

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

I've lived in other cities across Canada, but since moving here five years ago I have found home. This oasis in the prairies is an underappreciated gem. Yes, we've got challenges, but nothing that can't be fixed.

I'm running for city council and through small, substantive, concrete steps we can get this great city to an even better place. I believe it's important to keep the core of our city healthy and vibrant, but this will require us to build the city inward, not outward. I believe in community and that by actively listening to each other we can find the solutions we need.

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

The success of the city depends in large part on an effective city council. Everything depends on council leadership. Local government is a powerful force and it can help or hinder our city. It's also an enormous and complicated enterprise.

I've attended city council meetings for three years and noticed that on the vast majority of issues this city council has voted 9-0. Consensus is great, but I think the city is better served with more vigorous debate at council. To get to diverse views on council you need a wider variety of candidates running for councillor. That doesn't happen without new people putting their name forward.

I've learned as much as I can by watching the process. There are so many buzzwords used during campaigns--conservative, liberal, fiscal responsibility, cutting red tape--they lack specificity and tell you little about a candidate's ability to deliver on election promises. And you can't deliver without an understanding of city processes.

My experience working with the community through the library will help me on council. My professional experience in management will help. I analyze current events as a regular columnist for the Medicine Hat News. That has given me experience studying and articulating different points of views and looking for common ground and new approaches.

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

Building a more responsive city:

- Through bringing diverse viewpoints to council discussions
- Clearly explaining the rationale behind council decisions

- Support proposals from Chamber of Commerce to improve city operations.
- Split the Land Development and Properties department

Increase economic development:

- Focus on local business retention and expansion
- Focus on downtown development and review incentive program
- Review alternatives to the City Centre Development Agency
- Develop and expand events like Stampede, JazzFest, and Tongue on the Post

Get the city budget on track:

- Minimize tax increases through selective service cuts
- Recognize not all city services will make financial sense
- Review alternatives to the current council's financial plan

Improve our neighbourhoods:

- Support initiatives brought forward by residents and neighbourhoods associations
- Create matching grants for arts, culture and community projects
- Develop our city inward not outward
- Hold city council accountable to current neighbourhood development plans

But the overall priority for me is ensuring that city council makes the best decisions it can. Whatever our goals are, if we don't make good municipal decisions everything will suffer. Case in point, the transit issue. Originally council cut transit to save taxpayers money, but the cost of reversing this decision alone will cost taxpayers an extra 1-1.5% in taxes.

I believe part of the solution is clearly communicating the rationale behind council decisions, especially the downsides. Too often government paints too a rosy picture of their new plans. There are rarely perfect solutions, but the public should be aware of the cons of any approach.

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?

While attracting new business investment to our community should always be a priority we should recognize the competitive environment Medicine Hat is in. A focus on local business retention and expansion would give us a better return and help us diversify our local economy. Our local economy is diverse. If we helped our medium sized businesses grow into large ones and our small businesses into medium sized ones we'd be making good progress.

We like to talk about the Medicine Hat advantage, but the city has had the lowest taxes and utilities for the past few decades and that has hardly led to an economic boom. Over the same period cities like Grand Prairie and Red Deer have seen much better economic growth. One big difference is that those cities have seen much greater population growth while Medicine Hat has grown slowly at 1-1.5% over the last 20 years.

Population growth is a major economic driver. Focusing on attracting people, rather than new business, to Medicine Hat would be a different strategy. As someone who has lived across Canada I can attest that Medicine Hat has great advantages here. First, the city is drop dead gorgeous. Second, the weather is better than anywhere else in the province. The quality of life here is high. We can help Tourism Medicine Hat continue to build awareness about this city. We'll see more people discovering us and moving here.

Arts and culture is growing, but there is so much potential to develop! Medalta. Arts and cultural spaces. Local restaurants and cafes. Festivals like the MH Stampede, JazzFest, Tongue on the Post, Filthy Hands, have the potential attract tourists as well as new residents to our community.

5. In the past Intermunicipal Collaboration has been entered into on a voluntary basis. The Municipal Government Act review will make the adoption of an Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework a requirement. What aspects of the current Tri-Area Intermunicipal Development Plan would you like to see expanded, eliminated or amended?

