

Candidate Questionnaire

2026 Municipal Election • Working People. Strong Communities.

Your voice. Our community. Stronger together.

Thank you for running to serve the people of Sarnia. The Sarnia & District Labour Council represents thousands of working people across our community. Your responses will help our Executive Committee review candidates and make endorsement recommendations to our members and affiliates. Please answer each question in the space provided; feel free to attach additional pages if you need more room.

Please return your completed questionnaire within 2 weeks of receiving it to Candace Young at candace.d.parsons@gmail.com, or by mail to 1086 Modeland Rd, Suite 249, Sarnia, ON N7S 6L2. This form is fillable — you may type your answers directly, save, and email it back.

ID CANDIDATE IDENTIFICATION

Candidate name:	John Richardson
Office sought:	Sarnia City/County Councillor
Ward (if any):	
Email:	john@yourvoicesarnia.com
Phone:	(226)7766393
Past elected office:	N/A
Date:	08-23-2026

In 75 words or fewer, tell us why you are running:

I left Sarnia in my thirties because opportunity here had not kept pace with what I wanted for my life. I came back in my forties to find not just the same lack of opportunity, but cost of living stacked on top of it. Along the way I saw other places do this differently, and I know this was not bad luck. I believe I can make a real difference here, and I am at a point to act on it.

A LABOUR & DECENT WORK

1. Do you support keeping municipal services public and in-house rather than contracting them out or entering public-private partnerships? Identify any services you would protect or consider contracting out, and explain your reasoning.

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

I support bringing services in-house whenever it reasonably supports year-round, continuous employment for the people doing the work. A clear example is master plans and research studies, which the city routinely sends out to consulting firms. Much of that work requires multidisciplinary expertise, and we already have many of those disciplines on staff or should. Where that is the case, I would rather build the capacity internally than pay outside firms to do it project by project.

2. How will you ensure municipal jobs — and jobs funded by the municipality — remain stable, fairly paid, and unionized? Include your position on temporary/contract labour and subcontracting.

Municipal jobs stay stable and fairly paid when the city treats staffing as a long-term investment rather than a line item to trim first. That means budgeting core positions as permanent, unionized roles, not chronically underfilling and covering the gap with temporary staff or contractors year after year. If a role is doing ongoing, predictable work, it should be a real job with real wages and union protection, not a rolling contract.

Temporary and contract labour has a legitimate place for genuinely short-term, seasonal, or specialized needs

3. Will you support Community Benefits Agreements, fair-wage schedules, and local-hiring requirements on major municipal infrastructure and construction projects?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Undecided

Please explain:

I want to be honest rather than overpromise here. A full Community Benefits Agreement is a significant policy decision and I would want a proper study before committing to a specific model, there are different approaches used across Canada and they carry real tradeoffs on cost, competition, and how contracts get delivered.

What I do support now is expanding our existing Fair Wage Policy and procurement process to include scored,

4. Do you support a living-wage policy covering all municipal workers, contractors, and subcontractors, tied to the City's procurement policies?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

I support living wage standards. I saw firsthand in Ottawa how living wage certification changes how a business thinks about its workforce, and I want to see that standard applied here. Every full-time City position should meet or exceed the living wage for our region, which the Ontario Living Wage Network currently sets at \$21.50 an hour for Sarnia and Lambton.

5. Sarnia's economy depends on turnaround and maintenance work in Chemical Valley. How will you use municipal levers (procurement, permitting, training partnerships with local contractors) to prioritize local, unionized skilled-trades labour?

Turnaround and maintenance work will always matter to Sarnia, but it is inherently cyclical. My focus is on building the kind of steady, long-term industrial investment that keeps skilled trades working consistently, not just during shutdown season. That starts with supporting a potential Nuclear SMR at the LGS site. A project of that scale, and the supply chain and construction work that comes with it, is the single biggest thing the region can do to give local unionized trades sustained work over decades, not weeks.

6. Will you commit to meeting regularly with the Sarnia & District Labour Council and its affiliates, and to consulting workers before decisions that affect them, if elected?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

This is not a hard commitment for me, it is consistent with how I have run this entire campaign. I have spent the past three years and this whole campaign process seeking out as many conversations as possible across every part of this community, and that does not stop on election night. I would gladly commit to meeting with the Labour Council and its affiliates on a regular basis, quarterly, biannually, or as needed depending on what is actually happening at the time, whether that is with the Council as a whole or individual affiliates. Consulting workers

7. Lambton County's By-Name List identifies roughly 390 people experiencing homelessness in Sarnia-Lambton, including about 190 who are chronically homeless. What concrete actions will you take on homelessness and supportive housing?

