



KITCHENER WATERLOO
REAL ESTATE BOARD

Candidate Questionnaire:

While some questions may not pertain to all candidates equally– please feel free to jump in on any questions and make them relevant to your position.

REALTORS® of the Kitchener-Waterloo Real Estate Board have adopted formal “Quality of Life” principles. There are five of these principles in total:



Protecting Economic Vitality

A healthy economy sustains vibrant communities for living and working. Economic development promotes an improved Quality of Life by creating employment, expanding the tax base, and increasing the availability of goods and services.

Providing Housing Opportunities

We all want a safe, decent, and affordable range of housing near where we work, shop and play. We must grow the supply of housing, including choices about design, cost and location.”

Preserving our environment

Parks, open space, clean air and water are essential to our Quality of Life.

Protecting property owners

A strong economy depends on preserving the investment people have made in their homes by protecting the ability to freely own, use, buy and sell real property.

Building better communities

To promote livable communities governments should encourage policies that sufficiently fund infrastructure to improve Quality of Life.

Using these principles as a very general guideline, we would be interested in learning more about you.

1. How long have you lived in the community?

I have lived in Kitchener since 1977, when I was 11. My parents moved to Kitchener from Hamilton at the time because of the reputation Kitchener had for its' quality of life. Since being first elected, I have always had that in mind as we continue to make Kitchener one of the most livable communities in Canada.

2. Please list what you feel are your three most relevant past roles in elected office, committees, or charitable groups

- Councillor, City of Kitchener (1994 – present)

- Wilfrid Laurier University Board of Governors (1994-2000, 2001-2007, 2008-present)

- Board member, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (2000 – present)
 - current role, 1st Vice-President

3. What in your opinion are the three most important challenges facing the incoming council?

i/ Economic Development – continuing with the progress made in attracting some new economic sectors to the community through our EDIF investments including the health care sector and digital media while also addressing the decline in the manufacturing sector within our community so as to provide new, viable employment opportunities for those who were affected by that.

ii/ Sustainable Development – recognizing our role as a provincially designated area for growth while balancing that with the reality that we do not have an indefinite supply of land for development within the region. This means working to have development policies which maintain affordability while working with the private sector to develop a range of housing options from condo living to traditional single home development .

iii/ Fiscal Environment – local government continues to only receive approximately 8 cents of every tax dollar collected in the country yet is facing increasing challenges including a significant infrastructure deficit, both in our community and nationally. It will be necessary to continue to invest in infrastructure replacement and development while also working to ensure Kitchener maintains its excellent financial record.

4. What do you feel are the three most significant successes of the current council?

i/ Economic Development Investment Fund (EDIF) – by continuing our 10 year commitment to the EDIF, the City is beginning to see the benefits of its investments in Economic Development and in particular from the revitalization of the downtown. Investments in the WLU School of Social Work, the UW Health Sciences Campus, the digital media cluster, the expanded and revitalized central branch of the Kitchener Public Library and the revitalization of King Street infrastructure. These decisions are transforming the city's core and generating 100's of millions of dollars in other private and public sector investment seen through current and announced developments such as the Kaufman condos, The Tannery, the Arrow Lofts, City Centre development and the new provincial court house.

ii/ Continued investment in community facilities, parks and community development – Kitchener is well known for its high quality of life resulting from our investments in community and social infrastructure. This past term we invested in new facilities including the Activa Sportplex, the purchase of the existing Sportworld Twin Pads, the Kingsdale Community Centre, the Bridgeport Community Centre expansion, and McLennan Park amongst others. After a community dialogue, we decided not to sell various pieces of land but rather to keep them as greenspace. And we have dealt with a number of policy documents which will guide quality of life development in the future including the Cycling Master Plan and the Parks Master Plan.

iii/Responsible fiscal management – The city has continued to be one of the best managed cities in the province, maintaining our position as the 6th lowest municipality in terms of taxes when looking at the 28 largest Ontario municipalities. We have kept any increases to our core taxes in line with the inflationary pressures on municipalities (MPI) and even when the EDIF investment is taken into account, we still have stayed competitive both within the region and throughout the province as the above mentioned benchmarking shows.

5. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being greatest, how would you rate the performance of the current council in the last four years?

I would rate this Council by giving it a score of 8. While I do believe many things have gone well, I strongly believe there is always room for improvement in anything you do. Without a doubt, a new larger Council coupled with some retirements will breathe some new energy into the Kitchener Council. Significant progress has been made on a number of fronts, but in particular, the City must continue to focus on its customer service program, citizen engagement and ongoing financial management.

