



♀ ST. JOHN'S WOMEN'S CENTRE  
♀ MARGUERITE'S PLACE  
♀ SAFE HARBOUR OUTREACH PROJECT

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## CALLING ALL CANDIDATES

Feminist Q&A with municipal election candidates

- 1. Housing: The City's housing needs assessment identified 12,100 households living in unaffordable housing. What points from the City's 2018 affordable ten-year housing strategy, or other actions Council can take, do you see as most important to address our scarcity of affordable housing?**

MAYOR (acclaimed)

**Danny Breen** - No response.

DEPUTY MAYOR (acclaimed)

**Sheilagh O'Leary** - Our Affordable Housing Strategy is a 10-year roadmap to address affordable housing needs in St. John's. As the City lead for housing, this is my primary focus. We are administering quick builds through Rapid Housing Initiative funding and engaging the public regarding potential new housing projects on city owned land. Our Affordable Housing Working Group is a partnership between community non-profits such as End Homelessness SJ, and multi-levels of government who work collectively to realize this plan. Repairs/renovations to existing city units is also a necessity and I will continue to lobby for this in upcoming budget discussions.

AT LARGE

**Maggie Burton** - I have consistently advocated for housing affordability in the City of St. John's. In my view, the most important elements of the City's 2018 affordable housing strategy are: identifying vacant city-owned land and buildings (1.3); promoting a diverse and inclusive housing stock (4.1); supporting intensification and mixed-use development (4.2); and supporting community partners (5.5). In addition, I have had to defend the City's affordable housing programs, which are often attacked using the inaccurate euphemism "duplication of services". Affordable Housing Programs are essential programs and fall squarely within the City's mandate.

**Tom Davis** - Affordable housing is relative to one's income and standards. I believe that we need to embrace smaller and more efficient living. As a councillor I would advocate for zoning and building code changes that lead this initiative. The waste, consumerism and American dream pursuit needs to be changed to living in a space that is functional and affordable. Education and programs that provide guidance on physical, mental and financial health are crucial to help our residents, regardless of their socioeconomic situations, to navigate these difficult times.

**Ron Ellsworth** - The first step in addressing the scarcity of affordable housing is to ensure the supply that meets the needs of those who could avail of it. The city currently has 15% vacancy in its existing housing inventory. This is not due to a lack of demand, but because these units don't meet our community's needs (ex. too many four-bedroom units, units that are not accessible, etc.). Modifying our current units to maximize our existing resources can address some of the scarcity in the short term. All levels of Government need to work together to address the challenges of affordable housing.

**Debbie Hanlon** - Housing is a Right and a Municipal Responsibility (in partnership with other levels of government and community stakeholders). Our municipal approach aligns in many ways with both the federal government's National Housing Strategy and the provincial government's multilateral Housing Partnership Framework. Cultivating active and healthy relationships with other levels of government and community partners is critical. Of the six strategic components identified, the ones that resonate first with me are: Cultivating Partnerships and Unlocking Resources.

**Sandy Hickman** - I will be very brief in these answers as I fully trust our housing staff and colleagues with more direct contact in these issues. But I am very interested in and concerned about this. The most important issue is, of course, to continue to partner with like-minded organizations to provide affordable housing. They have the expertise, contacts, and are on top of the situation. In terms of our City stock, we know that we need to convert 3 bedroom to 1 and 2 bedroom units.

**Meghan Hollett** - Affordable housing that is not subject to market speculation is one of the most meaningful ways to meet the needs of economically, socially and politically marginalized groups including women, marginalized genders, refugee and immigrant communities, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and seniors. We can achieve these objectives by: cultivating partnerships with community organizations; investigating the implementation of rent control; leveraging the existing City-owned housing portfolio to increase the supply of accessible and affordable housing units; pursuing adaptive reuse of underused buildings; and by reviewing the intake process in non-profit housing that leaves affordable units unfilled.

**Mark House** - Housing is becoming less affordable and the stress this brings to the less fortunate increases exponentially. For single parents with dependents, this is even more dire. Affordable housing options for these as well as our aging population is imperative. We must commit to generating inclusive, affordable housing solutions that work for all.

