

Week 17 – Candidates on Attracting Veterinarians and other Professionals

By **Content Team** - August 1, 2022 @ 10:26 am



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!

This is week 17 of our question-and-answer feature in which SaultOnline poses a question from the constituents to those running for community leadership on council.

Our team garners questions from the community, at times from specific members, 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.

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

As always the question is put forward early in the week and an assigned deadline of Saturday at 5pm is given for responses to be submitted.

This week's question comes from social media and comments on a recent article that was published to our site:

1/ There is a significant vet shortage in Sault Ste. Marie. What would you do as a councillor or Mayor to help make the city more attractive to professionals including Veterinarians etc.

2/ How do you plan to make this city a city they want to come to, considering the high demand for their profession?

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

Mayoral Candidates –

Matthew Shoemaker-

1/ While the specific veterinary issue is one that is outside council's scope, I think the issue of the Sault being an attractive place to live and work is one we can help with. First, that means having the right opportunities to either find traditional on-site employment in the Sault or the opportunity to remote work for partners/spouses of professionals who want to move here. Second, having quality of life. We do have a lot of outdoor activities in the Sault for every season, but having a more vibrant downtown, with more people living in the area of downtown will create a better night life and opportunity for entertainment in the area. Finally, having a safe city where people won't get harassed or feel uneasy being out and about is key to making the Sault an attractive, vibrant community.

www.MatthewShoemaker.ca.

Tobin Kern-

Attracting needed professionals to Sault Ste. Marie has been an issue for a long time, but there are certainly things that can be done to entice more people to make Sault Ste. Marie their home. The Sault already has a lot of things going for it, from natural beauty and proximity to natural wonders, to relative affordability, little traffic, air connections to Toronto, not to mention the great people and amenities. On top of that, city staff and private enterprise make great efforts to attract the professionals we need.

Certainly, there are things we could do better. Professionals, especially those whose primary focus is to serve people, naturally care about the welfare of people—A lot! Some of the professionals I have spoken with have specifically mentioned that they want the city to take much greater steps to address climate change and the environment, to provide better public services, and see a need for more progressive approaches in Sault Ste. Marie. Professionals who focus on making other peoples' lives better want to see visible efforts by their city to pursue, and advocate fiercely for changes that will improve the lives of all citizens. Let's not forget that professionals who serve people see the poor health, the

financial duress, and depths of inequality faced by the city's most vulnerable people. Naturally, they are more apt to want to live in a city that shares their values, and makes its primary focus improving the vitality of their community, and the lives of all residents, rather than maintaining the status quo.

When you look at cities with a high concentration of educated professionals in Canada and the US, both large and small, the cities' cultures and politics are almost always inclusive and progressive in areas of environmental protection, health promotion, and improving equity in the community. These are the types of communities that help everyone thrive, and I think Sault Ste. Marie needs to do more in advocacy and action to reflect these values, if we are to attract more professionals.

Beyond celebrating the virtues that come with living in Sault Ste. Marie, we have to show prospective Saultites that we also embody virtue, by collectively building a city that is doing more to protect the environment for future generations, and doing more, and advocating more fiercely for the needs of our most vulnerable. This is what my vision for Sault Ste. Marie would be as mayor, and I think if we build a better and more ethical city together, more people will choose to call it their home, professionals included.

Ozzie Grandinetti

1/ Attracting top talent in a small city can be difficult, we have labour shortages in all areas, doctors, nurses, construction industry etc. To make the city more attractive to professionals and businesses, we need to promote and market SSM as a great place to live, and show them all the benefits they'll get from coming to SSM. We need to keep taxes low and create activities (festivals, events etc) that people look for when determining where to live. Professionals look for safe communities with low crime rates, environmentally friendly cities with low pollution good education systems and private clubs. I have ideas on how to incorporate all of these key components into SSM in my platform which can be found on my webpage at ozzie4mayor.com.

Donna Hilsinger – No Response Submitted

Ward 1 –

William McPhee – No response submitted

Sandra Hollingsworth – No Response Submitted

Brent Derochie –

1/ Veterinarians are a critical part of our society. Whether Sault Ste. Marie is looking to attract and retain veterinarians or other professionals, we need to be a city of choice. Providing tax breaks on property, offering start-up supports or engaging with the target audience to provide learning and development opportunities, we can make Sault Ste. Marie a city of choice.

