

Respondent

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Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

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Alison Van Dyke - City of Medicine Hat

2. What active role have you played to improve our community prior to running for council/mayor?

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I have been the Food Security Coordinator with Community Food Connections Association for eight years: operating the Good Food Club, Community Gardens, facilitating and leading Community Kitchens, offering educational programming and community events such as the annual Seedy Saturday Seed Exchange, and developing a local food and producers directory to increase residents' ability to find and purchase locally grown food. In January I initiated the successful campaign and petition to stop the potential sale of our publicly owned electric utilities. I have been an advocate for the continued operation of our neighbourhood recreation facilities. Additionally, I have advocated for the retention and enhancement of a variety of public health services in our community over the last decade. I have both previous and current experience on local and provincial boards - working and governance. As the Chair of Palliser Friends of Medicare I am also a director on the provincial board. Palliser Friends of Medicare 2011-Present Crescent Heights High School Council 2019-Present Ecole St. Thomas d'Aquin School Council and Fundraising Society 2010-2016 Canadian Parents for French Medicine Hat 2018-2020 Alberta Food Matters Board 2014-2016, 2018-2020

3. What initiatives would you propose to improve tourism, investment attraction and development to our municipality and region and support business recovery during/after the pandemic? *

Tourism Medicine Hat is already doing a fantastic job in the promotion of our beautiful community. And I was pleased to see the new "Move to Medicine Hat" initiative as it fills a gap that has existed for some time. We need to increase our population and tax base by creating a community of choice through strong social services and amenities to attract new and returning residents, including remote workers and public service jobs at other levels of government. The City's commitment to maintaining and enhancing public services and spaces will attract the increased population that we need to see economic growth in our community. I would also like to see the City be more effective, responsive, and willing to innovate to meet needs in the business community.

4. In Medicine Hat, businesses pay a higher proportion of property taxes compared to the residential sector. Medicine Hat's tax gap of 2.35% is one of the highest in Alberta. What is your position on the current approach to taxation and your thoughts on potential strategies to narrow this gap?

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Non-residential mill rates are typical and proportionate when compared to other municipalities across Alberta. The spread appears significant because of lower residential property taxes in Medicine Hat. Business owners benefit from our current residential taxation rates as they are usually also residential property owners.

5. If elected, what specific steps would you take to encourage & promote entrepreneurship within the region?

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I work in food security and come from an agricultural background, so I see the opportunity all around us. We live in an agricultural region and I would like the City to look beyond the petrochemical industry to agricultural processing and value-added production and export. We need to use an asset based lens to build on the natural partnerships and opportunities already existing in our region.

6. What is your stance on COVID-19 related laws that mandate requirements, including masks and vaccine passports?

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The overwhelming Covid case numbers in our city have put business owners, residents and our healthcare system in a terrible position. I have heard from many people that they are once again isolating to protect their health as they don't feel safe going out in public. Mandate requirements such as masking and vaccine passports reduce the risk to the public and help restore confidence in their ability to frequent local businesses. I support these measures.

7. What is your plan for publicly-funded services (examples would include Medicine Hat Public Library, power plant, facilities) if elected?

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Maintaining City assets and services is my top priority in our community. Without affordable and accessible services and amenities, we cannot attract or maintain businesses and employees in our region. In spite of owning our own profitable electric utilities, the City of Medicine Hat does not have a current strategic or master plan reflective of our obligations and market opportunities for this division. I propose that within 12 months of the new council term, City Council will strike a committee with city and industry experts to develop a Strategic Master Energy Plan with the intention of determining a vision for the future of our electric utilities, while reducing carbon emissions and investigating new technologies such as micro grids, distributed energy resources, vehicle to grid charging, and virtual

power plants. This will be done with an eye to reducing or deferring capital investment in our power plant while still meeting the local demand required and capitalizing on lucrative sales to the grid. Let's look to diversify and capitalize on our electrical generation as we rise to meet an increased demand in the future while meeting environmental and sustainability goals. The proposed closures of Heights, Crestwood and the Moose Rec Centre (and the loss of Heald pool) will impact some of the most affordable areas of our city where transportation access and ability to pay higher pricing at an expensive facility such as the Leisure Centre is not possible for many people. These closures also have impacts on other systems in our communities such as schools, sports teams and nearby businesses. I would like to maximize our existing facilities before committing funds to costly and less accessible facilities. Medicine Hat Public Library is exceptional in meeting the needs of Medicine Hat residents. Public spaces of this type, and the services and resources they provide, must be prioritized by our community. We can expect to see increased levels of poverty, homelessness and economic disparity post-pandemic. Libraries can play a vital role in addressing all of these by connecting people to government supports and services, providing training opportunities and much more. Public transit currently has poor utilization, resulting in reduced services - which leads to even less use. It is a Catch-22 that ends up leaving community members without reasonable and affordable transportation to work, school or leisure activities. I would like to see an expansion of the recreation facilities and services "Fair Entry" pass for city services to include transit. Alternatively, a program where up to four children under the age of 12 can ride for free while in the company of a fare-paying parent or guardian, would make using transit easier for community members and increase ridership. As more people use the bus, the routes can be extended into unserved and underserved areas and increased in frequency, which will lead to greater utilization in the future and help create a public transit riding culture in our community. By offering more and shorter routes, so that people can cheaply and quickly get to their destination, we also reduce the traffic on the roads, and the need for parking in higher density areas, which allows for increased multi-modal transportation routes.