Our intermunicipal development plan will help us prioritize development for the next 25 years. We're isolated out here in SE Alberta and working together is good. We'll need to agree on regional transportation priorities. The twinning of Hwy 3 from Medicine Hat to Taber needs to happen, but it'll take concerted effort over many years to make it happen. It is an essential corridor for business in SE Alberta. However, what I am fully against is any potential bypass of Hwy 1 around Medicine Hat.

We are currently working together on a regional waste management strategy and have had other successes like the agreement on the South Boundary Road improvements. Some areas we haven't been able to find agreement on such as water treatment for Redcliff and fire services for the County. But the success of Medicine Hat will depend on Cypress County and Redcliff also continuing to succeed.

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?

Medicine Hat has been closing the gap between residential and non-residential taxes. The Chamber's goal is to reach the vicinity of the provincial average for this ratio in the next three years. Given the many unknowns with the city's budget it would be premature to promise we could attain this goal in the desired time frame.

I recognize that tax fairness is important and that broadcasting city's intentions and transparency are important for business stability and planning. If the Chamber feels that local businesses are not receiving good value for their money we need to address that. They should expect quality infrastructure, business support, and access to quality labour market. But from the city's perspective, it must collect enough taxes to pay for the services it provides. For the past two decades we have been using our natural gas dividend to give services we have not paid for. We no longer have that luxury. Thus taxes *and* services must adjust accordingly. I believe we should attain a ratio closer to the average, but this should occur naturally. Lowering non-residential taxes simply to attain some specific ratio will leave the city in a worse-off state.

7. The City has committed to a Downtown Revitalization Development Plan. 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?

Obviously a thriving downtown is critical for the success of any city. And every candidate has talked about this for the past twenty years. It's a tough nut to crack. First we need to understand what the issues are that are keeping downtown from rejuvenating itself.

- The majority of the city's growth has occurred on the edges with most economic growth occurring near these neighbourhoods. We'll need to create more population growth in downtown and the adjacent neighbourhoods of the SE Hill, Herald, Riverside and the Flats.
- The single biggest blow to downtown came when the mall was built. The retail centre of town immediately shifted.
- Many businesses would like to be downtown, but for all the empty storefronts there are few suitable spaces for new business. Many buildings are in rough shape and renovations are very expensive. The Beveridge and the Hutchings & Sharp buildings have been recently renovated and those owners basically rebuilt the buildings from the

inside out. The downtown renovation incentive program is great, but the amount of money available is a drop in the bucket compared to what is required.

- There are four white elephants dragging down this area--the Assiniboia Inn, the Tramps Building on Second, the Towne Theatre and the old Parker's store. Some like the Sin Bin are basically derelict. Can you imagine if a homeowner in Southridge was allowed to keep a property in this condition? The surrounding homeowners would be enraged because it would affect their property values. Yet in the downtown core we don't consider the negative impact of these properties on the other businesses trying their hardest to bring downtown back.
- This council is in the process of replacing roads, sewers and water in downtown. These infrastructure upgrades are fantastic and council should be given credit. One area for improvement is communicating with businesses that are affected during these major projects. Many businesses on 2nd Street barely survived after suffering lower traffic during construction. We need to understand and alleviate the strain these infrastructure project place on affected businesses.
- The riverfront is important to celebrate in our city. We have no waterfront access and up until now the waterfront has been seen as a source of fear each with floods, with all the mitigation that has been done recently, it is time to enjoy our river.
- City's control taxes and regulation, but they can also set a vision. Slowly, steadily and modestly developing the empty buildings and waterfront would create a beautiful destination for downtown. Artists have a long reputation of working in underdeveloped areas to spur development, I'd like to see opportunities for more arts and culture development in our downtown by paving the way for increased community driven projects. This could be in the form of increased grant and expanded incentives.
- Whatever the original intent of the CCDA it seems to have lost its way. The city centre does need an advocate, but the CCDA has become quite divisive. If the CCDA is to continue and regain its effectiveness it must demonstrate a plan to rebuild bridges with more downtown businesses. If it is unable to do this we should look at other options.

8. Medicine Hat has made major investments into recreation facilities as well as decisions for cutbacks. What vision and direction do you have for the development of our recreational facilities so as to best service the population of Medicine Hat?

Recreation is one of the main indicators of quality of life. Slow pitch leagues, ice hockey, curling, lawn bowling, biking, skateboarding are all critical for a community's well being. It brings people together and builds community.

