our city forward but have had some damaging consequences. Our crumbling infrastructure has been one of the victims of this. As a business owner I understand this more than most. When you set a business up in a way to grow and develop you need the budget to support it. The options are either, ask more from your existing customers or increase the number of customers. Our city needs to do the same, we currently have a population of ~70 000 trying to support a city that can fit upwards of 100 000. We are essentially a single income family of 3 trying to maintain a 6 bedroom 3 bath house on an acre of land. We cannot adequately tackle the problems and crises that we face with infrastructure, the opioid crisis, housing and labour without increasing our tax base and that begins with building a city with amenities, features, global image, and events that bring people to our city.

2. See some good old fashioned manpower and boots on the ground dedicated to improving our city. We need to start mitigating the damaging effects and consequences of the multiple crises we face as a city while we are working on larger overarching solutions.

This starts with boots on the ground and immediately. Graffiti control, litter cleanup, garden/park/playground maintenance, needle and paraphernalia disposal and clean-up, property standards enforcement specifically on absentee landlords, and vandalism repair are all attainable with manpower.

3. To see the completion of ongoing and forgotten projects to their fullest vision.

Our city has had a bad habit of bringing projects forth and then watering them down, neglecting them, shrinking them or forgetting them all together in the name of short term budget decisions. These decisions have hurt far more than the money saved has helped us. Memorial Gardens is significantly smaller than originally intended and because of that there are many events, festivals and performers that we simply do not qualify to host. We replaced an entire sports arena only to be stuck with the same limitations of the previous one. Another example is that John Rhodes pool is just shy of Olympic length disqualifying it to attract any competitions, training camps etc. I have spoken with city staff current and past in tourism and sports and the amount of RFPs that our city passes by simply because our amenities do not qualify is upsetting. Furthermore we have many projects currently on the go or stalled out that we need to see completed and completed to their fullest potential.

Here are just three examples.

1. The Hub Trail was built well over a decade ago and its further development has ground to a snail's pace. We are still without connecting links to the entire west end, to the Hiawatha mountain bike system, to the far east end, to major amenities and more. We have a "hub" with no "spokes."
 2. Jamestown sits with a half finished park which does not live up to the renderings.
 3. The downtown revitalization plan is under constant attack and is under threat of becoming a watered down and useless development if that happens. This will be a waste of our tax dollars if the watered down version some are pushing for can't service the intentions of the project. Already the renderings of Bay St. do not match the finished product.
 4. Bellevue Park and other parks have out of order signs on some structures that are older than my children and tennis and basketball courts that have asphalt almost as bad as our roads in many parks.
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4. Create a lively, accessible and present city hall, city council and city amenities.
As long as I can remember city hall has looked like a ghost town when passing by and aside from election cycles the social media and overall media presence of city staff and council is inadequate. City hall and council need to be a buzzing hub of activity and media presence. The social media channels of councilors should not go silent after an election as they do. Our city amenities should never be vacant on a weekend, especially in the summer. Bellevue Park band-shell, The Pavilion and all our sports amenities need to be filled and open for business.
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5. Adequately staff city hall and municipal departments with quality talent, quality staff and the resources they need. When speaking with one city staff member I was told their department was "understaffed, not poorly staffed" and I have witnessed this time and time again. We have a handful of amazing staffers that do not have the assistance, resources or amenities they need to reach their fullest potential. Their talents are being wasted. Our public works/parks department is also short over a dozen student labourers this season.

While there is a lot I want to see accomplished and a lot I have spoken to in these articles, I will consider my time a success over the next four years if we; increase our tax base and set the city up for a healthier budget, utilize more good old fashioned manpower to relieve our city from the damage being done, complete some of the ongoing projects without watering them down or stopping just short of the finish line, create a buzzing presence around city hall and council that extends beyond election cycles, and have our team of city staff adequately supported and reaching their potential. This is the bare minimum I want to see accomplished over the next four years and will set us up with a strong foundation moving beyond this coming term.

Angela Caputo – No response submitted

Ward 4 –

Merek McLeod –

The Sault is so much more than just a city, it's a home. It's been my home my entire life, and has so much to offer, but we need to make that known to folks across Canada and to those looking for a close-knit, affordable, and open community to settle down in.

Labour experts warn that within the next decade 15% of our labour force will retire, we need to recruit a wave of new people to fill this growing gap in the labour market. I want to see Sault Ste Marie as the home of the next generation of young people, newcomers, and the trained and educated professionals of tomorrow who will fill these jobs.

