

PART 2
Fort Smith Election
Candidate's Profiles and Q&A

INTRODUCTION

My name is Jessica Cox and I am running for Fort Smith Town Council. I have lived in Fort Smith since 2000, when I moved to town to work as a reporter at the local weekly newspaper. The community has since become my home. I met my husband, Karl, in Fort Smith and we have settled here, proud to be raising our children in this community.

I currently work at Aurora College as the Coordinator of Continuing Education, and as an instructor in the Environment and Natural Resources Technology Program (ENRTP).

As such, I have experience working in both the private sector and the public sector. Additionally, I was a stay-at-home mom for more than six years, from the time my daughter was born until my son started kindergarten. My experience allows me to appreciate the different work dynamics in the community, and the issues that affect families in Fort Smith.

I have volunteered with several organizations, including:

- 2018 Arctic Winter Games Host Society (2014-present)
- Fort Smith Minor Hockey (2006-present)
- Town of Fort Smith Recreation Advisory Board (RAB) (2009-present)
- Fort Smith Animal Society (2010-present)
- Fort Smith District Education Authority (DEA) (2012-2015)
- Northern Life Museum and Cultural Centre (2008-2012)
- Fort Smith Volunteer Fire Department (2001-2007)

I understand the dynamics of different organizations in our community, and the contribution volunteers make to the quality of life in Fort Smith.

QUESTIONS

1. *What is the one thing you would like to accomplish during your term?*

Over the next three years, the one thing I would like to accomplish is to continue to work towards making Fort Smith the healthiest community in the Northwest Territories. This goal was identified in the strategic plan developed by the current council; it is a lofty goal, but one that is achievable and has the potential to improve the quality of life of every resident.

Becoming the healthiest community in the NWT means our residents have meaningful social connections and are supported in their decisions to make healthy lifestyle choices, including being physically active.

Strategies for achieving this goal include continuing to develop and support indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities, planning the mid-life retrofit of the Recreation and Community Centre, maintaining and improving sidewalks, and promoting community health and safety by supporting the enforcement of municipal bylaws.

2. *What does leadership mean to you? What are your leadership qualities? Define your style of leadership.*

Leadership to me means leading by example, and being a role model to the group you are leading. It means putting the well-being of the group ahead of your own. Being a leader means making difficult decisions, and recognizing that you can't please everyone all the time.

I am a skilled communicator who recognizes the importance of having community leadership that is strong and unified. It is crucial that the Town of Fort Smith work with our Indigenous government partners to advocate for the entire community at the territorial level.

My leadership style is collaborative. I understand that it is crucial for Fort Smith Mayor and Council to work together to better the community. Passionate debate surrounding important decisions is important to finding optimal solutions, but the mayor and each councilor must be willing to compromise in order to turn decisions into action.

3. *How is it possible for property owners to accumulate such large tax arrears? What will be your strategy for collection to prevent this from happening in the future?*

This is a lightning-rod issue that is particularly aggravating to taxpayers who pay their taxes in full and on time. It is bad for community moral when delinquent taxpayers are perceived to be getting a free ride, and it is bad for municipal coffers when property owners don't pay their dues.

Fortunately, this is an issue with which the Town has made progress in recent years, and continues to work towards collecting past due accounts. I understand that almost half of property tax arrears and delinquent accounts is the combination of accumulated interest, property taxes that were levied incorrectly, and bad debt. The Town must liaise and work with the territorial and federal governments to resolve these outstanding accounts.

The remaining arrears are past due accounts that the Town is actively collecting. In 2017, the Town hired a law firm to act as a collection agency on the Town's behalf, with the expectation that the amounts owing would be collected within three years.

My strategy for collection of property taxes to prevent this from happening in the future is to ensure collections systems are in place to make payment of property taxes as straightforward as possible, and to be consistent with the enforcement of the bylaws governing the collection of property taxes.

4. *In your opinion, what are the Town's immediate and long-term infrastructure needs?*

The Town has a detailed capital project priority matrix which identifies 38 capital project expenses. Among the higher-priority items are water and sewer system upgrades, expansion of the landfill, and the acquisition of a new fire truck.

The Town's longer-term infrastructure needs include decisions to be made about downtown development – including Town Hall and Mary Kaeser Library – and a mid-life retrofit of the Recreation and Community Centre.