Here are significant points I believe are of key importance: Unlocking resources to enable construction of affordable housing. Cultivating partnerships with businesses and service organizations to utilize these funds and construct these homes efficiently. Revitalizing current housing that needs reconstruction or refurbishment to provide a safe and secure environment. New homes need to be in compact, walkable neighbourhoods with accessible public transit.

**Anne Malone** - The strategy is vague, lacks specificity, and imagination. I would like to see options like housing cooperatives, co-housing collectives, and tiny home complexes. Location should be a prime consideration and affordable housing must be located in accessible neighbourhoods that are connected and adjacent to public transit, supermarkets, schools, green spaces, and other resources and amenities - all of which should be easily accessed on foot, year-round.

**Jess Puddister** - Housing affordability = housing diversity. Exclusionary zoning exacerbates poverty. If you don't make a living wage, it's very likely you don't have a car, making it difficult to get to work and meet needs. We've turned our backs on mixed-use development and have deserts of low-density, single-family detached dwellings (with basement apartments), far from places of work and shops. Increasing affordable housing stock has to be place-based (for easy access to jobs and amenities that improve quality of life), higher density, and integrated within existing neighbourhoods to address classism. I will advocate for these things and ending urban sprawl.

**Greg Smith** - I was raised on social assistance and in social housing. These issues are paramount and near and dear to my heart. Safe and universally designed housing is a human rights issue. We need housing to meet the needs of our community. Higher density single unit housing, for single people and single seniors and coop living spaces are also great options. I believe we need to combine neighbourhoods and have better housing options spread across our city. In addition to that, ending the urban sprawl needs to be taken into consideration as having people living closer to services will grow our economy, add to the dignity of life and mitigate climate change.

**Paul Combden** - No response.

**Steve Parsons** - No response.

**Raymond Petten** - No response.

## WARD 1

**Jill Bruce** - Lack of affordable housing is something that has been an important topic while I have been campaigning. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty. Having housing options that allow women the opportunity to access safe and reliable housing is a primary first step. The scale and availability of units needs to meet the needs not just from an economic lens but rather from a full needs assessment.

Cultivating partnerships, working with all levels of government, private and community partners to address housing issues and supporting partner efforts to create solutions is an important component in the Affordable Housing Strategy. Also, educating what the impact housing needs has on our community's health, sustainable growth and economic security.

**Mark Nichols** - Clearly, we need a significant increase in City-owned non-profit housing. At present, the City's Non-Profit Housing Division manages only 476 residential rental units. So, I'm glad to see *unlocking resources* and *building homes* are part of the City's 10-year Affordable Housing Strategy; I applaud the recent announcement of \$5 million for the construction of 14 new affordable housing units in St. John's, with 25 percent of that funding allocated to women-focused housing. Council must continue to seek funding to increase our number of residential rental units, in addition to revitalizing policy to address diverse housing needs more broadly.

**Jenn Deon** - No response.

## WARD 2

**Art Puddister** - The city needs to put more money into affordable housing at least one per cent of the city budget.

**Ophelia Ravencroft** - Three key ideas for me are building more non-profit social housing, moving forward with a "roommate" model at CSJ Housing, and using incentives to encourage private-sector construction of affordable units. However, Council also needs to ensure that we deliver services like public transit and infrastructure maintenance equitably so citizens can keep more money in their pockets. Our affordable housing crisis is both very real and very badly exacerbated by the high costs of living generated by Council's apathy on many issues. Addressing that crisis requires addressing the other contextual conditions that leave so many of our citizens struggling.

**Peter Whittle** - I think it's crucial to first find ways to unlock the City's resources and assets to create new living units. I then think we focus on partnerships with all levels of governments and nonprofits that know the problem and come up with real solutions. Another thing we have to do is stop grouping houses by socio-economic status and start creating homes for these persons throughout the whole community.

