

Thoughts of where we work, live and play

About 10 days ago, the Board of Trade took a fairly bold step forward to get formally involved in the fall municipal election process. Before I get too far into this column, let me be clear on a few things first. The Board of Trade isn't and won't be supporting individual candidates in the election; that is for you to decide. What we will be doing is asking questions and letting residents of St. John's know what those running for office are saying about the future of the city. We want to initiate debate and inform voters.

A question you might be asking now is why would the Board of Trade do that and why would I even care? The answer to both is the same, and it's quite simple. The Board of Trade is made up of thousands of people who live in St. John's. We are literally your family, friends and neighbours. While some can see 'business people' as a faceless group interested in profit, the reality is that we are people just like anyone else. We want what's best for our children and part of that is contributing positively to the political process.

So what are your family, friends and neighbours going to be asking? Well, most of the topics we will be touching are more specific to business, yes, that is true. But one of our main themes will be city visioning and planning. There is excellent work being done by the City of St. John's on planning and while much of it may be traditional in focus such as land use, there are forward looking things such as a cycling plan moving forward. These are things that the Board welcomes because it has a direct, positive impact on the lives of residents.

But what we are talking about is how land use planning and cycling planning and other things come together to create a city that we want in 10-20 years. Individual components need to be integrated so that they all work toward a vision of St. John's that residents have had their say on and show some consensus on. Not everyone is going to agree on what the vision of the city should be or even how to get there but that doesn't mean we shouldn't have a collective process and put ideas on the table.

We all can already agree that we live in a place that we love and that we want to see good things continue and even better things happen. That is an excellent start to the discussion of what we have in common. I suspect there will be many more things that we have in common.

The decisions we make today are important. Vital, even. Some of them seem mundane or routine and some of them are. But every decision we make can be a small move toward a defining the city for the future. Maybe we are ruling something out of our future and we need to consider, against a vision of the future, whether that is the best decision we can make today. What the Board of Trade is saying is that we should have a vision in mind that we can look at and make decisions based on that.

So here is my call to action. Tell candidates that you support having a vision for the future of this city, and tell them to talk about issues and what they plan to do. They will make decisions for the next few years on your behalf; you should tell them what those decisions should be.