5. *Are you willing to cut spending to keep taxes from increasing? What cuts to services would you make?*

Cutting services rarely makes significant dents in the expenses column of the Town's budget, especially when the municipality does a respectable job of delivering quality services with finite resources.

To keep taxes from increasing, Council needs to consider creative solutions, including energy retrofits to municipal facilities to reduce the cost of operations. There is enormous potential for energy savings with the mid-life retrofit of the Recreation and Community Centre.

One goal in the Town's strategic plan is to be a leader in sustainability. Becoming a more sustainable community means fewer resources will be spent on heating fuel, and creating efficiencies with solid waste management may reduce demand for twice-weekly residential garbage pick-up.

6. *If a property tax-exempt homeowner runs a home-based business, should they lose their property tax exemption? Why?*

This is a complex issue that requires nuanced discussion. The intention of the property tax exemption is to encourage seniors and disabled persons, many of whom live on fixed incomes, to live in their own homes. In theory, removing the property tax burden makes staying in their own home more affordable for those who may not otherwise be able to. In theory, this benefits society because seniors and disabled persons who live in their own homes are not accessing social housing.

Homeowners who run home-based businesses may earn enough income to afford to pay property taxes. However, monitoring residents' income is not within the jurisdiction of the Town of Fort Smith; the municipality cannot determine whether or not a home business is earning enough profit to warrant paying taxes. While the idea of a property tax-exempt homeowner with a profitable home-based business is not palatable to many taxpayers, the reality is that it is an unintended consequence of a bylaw with good intentions.

Regardless, the question is not whether or not property-tax exempt homeowners running home-based businesses should lose their property tax exemption because they're earning too much money. Rather, two other questions should be asked: How much does the property tax exemption for seniors and disabled persons cost the Town? And can the municipality afford to continue this practice?

Once the costs are known, council can consider whether or not the Town can afford the exemption. If council determines the exemption is affordable, then so be it. If council determines the exemption is not affordable, they should consider options for phasing out the bylaw over an extended period of time.

Separator Page

September 27, 18

Submitted by Ron Holtorf

Background: Having six years of proven experience on Council I have confidence in understanding the issues facing our community and what our community wants. The input of many citizens/groups is detailed in six broader goals:

Goals of 2018 Strategic Plan, which are:

- To retain and attract new residents
- To be the healthiest community in the NT
- To be a leader in sustainability
- To grow our role as educational capital of the NT
- To create a diversified economy
- To operate a responsive and transparent government

These are supported by specific objectives and time frames. In addition the Town has an **Economic Development Plan**, a **20 Year Capital Plan** and a **Downtown Development** plan. I propose that the new Council go to work on these, as I am sure they contain most of the platform items that will be raised by candidates.

We have a \$100K of plans-lets roll them out!

Respectfully Submitted by Ron Holtorf-
Response to questions submitted by UNW and
Thebacha C of C.

1. The one thing that I would like to see accomplished during the next term is a process issue –that of the office of the Mayor working closely with the SAO in a timely advance of council’s priorities as translated in recently developed strategic plans. Further, that communication with the public on accomplishments is shared regularly -monthly is desirable.

2. Leadership consists of a number of personal qualities including integrity, honesty. It means being fair and following through in doing what you said when you are elected. It means being consistent in keeping the overall good of the community in mind. Listening and confidentiality are important. Any strengths I have here comes from a 25 year career in administration -growing Aurora College to what it is today.

3. Property tax arrears exist for a number of reasons- financial hardship, bankruptcy, losing a building to fire, death of the owner. Regardless of the reason there is a defined process for recovery.

The next Council, through its Finance Committee should open a file on this issue to see if process is being carried out in a timely manner/ more legal options might be applied.

4. The Town has a 20 Year Capital Plan that is reviewed and updated annually. Getting closer for replacement are the Town Hall, Library and Fire hall. Major refitting

of the Water Treatment Plant and further replacement of water/sewer infrastructure are on the horizon.

5. Yes, I would be willing to cut spending to keep taxes from increasing. If this were the want of Mayor/Council the appropriate way would be to get a motion requesting Administration to present some options. This might be done through a Zero Based Budgeting exercise to show where cuts might be made. I would not want to see/approve of any cuts/reductions that might compromise public safety/health, the Collective agreement, the provision of protective/emergency services or environmental considerations. It must be remembered that a councilor has authority as a member of council but does not have the authority to make decisions or take action without the agreement of the whole council.

