

North Frontenac Lake Association Alliance

Key Questions for North Frontenac Municipal Candidates

Response to Questions - Gerry Lichty, Candidate for Mayor

1. Working Relationship

Given the significant number of lakefront property owners who belong to NFLAA, how do you propose to resolve common issues and provide us with a platform for our voice? How do you propose to engage with Lake Associations to understand their concerns? What steps will you take to foster this approach?

I recognize the important role that the NFLAA plays in lobbying for the benefit of all members and highlighting certain issues with Council. I also understand that each Lake Association may have their own particular issues that they wish to bring forward. To this end, I propose the following:

NFLAA

Regular meetings to discuss the over-reaching issues and to build an environment of trust and respect. We need to work together and we can only do this through a collaborative approach of dialogue and listening.

Lake Associations

Similar to the NFLAA approach, we need to establish an environment of trust and respect. I prefer that each Lake Association have its own Councillor contact and that individual is tasked with working with the Association and for highlighting issues to Council. Doing so establishes a working relationship and will provide continuity for both parties.

As Mayor, I will stay informed of Lake Association issues and will remain available to Associations as necessary. I will provide each Association my contact information to use as they deem necessary.

2. Mandatory Septic Inspection Program

Because of the critical importance of septic maintenance programs and the impact on the quality of water, this is a topic of vital importance to the NFLAA. Will you work with the NFLAA, MVCA, and the Council to implement a septic inspection program for lake front properties that defines a mandatory assessment will be required? Eg sale of lakefront property, age of septic system, time since last inspection, etc.

I believe in less government and in taking a business approach to issues to the greatest extent possible. I also believe in minimizing program and cost impacts on residents.

At this time, I am of the opinion that a mandatory septic inspection program will be cumbersome, expensive, and difficult to implement and maintain. It will also have a cost impact on tax payers. I do reserve the right to change my opinion based on on-going monitoring but, in the interim, I would like to consider a mandatory septic tank pumping program. This idea needs some development and, if elected, I invite the NFLAA to work with us to make this a practical, working program.

Here is a rough sketch as to how it would work:

Using the generally accepted rule of thumb that septic systems should be pumped every 3-5 years, the Township and the NFLAA establish a mandatory pumping program based on a maximum 5 year interval.

The Township establishes a databank of all properties that would be impacted. These should include all waterfront properties within the Township including those on rivers and lakes. The databank is kept up by owners self-declaring the month and year that they have had their system pumped. No additional information would be required. The declaration itself would be submitted as part of the process to pay property taxes. However, residents would be required to maintain a copy of the receipt for future reference should it be needed. The databank would be updated annually.

At a specified time, say at the end of year 4, the Township forwards a reminder to the owner to ensure that their septic system must be pumped out by a specific date

and that they notify the Township when the work has been completed. After 5 years and assuming no action on the part of the owner, a final notice is sent by the Township indicating that the work must be done by a certain date and if not, the Township will move in and have the work completed at the owner's expense.

Based on experience, it may be necessary to include a "check and balance" verification process wherein Township staff would visit the site and request to view the information regarding when the system was last pumped. If this cannot be produced, then the Township would arrange for the pumping of the system and, along with a substantial administration fee, invoice the owner for services rendered. This verification process would only be administered to a small percentage of owners annually.

Overall, the intent here is to build upon good practice and educate owners to follow through accordingly. Additionally, associated cost and resources would be held to a minimum.

3. Short-Term Rentals (STR's)

The NFLAA is part of a committee made up of Council representatives from four municipalities including North Frontenac. This committee has now produced a Report on Short-term Rentals which recommends a tiered approach to the regulation of STRs (the more that you rent, the greater the degree of regulation). The NFLAA is urging North Frontenac to act on this issue. Given the impact on environmental quality and other issues such as protecting small residential cottage communities from incompatible land use, we are concerned about the impact of STRs on the lakes.

How committed are you to enacting a Bylaw on Short Term Rental? What specific next steps and time frame are you willing to advocate for?

The short term rental issue is a complex issue that municipalities across Ontario are struggling with. At this time, no magic answer appears to have surfaced. The report created by the referenced Committee is well-researched and should provide a reasonable basis for creating a future STR bylaw. Working with adjacent municipalities is also a bonus.

The problem, at least as I see it, is not in writing the bylaw but in enforcing it. How do you make it work? What infrastructure is required? What staff are required? How do you minimize the impact on the taxpayer? If we move forward with this, will STR landlords suddenly develop a host of close relatives? All this begs the question – Is there a simpler way to handle a very real and very difficult problem?

The City of London has just enacted a bylaw under which all STRs must register with the City and pay all city and hotel taxes. Operators are not happy and we will need to see if the bylaw can be enforced. Apparently, the City of Kingston has recently withdrawn their bylaw as it was deemed to be unenforceable.

As a first step, I am of the opinion that we continue to work with our neighbouring townships to develop a draft bylaw. We need to work cooperatively with them. However, is there something else that we can do? Is there a different approach that we can employ? Can we move outside the “box?”

I am sure that there are many alternate ideas as to what we could do but here is one idea that I would like to explore - supplement the services provided by our part-time bylaw officer with private security officers.

Most noise intrusion issues probably occur on weekends when the bylaw officer is not on duty, is too far away, or is busy elsewhere. To supplement this, we hire two security officers complete with vehicle and roof lights. These security guards would be on duty say from 7:00 pm through to about 3:00 am the next morning. They would provide this supplemental service on Friday and Saturday evenings as well as Sunday evenings on long weekends. Coverage would begin in late June and end on the Labour Day weekend. Their job would be to make their presence known throughout cottage country and to respond to complaints. They would issue warnings under existing bylaws and if necessary, call in the bylaw officer or the OPP. It may even be possible for them to issue tickets re parking areas, etc. Depending on demand, it may be possible to share this additional security coverage, and therefore the cost, with adjacent townships.

As before, the short term rental issue is extremely complex with no easy answer. Whatever the solution, if there is one, it will take time to implement. Better to take

a staged approach and get it right then move too quickly and incur substantial costs with little or no benefit.

4. What are your top three priorities coming into this role?

I have attached my election platform and promises for your information. Although they do not include topics specifically about septic systems and short term rentals, constituents can rest assured that they are definitely included amongst my top priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions and for forwarding my response on to the members of the NFLAA.

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