

2024 Geoff Stewart - Mayoralty Candidate

Candidates in District 9 & 10 and the two Mayoralty Candidates were asked to complete and submit a questionnaire composed by The Shoreline Journal. Questions are printed in *Italic*, while candidate's answers are printed in **BOLD. The following is the submission from Geoff Stewart, Deputy Mayor and councillor District 3 mayoralty candidate for County of Colchester.**



Geoff Stewart

What do you consider to be the strongest asset of the municipality and how in the short term can it become an even better Municipality of Colchester?

Our strongest asset is our people. In Colchester County, you will find some of the hardest working, most caring people anywhere.

From one end of our community to the other, residents want to feel safe and live here affordably. I want to get to work for the residents of Colchester County by ensuring we tackle the serious issues of crime in our neighbourhoods and find ways to lower taxes, which are too high.

How will you assist residents to co-operate and urge all in the municipality to ensure better services are provided to the very remote rural areas?

The Municipality of Colchester County is renowned for its community spirit, From Tatamagouche to Stewiacke and communities in between neighbours look after neighbours. As Mayor, I will continue to support our community organizations, like fire departments, community halls, and service groups, while ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

What services need to be improved to achieve and deliver a better lifestyle for all residents?

One word, affordability. Taxes are too high, we need to make life more affordable for our citizens if we want to continue to grow and build in Colchester County.

Everyone complains about condition of roads and highways. Since rural residents have to travel farther for everyone – work / shopping / medical / banking and government service should roads in rural areas be prioritized?

Having roads and highways that are in good shape are important for safety and comfort. I will continue to work with MLA colleagues in the Provincial Government Tom Taggart, Dave Ritcey and Larry Harrison to ensure Colchester County gets its fair share of pavement. Being able to work positively with other levels of government is vital to moving our region forward.

Should a plan be developed to improve, pave or repave all county-owned roads within five years? What about J Class roads?

Roads are important, and as Mayor, I will work to ensure that we have roads that are in good shape and well-maintained.

Based on tri-government level of financing (Feds/Provine/Municipal) should the municipality pay half its 1/3 or 20% (Feds 40% / Prov 40%) share from general revenues, while applying an area rate based on assessment to all tax bills for the remainder?

I have knocked on hundreds of doors since the beginning of the campaign. Residents are clear, they don't want to pay more tax, hidden fees or area rates. I will not be in favor of any area rate that puts more of a burden on residents who already pay too much to the three levels of government.

With an aging population should the municipality encourage more senior and long term care housing facilities be developed and those facilities be built in the rural areas, which would allow residents to remain in their community and also be a job provider?

Seniors are the backbone of our community, and I am relieved that the provincial government has ensured that building new long-term care beds is a priority. With more than 5000 new beds being built across the province, as Mayor I will be a willing partner with the province in supporting seniors in our community.

Since 4600 jobs are projected for Scotia Port (should it proceed) and many other job-creating projects planned throughout the municipality, should the municipality issue an RFP for a "Needs and Capacity" study to determine what will be needed for the next 10 years for tradespeople / professional services / capacity to supply construction materials / building supplies / restaurants / or accommodations and how schools / NSCC / apprenticeship programs need to increase programming to train people for those jobs?

Our region is growing, and with the right leadership and a strong team, that growth can create opportunities. All three levels of government have a responsibility to be ready for the future. Working with council, municipal staff, and our provincial and federal counterparts, ensuring we have a plan to meet the challenges of tomorrow is at the top of my mind.

Staying in school is vital. How would you recommend "students at risk" be given opportunity for part classroom time combined with "supervised work term" at local or nearby business to learn basics of a trade but get high school diploma?

We are blessed to have great educational institutions in our region. Our public Schools, The NSCC, and The Dalhousie Agricultural Campus all play an important role in our community. While education is a provincial responsibility, I support seeing more trade focused learning and practical education in our system.

The ability of Colchester communities / residents to be able to communicate with their nearby neighbours or to the other end of the county is vital. The reverse is true, it is essential the county be able to easily and economically contact area residents and business en masse. To achieve this would you support / actively promote a \$25 annual fee be added to every property tax bill with proceeds used by communities to develop a "Local economic / family assistance fund" or "Aid to Entrepreneurs Fund"?

Unfortunately, I don't believe this is something the municipality should do. Our tax bill is already too high, I am not in favor in adding any additional costs to taxpayers.

Bridgewater Couple Woodland Owners of the Year

Judy and Thomas Mailman of Bridgewater are the western region and provincial winners of the 2024 Woodland Owners of the Year Award.

"I'd like to congratulate the Mailmans and thank them for passing along their extensive forestry knowledge to future generations of Nova Scotians," said Tory Rushton, Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. "Private woodlot owners are crucial to preserving our forests and an important part of our economy, and it's fantastic to see so many collaborating with us to promote ecological forestry in Nova Scotia."

The Mailmans have worked hard to take care of their woodland. They have taken part in a project on silviculture for hemlock woolly adelgid – an insect that attacks hemlock trees – hosted classes from Nova Scotia Community College, worked with researchers on tree care and wood heating, and put up birdhouses. They have also teamed up with the Western Woodlot Services Cooperative to promote their woodlands.

The central region winners are Julia and David MacMillan of Tatamagouche, Colchester County, and the eastern region winners are brothers Brian and Steven Eadie of Clydesdale, Antigonish County.

The awards honour private landowners for exceptional management of their woodlands and superior forestry practices on private land. They promote sustainable stewardship and raise public awareness about the significance of private woodlands in Nova Scotia.

Nominations were assessed based on integrated resource management practices, employing environmental standards, meeting sustainability goals, protection of wildlife habitats, enhancement of woodlots and understanding of forestry and woodlot management.



Judy and Thomas Mailman, of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, own multiple woodlots and often participate in and host various educational events about forest stewardship.

(Photo courtesy NS Department of Natural Resources)



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