6. I believe a property tax exempt home owner who runs a home based business should not be provided a property tax exemption as this current allowance was never in the Bylaw and, as with a business, there is provision to capture a portion of expenses related to the household. If there agreement to change this I would support grandfathering current recipients.

Separator Page

Hello;

My name is Gerard Fradsham. .

I have lived in the north over 45 years.

My family and I moved here in 2010 and decided to make Fort Smith our home. The people in Fort Smith are very pleasant, the scenery here is amazing and the riding/hiking trails are awesome.

On my journey through the north, I have become a:

-Trades Person

-Family Man and Grandparent

-Good friend of many people

-Life long Northerner

I have also gained life long experiences through my active involvement in organizations such as:

-Frobisher Bay Voluntary Fire Department

-Fort Simpson District Education Authority

-Deh Cho District Education Council

1. What is the one thing you would like to accomplish during your term?

If I were to pick one thing I would like to accomplish during my term, is get street lights in the dark areas of town such as Bus Stops, parts of the Walking Trails and many residential streets.

2. What does leadership mean to you? Leadership to me is a responsible individual who is able to work with a team, to achieve goals and objectives.

What are your leadership qualities?

I am Honest, Fair, Responsible and Focused.

Oh Yes, I will make mistakes along the way.

Define your style of leadership?

There are many styles of Leadership. In my experience, the style I find very effective is **Democratic Style**. As a leader you work with team and involve them planning and decision making of project or task to be completed.

Example: Provide complete Preventative Maintenance Schedule and Costs for a Commercial Building.

3. How is it possible for property owners to accumulate such large tax arrears?

Personal/ Financial Hardship, Appealing Tax Assessment, Non payment and very little or no follow up by Department responsible to collect property taxes.

4. What will be your strategy for collection to prevent this from happening in the future?

Collection of Taxes

I would recommend that all avenues be exhausted in assisting the property owner in the payment of their arrears.

I recommend to broaden their on line services to other financial institutions. Also Set up auto debit payment service.

Prevention

I would recommend that the Department responsible for tax collection to review property tax arrears backlog monthly. Follow up with property owners.

If, all avenues are exhausted by end of second taxation year.

Legal Action should commence to collect tax arrears.

5. In your opinion, what are the Town's immediate and long term infrastructure needs?

I think one of the Town's immediate needs is to offer the residents Online Banking Services to other Financial Institutions.

I think the town long term infrastructure need is to up-grade the aging Water Distribution System, Sewage System and street drainage systems. This will lead the way to street and sidewalk up- grades/

6. Are you willing to cut spending to keep the taxes from increasing? What cuts to services would you make?

Yes

This is a short term solution. Would need to review all services provided and make recommendations.

7. If a property exempt home owner runs a home base business, should they lose their property tax exemption? Why

No,

Property tax exemptions are approved for home owners 65 years or older and also to some home owners with disabilities.

The small business they operate on their property maybe enabling these folks to live a good life in their own homes.

Thank You

Gerard Fradsham

Separator Page

Lynn Napier-Buckley is running for Mayor. She is currently in her first term as Mayor, after one term on Council. Lynn has enjoyed serving the community and moving forward on projects to benefit Fort Smith. During her term and that of her Council, focus was on building capacity, fiscal responsibility, infrastructure, staffing, and community wellness. She looks forward to building on the work done by Council and is committed to continuing lobbying and fighting for the community.

