

**BRIAN DERBYSHIRE**

**THE MAYOR'S HANDBOOK**

*A Leadership Framework for Strathroy-Caradoc*

**Principles Before Politics**

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## Preface

Every election gives residents an opportunity to ask an important question: Who is the person asking for my trust?

Unfortunately, it isn't possible for me to sit down and have a personal conversation with every resident of Strathroy-Caradoc. This handbook is my way of extending that conversation.

I wrote it so you can understand not only what I believe, but why I believe it.

Inside these pages, you'll find my philosophy of leadership, the principles that guide my decisions, the standards I will hold myself to, and the vision I have for the future of our municipality.

This handbook is not intended to be a collection of campaign promises. It is intended to help you understand who I am, how I approach difficult decisions, and what you can expect from me if I have the privilege of serving as your Mayor.

Whether we have met before or not, I hope these pages give you a better understanding of my character, my priorities, and the values that shape my approach to public service.

Most importantly, I hope this handbook gives you confidence that every significant decision I make will be guided by consistent principles, careful preparation, thoughtful leadership, and a deep respect for the people and communities that make Strathroy-Caradoc such a special place to call home.

Thank you for taking the time to read it.

I invite you not only to learn about my vision, but also to hold me accountable to the standards I have chosen to set for myself.

- Brian Derbyshire

## Why I Am Running

I am running because I believe municipal politics should remain focused on the people and communities we serve.

The Mayor has a responsibility to residents, ratepayers and Council. The Mayor does not work for staff; the Mayor works with staff. A strong Mayor builds a constructive relationship with the CAO and municipal staff while remembering that elected officials are accountable to the public.

I believe the Mayor should help Council obtain the information it needs, encourage respectful and informed debate, build consensus where possible, and ensure residents understand why major decisions are made.

My goal is not to protect a particular outcome. It is to help create a process in which Council can make the best decision possible for Strathroy-Caradoc.

# The Five Cornerstones

## 1. Principles Before Politics

The right decision should be guided by sound principles, not political convenience. Leadership requires consistency, integrity, and the courage to make decisions based on what is best for the community over the long term.

## 2. Understand Before You Commit

Before committing public resources, changing policy, or making significant decisions, we must first understand the problem, evaluate the options, consider the long-term consequences, and explain the reasons for our decision. Preparation leads to confidence. Understanding leads to better government.

## 3. Better Decisions Come From Better Questions

The quality of our decisions depends on the quality of the questions we ask. Good leadership encourages thoughtful discussion, welcomes different perspectives, and seeks the information necessary to make informed decisions.

## 4. Good Financial Stewardship Is Not About Spending Less. It Is About Spending Wisely.

Every taxpayer dollar deserves respect. Financial decisions should be thoughtful, transparent, sustainable, and focused on delivering long-term value to the community.

## 5. A Healthy Municipality Grows in Balance

Strong communities require balance between rural and urban interests, residential and employment growth, new investment and responsible maintenance, today's needs and tomorrow's responsibilities. Growth should strengthen the entire municipality and leave future generations with greater opportunities than we inherited.

## The Role of the Mayor

A good Mayor must be able to lead, but leadership also requires the ability to listen.

No Mayor knows everything. Good leadership means surrounding yourself with people who will tell you the truth, seeking expertise from people who understand the subject, listening to residents and Council, and being willing to learn before making a decision.

The Mayor leads the process, not the outcome. The Mayor should create the conditions for Council to have informed, respectful discussion and then respect Council's collective decision.

The Mayor should build consensus where possible, make difficult decisions when necessary, represent the municipality professionally outside Council chambers, and maintain a constructive working relationship with the CAO and staff.

Respect does not require agreement. We can disagree strongly with a report, recommendation or opinion while continuing to respect the person presenting it.

## Core Values

Stewardship - Public resources are entrusted to us. They should be managed carefully, responsibly and with the future in mind.

Preparation - Major decisions deserve preparation. Council should understand the problem before committing to the solution.