I would suggest a more modest approach to creating recreational facilities that focuses on community driven projects. The current council likes to brag about the world class recreational facilities they've built and they are right. They are world class. But world class is expensive. And increasing fees may have the unintended effect of depressing the use of these facilities.

We should experiment. The Summit, a local privately run arts and sports centre, have proposed creating integrated skateboard spots--small scale installations that give skateboarders another place for recreation while beautifying the neighbourhood. A local group proposed buying the Arena and running it privately. This would give us another ice sheet in town that we could use.

Smaller community driven projects helps ensure success because city staff aren't guessing at what residents want. It also gives residents a stake in the process. This same principle can be applied to our downtown core and arts and cultural development.

9. Medicine Hat travelers are left with limited options when it comes to air travel. To facilitate a more convenient and efficient travel model for Medicine Hat and area how would you pursue lower airfares, increased flight frequency, better connection times and increased load capacity for travelers?

The market for air travel out of Medicine Hat is small, thus our options are limited and expensive. However, this may change in the future and we should be prepared. The City recently passed bylaws for the area surrounding the airport to ensure any structures would not interfere with aircraft. The airport terminal has been upgraded. We need to make sure there are appropriate land use regulations in place with the county. For example, where greenhouses can be located, the light from which may interfere with aircraft.

The city can only ensure that the environment is ready for any air service expansion in the future.

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?

Every four years we talk about cutting red tape and making the city's bureaucracy run efficiently. In every city I've lived in city hall has had a reputation for being difficult to work with. That's not to say that this city hall doesn't have plenty of room to improve, but we should recognize that local government has different priorities than local business and there will always be tension between the two.

The Chamber of Commerce recognizes the complexity of the issue of red tape and its many facets (legislation, regulation, fees, permits, licenses, paperwork, standards, processing times, guidelines, filing and certification requirements, reporting, investigation, inspection and enforcement practices). The Chamber also correctly recognizes that the burden of red tape is borne disproportionately by small business, who are the biggest employers in Medicine Hat. If we can help lessen this burden it would help them grow. It's not as sexy as attracting new industry to town, but would provide a more meaningful impact for local residents.

Progress can be made by working closely with the Chamber and going line by line through each proposal in the Chamber's Municipal Red Tape Reduction policy with city staff. There may be good reasons for not implementing certain Chamber proposals, but each should be considered and implemented. If not, the reasons clearly explained. This would help build trust between the Chamber and city hall that we take the concerns of local business seriously.

Rebuilding meaningful engagement between city hall, business and residents is necessary and no matter how many times we fail, it's worth continuing to try again.

11. As costs for services increase and costs to businesses increase at all levels of Government, 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?

Once again we need to understand why government costs keep rising. Locally, it's because we haven't planned and developed our city strategically. The city will require \$1 billion in infrastructure upgrades over the next 30 years mostly in the older parts of town. These neighbourhoods don't bring in enough tax revenue to pay for it, thus we must push new developments and new taxes to pay for these necessary projects. But counting on new growth to maintain our heritage neighbourhoods is akin to a ponzi scheme--using new growth to pay off old debts.

Decisions like building Canalta on the edge of town (against the recommendation of the planning department) will have incredible long term costs in infrastructure that will come back to taxpayers. It was the easy decision in the short term and costly in the long.

It's going to be difficult simply to cover our infrastructure replacement costs, the true essential services, in the next 30 years. And we haven't begun to talk about the cost of other public services.

We can help change things, but it begins with setting a new more sustainable development direction in the city.

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

The city is facing significant financial challenges. The situation is unprecedented. This is the first election in a generation since our gas dividend has disappeared. Our golden goose has died. I don't blame the current council since this has been decades in the making and most of us didn't want to make the hard choices when times were good. But neither should this council pretend to take credit for getting our finances on track. Their hand was forced. And their early attempts to close the budget gap (ie. transit) hasn't worked well.

We must show spending restraint because this council has shown none. The past council has spent the most in the history of any council. A third of our \$300 million debt has come under their watch. Yes, they've done some good things that were necessary, but they have also built world class facilities. That's great except world-class is expensive to build and expensive to maintain and now with increasing fees--expensive to use for residents.

What we'll need is substantive collaboration with local business through the Chamber of Commerce to demonstrate that progress can be made in making city hall more effective. We'll need better city council deliberations. These problems weren't created overnight and won't be solved overnight either.