





Elect Your Future - Mayor Candidate Responses
November 5, 2011

Please note: 1) Incumbent candidates are shaded in gray
2) Responses received after the deadline are included for completeness but are indicated in green

Candidate's Name	Photo	Website	Q1: Please comment on the current relationship between Council and City Staff. Are there any changes you would work towards if elected.	Q2: Understanding that Council's time and resources are not infinite, please comment on strategies that you implement to ensure adequate energy is devoted to the issues most important to the continued growth and development of Nanaimo.	Q3: If elected as a member of Council, how would your personal strengths help shape a Council that has the ability to lead our community?	Q4: Please discuss how you would work to ensure Nanaimo is competitive in attracting employment opportunities with pay scales that are in line with our local cost of living.	Q5: What role do you see the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation playing in Nanaimo's future growth?	Q6: What industries do you feel offer the best opportunity for sustainable, well-paying employment in Nanaimo.	Q7: Please comment on the current community vision for Nanaimo. Are there any changes you would work towards if elected?	Q8: What do you see as Nanaimo's greatest strengths and toughest challenges?	Q9: Please discuss your thoughts on Council's responsibility to lead our community and how public opinion should be considered in this role.	Q10: The majority of city revenue is generated from property taxes. What is your opinion of the existing property tax structure? What, if any, changes would you make if elected?
Dan Didio			No response to questions received	No response to questions received	No response to questions received	No response to questions received	No response to questions received	No response to questions received	No response to questions received	No response to questions received	No response to questions received	No response to questions received
Roger McKinnon		www.mckinnonforanaimo.com	There needs to be a redefinition of the service roles for Council and Staff. Revamping the formal relationship, and the working rules, for executive management (staff) and legislative/leadership (Mayor & Council) is essential prior to building a new culture at city hall. This is an immediate priority.	Council spends too much time administering details and needs to focus on policy making and leadership roles. A redefinition will free Council up, there's no reason that Council needs to weigh 'variance' issues at each council meeting, for instance.	I have over 35 years of business success to show as an example of my ability to get things done in a team environment. Teamwork has been my strength for these past 3+ decades. We have many challenges that will take a team approach to resolve.	Creating a 'successful city' as the Chamber of Commerce describes it will attract the industry sectors and members we need to sustain gainful employment numbers. Target marketing ourselves to a demographic of younger, growing, acquisition-oriented members of society that provide productive resources for expanding businesses is a strategy that will serve our economic development needs	The city has a unique opportunity and responsibility to create a new culture of team building at city hall.	Industries that would employ the best of our grads, attract the top talent in the world, and provide jobs for as many in our community as possible. Anything that ties into our partnerships with VIU, VIHA, Port Authority, School District, would be target areas for business development.	The current 'vision' is but a few lines in the OCP highlighting a community vision effort from 20 years ago. We can redevelop that plan with a lot less expense, and a lot less time and bureaucracy if we let the community lead the way.	Our greatest strength? Our human resources and our geographic setting. Our challenges: Our location and our unwillingness to 'push the envelope' and think outside the box.	Public opinion should be canvassed regularly through social media and annual meetings. I'm also proposing a monthly 'Citizens Day' at city hall. I promise fewer in-camera meetings and more opportunities for public input.	I have set a goal of ZERO percent property tax increases within 3 years, AND we'll achieve it.
Jim Routledge		www.jimroutledge.com	I am not privy to the inside dealings between Mayor, Council and city staff. I can't comment on changes. However, I can say that I believe Mayor and Council should work in close partnership with the city manager and staff. These are professionals with years of experience and expertise – and often valuable advice. I plan to work with staff in an atmosphere of mutual respect and open communication.	First – Identify the issues that are most important. Currently, people in Nanaimo are telling us that jobs and economic development are paramount. Naturally that's where we need to focus energy. The new Economic Development Corporation is a terrific and powerful tool to help us focus on attracting new business and retaining the businesses we currently have. We also have to deal efficiently with some contentious issues such as Low Barrier Housing and Transparency. Effective and open communication is key. We must let people know what is going on at City Hall every step of the way. Modern technology gives us the tools to do just that.	I have lived in Nanaimo for 30 years and been involved in several city initiatives such as the transportation committee that recently recommended that Nanaimo provide charging stations for electric vehicles. I graduated from UBC with a degree in commerce and I know how business works. I am a successful businessman and developer who is working to make the word "developer" far more inclusive. I've come to realize that development includes not just bricks and mortar, market housing, commercial buildings and new subdivisions. It also includes the services that support that. It includes water, it includes schools, it includes hospitals – and it also includes social housing. We have to include them in our development plans. We have to allow for social housing both physically and in the way we think as a neighbourhood and as a community. I believe that the mayor has to step up from being one of nine votes to being the leader – the quarterback, if you will – and I'm ready to step up and do that.	