To achieve this we need to work on expanding what works for us:

- Affordable Housing; in detached and rental properties for workers and seniors
- Strong Environment; which improves quality of life and the tourism industry
- Good Neighbourhoods; who make you feel at home and make you want to stay

A better Sault Ste Marie is possible, and I know this vision of a larger and stronger Sault is more than just a dream, it's an achievable goal that I hope we can get it done together.

If you agree, then join me, and vote for new leadership on October 24th. I'm Marek McLeod, your candidate for Ward 4 City Councillor.

Marchy Bruni – No response submitted.

Ward 5 –

Corey Gardi –

Moving forward I hope Sault Ste. Marie continues to prove to be an excellent place to live and raise a family. Efforts that continue to improve this will go a long way to attracting and retaining families, businesses and talent. This effort needs to be multi-faceted and involve strong working relationships with community partners in education, business, healthcare etc. The City of Sault Ste. Marie needs to continue to work with our post secondary institutions to ensure they are offering programming that assists with developing our labour force, to address the needs of agencies and businesses in our community. These schools should also be encouraged to continue to develop programming that capitalizes on our unique location. I would argue, our post secondary institutions should develop respective focuses on freshwater science. We live in the midst of the greatest freshwater bodies in the world; we need to be a leader in the protection of the great lakes ecosystem, while

balancing the tremendous economic opportunities that comes with being a part of the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence System.

I initiated the process for Sault Ste. Marie to be home of the soon to be established Canada Water Agency, as way to put Sault Ste. Marie on the map both nationally and internationally, as leader in freshwater science, management and governance. In addition, to bring well paying, knowledge based to jobs to our community, in the hopes of even more to come with spin offs created from an opportunity such as this provides.

City Council should be working with City Staff and other partners to further develop our downtown, to revitalize it as a place that residents can enjoy and help establish a critical mass of customers for our downtown businesses to capitalize on. We also need to ensure that we have the necessary infrastructure and engagement opportunities for those who travel to or through our community, so they want to want to extend their stay, or decide to return for a subsequent visit. This includes those arriving from the south, northwest or east, along with those that visit us via the water, whether they be from the ever-increasing cruise ship visits or via personal vessels.

We cannot lose sight of Sault Ste. Marie being a safe community. This means that we need to encourage the Province and the Federal Government to work with us to address the ever-continuing opioid epidemic and the serious challenges related to it. We have to advocate for supports to our local/regional healthcare system so it is best able to meet the demands it faces.

For Ward 5, and the West End of the community, which I hope to represent again, we need to continue to build on the work that has been done over these past 3.5 years. I would argue, that this council has been the most supportive of initiatives for the West End of SS Marie. We have seen the building of the new Twin Pad Arena/Sports Complex on Goulais Avenue, which will house an indoor walking track, along with community spaces. We are building a second splash pad in Sault Ste. Marie, which I brought forward for the West End; it will be built adjacent to the Manzo Pool. We are in the process of establishing more and more active transportation infrastructure in Ward 5, and I will be working hard to bring spokes of the Hub Trail to the western part of Sault Ste. Marie.

There are areas in the most westerly sections of Ward 5 that still require modern technological services i.e. internet service and cell coverage and there are areas along the water whose residents deserve an upgrade(s) to some of the physical infrastructure in their immediate vicinity. Ward 5 also represents some opportunities for further residential development, and I am hopeful this trend continues as it can lead to increased tax revenue and help build our overall tax base.

I have been proud to advocate for improvements to some of the main arteries in the West End including Allens Side Road, completed during my first year in office, and for the improvements that will begin soon for Second Line West and Wallace Terrace. I continue to keep efforts to reduce speeding in and around Ward 5 and City an issue; I receive many calls about the speed of personal and commercial traffic. Moreover, I have been happy to

work with City Staff to address improvements in snow removal, ditching and culverts around the West End, there is undoubtedly more work to do. I have worked to be a strong voice for the West End, and have benefitted from the strong working relationships that I have developed with fellow City Councillors and City Staff, which in turn benefits the residents of Ward 5.

Matt Scott-

To start, as a lifelong resident of ward 5 my vision for our ward is and always has been to have as much going on in our end of town as the rest of the city. It's no secret that I put the needs and concerns of ward 5 first and foremost. Having lived my entire life in this end of town, I've seen things slowly chipped away (rinks, library, neighbourhood identity) and have made it my goal to stop that. I voted against removing the library from our end of town and I attempted to bring an outdoor rink to ward 5 as our entire ward has no public rinks within the boundary, indoor or outdoor.

As for city wide, I would like to serve another four years on council to continue pushing our city into a more open and transparent municipal government. I want us to focus on our current infrastructure before undertaking major projects, specifically those that are replications of our existing amenities.

