



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: Intelligent growth is the key to any community, and St. Albert is no different. What is paramount though is that intelligent growth relies on creative thinking and comprehensive public consultation. Never losing sight of the fact that plans to meet current needs must not compromise the opportunity for future generations to meet their's.

- 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: This is in fact several issues, each of which I will address.

Changes to zoning within our community follows a regulatory process set out by law, and part of this process may require community input. I am in support of this process.

To accommodate the desire of our residents to remain able to live in our community we must have innovative land use plans that allow for mixed use zoning as well as medium and high density housing, including the provision of reasonably sized homes. This will allow our newly independent young adults as well those on fixed or limited income such as our seniors to move into affordable accommodations and remain in our community.

- 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 am in support of the DARP plan in so much as it provides an inspirational vision for the future of St. Albert. As with all visions, it is neither all encompassing nor complete but it creates an “end in mind” that allows for focused planning and decision making.

Some elements of the plan, such as the maximum heights of some buildings, do not resonate with me. Others, however, such as the orientation of the downtown to the river, the civic plaza and Millennium Park provide options for great community activities be they warm or cold weather related.

- 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: As I have walked the neighbourhoods of St. Albert and spoken directly with the tax payers of St. Albert my view has been confirmed, specifically that municipalities need to be effective, efficient and always innovative to ensure every tax dollar collected is spent wisely. Provincial and Federal Governments must commit to provide sustainable funding to reduce dependence on residential property and business tax payers.

- 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: With over 32 years experience in municipal service provision there are many alternatives to cutting programs and services, and all of them focus on the efficient and innovative provision of those programs and services in coordination with all the other activities of the municipality all based on an established and clearly communicated vision and set of objectives.

- 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: Setting limits presupposes a set of circumstances and handcuffs the ability of council to address unseen or unanticipated needs of the community. Disconnecting municipal taxation rates, the determination of priorities and the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision is a retrograde strategy with no hope of addressing concerns in any of these areas. However, using the regional inflation rate as a measuring tool to determine the appropriateness of budget requests from administration is prudent. Councillors should view the inflation rate as the upper limit for tax levy requests, not the base from which to start the budgeting process.

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

Answer: Similar to the previous question, an approach such as a hiring freeze disconnects the definition and provision of the city’s needs from the efficient and effective allocation of resources (including staffing). In the end, the necessity of a hiring freeze simply indicates poor and inefficient planning and provision of services.

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

Answer: Politics is always beset by special interest groups. Any time a number of concerned citizens gather with a common purpose towards a specific cause it can be labelled as a special interest group. To that end, a councillor must be prepared to weigh the interest, the party and the greater needs of the community to provide for the largest benefit within the means available. As such, all special interests promote their view and wish success in their specific area of interest.

- 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 feel it is my responsibility to be appropriately prepared on any and all issues that would come before council, and in turn the administration will provide all information available and required to make informed decisions in the best interest of our community. As issues are brought forward I will prepare as best I can and be proactive in engaging the administration with any and all inquiries that might arise. I would not accept insufficiency in this area.

- 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: Within any budget are costs associated with the provision of services as is the norm. The cost of provision is by default explained but should further information be required then administration would address any and all inquiries. As with the previous question, before an issue can be addressed all relevant information must be provided and I will expect nothing less within the budget process.

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

Answer: "Zero base" budgeting, a budgeting process developed during the 1970's, is very common within the business and municipal environment. An updated version of this process is used currently by St. Albert although some municipalities are considering more modern approaches. I am not averse to using this style of budgeting.

If this question is intended to imply a zero tax levy increase premise for the annual budgeting program, please see question 2 (c) for my response.

- 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: The first step in any capital spending program is the definition of a Vision from which decision making can be referenced for alignment and suitability. Competing spending proposals will be evaluated as to their fit, timing and cost.

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

Answer: Public consultation is an integral part of governing and I remain firmly in support of regular consultation with the electorate, as and when appropriate. What needs to be developed, in consultation with the community is a defined public consultation process. This then needs to be clearly communicated to the residents of St. Albert so that they are aware of the process and can judge clearly whether Council has met their consultation commitments.

- b) Do you support holding plebiscites on major capital projects, and if so, under what conditions

would you consider them appropriate?

Answer: The use of plebiscites must be weighed against their cost, both in terms of costs and the time and resources required to execute. Therefore, a blanket statement in support of their use does not address the means test which ought to be applied against the general view of the electorate. In short plebiscites have their place in our political process and will be considered on a case by case basis.

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

Answer: The administration is accountable for any and all activities for which they are entrusted. Capital projects are no different.

- 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: It is always a councillor’s responsibility to act in accordance with the best interests of St. Albert.

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

Answer: The governance of council meetings is defined in the Municipal Government Act (sections 192 – 199). Section 197 (1) reads: Council and council committees must conduct their meetings in public unless subsection (2) or (2.1) applies. Therefore “in-camera” meetings or portions of meetings are only appropriate when allowed by statute.

- 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:	Yes	5
Without the provincial funding in place		
With the total provincial funding for all 3 phases paid	Yes	
Regardless of payment of the provincial funding		
New Civic Administration Building	Yes	3
New Library	Yes	3
Expansion of Profiles Gallery as proposed by AH&F	Yes	2
Farmers’ Market Building	Yes	3
Seniors and/or Community Center	Yes	4
Servus Place expansion	No	1
Riel Park Phase 3 & 4	No	1
Grain Elevator Heritage Park	Yes	1