

SARNIA & DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

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: Michelle Parks

Office sought: Sarnia City Council

Ward (if any):

Email: michelleparksforsarnia@gmail.com

Phone: 519-918-2942

Past elected office: St. Clair Catholic District School Board Trustee/Vice Chair

Date: 2006-2012 Vice Chair 2012-2018

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

I'm running for City Council because I believe Sarnia deserves strong, practical leadership focused on getting things done. I want to bring my experience in education, healthcare, business and community advocacy to the table, while listening to residents and being accountable for results. I'm passionate about responsible spending, protecting our core services, creating opportunities for growth, supporting affordable housing, and ensuring Sarnia is ready to compete for the jobs and investment of tomorrow.

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 strongly support keeping municipal services public and delivered by City employees whenever possible. In-house services provide greater accountability, consistency, quality control and long-term value for taxpayers, while also supporting good local jobs. I would protect core services such as water and wastewater, roads, public works, parks and recreation, and other essential municipal operations. Contracting out should be the exception, not the rule, and only considered when the City can clearly demonstrate that it provides better value without compromising service, accountability or local employment.

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.

I would prioritize stable, well-paid, unionized municipal employment and view the City's workforce as an investment in Sarnia, not simply a line item to reduce. Municipal jobs and services funded by taxpayers should provide fair wages, benefits, safe working conditions and opportunities for long-term employment. I would limit temporary and contract labour to situations where there is a genuine short-term or specialized need. Subcontracting should be the exception, not the default, and should only occur when there is a clear benefit to taxpayers without undermining existing municipal jobs or collective agreements.

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:

Yes. I support Community Benefits Agreements, fair-wage schedules and local-hiring requirements on major municipal infrastructure and construction projects, where legally and practically achievable.

When taxpayers are making significant investments in our community, I believe we should maximize the benefits that stay in Sarnia. That means creating opportunities for local workers and businesses, supporting fair wages and good union jobs, and ensuring major projects contribute to our local economy. These requirements should be transparent, competitive and structured to deliver strong value for taxpayers while building Sarnia's workforce and economy.

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:

Yes. I support a living-wage policy for municipal employees and for contractors and subcontractors working on major City-funded projects, incorporated into municipal procurement policies where legally permitted.

If public dollars are being spent, we should ensure the people doing the work are paid fairly and can afford to live in the community they serve. I would also support clear, enforceable wage requirements in contracts, with appropriate exemptions for small or specialized suppliers where necessary. Good wages, good jobs and responsible procurement can go hand in hand with value for taxpayers.

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?

I believe Sarnia should use every municipal lever available to strengthen and protect our skilled-trades workforce. Major municipal procurement should include local-hiring and fair-wage provisions where legally permitted, while permitting processes should be efficient and predictable so turnaround projects can move forward quickly. I would also work with local unions, contractors, Lambton College and industry to expand apprenticeships, training and job pipelines. When public policy can help ensure Sarnia workers are first in line for good local jobs, we should use it.

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: Absolutely. I believe workers should have a seat at the table when decisions affect their jobs, working conditions and livelihoods. If elected, I would commit to meeting regularly with the Sarnia & District Labour Council and its affiliates, as well as consulting directly with municipal workers before significant decisions affecting them are made. I want an open, respectful relationship with organized labour—one based on communication, transparency and finding practical solutions together, rather than consulting workers after decisions have already been made.

B HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

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 would approach homelessness through the same priorities outlined in my platform: safe communities, affordable housing, responsible spending and collaboration between the City, County, service providers and community partners.

We need more than emergency shelter—we need a continuum of housing, including supportive and transitional housing, with the supports people need to successfully maintain housing. I support projects such as Indwell, while recognizing that supportive housing must be thoughtfully located and managed so it works for both residents and the surrounding community.

I would also push for stronger coordination between municipal and County services, better use of existing housing and City-owned properties where appropriate, and measurable outcomes for every public dollar invested. We cannot simply move people from one location to another; we need solutions that help people move from homelessness to stability and independence.

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: Yes. I support maintaining overflow and low-barrier shelter options while permanent supportive housing is being developed. My platform recognizes that homelessness requires both immediate action and long-term solutions.

We cannot close emergency shelter capacity before there are realistic alternatives in place. At the same time, emergency shelter cannot become the permanent solution. I would support a coordinated approach between the City, County and community agencies that maintains safe emergency options while accelerating supportive, transitional and affordable housing.

My goal is to move people from crisis to stability—not simply move the crisis somewhere else.

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: Yes. This fits directly with my platform's commitment to affordable housing, responsible growth and practical municipal decision-making. I support zoning and parking policies that make it possible to build appropriate supportive and affordable housing, while still respecting the needs of existing neighbourhoods.