**Derek Winsor** - No response.

## WARD 3

**Walter Harding** - We have far too many affordable housing units that are in such bad shape that they are in need of major renovations/repairs and some that are not able to be lived in due to their condition. We as a city must ensure that all affordable housing

units are available to residents in a very clean and manageable condition and we must find suitable and sustainable solutions for the increasing need.

**Greg Noseworthy** - Diverse housing, as noted in the ten-year housing strategy, is one of the most important ways to address affordable housing. Marginalized persons have different needs and requirements, and a diverse and inclusive housing market will help to use under-utilized areas of St. John's. This can also help increase urban density which will help to maintain city infrastructure costs, in turn allowing for sustainability city taxes in the coming years for future homeowners.

**Jamie Korab** - No response.

WARD 4 (acclaimed)

**Ian Froude** - First of all, I believe housing is a right. We need to enable the building of diverse housing options that are on accessible and frequent public transit routes so that we are addressing both the need for housing and for affordable transportation. This can be done by increasing the number of the City's non-profit housing units, supporting community organizations in building/operating units, and making development choices that add diverse housing options. The Affordable Housing Strategy includes specific actions and I commit to collaborating with staff and community organizations to identify those that will make the most progress.

WARD 5

**Scott Fitzgerald** - There are many great points in the plan. Some that stood out to me include partnering with other levels of government as well as developers and landlords; supporting mixed use developments; lobbying the provincial government for the power to require affordable housing units in new developments. I'd also like to see the encouragement of creative approaches like tiny home developments.

**Carl Ridgeley** - The City's Affordable Housing Strategy (AHS) 2019-2028 is a comprehensive document. The two main points that underpin the strategy are, (i) "Everyone needs and deserves a safe, suitable home that is affordable to them." and (ii) "Affordable Housing represents a foundation for safe, prosperous and healthy communities." For this strategy to be successful, there must be continued collaboration with the partners referenced in the document, including the federal and provincial governments as well as other stakeholders. To facilitate this collaboration, council must support the work of the Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG) as they guide the implementation of the strategies

**Donnie Earle** - No response.

**Brenda Walsh** - No response.

**2. Accessibility: There are many significant barriers for people to move safely and freely in and around St. John's, infringing on resident's human rights. How will you prioritize increasing safe and accessible mobility in our city?**

MAYOR (acclaimed)

**Danny Breen** - No response.

DEPUTY MAYOR (acclaimed)

**Sheilagh O'Leary** - I have been proactive in lobbying for improved accessibility in the city and I will continue to listen and explore further ways to address. I support additional financial resources for sidewalk snow clearing to provide safer pedestrian passage and the push for automated pedestrian signals (beg buttons) in our winter city. I have and will continue to vote for increased resources in these areas. Again, with a 'nothing about us, without us' philosophy, it is important to continue expanding partnerships with seniors, and inclusion and accessibility advocates so lived experience can help guide policy.

AT LARGE

**Maggie Burton** - Every resident deserves to safely access sidewalks, trails, buses, and roads connecting them in and around the City. In my first term, I advocated for the City to ensure its own services are accessible, and discussions about accessibility must forefront the voices and perspectives of people with diverse abilities. Based on my conversations, priorities include equitable trail access, Metrobus stop announcements, improvements to the Pedestrian Mall, removing sidewalk obstructions, fixing curb cuts, extending the sidewalk network, and improved sidewalk snow clearing. That said, I will continue to take the lead from the community.

**Tom Davis** - 20% of our population lives with a disability. As our population continues to age this ratio will increase. It makes good business and legal sense to serve these residents and visitors. I also understand the struggles involved in older building renovations and a very hilly terrain. We must continue to push the envelope to increase accessibility for all our residents and I will be a strong advocate.

**Ron Ellsworth** - We need to continue to improve our public transit system (both Metrobus and Paratransit) to make it accessible, efficient, and reliable. Older sections of our City, and the infrastructure that supports it, did not include considerations for people with barriers to mobility when it was built. A "what's done is done" attitude isn't acceptable. We must maintain a systematic way to make St. John's a more accessible



City and work in lockstep with the disability community. This includes adjusting our trail system and improving sidewalk clearing in the winter. Furthermore, all City initiatives should require an accessibility assessment. Accessibility must be a part of our planning process.

