



LEAP Thunder Bay Candidate Survey Stephen Margarit

1. What contribution to making Thunder Bay a better place to live are you most proud of?

As a dedicated and passionate community member, I am proud to have volunteered with many amazing organizations over the years. We live in a city with a big heart and I would do everything in my power to promote volunteerism in our community. Whether its my work with my Rotary Club helping to raise significant funds for local organizations or by volunteering at the RFDA or Shelter House, I feel like I have made a positive impact on my hometown.

2. What are three priorities that would guide your work on City Council?

1. Strengthening and growing our local economy. We must work with local businesses in a more collaborative approach. I also want to work to help bring in new business and look at attracting medium and large-scale industry. Our community has a lot to offer and we can work with the CEDC to help spur economic investment.
2. Building a 21st century city. I want to see a more livable, walkable and environmentally-friendly community. First, we need to work on closing the infrastructure gap that exists. We must also work on urban infill and building up as opposed to building out. People stay here, and we attract new residents because of our green-space and our proximity to nature and we need to preserve this.
3. Tackling crime and building safer neighbourhoods. Across our city, people are not feeling safe. We must work together to find solutions that work for our city and its unique needs. I will advocate to bring together local partners to work collaboratively to tackle aspects of crime. However, as many of the factors that lead to crime come from social issues like poverty, I will advocate higher levels of government to work to solve these issues.

3. What three community organizations in Thunder Bay are you most interested in supporting?

First and foremost, as a city councilor, I will work to support as many community organizations as I could. That being said, 3 organizations that are near and dear to my heart are; Roots to Harvest – and I would love to see a growing partnership with the city to increase urban agriculture. Our Kids Count does some great work in the McKellar and Westfort areas and has made a positive impact on our community. RFDA has been a great way of supporting the many

different food banks and shelters in our community and also providing fresh and local food products to economically disadvantaged populations.

4. How would you build relationships between the City of Thunder Bay, Indigenous residents and neighbours?

I believe the City could strengthen its relationship with Fort William First Nation and work together on economic opportunities. I also believe we must work with NAN and other First Nations organizations to make Thunder Bay a welcoming and better-connected city for everyone. As a child I attended St. Jude's a school with a large First Nations population, growing up together, playing together and making friends helps to break down racism. I believe City Council can help foster an environment where we learn and share of the culture and heritage of our Indigenous residents.

5. What should the City of Thunder Bay do to pursue reconciliation with Indigenous peoples?

The City must comply with the recommendations of both the Inquest and the TRC, but this should only be a start. We must look to bridge together our community and everyone who lives here. Incorporating Indigenous teachings and ideas into the way the city does business and provide services is a must.

6. The city of Victoria, BC recently removed a statue of Sir John A. MacDonald from in front of their City Hall due to his role in starting Indian Residential Schools. What is your opinion on this?

This decision was made for Victoria by it's council and residents. As a person with a history degree I know all too well that many historical figures who did some great, progressive things, would not meet current ethical standards. Going forward we must accept and teach both the good, the bad and the ugly. Sir John A. MacDonald is a great example, we can still respect the work he did to unite Canada through confederation, but we must also accept and teach the other side of history. For too long, his role in residential schools was brushed aside and we must now tell the story of so many whose voices were silenced.

7. Is the City of Thunder Bay doing enough to mitigate and adapt to climate change?

No. We need to improve our recycling capabilities in town, work to increase composting and reducing waste. While there is movement in the food service at banning plastic straws, we could also benefit from banning plastic bags. Having reusable or biodegradable options is a must. The municipal government needs to look at it's fleet of vehicles and see if we can replace old ones with hybrid or electric ones. I would also support looking at making city facilities more environmentally friendly and have less of a carbon footprint.

8. The City of Portland, Oregon voted to ban all new fossil fuel infrastructure. Would you vote to do the same in Thunder Bay?

While the City of Portland and Thunder Bay have their differences, I would support making our city the place for green investment instead of fossil fuel. Should a similar proposal come to council, I would review first but I would generally be supportive.

9. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization is currently looking at Ignace as a possible site to bury nuclear waste from southern Ontario. Would you vote to prevent the transportation of nuclear waste through our city?

I would support such a motion; public safety and the safety and preservation of our natural environment are priorities for me.

10. Would you be willing to get arrested at a protest to protect our natural environment?

This would totally depend on the situation. I believe in peaceful demonstration and the rights of individuals to stand up for what they believe in. While I would hope it would not come to this, preserving our environment is a priority and I would be willing to stand up for my beliefs even if that was the consequence.