6. What specific ideas or new proposals do you have for your ward/constituency?

There are a number of new ideas I would pursue in relation to my ward specifically. These include:

i/ The creation of a Community Development Plan by bringing together all the various potential partners in the ward (schools, churches, businesses, neighbourhood associations and other agencies). This group would apply the city's strategic plan at the ward level and develop a specific set of goals for us to work towards in the coming years.

ii/Taking the recommendation for the development of Riverfront parks in the City from the new Parks Master Plan and look to see how a facility of this nature can be developed in the ward where the river forms a significant part of its boundary

iii/Additional development of parks and green spaces in the new developments within Grand River South while also working to revitalize the existing parks resources we currently have.

7. Property Standards is about more than absentee student landlords...licensing rentals is one solution currently being examined, what suggestions do you have to ensure property standards are maintained?

Dealing with issues like Property standards requires a balance between positive reinforcement and actual bylaw enforcement. Working with our community partners, we must look to see how we can take initiatives like Communities in Bloom and not only grow them, but also potentially expand them into a community pride program of some sort. Positive actions generally encourage positive actions and should be the primary focus. Where bylaw enforcement is necessary, look to other municipalities across North America for best practices in addressing these issues from an enforcement point of view.

8. Traffic is a recurring concern in the region...what recommendations do you have to manage/address this issue?

As a Councillor, traffic and speeding in residential areas are probably two of the issues I receive the most complaints about. We must continue to focus on neighbourhood walkability, investment in cycling infrastructure as proposed in the cycling master plan as well as other transportation demand management initiatives. New residential areas must be built to consider traffic issues from the beginning and we need to continue to address issues in existing neighbourhoods where they exist. Investment in public transit as the community grows will also become increasingly more important.

9. Rapid buses, LRT, GO train to Toronto...what do you envision for the region?

With the number of people travelling to Toronto for employment, and as a former commuter myself, the ongoing advocacy for implementation of GO service to this region is more than essential. To be most effective, this also needs to be linked with investment in public transit infrastructure, which as we know is a regional responsibility in partnership with the other orders of government. While the research I have done suggests that something like a LRT will obtain the greatest buy-in by the community in the long-run, and will best support intensification efforts as well, the region must demonstrate the affordability of such a solution in light of the fact that the combined dollars from the federal and provincial governments was less than expected. If this is not an affordable solution, then they may need to re-think some of their plans. The long and the short of it however, is that we must look to invest in a viable and affordable public transit system to assist with the anticipated growth in this region much like 40+ years ago the decision was made to invest in the expressway as a means of addressing the anticipated growth at that time.

➤ Bonus Questions

While this section is targeted for Kitchener and Waterloo candidates, we welcome feedback from all candidates:

10. In your opinion, should the government of Kitchener-Waterloo examine the pros/cons of amalgamation?

I believe you can never lose by talking, and so I will be voting in support of the current ballot question on the issue of dialoguing about municipal reform involving Kitchener and Waterloo.

I have always been of the view that at some point in the future, a provincial government would impose amalgamation on us as they did to Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa and Sudbury and almost did to us in 2000. As such, I am of the view that a home-grown solution is always better than an imposed one. If the ballot question is successful, then I think we need to have an open, honest and frank dialogue about municipal restructuring in this context.

11. What do you think are the greatest advantages of amalgamation (if any), and what do you feel are the greatest disadvantages (if any)?

The key things associated with examining any amalgamation include looking at its affordability, its effectiveness and its accessibility as a form of local government.

I do believe that an amalgamation of the two cities, or one which would move us to a single tier could be more effective if set-up properly. Today there is still confusion about who does what. I believe one of the greatest advantages of an amalgamation is that we could be much more effective as a government if the need to go to all these local agencies was removed, both for business and citizens, as a whole.

I also believe that if a local government restructuring was done properly, another advantage is it could be more accessible. While there will always be concerns about size taking away accessibility, by examining best practices, focusing on the interconnectivity of neighbourhoods and looking at things like community councils possibly, it could in fact lead to higher citizen accessibility and engagement.

Affordability of local government is probably the issue that would need to be looked at most carefully as it could become a disadvantage, if not managed properly based on some other experiences. This is the main reason why I believe a Made in Waterloo region solution is key so as to keep costs in check and provide for the greatest chance to save some dollars through this process. At the very least, done well, it should allow for future cost avoidance going forward.