Respect - Every person deserves to be heard and treated fairly. Respectful disagreement is part of healthy democratic government.

Accountability - Elected officials should accept responsibility for their decisions and be prepared to explain them.

Transparency - Residents should be able to understand how and why important decisions are made.

Humility - Leadership requires recognizing that no individual has every answer. Good leaders listen, learn and seek informed advice.

## My Decision-Making Framework

My decision is never formulated until I have received and considered the facts available to me.

For significant decisions, I return to four steps:

### 1. Understand the Problem

Define what we are actually trying to solve. Ask questions until the need, risks and constraints are understood.

### 2. Consider the Options

Identify reasonable alternatives. Understand the advantages, disadvantages, costs and risks of each.

### 3. Think Long-Term

Consider the full life-cycle cost, future obligations, community impact and consequences for future Councils and taxpayers.

### 4. Explain the Decision

Residents deserve to know what was decided, why it was decided, what alternatives were considered, and what result we expect.

## Questions Before a Major Decision

Before supporting a major commitment, I want Council to be able to answer questions such as:

- What problem are we solving?
- What facts do we have, and what information is still missing?
- What reasonable alternatives were considered?
- What are the immediate and long-term costs?
- What risks come with each option?
- How does this affect existing services, infrastructure and taxpayers?
- How will success be measured?
- Can we clearly explain why this is the right decision for Strathroy-Caradoc?

## **Supporting Principle: Public Process and Public Decisions**

A public process is essential. The question is whether the decision was the right one.

Transparency allows residents to see how decisions are made. Good governance also requires us to evaluate whether those decisions were well-informed, thoughtfully considered and in the long-term interests of the community.

A good public process should improve the likelihood of a good decision. It does not, by itself, guarantee one.

## The Standards I'll Hold Myself To

These are the standards I will hold myself to and the standards I will encourage throughout Council and the municipal organization, while respecting the independent role of Council members and the professional responsibilities of staff.

### Financial Stewardship

Good financial stewardship is not about spending less. It is about spending wisely. Major expenditures should have a clearly defined need, realistic scope, long-term financial plan and measurable public value. Debt can be a useful tool, but it should be strategic and should never replace proper planning. Healthy reserves, sustainable debt and predictable taxation strengthen the municipality's ability to respond and invest.

### Infrastructure & Asset Management

The goal is not simply to build new infrastructure. It is to protect, maintain, improve and strategically expand the assets entrusted to the municipality. Before major infrastructure decisions, I will seek to understand the condition of existing assets, maintenance and rehabilitation options, life-cycle costs, operating costs, asset-management priorities and future replacement obligations.

### Water, Wastewater & Environmental Stewardship

Safe drinking water and responsible wastewater treatment protect public health, the environment and future growth. Major investments should be based on a clearly understood problem, reasonable alternatives, sound engineering, regulatory requirements, environmental impacts, capital and operating costs, risks and measurable outcomes.

### Growth, Planning & Housing

Growth should improve Strathroy-Caradoc rather than simply increase its size. It should be supported by infrastructure, financially sustainable, respectful of existing neighbourhoods and rural communities, and accompanied by employment opportunity. Complete communities need places to live, work and thrive.

### Rural Communities & Agriculture

Agriculture and rural communities are foundational to Strathroy-Caradoc. Decisions affecting rural areas should consider farmland, drainage, roads, property rights, responsible land use, rural services and the long-term sustainability of villages, hamlets and farms.

### Economic Development & Employment Lands

A healthy municipality needs places to live and places to work. I support strategic planning for employment-ready lands in appropriate parts of Strathroy-Caradoc, supported by infrastructure and

compatible land use. Economic development should support existing businesses, attract responsible investment, create local employment and strengthen the tax base.

#### Governance & Public Trust

Trust must be earned. I will strive to lead respectfully, listen before deciding, encourage thoughtful discussion, ask difficult questions, explain major decisions, support transparency, accept accountability and lead by example.

