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New Ward 1 Councillor cut out for the job

Patrycia Chalupczynska

Linda Sloan has covered a lot of ground on her way to Edmonton City Hall.

An emergency room nurse for 11 years, the 44-year-old also served one term as a provincial Liberal MLA for the Riverview riding before she was eventually elected this fall to represent west Edmonton's Ward 1 on city council.

"I felt this position offered an opportunity to impact things closer to home," says Sloan, in her clam and confident manner. "I felt the city needed strong advocacy. There are significant issues the city's facing relative to funding."

Sloan, the mother of two teenaged children, says the current city council is a diverse group.

"I think there's a very good cross section of interests and backgrounds on council, and youth and maturity," she says. "I think it's a council of substance and there's a desire to work together."

Like many first-time councillors, Sloan has spent her first few weeks adjusting to the back-to-back meetings and familiarizing herself with how the city does business.

"The first month has mainly been orientation with the city departments and information intensive. It has been very hectic," she says. "It's been long days and lots of reading."

But, Sloan's past experience as the former president of the Staff Nurses Association of Alberta as well as an opposition MLA in the Alberta legislature has already proven useful during the city's budget deliberations.

She's used to analyzing budgets and crunching number.

"The toughest part of the budget is going to be weighing the priorities," she says.

But, Sloan says she isn't afraid to jump in and get to know the issues.

A bright yellow firefighter helmet sitting on her office armoire, serves as a reminder of the lengths she is willing to go to gain an understanding of concerns.

Before election day, Sloan visited Fire Station No. 19 in Callingwood to listen to concerns of firefighters.

The men of Station No. 19 told her that if she got elected she would have to come back to the station and cook supper for the brigade.

Being a good sport, she returned and took the opportunity to talk about the budget.

“One of the things I didn’t know was how understaffed the department is. Through the years of not having adequate funding, we have not been able to keep pace with the population growth,” says Sloan, pointing out the city has the same number of firefighters now as it did in 1987. “Half of them will be able to retire in 10 years. We have some challenges there. We need an additional 100 positions... We have to make some advances in addressing that.”

There are other issues Sloan would like to address in her ward besides the understaffed fire department.

Those include transportation, transit access to outlying areas, concerns about seniors and how to make the city more senior friendly, and fixing crumbling neighbourhoods and infrastructure.