Projects should be evaluated on their merits, not stalled by unnecessary barriers. I believe the City should work proactively with organizations like Indwell to find solutions, address legitimate neighbourhood concerns and create a clear, predictable approval process that gets good housing projects built.

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?

I would make increasing the supply of affordable and non-market housing a clear municipal priority, consistent with my platform's focus on housing affordability, responsible growth and strong partnerships.

The City should identify suitable City-owned land, streamline zoning and approvals, and work with the County, non-profit housing providers, developers and organizations such as Indwell to get projects built. I would also support using municipal incentives and partnerships to leverage provincial and federal funding.

We need to build more, approve good projects faster, and use every available municipal tool to address the waitlist—not simply manage the shortage.

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: This aligns with my platform's focus on safe communities, affordable housing and practical solutions. At the same time, residents deserve safe, clean and accessible public spaces. The City should work with the County and service providers on a coordinated response that includes outreach, mental-health and addiction supports, shelter and housing options, while establishing clear expectations around public safety. The goal should be moving people toward stability—not simply moving them from one place to another.

C JOBS, COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

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?

I would make sure major industrial investment delivers long-term economic benefits for Sarnia residents, not simply increased industrial capacity. This fits directly with my platform's focus on economic development, good local jobs and responsible growth.

The City should use procurement, development agreements and other municipal tools, where legally permitted, to encourage local hiring, apprenticeships, fair wages and opportunities for local contractors and skilled trades. I would also strengthen partnerships with Lambton College, unions and local industry to ensure our workforce has the skills needed for emerging opportunities.

We should welcome investment—but we need to measure success by the quality and longevity of the jobs and economic opportunities it creates for Sarnia.

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?

I believe the City has an important role to play, even though employment and retraining programs are primarily provincial and federal responsibilities. Consistent with my platform's focus on good local jobs, economic development and workforce stability, I would bring the City, County, unions, Lambton College and local industry together quickly when a major employer closes.

The City should help coordinate retraining, connect displaced workers with employers and apprenticeships, advocate for government transition funding, and ensure workers are aware of available supports. We should also actively pursue new investment that can replace lost jobs with good, permanent, local employment.

Sarnia has a highly skilled workforce. Our response should be about protecting workers, investing in their skills and making sure they have a future here.

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?

I would focus on diversifying Sarnia's economy while building on the strengths we already have, which is a key part of my platform. We should continue supporting petrochemical investment and the skilled workforce it creates, while actively pursuing opportunities in clean technology, advanced manufacturing, the port and waterfront, tourism, downtown development and small business.

The City should make it easier to invest here through predictable permitting, strategic use of municipal lands, streamlined approvals and partnerships with Lambton College, industry and senior levels of government. I would also support initiatives that help small businesses start, grow and stay in Sarnia.

Our goal should be an economy that is resilient, innovative and diverse—creating good, permanent local jobs while making Sarnia a place where businesses want to invest and families want to build their future.

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: Yes. This aligns directly with my platform's focus on good local jobs, economic development and investing in Sarnia's future workforce. I would support incorporating apprenticeship opportunities, Red Seal training pathways, youth hiring and local-hiring provisions into major municipal projects and procurement, where legally permitted.

I would also strengthen partnerships between the City, Lambton College, local unions, contractors and industry to create clear pathways from high school into apprenticeships and skilled trades.

When the City invests taxpayer dollars in infrastructure, we should be creating opportunities for local people to build the projects—and build careers at the same time.

16. How will you support revitalization of downtown Sarnia and Mitton Village and strengthen local small businesses? I would make revitalizing downtown Sarnia and Mitton Village a key part of my platform, while connecting that work to our waterfront plan. Sarnia has an incredible waterfront asset, and we need to create stronger, more inviting connections between the waterfront, downtown, our trails, businesses and neighbourhoods.

The City should make it easier—not harder—for small businesses and property owners to invest through streamlined permitting, predictable approvals and practical zoning. I would also support improvements to streetscapes, cleanliness, safety, parking, walkability and public spaces, while working with our BIAs, businesses and property owners to identify barriers and pursue targeted incentives and partnerships.

I want people to come to Sarnia for our waterfront and stay to experience our downtown, restaurants, shops and local businesses. A connected waterfront, vibrant downtown and thriving Mitton Village can create more jobs, attract investment, strengthen our tax base and become an economic engine for the entire community.

D 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 would make environmental health and transparency a municipal priority, while recognizing that air-quality regulation is shared with the province and other levels of government. Consistent with my platform's focus on safe communities, responsible growth and protecting Sarnia's future, I would work closely with Aamjiwnaang First Nation, residents, industry and provincial regulators to ensure concerns are heard and acted upon.