I've spoken with a lot of business owners who have given me their opinions on how to improve the city's relationship with small businesses. In my time on council I've supported nearly every small business request that has come before us as one of my campaign promises was supporting local and doing what I can to increase jobs.

Martin Poirier –

Our population is shrinking. According to Statistic Canada, we lost 1.8% of our population from 2016 to 2021; that's 1 317 souls. Our median age is 47.2, compared to 41 for the whole province.

In other words, we are less people than we were to support the tax levies. And our people are older, so the prospects of the city growing is that much further.

Furthermore, in BMA Management Consulting Inc.'s last Annual Studies, our average household income is ranked as low, but we fall in the "mid" ranking in net municipal levy per capita. So in pro rata of our average household income, we pay more municipal taxes than the average Ontarian.

It is thus not reasonable to spend on big new projects given our demography and current spending pattern. I'm not saying there aren't any low hanging fruits left (why there is no beach on the river near the University is puzzling me), but big new projects could put an undue burden on our community.

That is one of the things I would like to have realized in 4 years if I am elected: lower the annual city budget by around 1.5% in real terms to reflect our shrinking population. It should be done gradually, at the margin. There is no magic bullet here.

The only magic bullet I can think of comes from the example of small municipalities that have started cutting the grass twice a year only on most road sides, making significant savings in labour and energy, as well as lowering their carbon footprint. But the road there was bumpy: grass needs to be mowed instead of cut to prevent clogging of drains (that means new machinery), complaints of citizens on aesthetics, allergies, etc.

We can try new ways of doing things, but there is no magic bullet.

If I had one place to cut, it would be in economic development. I am not against helping businesses with tax money. But I do not think property taxes is the good tool to do so; it is too blunt. Unlike income taxes, property taxes ignore the fiscal capacity of those it levies money from. With an aging population, we will have more and more people on retirement, with some counting only on fixed revenues. When using property taxes to support economic development, there is a chance of putting people in more poverty and, ultimately, out of their houses to give to others. I never will be comfortable with that idea. We need staff in economic development. Cities compete to attract businesses and we need people to broker deals to attract them. But funding of risky initiatives should come from the provincial and federal governments through sharper tools of taxation.

Some other things I would like to put forward/support/do:

- Support densification in all zones (I support Luke Dufour's resolution on housing supply). We should also explore removing most limits on building heights, and limits on secondary unit sizes.
- Review the by-laws and modernize them; for example:
 - Hub trail: remove the 20km/h limit on most of the hub trail. Very few people ride their bicycle at or under 20 km/h! Permit e-bikes: we have an aging population, why should we bar e-bikes from the Hub trail?
 - Yard maintenance: relax the requirement to permit gardens and to allow people to mow less often.
 - Zoning:
 - Add a requirement for bicycle parking for medium and large sized businesses.
- Moratorium on subdivision of land in rural areas: we cannot protect our agricultural land and at the same time approve a new official plan that facilitates the creation of new small lots out of big rural lots. It's like cognitive dissonance, but in a moral entity.
- Propose a referendum to be held at the same time as the next municipal election to go back to the name Bawating for the City. Mayor Provenzano has been using that name since Chief Sayers raised the issue with him, but it is a process that needs to be done collectively. If we are to reconcile with our first nations, we must walk the talk. If only the mayor uses the name, it will be interpreted as paying lip service to the idea; a good intention turned away. Out of respect for both our first nations and our citizens, we should have the discussion and put it to a vote.

- Increase user satisfaction of City services. There is little the Council can do on this, but we can require city departments to produce statistics on user's experience satisfaction and bring them back before Council yearly. As an example of how this could work out: for building department, every permit holder would receive a survey by email once to permit is closed to assess his/her appreciation and gather comments. It is not to Council to dictate how this would work out, but we cannot assess something we do not measure.
- Ferrochrome plant: no compromise on health. Experimental technology for limiting pollution just doesn't cut it. We need robust and proven processes to protect our health and environment.
- Specifically for ward 5: Pointes des Chênes park should be open longer in the season. It is disheartening to see so many cars parked outside closed gates in September/October when people want to go swim or simply walk the beach. The park used to close just after the waters reached their annual maximum, let's enjoy it for longer in the year. I'll be listening to what people bring forward.

Dave Mornix – No response submitted.

The Bi-Weekly scorecard which would normally tally the ongoing responses received and would typically appear in this section has been discontinued. However, an overall score will be added to a summary write-up our team will do on each candidate based on responses received near the end of the Q&A sessions in late September.

Do you have a question you would like to be 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.

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.

