

## Questions for Norfolk Mayor Candidates

**Please feel free to type your answers below the questions!**

- What, in your view, are the major issues affecting the community?
- What are the key economic, social, environmental concerns, in the municipality?

1 & 2)

The major issues facing Norfolk today are complex and whether urban or rural, primarily are economic in nature. The viability of farming enterprises are threatened of the collapse of the tobacco industry, the potential threats to other marketing board commodities and of commodity prices below the cost of production in other farm sectors.

Add to this, ever advancing input price increases, including municipal taxation, in the face of low and falling commodity returns and it is clear that the farming community has problems. For urban dwellers, Norfolk's shrinking industrial base has led to a huge loss of employment opportunities. This affects both older workers with the loss of pensions or at least reduced pensions for their retirement and for younger folks entering the work force, the lack of good jobs with which to make a living. For younger people, weather urban or rural, both face out migration from Norfolk as they seek employment elsewhere. That is our future fleeing Norfolk.

Urban and rural folks also share economic woes as reduced farm income really impacts the urban centers which have relied heavy on farm economy spending in their small business and commercial centers.

We are all in this together. These economic problems, for the most part require legislative support, action and financing that is clearly beyond the scope of the municipality. Only the federal and provincial governments have the constitutional authority and financial means to significantly impact on there problems.

However, there is still a very real role for the municipality to play. The municipality can not solve these problems but it can assist and help in working through solutions.

First the municipality should be organized and operated in a fashion that reflects the true nature Norfolk society. We are a collection of large rural areas, populated with family farming operations, we have people living at crossroads, in hamlets and small villages, we have a few small towns and one larger town. Yet the present Norfolk's bureaucracy has been centralized and operates, its services and programming as if Norfolk was a contiguous urban center. I believe that the cost of the present Norfolks County operation in out of sink with the present demographic distribution and the present economic realities of the county. This is reflected in high and ever high taxes, just at a time when the

farming community and many small businesses are under financial strain. High taxes are job killers. We must restrain and end the present upward spiral in the cost of municipal government. Finally a very pressing urban issue deals with infrastructure, particularly water and sewer services. We neglect these at our peril and at a cost of badly needed jobs if infrastructure is not properly maintained.

Recent “surprises” which I prefer to call a lack of due diligence, poor planning and poor performance by some, has exacerbated the financial pressures that are facing taxpayers. When you add to this the requirement to maintain good quality roads, both rural and urban it is so clear that Norfolk must operate more effectively and more efficiently than it has to date. If the next Mayor and Council can not do this, the future will be even higher taxes while physical infrastructure declines. This is a recipe for driving away, not attracting new economic endeavors.

Finally, with the limited funds available to the municipal coffers, we must do a better job; get more value and better results from the expenditure of tax dollars. The present spending and taxing levels by Norfolk County are not sustainable.

I believe Norfolk County administration is administratively top heavy in both personnel and salary costs. This must be addressed. I will address it. I will bring proposals to council to rationalize the bureaucracy, reduce costs and maintain service levels appropriately.

With respect to the environment, I am of the opinion that these are areas where the federal and provincial jurisdictions are responsible for the legislation and enforcement of same. While environmental issues are important and often characterized as “motherhood and apple pie” issues, I believe Norfolk municipal government has more than enough to keep it busy, without self downloading of issues which are properly the scope of more senior levels of government.

Having said this, Norfolk County in its operations and by-laws must always strive to lead by example and to be responsible environmentalists.

- Where will you look for advice on agricultural issues or any issue that could affect agriculture?

3)

First of all, as Mayor, my door will always be open, both literally and figuratively. In matters affecting agriculture, I would have the OFA and any other farm groups or producer voices, collectively or singly would provide input and education on concerns. I would also seek advice from OMAF and appropriate provincial ministries that might have jurisdictional responsibilities.

Finally, as Mayor I propose having regularly scheduled “come talk to the Mayor” sessions throughout Norfolk’s many communities. Throughout the year citizens, farmers or otherwise, would have the opportunity to inform or to complain, propose or condemn or whatever.

- What plans do you have for building the local farm and business base?

4)

With respect to building the local farm and business base, I will be setting forth a major new policy initiative for council's approval.

As stated earlier, Norfolk County has neither jurisdictional powers nor the financial wherewithal to solve the present economic dilemmas facing us. However Norfolk can and must help and assist in working toward solutions. Notwithstanding the recent TOYATSU announcement, the Economic Development Department both presently in Norfolk and previously in the former municipal arrangement, has little to show for having consumed a great many millions of tax dollars.

I do not believe that Economic Development is a department of the municipal government. Rather, economic development is an attitude. As a full time Mayor, I will personally be involved at an appropriate level in the economic development of Norfolk County. I would hope that all members of council would share this attitude with respect to their function. I would also ensure that every single employee of the County viewed economic development as a concern of their jobs. To this end, I believe that Economic Development is what happens when a municipality gets all of the rest of the job done right.

Therefore I will be proposing for Council's approval, the elimination of the Economic Development Department as a separate entity. I propose eliminating all jobs associated within the department. Please note, dismantling the department does not mean an end to economic development. Indeed, my proposal will enhance and invigorate economic development in Norfolk's many communities. We will get much more bang for our bucks!