This all starts with attracting people – and business – to Nanaimo. So we ask, why would people and businesses locate here? The clearest answer is lifestyle. Nanaimo is a highly desirable location. Certainly we are attracting more retirees and we can attract even more. Nanaimo is the perfect location to be a tourism hub but rather than build facilities for people once they get here (i.e. the Conference Centre) I think we have to enhance and publicize the attractions we have. Give people a reason to come here first – then build what we need to service and look after them. That's why I want to work with Chief Doug White and the Snuneymuw First Nations to build a pedestrian bridge to Newcastle Island. This is our biggest asset both for its serenity and its historical significance. We need to use it. A bridge will allow everyone to go, elders especially – our burgeoning demographic. A bridge will welcome everyone – including the disabled, the sweat seekers, the overloaded and the impatient. A bridge is functional and efficient. Newcastle Island is our "Stanley Park" – let's celebrate it. A bridge to Newcastle represents Nanaimo's future – functional, efficient and beautiful. And that's just one example of what can be done.	The Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation should take a lead role in attracting new business to Nanaimo and retaining the businesses we have. The EDC will also make the most of our tourism opportunities, working together and consulting with all the stakeholders in the community to make the most of all our economic opportunities. Vancouver Island University is one of those important stakeholders – the university's contribution to the community cannot be underestimated.	First, I'd like to say that Harmac serves as inspiration for what is possible in this city when a group of committed individuals get together and commit to making something work. Nanaimo still has untapped potential in tourism with Newcastle Island a prime example of that. Because we are the transportation center of the island with two ferry routes, as opposed to Victoria's one, plus an airport as well as float planes, Nanaimo occupies an enviable position for all transportation related industry. I also want to discuss with the EDC potential for manufacturing and technology – two sectors that generate skilled and high-paying jobs. The Pacific Biological Station is doing world class work with world class people – that can be celebrated too and helped to grow to new heights	Mike Harcourt said it well at the recent Envision Nanaimo workshop. Let's not be like NATO – No Action Talk Only. I like TW3 – Talk While We Work. We know that we have work to do. In the last three years I have witnessed a great deal of talk and instances of moving one step forward and one back – sometimes two back. Let's develop our attractions. Let's enhance what is unique about this city and then let's move forward boldly and sustainably. We have an opportunity with Newcastle Island and we have a grand opportunity to become known as a sustainable community. My vision for Nanaimo is epitomized by this image of the Lady Bridge in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It represents everything I want Nanaimo to be: Functional, Efficient & Beautiful	Our location on this beautiful island is a strength that no other community in BC can boast of. Where is there a prettier harbour? Our downtown core continues to be unique and to grow in potential. We also have a strong community spirit that is particularly evident during some of our vibrant festivals such as the Marine Festival and the Vanisle 360. At the same time, Nanaimo is sometimes split between north and south. I want to see Nanaimo unified. We're all in this together and a strong, growing Nanaimo that cares for everyone in the community benefits us all. As a community, we have often tended to say "no" to forward movement. Let's say "yes" to movement – and consequently they don't necessarily give back to the community. We need to find a way to engage them more and take advantage of the skills they might bring to the table. And we need to find a way to get all of our citizens to work together to build a strong city instead of working against one another to try to ensure that one community is not falling behind another. Nanaimo 2020 will take on this challenge.	Mayor and Council have to take a leadership role. They have to be transparent – that is, they must communicate, not only when decisions have been made, but during the decision making process. There should be no surprises. Mayor and Council also have an obligation to listen to people – people may have excellent and valuable ideas that deserve to be heard and considered. Council needs to trust the processes in place for decision making, play their role and move forward. People can live with good decisions, even bad decisions can be endured, it is the indecision that is paralyzing our community	This is a big (and contentious) issue that I have been delving into. I have been looking at how much in taxes homeowners pay as compared to business in other communities in the province. We not only should be in line with what other cities our size pay but also in line with what services are provided. Homeowners don't want to see their taxes go up every year – neither does business. If we are to attract new business, we have to provide a fair rate of taxes. What I want is to be fair and I have more investigation to do before I have a definitive answer on this. I do support a core review and zero based budgeting
John Ruttan		http://johnruttan.ca/	The relationship between Council and staff was tenuous when I first came into office three years ago. However, the current relationship continues to improve and trust has come a long way since 2008. I think we still need to do some work on both sides... some of the current Council are quite demanding of staff and make comments from time to time that are quite personal which I do not condone. And sometimes staff makes decisions or takes action without proper regard for the elected officials. These issues are mostly just judgment errors that we need to work on and I, personally, am committed to continue to do that work.	I will continue to seek out community members for opinions and guidance on the pressing issues coming before Council and I listen carefully to those citizens that choose to come before Council at our regular meetings. I also try to attend as many community functions as I can (and that I am invited to) so that I can further engage our community in discussions about the things that are important to them.	