**Debbie Hanlon** - Everything that the City explores now is examined closely through a lens of accessibility. Safety and accessibility is top priority. While we have to work with old and new infrastructure, we always have to do this with accessibility at the forefront. Current council have had a positive working relationship and strong awareness of the new Inclusiveness Committee in making decisions. It is critical that incoming council is made fully aware of this approach to everything that we do. I was part of the decision making process to develop and implement the Inclusiveness Committee and fully support the need to ensure that there is 100% accessibility.

**Sandy Hickman** - This is an ongoing issue and covers a broad range. Enhancing Metrobus through, continued accessible buses, GoBus etc. more covered shelters, Better sidewalk snow clearing at bus stops. Better lighting along trails and dark streets. Enhanced sidewalk snow clearing - this has improved over the past few years and there will be some small additions this winter but more is needed. Capital works such as better curb cuts at corners and crosswalks, the new call system at some crosswalks for visually impaired, the bump outs at crosswalks to shorten the crossing.

**Meghan Hollett** - Regardless of how we choose to move around St. John's, we should be able to do so safely and efficiently. When barriers to mobility are removed, the city stops being a collection of separate neighbourhoods and becomes a unified community. We can improve mobility by committing to a [Vision Zero](#) approach to traffic safety; improving public transit; increasing lighting in city parks and greenspaces; investing in expanded sidewalk snow clearing; more sidewalk curb cuts and ramps; and by adopting universality in design and service provision - ensuring accessibility requirements are built into all city contracts and training is provided for all city staff and contractors.

**Mark House** - All residents have the right to move freely within the city and we must bring a greater awareness of those with accessibility issues. We need to innovate in finding ways we can move on our streets and trails so residents feel safe and welcome to engage in their usage. We must develop a more complete sidewalk network. We should strive to widen sidewalks and place them on both sides of all streets where possible. The visibility of people, vehicles, and infrastructure under all conditions is a critical element of a safe and accessible mobility network. Increasing the quality of lighting on streets and paths will make them safer and more accessible to all residents.

**Anne Malone** - I am partially sighted and navigate with a guide dog. My entire platform is centred on disability rights - year-round accessible sidewalks, a Universal Design approach to all public spaces, accessibility audits and accessibility scores of all residential and commercial areas, a significant increase of audible pedestrian crossings, increased availability of affordable, accessible housing.

**Jess Puddister** - Nighttime bus routes, smaller buses, and more frequent service, to get people home safely from downtown, and from work. More road-side benches to provide rest stops for pedestrians. Action on a [comprehensive bicycling network](#) with physically separated lanes on the streets. Commit to improving sidewalk snow clearing in budget 2022. Reassess criteria for installing crosswalks to facilitate meeting pedestrian needs. Increase [audible pedestrian crossing signals](#) at all lit intersections as quickly as possible. Collaborate to reposition light poles out of the right-of-way of pedestrians. Ensure barrier-free gaps exist in vehicle barricades (at parks and pedestrian malls).

**Greg Smith** - Though I'm able bodied, I am a pedestrian and transit user in our city. We need clear sidewalks year round so people can safely navigate active transportation around our city. We need paving parts of wide trails for bike users and those with mobility issues. We need investments in transit with better bilateral and trilateral government agreements. We need visual and audible stops on Metrobus. More audible crosswalks and visibility lines on staircases. We need to make sure new developments are accessible and allows users to navigate comfortably. I believe accessibility ought to be at the forefront of our decision making.

**Paul Combden** - No response.

**Steve Parsons** - No response.

**Raymond Petten** - No response.

## WARD 1

**Jill Bruce** - Accessibility needs to be looked at from a fully inclusive lens thinking of universal design and full access. Thinking universal design and access will be inclusive of persons with disabilities, the elderly and parents with strollers accessing our city fully. Tangibly this can also include, lighting in and around city property, accessible public transit, and stops that are safe, providing not only online platforms for information but looking at our population as a whole. Partnership with community groups, education, working with and educating engineers, police and first responders to be inclusive in their approaches to design, development and working with and for our citizens is imperative.