- 1) The recommendations for Aurora College are a huge concern for Fort Smith. During our meetings with the Standing Committee on Social Development and with the Premier and the Minister of Education, we understand that any transition will take time and will be a partnership with the community. This is not something that will be accomplished in one term of Council and will continue to be a matter of importance for any Council in the next few terms. For one thing to be accomplished during the term, it would have to be the focus on infrastructure; water, sewer, recycling, landfill, and slide zone remediation. Repairing and upgrading our infrastructure has been a focus of this Council with work that will need to be continued into the next term.
- 2) Leadership is the ability to listen, to be open to ideas, to seek out differing opinions and then to use that information to promote and advocate for solutions and decisions that benefit our community. Leadership qualities include being open to criticism so that I can work on making things better; consulting and reaching out to community members; making a commitment to work for what benefits the community as a whole; accepting responsibility and leading changes; being comfortable standing behind and supporting Council and the Town as we work together; and, representing our community and fighting for our common goals. My style of leadership is to engage discussion, to find solutions and outcomes to benefit Fort Smith, to provide guidance to our employee and to Council, and to involve Council as a team while moving forward.
- 3) Some tax arrears have been growing for many years. While some arrears have previously been written off, during our term as Council we have worked with Administration to tackle the issue of outstanding taxes by means of collection. There are some locations that require work with organizations and governments outside of the community to address but collection action has been a priority and is currently in the hands of Town Administration and the legal team.
- 4) The 20-year capital plan includes Town Hall and the Library, Ambulance and Firehall, and Recreation Centre as needing retrofits or new buildings within the next few years. There is also a need for landfill expansion to meet the needs of rolling out the waste management plan for recyclables and composting. The Water and Sewer Replacement Infrastructure project has already started and will continue into next summer, working on Water and Sewer in the main part of downtown. This replaces water and sewer infrastructure that was put underground in 1958. Long-term requirements are the need for slope remediation along the bank of the river, upriver and downriver from Marine Drive. Climate change funding has already been accessed to create a plan for remediation so that when further funds are made available, the plan can be actioned. For recreation, new playground equipment is being purchased for the three smaller playgrounds in Walters Court, Timber Crescent, and in Caribou trailer court. We have also had discussions with the Minister of Housing to lobby for playground equipment on St. Ann's Street, as well as looking for possible partnerships or sponsors. Additionally, a tow rope has been purchased to be installed for Winter 2019 at the snowboard and sledding hill near Riverside Park.
- 5) During the three years on Council, we were committed to fiscal responsibility. We ensured that \$300,000 per year went into reserves through bylaw; that anticipated overtime requirements for snow removal and other historic services were included in budgeting to provide a more accurate representation of O&M expenses; and that the Arctic Winter Games budget that

provided anticipated income was realistic in order to best manage finances. With an increase in MACA funding, increases in taxes were modest. Services had been cut in prior years to limit tax increases; any further cuts would need to come with discussions on what programs and services would be affected. It is important that we continue to work on preventative maintenance to mitigate responsive, and often times, more expensive repairs. Decisions on what services could afford to be cut in order to reduce taxes would happen with the rest of Council with the input from Administration and the Directors.

- 6) The Town of Fort Smith has many home-based businesses. Since the Property Tax exemption is for specifically for seniors and disabled persons, I am of the opinion that this would be a financial hinderance to these residents. There is no method of means testing residents and it would be unfair to target seniors and disabled residents on this issue.

Through my term as Mayor I have worked mainly mornings or afternoons at Town Hall, unless rare alternate schedules were required. This has been done in partnership with my employer and would continue if I was re-elected.

Separator Page

Brad Brake is a Qalipu Mi'Kmaq First Nation member, President of UNW Local 2, and employed as Correctional Supervisor with the Northwest Territories Department of Justice.

Brad has spent 20 years living in the North and raising his family in Fort Smith.

In 2012 he entered municipal politics and was elected to the mayor's seat in Fort Smith. During his three year tenure under Brad's leadership the town council accomplished:

Successfully lobbied the Prime Minister to finish paving Highway 5

Successfully won the bid for the 2018 Arctic Winter Games

Rebuilt the arena after a catastrophic fire

Re-unified the town after a bitter strike

Negotiated a 4-year collective agreement in three days

Met with NWT Premier annually

Supported various community events

Initiated in town infrastructure projects

Worked cooperatively with all local Band and Metis Councils

Brad has participated in various leadership training and development opportunities including being selected for the Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference, and various lobbying and political campaign training through the union.

Brad loves helping and empowering people. His leadership abilities, knowledge and skills together with years of experience as former Mayor affirm him as a proven accomplished leader. He is always eager to hear people's concerns and work with them to find a solution.

Brad's interests are in politics, leadership, community and service to others. He spends his leisure time exploring life with his wife and two sons

1) What is the one thing you would like to accomplish during your term?