I believe that I learned a great deal in my first term as Mayor. Contrary to what many people believe, the Mayor only has one vote at the table, so I have to rely on my ability to state my views clearly and understandably, to help others on Council see issues that may not be apparent to them and to bring important views from the Council table into the Mayor's office when it is called for. As well, my proposal for Nanaimo 2020, a community engagement process that will help all of us define the best possible future for Nanaimo, will help our community to lead itself. Personal strengths that I draw on continually are my four decades as a successful business person and in community service to Nanaimo.	While I can't work alone and achieve significant success, I would ask Council and city staff to assist the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation in defining and going after those sectors that can provide sustainable, well-paying economic opportunities. I would also ask Vancouver Island University to be a part of the dialogue as that institution is creating the skilled workforce of the future. We just need to keep those who graduate in our community.	While I can't stress enough how important and significant we expect NEDC to be in regards to Nanaimo's economic future, I have to caution people a little that we can't expect too much too soon from this organization. While I want to see real, measurable progress in our objective of bringing new, sustainable businesses into our community, I realize that, especially for businesses that are going concerns, the decision to relocate to Nanaimo could take many months or even years. Moving a business is a costly undertaking, so don't expect too much right away. However, if NEDC focuses on the goals set for it, works with determination and does what it needs to do, we can expect excellent and ongoing results in the mid to long term.	Again, I don't want to second guess the NEDC, but just off the top of my head, I can see potential opportunities in aquaculture, value-added wood products, technology and tourism. And I am also on record as supporting programs aimed at bringing retired Canadians to reside permanently in Nanaimo.	One of the challenges we faced in my last term as Mayor was the lack of a clear and comprehensive community vision. When Council discussed this topic, it was clear that we had a variety of visions at the table which made it clear that even the Councilors didn't have a clear picture of what the community wanted. That's why I developed the Nanaimo 2020 visioning process. This community engagement exercise is designed to go beyond the planning issues of designing a city – to bring out the hopes and aspirations of all of our community's members, to paint a picture of a city with a personality, a heart and a soul. And in this campaign, I have pledged to bring this initiative before Council in the very near future.	One of our biggest apparent strengths is our location. Our city is the closest urban centre to the lower mainland on Vancouver Island. It is centrally located on the island and it is the hub of transportation, shipping, travel and tourism on the island. The most obvious challenge is the transition that Nanaimo is going through from a resource-based economy to something new. Apart from the obvious strengths and challenges, I would say that Nanaimo's greatest strength is its citizens. Apart from the people actively working to make Nanaimo a better place, we have some of Canada's greatest business people, artists, academics, social scientists and politicians living within and around our city. However, that is also one of our biggest challenges. Many of these people have come here to take life easy, to get out of the "rat race" and consequently they don't necessarily give back to the community. We need to find a way to engage them more and take advantage of the skills they might bring to the table. And we need to find a way to get all of our citizens to work together to build a strong city instead of working against one another to try to ensure that one community is not falling behind another. Nanaimo 2020 will take on this challenge.	I think we all agree that Council's primary responsibility is to manage the assets of the city in a sustainable, careful, conscientious and competent manner. However, I agree that we have another responsibility to be seen to be the leaders in our community. To be fair, we cannot lead by public opinion alone as our responsibility is to all citizens and not just the ones who care to share their views and opinions with us. For example, on the supportive housing issue, I think we all can agree that it would be nice to provide homes for homeless people. But, when we drill down to where those homes would be, or what parameters will be placed on the residents, we get a wide variety of "public opinion" in the answers to those questions. Sometimes, civic leaders must make the "right" decisions and not necessarily the ones demanded by public opinion. We have a moral obligation to be fair, just and compassionate to all of our citizens whether or not they can speak for themselves.	In my opinion, the current situation is quite fair. We continue to make progress on making the share of taxes paid by business and industry more equitable. Municipal governments in Canada don't have the freedom that provinces and the federal government do – we can't run deficits, even if it's only for temporary situations, we can't arbitrarily enact taxes on specific economic sectors and we can't generate financial debt instruments like urban centres in the United States. This leaves us in a position where, if the other levels of government download responsibilities, we must provide the services and face our taxpayers when it comes time to pay for them. On the matters of interest to some candidates, a core review and zero based budgeting, I have to set the record straight. Over the past three years, this Council has conducted reviews of several departments and the process is ongoing. At least one of the incumbent Councilors seems to have forgotten this fact. Zero-based budgeting has been tried in many municipal operations over the past twenty-five years and has largely proven ineffective at controlling local government growth over the longer term. Zero-based budgeting simply cuts jobs and services. City Hall provides services that Nanaimo's citizens want and need. We need to go to the community to determine what they would cut and what they would hold sacred – that's the only effective way to cut spending in local government. And I would say that Nanaimo 2020 is an ideal process to explore what our citizens want.