



<b>2010 St. Albert Municipal Election Candidate Survey</b>
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September, 2010

## **Introduction**

The St. Albert Taxpayers Association (SATA) would like to invite you to take part in its 2010, St. Albert Municipal Election Candidate Survey. The Association has prepared a series of questions dealing with issues facing St. Albert, as well as questions dealing with matters of interest to voters who will be casting their ballots on October 18<sup>th</sup>.

Although initially the Association set out to prepare two sets of questions consisting of written answer and Yes/No questions, we soon realized that it was not fair to simply pose Yes/No types of questions to what in some cases may be complex issues. For this reason, and to be fair, we have confined the questionnaire to a series of written answer questions. We hope you will take the time to study each of the questions, and for each provide a written answer. Wherever possible we would like you to limit your answers to 100 words or less.

Please answer in the spaces provided. The spaces will expand to accommodate your replies.

The replies from all candidates will be posted on SATA's website at [www.stalberttaxpayers.org](http://www.stalberttaxpayers.org).

## **Questions**

- 1 a) Do you believe that growth is essential to the long term sustainability of St. Albert? If so, what should be done to promote growth? **What types of development will you support, and where?**

Answer: Growth for growth's sake is not sustainable. Growth that broadens the tax base and economically utilizes infrastructure should be promoted. We should focus on attracting retail and industrial development rather than increased residential development.

- b) **What is your view on the "infill" of current St. Albert green spaces with mid to high density developments, e.g. Akinsdale, Grandin Pond, etc? Would you do anything differently?**

Answer: The majority of homeowners in St. Albert purchased their homes based on land zones for single family dwellings. If this is to change the average homeowner must be compensated for any resulting loss in property value coming from infill developments by the developer. I have proposed a neighbourhood rights bylaw to provide homeowners with adequate protection from loss, the ability for reasonable input and a transparent process for developers. This is comprised of resurrecting the municipal planning commission, creating areas structure plans for established neighbourhoods and providing the right to compensation for a loss in property value upon redevelopment.

- c) What is your position on the redevelopment of St. Albert's downtown as proposed by DARP? What do you support or not support, and why?

Answer: I feel that all major decisions should be made directly by those who are most affected. In the case of DARP this group would be any resident of St. Albert, affected landowners and business owners. The current DARP proposal is too ambitious and needs to be scaled back to more accurately reflect the cultural, social and economic fabric of St. Albert.

- 2 a) What is your view of the increasing burden on St. Albert's taxpayers, and how do you propose dealing with this problem?

Answer: In order to resolve St. Albert's ever growing tax burden, we need to spend our money wisely, attract business development and make better use of current infrastructure and government services. Zero-based budgeting and creating efficiencies within government and annual 360 degree performance reviews will serve to spend our money wisely. Reducing red tape, adequately zoning land for business and more actively pursuing retail and industrial development will spread the burden of taxation. Less focus on big, new ideas, and more focus on incremental improvement will provide us time to pay down debt and more sustainably grow our community.

- b) Other than cutting programs and services, what specific ideas do you have to use tax dollars more wisely, so the same amount of money can go further? What ideas do you have to control spending?

Answer: We should spend less money on consultants. More time should be spent by politicians researching ideas on their own and consulting with the public informally. This would permit us to reduce dollars spent on consultant's fees and provide the opportunity for politicians to do their job. Zero-based budgeting, 360 annual reviews, and defining the appropriate scope for municipal services, will lead to efficiencies and wise expenditures of public tax dollars.

- c) Would you support limiting annual total tax increases (including property tax, utility fees and user fees), in the next three years to:

- The regional inflation rate as measured by Statistics Canada?
- To 1.5% per year until St. Albert Taxes are in line with other mid-size cities in Alberta?
- Other?

Why or why not?

Answer: I support the 1.5% per year because a 1.5% cap on property tax increases will allow St. Albertan's wages to catch up with past large property tax increases. This will also serve to improve St. Albert's competitive advantage with the Edmonton region. The user/utility fees in St. Albert should be controlled such that large increases do not occur. I would prefer that franchise fees and other hidden taxes that municipalities charge within utilities be eliminated to provide more transparency in taxation.

- d) **Would you support a City Hall hiring freeze over the next 3 years? Why or why not?**

Answer: I support a hiring freeze for all incumbent city councillors for the next three years.