A. There's no one thing, there are many things to accomplish.

I'd like to continue the projects and direction that were developed by council when I was Mayor of Fort Smith and continue projects that the current and past councils have developed.

The community wellness plan that I worked with the local indigenous governments and citizens to develop. I attended every meeting for the consultations and creation of this plan and signed off on the final draft to make it our towns wellness plan.

We ensured that our town was prepared for emergencies and had full scale tests of our emergency services and tested our responses for a full town evacuation during operation Nanook in 2015. We learned we have considerable expertise in this area, more so than many other communities. We can't become complacent though and need to be constantly aware.

During my term our council met with the Canadian Government regarding low-level radioactive material (rocks and sand, raw unprocessed ore) to learn about it and what it means to our citizens and community. It's been referred to as "radioactive waste" calling this material waste is not a truthful representation, it is vastly different and not dangerous to life.

The Community Waste Management plan that began from the Sustainable Development Advisory Board under my tenure as Mayor.

We met with the Premier annually and we met with Ministers and regular members alike. We lobbied to keep jobs here! We worked

closely with the MLA at the time to ensure that jobs stayed in our town.

The council I was part of saw the future benefit of the AWG and we won the bid through a strong lobby, and showcasing our community and our citizens!

We looked at the riverbank stabilization and at potential issues that could arise from areas that were not stabilized, this came forward when we had a slump below our cesspool. Waste treatment and wastewater became that much more important after that happened. We identified the need, but we need to secure funding as it's a very large project.

I would develop a communication plan that works for our citizens. I'd start on it right away and until it was developed would take responsibility for ensuring people get informed.

2) What does leadership mean to you? What are your leadership qualities? Define your style of leadership.

A. Leadership to me means working with people to reach a common goal, to being a catalyst for change. To encouraging people to strive to do their best and to go beyond. It means working towards a common goal, as we do so well in Fort Smith.

My leadership qualities are integrity, confidence, commitment and passion.

As a leader you need these and you need to be calm and have good decision making skills that are tempered with empathy. To often, decisions are made without all the information and you must try to get as much information before making decisions. Being empathic to people situations is far too often the missing piece when it comes

to politicians. I have humble beginnings and as such cannot forget how fortunate some of us are.

My style of leadership is mostly guiding/coaching. We have the answers inside and must ponder to get the best result. I can also be a supporting/delegating leader when that is required. I prefer to allow people to do their work and offer assistance when I see people needing it.

3) How is it possible for property owners to accumulate such large tax arrears? What will be your strategy for collection to prevent this from happening in the future?

A. There could be a multitude of reasons why property owners accumulate arrears, too many to speculate. Best to try to figure out ways to deal with it.

During my term as Mayor council gave direction to administration to have a tax sale for delinquent property taxes. We learned that the large tax arrears are in fact mostly interest on unseizable land. Now, several years later we are finally getting close to having a sale.

Property taxes are assessed on land owned and improvements upon that property. When you look at the property arrears list and you see some large numbers you need to understand that the process to collect is hindered by a number of things.

1. Time: it takes a long process that involves court proceedings and lawyers. There are very defined timelines that must be followed and if a step is missed you have to start over.
2. Allowed Seizure: the town does not seize land, it is unable to seize land. It is allowed to seize a "chattel". A chattel is usually a building or house that is present on the land. This is the only thing that can be seized, if there are no buildings to be seized the town cannot seize the land.

Brad Brake

My strategy would be to write-off as bad debt or forgive the interest charges for properties that are unseizable and contact land owners to see if they can begin payments to pay down the true balances. We also need to continue the process for seizing land with chattels, long though it may be and to ensure that timelines are being met so that properties can be auctioned to recuperate monies.

4) In your opinion, what are the Town's immediate and long term infrastructure needs?

A. Our most important immediate and long term infrastructure need is the in-ground infrastructure, cesspool, and sewage treatment, of the last two the cesspool needs to be moved and a sewage treatment plant needs to be built, but both are cost prohibitive.

We need to look into waste management, an initiative that was begun during my term as Mayor. It is also important to have adequate reserves in place. We currently have reserves and are using them wisely, but the amounts accumulating aren't keeping up with expenditures and this is an important item related to infrastructure.

5) Are you willing to cut spending to keep taxes from increasing? What cuts to services would you make?