The City can strengthen monitoring and public reporting, improve communication during air-quality incidents, ensure land-use planning considers cumulative impacts, and advocate strongly for stronger provincial standards and enforcement where needed. I would also support greater transparency around emissions and emergency response.

Residents should not have to choose between good jobs and clean air. We need both—and municipal leadership should help make sure economic development and public health move forward together.

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: Yes. I would strongly advocate to both the provincial and federal governments for cumulative-effects assessment, stronger air-quality monitoring and meaningful enforcement in Chemical Valley. This fits with my platform's commitment to protecting residents while supporting a strong local economy.

Sarnia has a unique industrial environment, and residents deserve to understand the combined impact of multiple emissions, not simply how individual facilities perform in isolation. I would work with Aamjiwnaang First Nation, local residents, industry and all levels of government to push for better data, transparency and accountability.

We can support good industrial jobs while demanding clean air and a healthy community. Sarnia deserves both.

19. What specific actions will you take to implement and accelerate Sarnia's climate and emissions-reduction plans? I would focus on practical, measurable actions rather than simply adopting another plan. Consistent with my platform, I would push the City to lead by example by improving the energy efficiency of municipal buildings, transitioning municipal vehicles and equipment where practical, expanding tree planting and active transportation, and supporting projects that reduce energy use and emissions.

I would also work with Aamjiwnaang First Nation, industry, Lambton College, residents and other levels of government to identify opportunities for emissions reduction and clean technology investment.

Most importantly, I would establish clear targets, timelines and public reporting so residents can see what is actually being accomplished. Sarnia can reduce emissions while protecting jobs and attracting the next generation of clean investment. Climate action should be practical, measurable and economically responsible.

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

I would protect affordable public transit as an essential municipal service and look for practical ways to expand ridership and accessibility. Consistent with my platform's focus on affordability, safe communities and responsible growth, I would support reliable routes and schedules, accessible transit, and improvements that connect neighbourhoods to employment, schools, healthcare, downtown and the waterfront.

For active transportation, I would prioritize safe, connected sidewalks, cycling routes and multi-use trails, rather than building disconnected pieces. New infrastructure should be planned with pedestrians, cyclists and accessibility in mind.

I would also work with the County and senior levels of government to secure funding so improvements don't place unnecessary pressure on municipal taxpayers. People should have safe, affordable ways to get where they need to go—regardless of whether they drive.

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?

I believe core municipal services should remain publicly delivered, particularly water and wastewater, waste collection, transit, libraries, recreation and emergency services. These are essential services that residents rely on, and keeping them in-house provides greater accountability, quality control and long-term stability.

My approach would be to strengthen—not shrink—these services through responsible budgeting, preventative maintenance, investment in infrastructure and equipment, adequate staffing, training and modern technology. I would also focus on improving coordination between departments and measuring service performance so taxpayers know they are receiving value.

I don't believe privatization should be the default solution to budget pressures. Sarnia should invest in the people and services that keep our community running.

22. How will you advance meaningful reconciliation with Aamjiwnaang First Nation and the broader Indigenous community at the municipal level? I believe meaningful reconciliation starts with building a respectful relationship based on listening, partnership and action—not simply statements or ceremonies. As part of my platform, I would support regular dialogue with Aamjiwnaang First Nation and the broader Indigenous community on issues where municipal decisions affect their community.

That means meaningful consultation on environmental protection, land use, economic development, infrastructure, housing and cultural priorities, while respecting Aamjiwnaang's rights and expertise. I would also support opportunities for Indigenous businesses and workers through municipal procurement and economic development.

Reconciliation needs to be an ongoing relationship, not a box to check. As a City Councillor, I would listen, learn and work collaboratively to turn that relationship into measurable action.

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? I believe transparency and accountability are fundamental to good municipal leadership. Residents should know what decisions are being considered, why they are being made, what they will cost and what outcomes are expected.

If elected, I would make a point of listening to residents before major decisions are made, communicating regularly through accessible community updates and reporting back on the commitments I make during this campaign. I would also support clear, measurable goals and timelines for major initiatives.

Most importantly, residents should be able to hold me accountable. If I say I'm going to do something, I believe I should report back on what I did, what I couldn't accomplish, and why. My commitment is to be accessible, honest and accountable—not just at election time, but throughout my entire term.

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? I would make the difficult decision to prioritize long-term financial sustainability over short-term political popularity, including being prepared to delay or say no to projects that are not financially responsible.

For working people, a strong economy requires a municipality that can afford to maintain its roads, water systems, transit, emergency services and other essential infrastructure without continually increasing the tax burden. I would push for better prioritization, stronger reserves and disciplined spending, while protecting good municipal jobs and core services.

Sometimes leadership means saying no today so we can still afford to say yes tomorrow. My goal would be a financially strong Sarnia that can continue creating good jobs, attracting investment and providing reliable services for generations.