

Sharon Langley – Oct 12, 2010

Hello , I would like to speak about my balanced vision of North Bay. A vision which encourages people to become part of their community because their community has enriched their lives. I would like to congratulate the Civic League membership for the forwarding of the community values survey. It is a giant step and I want to work on a city council that is open to greater public input. Secondly, helping citizens to get involved in the political process is a great value for future planning that is community focused.

The Environment in our city is to be cherished. I have noted the alliances of organizations working together to have a liveable, walkable and breathable city. I support the planning of car & bike sharing streets, finding ways to increase transit useage (fuel, less emissions) and water conservation programs. I believe community planning needs to start now, prior to a crisis stage. Gardens and parks promote a sense of well being amongst citizens and improve the quality of their lives. I resided in London England and often reflected how the parks offered a sanctuary for all ages. I think it is time to aggressively pursue the management of our natural attributes.

Economic development and economic growth usually means, time to attract new investment as this is what creates new jobs. I believe, it is important to also look at the existing business, perhaps help them meet green opportunities. The big picture view..building upon what we have. We reside in a prime tourist area and the development of partnerships like Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition would educate our community. Partnerships and creative collaboration lead to accessing funds from different sources.

The Social fabric of our community is the backbone for health, safety and well being of persons. A strong social program usually means, better education, less crime and better health and mental health. I refer to balance again as there is a lack of balance in North Bay's social capital and I would work hard for additional social planning and programs. There needs to be affordable housing, long term care beds (lists are two years in some cases), wait lists for social housing needs to be addressed, poverty rate is 18.5% of children live in poverty and I find it alarming that 17% of youth are unemployed in the Nipissing District.

Communication has been an issue for this past council. I am hoping to make a major difference in this area. My Social Work background has allowed for outside interests and I have been a social advocate trying to advocate for social change for the betterment of society. The new council has to take note that there is apathy in the community because people are not first. There are no avenues for direct communication. Trust in the municipal government is at all time low. How do we engage our community? How do we improve communication? I think it is time to have Community Advisory Groups with input. There must be community workshops to educate council on front line issues. The encouragement of active forums and focus groups. Council must change the way they do business. The inclusion of the internal mechanisms and no more vending machine approach. People in our community care about values. The Civic League of North Bay is an example of community engagement. I am familiar with the city of Guelph's Civic League and the advancements they have made in the area of communication. (E-bulletin is an example of good communication)

There will always be some form of controversy, the citizens in North Bay should be allowed a public forum and consultation in situations that demand an arena of great concern. The council is elected to represent the people however, a healthy community that flourishes, nourishes the people and it is time to elect a council that has the best interests of North Bay and it's citizens at heart. Thank you Sharon Langley