**Mark Nichols** - Accessibility is integral to my central platform policy of mobility for all: the ability of all residents to safely move about the city, throughout the year, by the means they choose. The inaccessibility of sidewalks on main streets in winter is a leading barrier to mobility in this city and must be addressed alongside other transit needs. I view the ability of all people to move about St. John's safely and freely throughout the year as a core responsibility of the City, and I would treat it as a core priority in the budget process, as detailed in my platform.

**Jenn Deon** - No response.



## WARD 2

**Art Puddister** - Safe and accessible mobility around the city calls for more policing.

**Ophelia Ravencroft** - Mobility equity is central to my campaign; specifically, clearing all sidewalks in the winter is my #1 priority. As a pedestrian, I know how dangerous winter walking is here, and will work to correct that. I will also strengthen public transit, including paratransit, by expanding the area and frequency of service, and will ensure fixed routes are made accessible through things like audiovisual stop announcements. I will also implement yellow nosing on City stairways and audible crosswalk signals to address calls for basic accessibility that should have been answered a long time ago. No-one should struggle to move around our city.

**Peter Whittle** - We need immediate collaboration with all stakeholders ensuring an engagement strategy that leaves no one behind. This means bringing representatives from each stakeholder group to the table to come up with workable solutions for everyone. It may involve a conference or workshops to find the best possible solutions but there is no reason we can't do that.

**Derek Winsor** - No response.

## WARD 3

**Walter Harding** - We are all equal. No one person is better or worse than another person, no one person deserves more or less than another person. No one person should ever find themselves unable to travel around our beautiful city, into businesses or entertainment facilities or to any place/area of the city because of it being inaccessible. With everything we do, with everything we say it must be done in a way that includes EVERYONE regardless of limited physical abilities or other limitations. Accessibility for ALL residents and visitors is a must.

**Greg Noseworthy** - Accessibility is an issue that needs to be addressed at all levels. Whether in approving new developments, by-laws, or other areas of city dealings, this must be addressed to ensure that all residents are able to safely and freely move about St. John's. I will include this in all of my decision making processes to ensure that it is a priority and consideration so that residents can benefit from a livable city. This will also be included in my work practices as councillor, by providing safe spaces, alternative means to communicate, and any other necessary accommodations to support marginalized persons.

**Jamie Korab** - No response.

## WARD 4 (acclaimed)

**Ian Froude** - Everyone in this city should be able to move around the city freely, without barriers. Our efforts should be on creating a transportation system that doesn't require a

vehicle. People should be able to get around the city safely and efficiently in a way that doesn't have a high cost. We need to add frequency to our bus routes, improve and add routes to sidewalk snow clearing, remove accessibility barriers, add sidewalks, and add cycling infrastructure. I have prioritized this issue for four years and will continue to do so on every decision I make as a Councillor.

## WARD 5

**Scott Fitzgerald** - I agree that it is a human right to be able to freely and safely move about the city. I firmly believe we need to support and continually improve sidewalk snow clearing and public transit. I wrote a letter to the editor for The Telegram in November of 2020 advocating for a city project to make all the trails in St. John's accessible.

**Carl Ridgeley** - "Full participation" and "equality" are key goals of any accessibility strategy. Persons with disabilities have a significant positive impact on society and their contributions can be enhanced if barriers to participation are addressed. Universal design principles must be considered from the initial stages of planning and design for city facilities and services. Promoting accessibility as a collective good and a key component in urban policy development is critical. If elected, I will be a strong advocate for safe and accessible transportation and accessibility generally (e.g., transportation, facilities, parks). There are some quick wins (e.g., visual and acoustic information on buses); however, a long term plan/strategy is required.

**Donnie Earle** - No response.

**Brenda Walsh** - No response.