I support supportive housing and geared-to-income housing, and I will vote consistently in favour of it at both the city and county tables. My approach is to site these projects in accordance with the city's own mixed-use and density plans, not fight them at the zoning stage after staff have already recommended approval. That means pushing zoning and research based parking numbers so projects stop getting stalled on technicalities. It also means pairing new housing with the social supports and infrastructure the surrounding area actually needs, proactively, while genuinely engaging neighbourhood consultation and addressing the concerns that come out of

8. A County report warned that prematurely closing the Out of the Cold overflow shelter could more than double the unsheltered population. Do you support maintaining overflow and low-barrier shelter options while permanent supportive housing is built?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

I support maintaining overflow and low-barrier shelter capacity while permanent supportive housing gets built, we cannot pull the safety net before the replacement exists. The county's plan to add adequate space at the Lodge addresses this directly, and I support that direction because it moves us toward a merged, purpose-built, permanent facility rather than an ongoing patchwork of temporary overflow sites. If space becomes constrained again in the interim, I support using motels paired with CHIC, MHEART, and IMPACT Team support for the most

9. Will you support zoning and parking reforms that make supportive and affordable housing easier to approve — rather than changes that stall projects like Indwell's proposed 353 George Street development in Mitton Village?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

I already put this on the record. I delegated at the May 11 special session on the comprehensive zoning bylaw specifically to oppose the parking standard being applied to supportive housing, a standard with no comparable precedent anywhere in Canada, and one that does not even apply to Bluewater Health.

More broadly, our zoning does not reflect how people actually live in 2026. Rigid lot requirements and parking

10. With more than 900 households on the social-housing waitlist and demand for roughly 2,500 additional affordable units, how will you increase the supply of affordable and non-market housing?

The math here is straightforward. Over 900 households on the waitlist and demand for roughly 2,500 more affordable units is not a slow-moving planning problem, it is an emergency, and I will treat it that way.

I consistently support non-market and geared-to-income housing, as I have laid out elsewhere in this questionnaire. The government's job is to provide at scale what the market cannot. The market has not shown it is capable of delivering truly affordable housing at the scale we need, so that responsibility falls to us.

11. Do you support a humane, housing-focused Encampment Response Protocol that connects people to services and housing rather than relying primarily on displacement or policing?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

Everyone should have a roof over their head if they want one, and our response to encampments should be built around getting people there, not around displacement or policing as the first tool. One practical barrier I want addressed is possession security. People often will not enter shelter because they cannot bring their cart or belongings with them and have nowhere secure to leave them. I saw this firsthand when I visited St. Thomas, where addressing that barrier directly helped bring more people off the street and into shelter. Removing that

12. Major industrial investment (such as the proposed Northern Shield Energy Corridor pipeline) may add capacity while creating relatively few permanent jobs. How will you ensure new industrial investment translates into good, lasting local jobs?

Northern Shield is worth watching closely, but I do not think it should be sold to Sarnia as a jobs program. It is a pipeline, not a refinery expansion. Realistically it makes us less dependent on Line 5 and the US for supply, and that is a legitimate reason to support it, but construction jobs are temporary. As well I have not heard anyone articulate what demand that would support refining expansion.

My concern is that a big provincial and federal announcement like this pulls attention and political capital away

13. The closure of INEOS Styrolution affects local workers. What role should the City play in supporting displaced workers and ensuring a fair transition and retraining?

There will be times when employers leave the region, and the reasons vary, market conditions beyond our control, corporate restructuring, or in some cases an unwillingness to meet safety standards that affect everyone living nearby. Whatever the reason, the workers affected did not make that decision, and they deserve support regardless of why the company left.

Most of the actual levers here, EI, retraining funding, severance protections, sit at the provincial and federal level.

14. How will you attract and retain diversified jobs, commerce, and investment beyond petrochemicals — for example downtown, the port and waterfront, clean technology, and small business?

Diversifying beyond petrochemicals is not optional for this city, it is the whole reason growth has stalled here. We need to be fully open as a city to that diversification, and stop treating every alternative to oil and gas as an affront to our industrial identity. The SMR is actually part of protecting our petrochemical base, not competing with it. Nuclear-powered hydrogen can decarbonize the hydrogen our refineries already use in processing, which safeguards that industry's future instead of threatening it, while building the foundation for a genuinely new export industry once the market exists. The oversized load corridor and Cestar dock were built just for this kind of

15. Will you support apprenticeships, Red Seal skilled-trades training, and youth and local hiring through municipal projects and procurement — and if so, how?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

This connects directly to positions I have already laid out. I support scoring apprenticeship and local hire commitments into municipal procurement alongside price, not just leaving it to a fair wage floor. I also think the biggest lever for Red Seal trades in this city is not a municipal program, it is diversifying our industrial base so trades work is not tied to one industry's feast-or-famine maintenance cycle. Projects like the potential SMR and serviced industrial land that brings in new investment are what actually turn apprenticeship seats into years of

16. How will you support revitalization of downtown Sarnia and Mitton Village and strengthen local small businesses?

Downtown and Mitton Village revitalization comes down to the same principle running through my whole platform: more people living close enough to actually support the businesses that are already there. Density is the foundation, mixed-income housing within walking distance of both areas. We need to build the city we actually want to live in and participate in ourselves before tourism becomes an economic driver, not the other way around. A downtown that residents do not use will not hold a tourist's attention either.