8. How important is it for our region to have a local Community College? What specific steps could the municipality do to work better with Medicine Hat College to provide ongoing opportunities for future learners?

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Strong post-secondary education opportunities are vital to retaining people in our community and educating our workforce to meet business and public service staffing demands. The municipality could continue the collaborative work started in the BREWD process by supporting ongoing City staff attendance at community and regional meetings in order to stay abreast of the issues and challenges facing our post-secondary and business community.

9. How will you attract newcomers to the district and address the needs for a skilled workforce? *

The new "Move to Medicine Hat" initiative is an excellent start to attracting skilled and remote workers to our city. Maintaining and highlighting our city's social prosperity will encourage economic prosperity. We can create a community filled with social prosperity by providing recreational opportunities, robust government and public services, and an equitable, diverse, and inclusive culture focused on social development to attract new residents, or entice back friends and family who moved away looking for opportunity in other cities.

10. What is your stance on the importance of mental health & wellness support in our region? What ideas, implementations, and initiatives would you put forward to improve the overall mental health & wellbeing of our community?

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Top of mind for many Hatters is the addictions and mental health crisis that we have been experiencing in our community. Unfortunately, the City does not have any jurisdiction over health service delivery, as that is provincial jurisdiction under the Canada Health Act. However, there are several things that can be done by the City in this situation. A. We have previously experienced both family and specialist doctor shortages in the city. The new council can reconvene the Physician Attraction and Retention sub-committee which previously existed to encourage psychiatrists to set up practices in Medicine Hat, increasing the number of mental health professionals in the city to reduce assessment and treatment wait times. B. The City as an organization sets the tone for a community, and with that power and responsibility they can work to reduce the stigma around seeking help and support for mental health and wellness issues, through social marketing, and by normalizing seeking help within their own municipal corporate structure.

11. How will you further diversity and inclusion initiatives in our region, as it relates to each of the pillars in the Chamber's Vote Prosperity Platform: <https://www.medicinehatchchamber.com/voteprosperity2021/> (<https://www.medicinehatchchamber.com/voteprosperity2021/>)

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Diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility are the defining values of my decision making process. We are stronger as a community when the needs and best interests of everyone are included in decision making. Our culture is changing and we need to recognize that social values determine where people choose to live, work and play. Without incorporating these values into all facets of our planning and execution, we will be left behind by other communities doing the work of recognizing the importance and impacts of integration into policy, business plans, and service provision.

12. On a municipal level, how do you intend to address climate change and pollution?

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While the completion of the berms will prevent future flooding of our city, we need to be planning ahead for the biggest climate issue in our region, drought, as well as extreme weather events. Medicine Hat should be accessing every available resource for climate change mitigation through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund. Additionally, I propose that City Council strike a committee of council members and City staff, in consultation with experts, to develop a Climate Resilience Strategy. This strategy could and should include a municipal energy audit, emergency response to extreme climate events, coordination with provincial and federal organizations and governments to develop a long-term water management strategy, and incorporation of my proposed Strategic/Master Energy Plan, as well as determining funding streams and timelines for the implementation of the plans.

13. What strategies will you use to communicate and engage with the community and remain accountable to the citizens?

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Communication is a top priority for many residents in this election. In my current position operating a community organization as well as working on boards, I have to allow for easy accessibility and responsiveness. I will respond in a timely fashion to all queries. As a community member, I have often struggled to find City information to support my community work or to help me be an informed citizen. I would like to be able to foster a culture of openness and information sharing from the City in order to give residents every tool they need to enhance our community. Currently there does not seem to be a mechanism by which suggestions can be made to specific city departments, which I think should be implemented in some way. I want to encourage the formation of more neighbourhood associations with the support of city staff, utilizing existing informal Facebook and community groups. Strong

Neighbourhood Associations champion the best interests of their unique locations and needs by building community and working together to identify and advocate for issues in their geographical areas, which can then be brought to councillors.

14. Are there any other issues you wish to address or highlight that were not mentioned in the questions above?

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Most of my professional and volunteer experience is in the not-for-profit and human services field, so I welcome any conversation from local business owners about the issues they are facing and their proposed solutions.