11. Tell us one example of how you would reduce homelessness and increase housing in Thunder Bay.

We must work with our provincial and federal partners to combat poverty. One way would be re-instating the Basic Income Pilot. We must also work with local organizations to create a “made in Thunder Bay” plan that would work for our unique situation. Having a local strategy would be a great way to leverage provincial and federal funding. Having affordable housing has a significant impact on the economy and is one of the social determinants of health.

12. Would you appeal to the Province to re-instate the Ontario Basic Income Pilot? If so, how?

YES. First and foremost, as someone who worked as a Constituency Assistant to an MPP and former cabinet minister, I have experience with how government works. I would meet with the provincial ministers and urge them to reconsider. I would put forward a motion calling on the provincial government to re-instate the pilot. I would work with local MPPs and get a petition created and I would participate in a local rally to show support for the pilot program. I would also reach out to the federal government to lobby for a federal pilot.

13. Tell us one thing you would do to support local businesses.

City Council must install a better, more collaborative approach with the business community. Local businesses do not feel they are being heard and I would work for better more open communication with the business community.

14. Tell us one thing you would do to support local food production.

We need to promote local food production, not only is there an economic impact on our community, there is a social and health benefit as well. We see today more demand for buying local, as someone who has been going to the Country Market for many years, I have personally witnessed the growth of vendors and popularity. One area we would benefit from is working with the CEDC to secure funding for a production centre here in Thunder Bay. Many food producers could benefit from a place that provides storage space and processing abilities. While many producers do not have the funds to build such a place on their own, a local co-op idea would provide a sustainable business plan.

15. Tell you one thing you would do to improve the public transportation system.

Making public transportation a viable option for more people in Thunder Bay is a priority of mine. We need to look at revising the bus routes. Our city has changed over the years, we have new developments, yet our routes haven't kept up with all the changes. City Hall was supposed to be a temporary hub and the north core hub would have been gone with the development of the Event Centre. We need one, central station in our city that can have smaller hubs in different areas.

16. Do you support lowering bus fares?

Lowering bus fares would also help to make public transportation a more viable option. In Vienna, Austria a yearly ticket to use the public bus and tram system cost 1€ a day. I would support doing something similar in our city.

17. Would you work to have the Memorial Link, a proposed bike lane linking Port Arthur and Fort William, built within three years?

I will support to have Memorial Link added to the Master Plan and secure funding during my term on council. We have different styles of bike lanes in our city and some work and others do not. I have heard complaints from both drivers and cyclists and we need to have separated bike lanes in our city. As someone who has travelled around Europe, we are way behind, but we can look to other examples to see best practices for everyone's safety.

18. Tell us one thing you would do to help Thunder Bay neighbourhoods become safer and more vibrant.

We must tackle our safety challenges by working in a collaborative and multi-faceted approach. Enhancing our youth programs at our community centres is one way. We can also work with our provincial and federal partners to tackle social issues, like poverty, homelessness and substance abuse. We must also work to rebuild the image and trust of our police officers to marginalized populations. Having a collaborative community police program helps to build relationship in our neighbourhoods.

19. Tell us one thing you have done to support racialized people, to increase accessibility, or to support LGBTQ+ people in Thunder Bay.

As an ally of the LGBTQ+ community I proudly attend events like Thunder Pride. I believe by getting more people to attend LGBTQ+ and First Nations events, like a pow wow, we can bridge communities and help bring about better understanding. As a councillor, I would work with local partners for guidance in bringing our city together.

20. Tell us one thing you would do to support urban infill.

The population of our city has declined yet we continue to see new developments grow. We need to look at building up instead of building out to preserve our green space. I would work with administration to look at the zoning of our downtown cores to promote mixed-use development for business and residency. We can work to clean up and revitalize our urban areas, especially the downtown south core. We can be proud of the developments that have taken place in our downtown north core and we can work together to see revival of the south core.

21. How would you put pressure on the province to proceed with the planned safe injection centres in Thunder Bay?

Again, I believe we must first work with the government and lobby them for support for the safe injection centres. I would support a motion calling on the provincial government to proceed with the centres. I would also work with local MPPs to help get our message across to the government.

22. Is there anything else you would like us to know about the vision you have for Thunder Bay?

As someone born and raised in Thunder Bay, this is where I grew up and it is where I plan to grow old. We have a tremendous city with so much potential for a brighter future. While we have made some progress, we can only succeed by working together to face our challenges and build the city for the next generation.