



2010 St. Albert Municipal Election Candidate Survey
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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 18th.

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.

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: Yes, growth is essential for community sustainability. Growth can be achieved through business growth and economic development. Types of development would include downtown revitalization, river clean up and light industrial in the northwest lands.

- 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 city needs to establish infill guidelines and this would include addressing higher density developments which will be in greater demand as the population ages. Higher density developments will be cost effective and therefore increase affordability. These developments must include public consultation and blend in with established areas and the environment.

- 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 support downtown redevelopment as citizens have expressed a need for a vibrant, active and attractive gathering place for entertainment, recreation and speciality shopping.

DARP has provided a visionary concept that will attract residential, social and economic development to the city core which is recognized by communities as essential for a city to be progressive and sustainable. It must be recognized that DARP is a visionary document and the Plan is only conceptual subject to approvals that are cost effective. Stabilization and development of the river area should be an area of focus as it can become a year around attraction.

- 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: Residential taxpayers cannot continue to absorb the increasing tax burden if St. Albert is to be a sustainable community. This problem can be addressed by balancing residential, commercial, industrial and institutional development as well as practicing fiscal restraint.

- 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: If the assumption is for taxes to not increase then the city has to closely review the costs for the programs and services and the city will have to "live within its means". The analogy being the household budget – a family cannot spend more than its income otherwise they go into debt which is unsustainable.

To control spending, the city needs a change in mind set so fiscal restraint becomes the norm. Zero based budgeting and careful scrutiny of expense lines should be considered. Solid business cases need to be presented to justify the expenditure.

Council needs to give clear direction to Administration to present affordable budgets.

- 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: An option would be to consider some of the ideas outlined in 2b which could result in providing a realistic budget that reflects justified expenses and revenues resulting in no increases in the short term. Tying increases to inflation or a fixed % ignores the opportunity to challenge the process currently in place.

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

Answer: Hiring new employees would be dependent on the programs identified and approved in the business plan. If the business case supports hiring because the benefits outweigh the expenditure ie. A profitable return to the city then it should be considered.

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

Answer: Projects must present a solid business case to justify the expenditure and funding is available that will not negatively impact our tax situation. There should be equitable sharing.

- 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: Council needs to provide clear guidelines and expectations to Administration as to the budget to be presented. If the right information is not presented, administration will be requested to provide specific information prior to a decision.

If questions are not being answered, Council will need to meet with Administration to understand the reasons.

- 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: Council needs to understand the department requests for their complete budget not only the extra money. This is necessary to ensure funds are justified and fiscally responsible so good decisions are made.

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

Answer: Zero base budgeting should be considered to avoid automatically taking previous year's actual costs and revenues then adding a % to present a current year's budget.

- 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: Capital projects need to be identified and supported on the basis of what the community has asked for, then prioritized based on need, ROI, affordability and the city's vision / objectives outlined in the strategic business plan.

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

Answer: Collaborative approach working together with advisory committees, citizens, developers, entrepreneurs and volunteers. Council needs to listen to the community voice through open dialogue, forums, informal meetings, and effective communications.

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

Answer: Plebiscites would be the exception rather than the rule as Council has been elected to govern. If a request for a plebiscite was made it would have to meet the MGA regulations and have a justified business case before proceeding.

Major capital projects should be managed as outlined in 4c.

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

Answer: Performance measures would be in place and administration's performance would be evaluated based on performance.

- 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 member of Council can still be "part of the team" and act in the best interests of St. Albert if they disagree with the majority. This is democracy. It would be incumbent of other members of Council to justify their position and if they cannot then my position would be to vote according to my common sense and logic.

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

Answer: Land use, legal matters and personnel situations.

- 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		
With the total provincial funding for all 3 phases paid	yes	4
Regardless of payment of the provincial funding		
New Civic Administration Building	no	1
New Library	no	3
Expansion of Profiles Gallery as proposed by AH&F	no	3
Farmers' Market Building	n/a	n/a
Seniors and/or Community Center	yes	4
Servus Place expansion	no	1

Riel Park Phase 3 & 4	yes	3
Grain Elevator Heritage Park	done	n/a