- 3 a) How will you respond to special interest groups and City Administration that want their

projects built?

Answer: We have to always be cognizant that whenever someone comes to City Hall asking for money, there is someone working to earn this money that is too busy to show up at City Hall. A prime responsibility for any city councillor is to adequately reflect and represent the wishes of the silent majority whose sole interest is good, honest government.

- b) What will you do to ensure Administration provides enough of the right information for decision making, including at budget time? How will you respond if you think your questions are not being answered?

Answer: I support more community involvement and analysis from groups like SATA, CFIB, and any other local group with a particular interest in any public policy matter to supplement the inherent bias that comes from City Council's leadership team. I will perform my own research and analysis, as well as challenge the information provided. The bulk of my information will be derived from the constituents that I represent. If City Council is to adequately represent the individual residents, answers from administration must be forthcoming, otherwise democracy is not served and government is not being run for the people by the people. It is the responsibility of City Council to always hold employees responsible for the duties and obligations inherent to their positions.

- 4 a) Do you believe that the current budget process, where departments only describe what they will do with the extra money being asked for in the new year budget, gives Council enough information for decision making? **Why?**

Answer: No. I favour a zero based budgeting process whereby new annual increases are not the sole focus of the budgeting process, but rather where service delivery or rather the cost versus the service provided is the focus of budget negotiations. I feel this will provide the average resident with better value for their tax dollars.

- b) Would you support use of a zero-base budgeting process? **Why or why not?**

Answer: Yes. Zero based budgeting will improve the allocation of funds and find efficiencies within government departments.

- c) How would you approach future planning and implementation of St. Albert's capital spending program, and how would you evaluate the relative merits of competing spending proposals?

Answer: Everything City Hall does must be for the benefit of the average St. Albert resident. On a case-by-case basis a determination will have to be made as to whether/whether or not a capital project provides good value for the money. We must also recognize that as some point the average resident is best served by having more of their dollars in their own pockets than in the city's.

- 5 a) What steps will you take to promote engagement and consultation with residents on issues that affect St. Albert residents?

Answer: All large scale projects that exceed the scope and term of City Council should (when possible) be made by the stakeholders affected whether this be by plebiscite, public consultation or by an individual councillor performing his/her due diligence by meeting with

people directly.

- b) Do you support holding plebiscites on major capital projects, and if so, under what conditions would you consider them appropriate?

Answer: Major capital projects that have not been the subject of an election campaign that represent a dramatic departure from day to day management of government affairs should be determined by a plebiscite.

- 6 a) What will you do to hold Administration accountable when project costs exceed cost estimates and budgets?

Answer: Administration is not ultimately responsible for cost overruns, city council is. Estimates are never 100% accurate and it is incumbent upon council to recognize this and to choose the scope of projects wisely. Council must also be cognisant that estimates will invariably always be low as to get council's "feet in the glue" and committed to a project with a small initial investment. If employees of the city are not performing their duties to the satisfaction of council or the public they must be held to account.

- b) How will you respond to pressure by other members of Council or Administration to "be part of the team" instead of acting in accordance with what you think is in the best interests of St. Albert?

Answer: A city councillor is elected to represent their constituents, rather than to be part of a team. One must always recognize this as pressure will invariably be exerted and represent the interests of constituents first and foremost.

- c) Under what circumstances and for what issues will you support in-camera meetings?

Answer: In camera meetings are only acceptable to protect personal or proprietary information and land acquisitions. To ensure a fair, open and transparent process, all of the business City Council conducts must be freely available to the public.

- 7 Please indicate whether you support the projects listed below, and indicate what priority level you assign to the completion of each project. Please indicate priority level from 1 – 5 with 1 being very low priority, to 5 being very high priority:

Project	Support Yes or No	Priority 1 to 5
Ray Gibbon Drive:		
Without the provincial funding in place	No	
With the total provincial funding for all 3 phases paid	Yes	4
Regardless of payment of the provincial funding	No	
New Civic Administration Building	No	
New Library	Yes	3
Expansion of Profiles Gallery as proposed by AH&F	No	
Farmers' Market Building	No	

Seniors and/or Community Center	Yes	3
Servus Place expansion	No	
Riel Park Phase 3 & 4	Yes	1
Grain Elevator Heritage Park	No	