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ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC HEALTH

17. Aamjiwnaang First Nation and nearby Sarnia neighbourhoods face benzene and cumulative air-pollution exposure. What actions within municipal jurisdiction will you take to protect residents' health?

I want to be honest that municipal jurisdiction over air quality is limited, this is primarily a provincial and federal responsibility. But limited jurisdiction does not mean limited voice. I will use the full reach of this position to make sure safe air is flagged at every other level of government, and I will do that for Aamjiwnaang First Nation and for nearby Sarnia neighbourhoods together, not as separate concerns.

I also think it matters to point out when companies are actually stepping up. Many operators in Chemical Valley

18. Will you advocate to provincial and federal governments for cumulative-effects air-pollution assessment and stronger monitoring and enforcement in Chemical Valley?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Please explain:

Our largest growth opportunities in this region come from future-proofing our existing petrochemical producers, through diversification, the SMR, and clean hydrogen, not from ignoring the pollution question and hoping it goes away. So yes I will advocate to the province and federal government for cumulative-effects air pollution assessment and stronger monitoring and enforcement in Chemical Valley. A region that is serious about that path has to be serious about accurately measuring and enforcing the cumulative pollution its industry already

19. What specific actions will you take to implement and accelerate Sarnia's climate and emissions-reduction plans?

I approach this as a fiscal issue as much as an environmental one, because that is what actually gets it funded and prioritized at this council. Flooded basements are budget problems. Insurance companies pulling flood coverage in parts of this city is the apolitical signal that something has already gone wrong. We have 19 kilometres of aging combined sewers that overflow into the St. Clair River during heavy rain, and that is an infrastructure deficit issue as much as a climate one. My infrastructure plan already treats flood mitigation as the first priority in the unfunded project queue, ahead of other capital asks, because it is the one where the human

20. How will you protect and expand access to affordable public transit and safe active transportation?

Sarnia's transit system carries 1.78 million riders a year, and 65 per cent of them do not have a car. That is not a marginal user base, that is a core part of how any productive city functions. Full service currently slows around 6pm, which does not match when people actually need to get to and from work, school, or anywhere else in their lives. I want to extend service at least 30 minutes past major retail closing times and increase frequency on the corridors that carry the most riders.

E GOVERNANCE, SERVICES & RECONCILIATION

21. Which public services (water and wastewater, waste, transit, libraries, recreation, emergency services) do you believe must always remain publicly delivered, and how will you strengthen them?

Water and wastewater, waste, transit, libraries, and emergency services should stay publicly delivered. These are core services people depend on every day, and the incentive structure of a private operator does not align with what a municipality needs from these systems.

Water is worth flagging as a specific case. As I mentioned elsewhere, I am open to exploring a municipal service corporation structure for water specifically, because that model can unlock access to grants that let us expand

22. How will you advance meaningful reconciliation with Aamjiwnaang First Nation and the broader Indigenous community at the municipal level?

Duty to consult is mandatory, affirmed by the supreme court and embedded constitutionally, not a box to check. I view UNDRIP and the ongoing work of building this relationship as an asset, one that strengthens the bond between our communities and helps assure prosperity across the region, not a constraint on it. I would gladly join the UNDRIP Working Group and continue the relationships I have been building with First Nations throughout this campaign. Reconciliation at the municipal level is directly tied to economic development, and industry. Every entity looking to invest here knows they need to consult the only question is whether we have good relations.

23. How will you ensure transparency, accessibility, and meaningful public engagement in municipal decision-making — and how will residents know whether you are delivering on your commitments?

This is one of my five priorities, Open Books and Straight Answers. Sarnia does not have a shortage of plans, it has a shortage of leaders willing to report honestly on them and explain why they are not getting funded. Right now the information is technically public but buried across hundreds of disconnected PDFs that no working person has time to assemble into a real picture. That is the appearance of transparency, not the thing itself.

Concretely, I will file a motion for interactive public financial dashboards that link city finances and decisions.

24. What is one decision you would make that may be unpopular in the short term but necessary for the long-term well-being of working people in Sarnia?

Advocating for density and affordable housing, specifically the missing middle, row houses, infill, and duplex-to-fourplex conversions, is the decision that will draw the most short-term pushback and matters the most.

Sarnia is not unique in facing a housing affordability crisis. Every Ontario municipality is dealing with the same macro forces. What we did do differently here is skip the bare minimum for three decades. Our stock of attached dwellings like row houses, infill, and missing middle housing sits roughly a third below most peer cities. That is



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and for your commitment to building a stronger community for working people in Sarnia.