

Chamber of Commerce Questionnaire

1. What inspired you to put your name forward for consideration in this election?

I am a life long resident of one of the finest communities in the world. Appreciating all of the advantages and amenities which we enjoy in Medicine Hat, I want to serve on Council so that I can be a part of seeing those continue and become even better.

2. What qualifications and/or experiences will assist you in being an effective councillor?

Experience, enthusiasm and energy combined with intelligence and integrity. I am a recently retired lawyer, having served over 17 years as a Crown Prosecutor and over 20 years in private practice. Therefore, I've been a public servant and in business for myself. Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States once said: "Let common sense and common honesty have fair play and they will soon set things to rights." Common sense and honesty are hallmarks of my character.

3. Please list your top 5 strategic priorities that you will commit to during your four year term.

- (i) returning NGPR (City owned natural gas and petroleum resources) to profitability
- (ii) continuing our program of infrastructure (deep utility) renewal
- (iii) finding the *right* answer for our public transit system
- (iv) seeking appropriate budgetary ways and means to reduce the costs of delivering our public services
- (v) working with Invest Medicine Hat and the DMO (tourism) to achieve growth and expansion in our businesses, industry, tourism, and residents.

4. What opportunities for growth and development do you see in the future for Medicine Hat? What strategies will you seek to implement in order to achieve this?

Medicine Hat College and Defence Research Canada at CFB Suffield provide great opportunities to attract high tech businesses and good jobs to this city. The City's contracted partner, Invest Medicine Hat, has done excellent work in these areas. Medicine Hat College has a very positive philosophy of working with community partners, business and industry to develop educational opportunities and business growth/development. The City should be ever ready to play a part in these ventures.

5. What aspects of the current Tri-Area Intermunicipal Development Plan would you like to see expanded, eliminated or amended?

We must move beyond physical development plans along our shared boundaries to a place where all of our public services are considered, regional components established and joint funding agreed to. The Town of Redcliff and the County of Cypress have been great neighbours and understand the importance of regional approaches and the cost sharing of regional benefits, but this must be extended to operational costs and not just contributions to capital spending.

6. Businesses in Medicine Hat pay a non-residential tax rate that is above the provincial ratio

average. In your opinion what is a reasonable ratio? What factors should be considered when calculating the non-residential tax rates?

These ratios are a challenge for every municipality and vary a great deal based on the circumstances of each community. The City of Medicine Hat has reduced that ratio and we should continue to look to reduce that ratio further, but we must remain cognizant of the burden on residential tax payers who have no way to adjust their revenues to meet the tax demand. I am not prepared to cite a ratio without examining all aspects of the question at the time it is being addressed. The right ratio lies not in a randomly chosen number but in the balance of ability to pay and use of the services.

7. What is your personal vision for downtown Medicine Hat? Are there any further opportunities that should be included in the overarching future plans for development in the core of the City?

My vision for the downtown is that it will be an arts and entertainment hub with a vital residential component and retail businesses that support that cultural and residential core. A full service hotel is an important aspect of that renewal and to that end I hope that we can look at acquiring the CPR yard (not the main rail line which should stay in place) for retail, hotel and residential development.

8. What vision and direction do you have for the development of our recreational facilities so as to best service the population of Medicine Hat?

Our current portfolio of skating rinks, swimming pools, gymnasias, pickle ball courts, tennis courts, soccer fields, libraries, galleries, art studios, theatre and rehearsal space is second to none. The operation and maintenance of these facilities comes at significant cost. We need to align user fees to the cost of delivery while also observing that public investment should result in public benefit. That is what Financially Fit for the Future was partly about. As with so many things in public life, finding the right balance is the secret and regular adjustments based on public feedback are critical.

9. ...how would you pursue lower airfares, increased flight frequency, better connection times and increased load capacity for travelers?

The CMH has already taken the first giant step in that direction by expanding and renovating our municipally owned airport. Runway maintenance and construction are a future part of the plan but air service providers have told us that the lengthening of our runway is not something that requires immediate attention. The City continues to work with major airlines to show them our facilities, explain our customer requirements and attract new carriers and additional flights. Airfares, flight frequency and load capacity are all functions of a free market economy, demand for service and the prospect of good returns to the service provider.

10. How do you feel that the council and the City can provide a more efficient business-to-government process to streamline government services for business both online and within city Hall?

City Hall must and does listen to the businesses and individuals who come looking for service in various departments. We have responded effectively to many of the things we have heard and will continue to do so. City administration don't have all the answers but they are good listeners and will implement suggestions which are both effective and cost sensitive. Business and development are not uncomplicated and simplistic jingos like "cut the red-tape" don't achieve anything. Ideally, business and public municipal administration regard themselves as partners in delivering services. Together we can make it happen for the common good. That attitude is what I have tried to foster at City Hall.

11. As costs ... increase ... how will you evaluate the increases in fees and charges to ensure fee structures are reasonable and that any increases are implemented over a reasonable period of time?

I don't like automatic across the board increases based on cost of living indexes being applied to user fees at City Hall. On the other hand, as costs, including the cost of labour, increase, the City cannot simply absorb those costs and pass them on to the taxpayer. Annual evaluation of what is truly necessary and consultation with stake holders about what is affordable are required.

12. What are your plans and/or strategies for achieving financial sustainability while balancing service delivery, capital requirements, cost containment and fair taxation levels?

This is what Financially Fit for the Future was all about. It involves each department of the City examining everything it does, determining where cuts and costs savings can be achieved and then running all of those through the filter of public input through user group consultation, surveys, open houses and the lens of City Council. Tax increases are to be avoided where possible but it cannot be denied that our municipal taxes are the lowest in the country and if we want to maintain the high level of services provided the tax base will have to increase.