I then propose taking every penny previously consumed by the eliminated department and making it available to economic revitalization committees from within Norfolk's various communities. These committees will be composed of citizen volunteers, local community groups and business associations, BIA's, Chambers of Commerce and/or Board of Trade, agricultural spokes persons and so on. They will develop their own local plans and initiatives to turn their local situation around. Who better knows the problems facing their individual communities? Who better to develop and implement the solutions required? Change succeeds when it is from the ground up.

It would be the municipality's role to spend its economic development funds in aid of these local initiatives. For this we do not need an Economic Development Department! Finally it would be the County's role to approach both the federal and provincial governments for a fair share of federal and provincial funding in these areas, particularly with respect to infrastructure funding.

I would stress, these community groups would not be restricted to urban area concerns. They would be required to represent and have representation from their rural neighbors that constitute an important part of the community.

- What are the implications of non-farm rural development in productive agricultural areas?

5)

This question means different thing to different people; and different things to the same people at different times. The same farmer who might oppose the expansion of a hamlet or a new subdivision when his farming endeavor is prosperous and thriving, might well be upset if he or she could not sell off farm land, or a portion of it, if they were of retirement age or facing catastrophic economic disaster from a failing agricultural economy.

Just as there was a need for “right to farm” legislation to deal with the incursion of residential homes into rural areas, surely there is also a reasonable right for a property owner, farmer or otherwise, to dispose (sell)their land without undue restrictions.

On the issue of the loss of productive farm land, the cost of fair and reasonable treatment for the property owner can only be dealt with at the provincial level. Any equitable solution to this matter would require provincial funding.

- How would you propose to consult with the farm community in the development or review of the Official Plan or zoning by-laws?

6)

Please see above (question #3 response)

- Do you recognize that a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) or Nutrient Management Strategy (NMS) necessary for a Building Permit application refers to an NMP and NMS as defined by the NMA Regulations, not the municipality?

7)

I recognize the law as it is written and as adjudicated by the courts. I would be so guided. Norfolk has enough to do without spending precious dollars fighting court decisions in areas of provincial jurisdiction. If citizens of Norfolk feel aggrieved with respect to what is or is not contained in provincial legislation and regulations, these citizens should address their concerns with their provincial MPP and the Ontario Government. If the Norfolk Council felt change was required, Council likewise should lobby the MPP and the Ontario Government.

- What role do you think a municipality should play within the current regulatory regime on pesticide safety?

8)

Much like Question #7 above, municipalities have more than enough to do without wading into areas where the federal and provincial authorities have adequate jurisdiction. I would refer to # 7 above for those who don't like existing legislation and regulations.

- Are you willing to support a by-law to provide a reduction or refund of taxes that are unduly burdensome to a taxpayer?

9)

NO! This is a slippery slope. What one taxpayer avoids, the rest have to make up. Who decides who gets help and who does not? When they get help and when they do not?

Better that we work smarter, more effectively and efficiently and thereby keep municipal taxes affordable for all tax payers, not just a select few.

- How would you ensure inclusion of value-added farm enterprises in their economic development plan?

10)

My comprehensive answer above regarding Economic Development issues addresses this.

- Do you know if development charges apply to agricultural structures in this municipality? If development charges do apply, describe how you would support standardizing the application of development charges to prevent inequitable treatment.

11)

It is my understanding from the Norfolk Planning Department that farm related agricultural building's are exempt from development charges in Norfolk.

- What priority do you assign water resource protection for the municipality?

12)

Water resource protection has a high priority for me. This is not an issue that I have arrived at just recently. As early as 1972, as part of the requirements for my M.A. Degree I produced a dissertation entitled, "The Federal Government and the Issue of Inland Fresh Water Pollution" The issue was extremely important to me then, as it is now.

- What level of financial support should be available to farmers who are required through a Risk Management Plan to incur capital costs, and/or management costs, and/or ongoing maintenance costs to protect a municipal drinking water supply?

13)

It should be clear that a municipality does not have the economic resources to support such a program. Again this is an issue for the farm community to settle with the province, given it is provincial regulations that mandate and drive these issues.

- How will you site future municipal water supplies? The future level of protection may make it undesirable to offer land to sell for this purpose, how will this be overcome?

14)

Since your questions revolves around the word “may” I prefer not to go off tilting at potential windmills.

- How would you allocate water at times of shortages? What priority will farm practices such as watering livestock and irrigating crops be given in the allocation of water, at times of shortages?

15)

Again the question contemplates a situation that is hardly the case in Norfolk. Notwithstanding the latest absurd findings regarding Norfolk water usage, it is my understanding that the study results were misleading and that in fact, Norfolk has sufficient water for foreseeable usage into the future.

However it is also clear that ongoing farm operations must receive sufficient water allocation to care for livestock and to irrigate crops. Having said that, it is clear that should water security become an issue in Norfolk, new technologies do exist to meet agricultural needs more efficiently. I think of drip irrigation is one such technology for some crops.