When people select a city to live in, they consider factors like a mix of cultures, access to amenities, environment quality, safety and security, cost of housing, improved public transportation and opportunities for advancement and growth in their field. Deterrents include racism, distance from family and friends and cost of living to name a few. Sault Ste. Marie can capitalize on these factors. We can market to attract professionals and retain them by implementing strategies to

2) Sault Ste. Marie needs to be experienced as a city of choice to live in, raise families in and have quality of life as we age. We market our natural resources and outside activities well. We need to continue to market our fun experiences of skiing, boating, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting to name a few. But we can do more.

We need to address those reasons why people move to a community, what keeps them there and what pushes them away. Ideas to attract new talent could include tax breaks, rental breaks on setting up offices and services in unused buildings owned by the city, and other financial incentives to show prospective professionals that their business can be lucrative in the Sault. We also need to retain our current complement of professionals that practice here. Professionals need opportunities for continuous learning and development.

The City could support existing networks of care to identify learning opportunities. Could we facilitate conferences that would provide opportunities to showcase our community at the same time as providing our current professionals with learning and networking opportunities? A strategy around learning conferences brings business to the community and could be capitalized on it to market our city for future prospects.

Our city has made some great progress to work closely with our indigenous community. We need to do more with this focus, and that includes building strategies to attract indigenous professionals to our community. That starts with engagement. We need to engage with those professionals to identify factors that would attract them in particular to set up practice, live and stay long term in the Sault.

Finally, I want to speak to multiculturalism. Our nation and individuals are becoming more multicultural, in turn making our communities grow and becoming more diverse. Sault Ste. Marie has done some work on developing this and I would like to continue to expand our opportunities for diversity. Strategies to combat racism is critical. The Rural Northern Immigration Project is a great resource for bringing in newcomers and other people up to the North to work. Celebrating new cultures, inviting immigrants and showcasing our welcoming community will be critical to attract professionals and need to be considered in all efforts to bring in new professionals.

Ward 2 –

Lisa Vezeau-Allen – No Response Submitted

Luke Dufour – No Response Submitted

Ward 3 –

Luis Moreno – No Response Submitted

Kurtis McDermid – No response submitted

Angela Caputo – No response submitted

Ward 4 –

David Celetti –

1/ How about we start with the Doctor shortage, Healthcare, Longterm Care, Nurses Etc. There may be a shortage of Vets here in the Sault however that that would be the vets choice if he or she choses to locate here. The City should stick to city business and making life better for its citizens. I could only HOPE that these Vets chose to come here and make the Sault their home. And that they live well and prosper here. The Sault is always welcoming every one who wishes to settle here and open up business here we welcome them with OPEN ARMS.

Stephan Kinach-

1/ In Ontario, there is only one veterinary school – the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) at the University of Guelph. The OVC has 105 spots total for Ontario residents. Indigenous applicants are also considered without provincial residency requirements and 15 more are international students.

I personally know two people who studied at the OVC in Guelph, and one who studied in Australia. All three are currently working in Ontario. One vet was a friend from my undergraduate program at Laurentian University who is currently working in Mississauga. The other was my roommate's sister from my undergraduate program; she was from North Bay. The third vet that I know was my roommate at Laurentian University who studied in Australia. He now works in Owen Sound.

A quick, short-term solution to our veterinary shortage is introducing a Tele-Health Service. I spoke with my veterinarian friend in Owen Sound who has participated in this service. He told me that this service significantly reduced the strain on clinics in his city, while reducing costs to pet owners because you only visited the clinic if you needed to see the veterinarian things like prescriptions can be done through the teleconference eliminating the physical visit.

A long-term solution would involve cities calling on the provincial and federal governments to increase the number of spots in the OVC to reflect the increase of our growing population.