#### Recreation, Parks & Community Life

Parks, recreation, libraries, trails, cultural spaces and community organizations strengthen quality of life. Community investments should reflect community priorities, be financially sustainable, accessible, and provide long-term value.

#### Organizational Leadership

Strong municipal government depends on a respectful professional relationship among Council, the Mayor, the CAO, staff and residents. I will respect Council's governance role, staff expertise and the CAO's administrative role while encouraging collaboration, preparation, professionalism and continuous improvement.

Customer service is not a department. It is the standard by which every municipal service should be delivered.

## A Vision for Strathroy-Caradoc

Municipal government should do more than manage today's challenges. It should prepare the community for tomorrow's opportunities.

My vision is a municipality that is financially strong, well planned, trusted by its residents and prepared for future generations.

### A Financially Sustainable Municipality

Financial stability creates opportunity. Long-term planning, healthy reserves, responsible debt management and wise investment give Council the flexibility to maintain services and infrastructure while keeping taxation as predictable as possible.

### Infrastructure That Serves Future Generations

Roads, bridges, water and wastewater systems, parks, buildings and other public assets should be planned, maintained and replaced with future generations in mind.

### A Strong and Balanced Local Economy

Employment opportunities should grow alongside residential development. Strathroy-Caradoc should support existing businesses and create opportunities for responsible new investment throughout the municipality.

### Thriving Rural and Urban Communities

Urban neighbourhoods, rural villages, hamlets, farms and businesses each contribute to our identity. Every community should feel represented, respected and included in the future we build together.

### A Municipality That Earns Public Trust

Residents should have confidence that decisions are carefully prepared, respectfully discussed, clearly explained and made in the community's long-term interest.

### Continuous Improvement

Every project, budget, policy and decision provides an opportunity to learn. Municipal government should measure results honestly, welcome constructive feedback and continually seek better ways to serve residents.

### The Municipality We Are Building

I want Strathroy-Caradoc to be a place where families choose to stay, businesses choose to invest,

agriculture continues to thrive, young people see opportunity, seniors feel connected and future Councils inherit a stronger foundation.

My ambition is not simply to help Strathroy-Caradoc become larger. It is to help it become one of the best-managed municipalities in Ontario - known for responsible leadership, thoughtful planning, financial stewardship and the trust it earns from residents.

## Governing in Practice

The principles in this handbook are intended to guide action, not sit on a shelf.

### First 100 Days

My first months as Mayor would focus on listening, understanding and building productive working relationships. I would meet with members of Council to understand their priorities, establish a constructive relationship with the CAO and senior staff, review the municipality's financial position and major capital commitments, confirm that Council has the information it needs for informed decisions, and begin improving communication with residents.

### First Year

The first year should strengthen the municipality's foundation: long-term financial planning, asset management, major infrastructure priorities, transparency, public communication and clear measures of success for major initiatives.

### Over the Term

My priorities would remain consistent: build public trust, strengthen financial sustainability, support responsible growth, invest wisely in infrastructure, support agriculture and rural communities, expand economic opportunity and leave the municipality stronger than I found it.

### Measuring Success

Success should not be measured only by what government spent or built. We should ask whether infrastructure is in better condition, debt and reserves are sustainable, residents are better informed, businesses are investing, services are improving, and future Councils are better positioned to succeed.

## My Commitment to Residents

I will listen before I decide.

I will prepare before I vote.

I will ask questions when I do not understand.

I will respect every taxpayer dollar.

I will consider the long-term consequences of major decisions.

I will respect people even when we disagree.

I will explain my decisions.

I will accept accountability for the decisions I make.

I will continue learning.

And I will always remember who I serve.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about me, my principles and my vision for Strathroy-Caradoc. Whether or not you choose to support my campaign, I appreciate your interest in the future of our municipality.

If I earn your trust, I will work every day to live up to the standards set out in this handbook.

Judge me not only by the promises of a campaign, but by whether I live up to the standards I have set for myself.

- Brian Derbyshire