A. I would consider it, but I don't believe in cutting services. What I do believe in is responsible budgeting and finding revenue. We need to look at increasing revenue, we will see a significant uptick in revenue with the completion of 3 large building projects this year.

How we can gain revenue is through increases to institutional mill rates and higher fees for businesses that are not from town. We can

also look at increases to fees across the board that are equally borne by all, keeping current exemptions static.

We have forced growth every year that we must raise funds for. When I was last mayor we had a 35% increase in business license applications this was due in part to direction I gave the SAO direction that businesses that came to town to work and earn revenue should be licensed and should be checked for licensing by bylaw.

We could look at business licenses that address outside construction companies coming in and doing large scale projects and leaving town with the money when completed. They provide some jobs for a time and are gone. Our local companies are left with smaller lower dollar projects. I suggest they pay a license fee based on the scope of the project. Increasing costs as the value of the project increases.

6) If a property tax exempt home owner runs a home based business, should they lose their property tax exemption? Why?

A. If a business owner makes their livelihood solely from a business and pays tax on their business location and on their home, the home based business owner who is exempt is then subsidized by the town. This provides an unfair advantage to the tax exempt homeowner. It also marginalizes home based business owners that do pay taxes on their home property.

I don't know if they should lose their exemption or if we need to have a system that supports all our licensed businesses and ensures that we encourage people to start licensed businesses.

Brad Brake

Perhaps a minor concession off their exemption. The town council would need to deliberate and investigate and make a decision based on input from the community both for and against.

We also need to look at types of businesses as well. Baking several dozen cookies is a far different business than running a B&B or a desk operation consultant that earns 100-300K annually.

I would like to foster people's entrepreneurial spirit to increase the businesses in our community. People are missing out on lots of opportunity. If they are shown that getting licensed and inspected will help them build more business shouldn't the town help them achieve this by guiding them through the process and making it easier?

Mayoral Candidates Only Question: What arrangements will be made with your employer so that you are available in town hall during business hours? What will your town hall schedule be?

A. My employer has been notified and given me approval to engage in Mayoral duties. I am a shift worker working 8-4 or 4-12 daily. I can be in town hall everyday and meet the requirements of the mayors legislated hours. When I was mayor before my contact information was available to all and I spent many more hours in office than was required.

In my past role as Mayor I made sure to be present in our community at events and important meetings.

I was at the Nwthssa AGM the other night and there was no identified representative from Current Mayor and Council. This was an excellent opportunity to advocate for our community to the NWT health board and to address the Minister directly.

Brad Brake

My schedule will be based upon the legislated requirements and my schedule at my substantive position with my employer. I will be in the Mayors office daily during the week.

Separator Page

My name is Bob McArthur and I have submitted my name to run once again as councillor for the Town of Fort Smith. I have lived in Fort Smith all my life, I was educated here, married and have raised my three daughters in Fort Smith, this is my home. I would like to see more people move to Fort Smith and call it their home. To do this we need to have more affordable housing, more services and more jobs to attract people to our community. If elected for another term, I can say that anything I do and support will be for the betterment of our community.

1 – During my term I would like to see new buildings built for the Town Hall, Library and Fire Hall. A stronger economy for the people of Fort Smith and to also attract new residents to our community.

2 – Leadership to me is a person with a strong voice, willing to work with others, dependable and willing to go the extra mile to get the job done, never forgetting they are working for everyone's interests. When working with others, these are the qualities that I will be bringing to the table.

3 – The Mayor and Council have hired a law firm to look at all tax arrears and following town procedures, they have started working on collecting delinquent arrears. In future I would like to see a position created to look after all arrears for the town, avoiding arrears from accumulating

4 – Long term goals would be new buildings for Town Hall, Library and Fire Hall, to replace all the old water and sewer lines. Short term is to continue building a stronger working relationship with Governments, departments, organizations and businesses to build a stronger economy.

5 – No. I don't think cutting spending anywhere to keep taxes down will help Fort Smith. Once you start cutting spending, services in our community will suffer. As long as funds collected from taxes are used intelligently and for the betterment of our community, our community will profit.

6 – As a business owner I don't agree with penalizing a person for wanting to have a business out of their home, no matter if they are exempt or not. However, just like any other business owner, they must have all their documents and licenses to operate their business.

Bob McArthur