2/ The main concern of my friends was their student debts. This is a main issue because graduates will have roughly \$300,000 of debt after a 4 year bachelor degree (\$18,000/year tuition and living) and a 4-year veterinarian college program (\$53,616.88/year tuition and living expenses or \$70,000/year for international students) but new graduates' salaries start at \$80,000-\$90,000/year. Then to open their own practice, they would be on the hook for expensive equipment, leases/rent/mortgage, plus staff and taxes which would likely double their debt. Add home ownership in the city they settle in, which can bring their total debt to around \$900,000+. This reality makes it more likely for new graduates to join a corporate clinic instead of opening their own business, also a huge problem. This reduces the free market and clinic choices available, leading to skyrocketing prices at corporate vet clinics (the corporate my friend works at already raised prices 3 times this year).

So what can we do when this is a private sector service? Our city could invest in future vets with interest-free or low-interest loans for students (prioritizing citizens of the Sault) attending a veterinary college with contracts to restrict their practice to Sault Ste Marie after graduation until their loan is paid off.

The same strategy could be applied to medical doctors as well. A program like this would actually help us to address the dire shortage of medical professionals in our city and have our young medical graduates return to our community. Realistically, it would cost \$2 million up front for about 5 students to be in this type of program. That is a large figure for a small city to absorb, but I believe it is essential to have medical professionals in our city to treat our families and friends.

If you like my perspective, please share my ideas with your family, friends and colleagues. Please consider voting for Stephan Kinach Ward 4. If you would like to reach out to me personally my email is kinachward4@gmail.com.

Merek McLeod – No response submitted

Marchy Bruni – No response submitted.

Ward 5 –

Corey Gardi –

1/ There is a shortage of veterinarians across the province, as there is of other professionals such as doctors and others. In order to attract talent we need to be sure that we continue to do our best to market our city as an attractive place to live and raise a family. City staff has done a lot of good work in this regard, they need to continue to do more.

Sault Ste. Marie needs to further develop engagement opportunities for individuals and families. In order to do that we must continue to work with community groups exploring diverse recreational opportunities, build upon efforts like the West End splash pad, and support our merchants and business people downtown. Obviously, we live in a place

surrounded by beaches, great hiking, skiing, fishing, hunting and biking. All of these are great calling cards we have promoted and will continue to.

Specific to veterinarians, I'm not sure what specifically we could do other than reaching out to the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and the Ontario College of Veterinarians to let their members know of the opportunity, along with all of what our community and surrounding area has to offer. We could also do our best to develop relationships with Veterinary programs at schools like the University of Guelph, University of Saskatchewan, University of Calgary and UPEI with the hopes of recruiting some of their graduates to Sault Ste. Marie.

Matt Scott – No response submitted

Martin Poirier

1/ People tend to establish themselves close to where they have roots. Most find it hard to live far from their families and friends.

Professionals grown up here are much more likely to realize their professional lives here than newcomers. The problem though is that our population is older than the average Ontario town (median age in the City is 47 years, compared to 41 in Ontario), so we will likely rely more and more on newcomers.

I am not well informed for veterinarians in particular, but we do have a physician recruitment and retention program supported by the City. I would certainly advocate we continue supporting the staff of that program, it helps a lot for our City to be "discoverable". I doubt a financial incentive is what will change a physician's mind when it comes to moving, but having someone to promote our community, answer their questions and guide them through has a proven track record.

We should continue to put our lifestyle in full display; practically no traffic, fast commute, close to nature, comprehensive amenities. And that is no small advantage. In my MBA, one of the meta-analysis that fascinated me most looked into what makes people like their job. It turns out that it is not the salary, the working environment, what people do, or even the boss that people cherish most, but the commute time. We are lucky that our City is configured in such a way that commute is easy and fast.

To retain professionals in my experience, a good working environment is necessary. If we attract them with promises, we need to follow through.

Although a long shot for professionals, promoting immigration is certainly an avenue worth putting efforts into.

In sum, the City should continue doing what it is doing in its recruitment efforts, including through immigration.

For doctors, we should encourage the hospital and its board to continue supporting recruitment efforts, and stimulate them in putting sustained efforts behind attracting as many residents as possible. Future doctors are more likely to come practice here if they have worked here as residents.

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.

Content Team

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