



Key Questions for North Frontenac Municipal Candidates

Ron Higgins Submission September 14, 2022

Who we are

The North Frontenac Lake Association Alliance (NFLAA) is a coalition of 20 Lake Associations representing the interests of waterfront property owners broadly across the Township, and with membership comprising 59% of these property owners. The NFLAA was established by volunteers to provide representation, assistance, and leadership on shared interests.

Our main goal is to help lake associations in North Frontenac protect and enhance their environment and maintain the quality of water in our lakes for future generations.

Given that the NFLAA often works closely with North Frontenac Council, we are keenly interested in the candidates' positions on key strategic issues that are closely lined with our mission.

Questions for candidates:

1. Working relationship

Given the significant number of lakefront property owners who belong to NFLAA, how do you propose to resolve common issues and provide us a platform for our voice? How would you propose to engage with Lake Associations to understand their concerns? What steps will you take to foster this approach?

Mayor Ron Higgins Response

First off, I have enjoyed working with the NFLAA over the last eight years. Going forward I see a couple areas whereby we can improve how we work together and address key specific concerns that affect us all. One process that has worked very well is to setup working groups to address specific concerns and collect information and data to support the concerns and develop an action(s) going forward. This has worked well related to septic and short-term rental concerns as an example. Here are some opportunities that we can use to improve how the Township and NFLAA address concerns and enhance our collaboration.



I feel the Mayor and the NFLAA executive should meet quarterly as a minimum to have high level general discussions on current concerns, provide updates on projects, and develop our short and long range plans. This will provide even closer working relationships and ensure we stay aligned on common concerns and projects going forward that affect the Township as a whole.

If I am successful at another term as Mayor, I will put in place a process by which each Councillor will be responsible for a lake association within their Wards. This will ensure that each lake association could have regular meetings and/or communications at the local lake level, and any specific lake issues are dealt with directly. This will enhance communication and collaboration within the Wards themselves and get all of Council involved in our collaborative goals.

2. Mandatory Septic Inspection Program

Because of the critical importance of septic maintenance programs and the impact on the quality of water, this is a topic of vital importance to the NFLAA. Will you work with the NFLAA, MVCA and the council to implement a septic inspection program for lake front properties that defines when a mandatory assessment will be required? Eg sale of lakefront property, age of septic system, time since last inspection etc.

Mayor Ron Higgins Response

As you know we have been discussing this topic for years and I am still of the opinion that more data and information is required before I would implement a mandatory septic inspection program. Just recently I was privy to an inspection result for a 30-year-old septic system, and it was found to be in great condition. The lake sampling from the lake associations and MVCA have not provided any information on increased phosphorous trends and in some cases where we see spikes in the counts it has not been directly tied to faulty septic systems. In the volunteer programs, where failed systems have been detected, the lake quality data never recorded any increased levels of phosphorous that determined faulty septic systems were at fault.

Having said this, I remain focused on the septic concern, and I have submitted a request to the Ontario Realtors Association of Ontario (OREA) to implement a mandatory septic inspection at the point of sale. This would ensure any faulty or out of date systems are addressed accordingly and over time will, ensure we have high quality performing septic systems throughout the Township and the rest of Ontario which would ensure we maintain water quality throughout the Province. On September 14 I found out that the OREA will not



be implementing such a program. I am now currently looking at other potential options and will address this continuing issue with NFLAA in the new term of Council.

The Township has also ensured no new septic systems will be located close to any water source to prevent any possible rise in Phosphorous levels due to septic failure. I will also ensure that we continue the volunteer septic inspection projects with MVCA. This program has been valuable in education and addressing any issues found. We all realize that this will not capture a defective system for those that do not volunteer which can be addressed by the mandatory inspection at point of sale.

This is one concern that I will remain focused on and will continue to collaborate with the NFLAA on. When the NFLAA and/or MVCA provide fact-based data and information that there is a direct correlation between increased levels of Phosphorous and failed septic systems, I would then put forward a motion to implement mandatory septic inspections. I know that this may not sound proactive, but as a Mayor I need to balance everyone's opinion on the matter which is why I need solid facts before acting accordingly. Implementing such programs comes with costs to the Township related to implementation and enforcement which can be addressed either through taxation or user fees.

As a comment, Central Frontenac put in a place a bylaw for a mandatory septic inspection on waterfront properties and they are having difficulty to fulfill or enforce due to lack of suppliers to conduct such a program.

3. Short-term Rentals (STRs)

The NFLAA is part of a committee made up of Council representatives from four municipalities including North Frontenac. This committee has now produced a Report on Short-term Rentals which recommends a tiered approach to the regulation of STRs (the more you rent, the greater the degree of regulation). The NFLAA is urging North Frontenac to act on this issue. Given the impact on environmental quality and other issues such as protecting small residential cottage communities from incompatible land use, we are concerned about the impact of STRs on the lakes.

How committed are you to enacting a Bylaw on Short Term Rental? What specific next steps and time frame are you willing to advocate for?

Mayor Ron Higgins Response



I am totally committed. I have been working with NFLAA for over a year on this topic and we have developed a draft criterion for a bylaw in this regard.

One key issue is how we allow such a business to operate as a business versus someone renting to help pay off a mortgage as an example. A business should not be able to operate on a residential zoned property. If I am re-elected this issue falls into one of my top three priorities of which Planning is my number one priority. I need to address STR rentals as my first order of business with the first step is identifying each STR I North Frontenac, determine if they are legally compliant (operating on a commercially zoned property) and if not take the appropriate action which would be shutting them down.

I have been hesitant to implement a bylaw up to this point. I will remain open to implement an STR bylaw in the next term of office. When I started working with NFLAA on this issue I was not supportive of another bylaw for the sake of a bylaw. After working with NFLAA, over the last six months in particular, my position has been moving towards implementation of such a bylaw. Although we tried to communicate, as a step towards addressing this issue about what a responsible owner should be doing, I still hear of some issues this past summer. Although complaints to me were down this year it is clear the issue has not gone away.

Next steps to address this issue

- 1. Identify all STR and determine compliance or not related to our zoning bylaw*
- 2. Address all non-compliant STR operations*
- 3. Determine if the above actions have addressed the issue*
- 4. If yes no further action may be required*
- 5. If no, enact a bylaw and ensure enforcement is in place to address*
- 6. The bylaw would include a user fee to cover operational and enforcement costs and not through taxation*

4. What are your top three priorities coming into this role?

Mayor Ron Higgins Response

My top three issues that I will focus on are listed here, and I have also included all my priorities that I will be focused on, for your added information



1. *Short Term Rental*
2. *Cell/Broadband*
3. *Septic Inspections*
4. *By Law Enforcement*
5. *Boat Launch Parking*
6. *Care for our seniors*
7. *Land Claim*

In addition, I am providing my overall high-level platform that I intend to focus on for my next term of office, as listed here.

1. *Planning*
 1. *Determine how to make planning more user friendly, efficient, and effective*
 2. *Identify opportunity for cost and red tape reductions*
2. *Economic Development*
 1. *Continue to push for Cell and Broadband service*
 2. *Continue working with businesses to help leverage the economy for NF*
 3. *Focus on ECO Tourism and trails*
3. *Climate Change*
 1. *Continue to protect wetlands*
 2. *Continue to upgrade infrastructure for significant rain events*
 3. *Keep our Emergency Hazard Identification and Risk Analysis plan up to date annually*
4. *Indigenous Relations*
 1. *Continue to build and strengthen relations*
 2. *Focus on Community development*
 3. *Provide Education and communication*
 4. *Collaboration for Economic Development*
5. *Younger Generation Engagement*