

Respondent

< 32 Anonymous >

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Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

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Immanuel Moritz 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 served two terms on the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education (member, vice-chair, and chair). The board has a similar governance model to city council, so I have a clear understanding of council's and the CAO's roles. I was on the Municipal Planning Commission for 10 years (member, vice-chair). These experiences have taught me the intricacies of government.

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? *

We need to refocus the brand. No longer the Gas City, or the Grass City, or All Hell for a Basement. We can get behind YXH. There are many advantages that we have: the people who live here, utilities (gas and electric), road and rail links, parks, recreational and cultural facilities, Medalta, MHC, airport, water and, of course, sunshine. When we travel and tell people where we are from, the most often

heard response is "the Tigers", so, yes they are a resource. Attracting business and population growth requires we leverage our advantages and sell the brand. From the city's perspective we can use taxation, utilities, off site levies, or land to entice new business, while also looking to retain local companies and allow them to prosper. Small local business creates 80% of all jobs. We need to discuss common goals with our neighbours (Redcliff, Cypress County) to ensure regional prosperity.

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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Taxation and assessment must be fair and equitable. Local companies pay nearly 2.5 times as much tax as a residence with an equal assessment. Most small businesses survive on thin margins (razor thin during covid). Growth (to share the burden), and cost control are key to allowing a reduction in the differential between commercial and residential taxes.

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

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We need to create a culture of opportunity. Entrepreneurs need to have a single contact at city hall that can guide them through the red tape (and less red tape). We need to streamline taxation, development and building permit costs, and utility rates. Saying yes, and then getting out of the way. People will start new businesses (like Ace Hardware or a new Mexican restaurant downtown) if they are treated fairly.

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

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Health is a provincial issue. Council does not have the requisite information, expertise, nor medical advice to make decisions on Covid. From a personal perspective, I am fully vaccinated, and encourage everyone to do so as well, but mandating vaccination is not council's purview.

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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Electrical generation has kept the city afloat. It is not a viable option to sell. Small rinks and swimming pools should be maintained to foster a sense of community, perhaps in collaboration with neighbourhood associations. Libraries are a source of wonder, an inspiration for learning, and an information resource. Every effort should be made to ensure continued excellence. With any publicly funded service, the citizens need to get both a financial and a community value for the money spent.

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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The MHC is an excellent resource. Working with the college and the Alberta government to create a small university would have a huge economic impact --- but it is a long term goal. The college has an excellent Department of Continuing Studies that can be called upon to provide any manner of training and skills development, something that can be provided to new industries, existing local businesses, city staff, etc.

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

Jobs and population growth are intertwined. While both need not occur in lockstep, one without the other will not suffice. Covid has

created a workplace revolution, both working from home and movement away from existing jobs. A simpler, less expensive lifestyle can be selling points to attract those where working from home will be more permanent. Immigration will also be a key driver as the population of Canada greys in place. Seniors, themselves, will provide opportunities for growth in homeware and nursing. Again we can leverage all those advantages to attract newcomers. While a cadre of skilled workers is important, most corporations are looking to hire workers with 21st century skills, like critical thinking, collaboration, flexibility, empathy, work ethic, believing that hard skills can be taught more easily than these soft skills.

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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Covid has become a mental health nightmare. Fear, isolation and uncertainty have led to frustration, anger and depression. Suicides are up, drug overdoses are up, and spousal abuse is up. No magic wand. The city needs to encourage the province to tie a safe injection site to rehab and mental health support. We need to facilitate suicide prevention groups, and continue to work with the Women's Shelter. Encouraging physical activity and recreation will ease the burden of loneliness. Most of all, we need to talk about hope, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

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 and inclusion are part of a cultural shift that is decades old. Ideas and actions that were common, are no longer tolerated. As a city, we can support simple things like NDTR or Gay Pride celebrations, while trying to focus the view on what unites us, what common outlooks we have rather than our differences.

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

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Making neighbourhoods walking and biking friendly to reduce motor vehicle use. Ensuring existing buildings are energy efficient while new construction should be built to LEEDS standards. Right sizing the number and kind of vehicles in the city fleet, converting to CNG where possible and to electric when it is price efficient. Extending recycling to apartments and condos. Continuing to offer incentives for appliance and energy upgrades to local residents. Encourage residents to lower the thermostats in the winter and use less AC in the summer. Carbon Capture and sequestration. All small steps but, in total, a large impact.

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

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Information is the currency of the 21st century. It is the role of council to provide as much information as possible so that citizens have a clear understanding about issues and why decisions are made. Good information leads to less wild rumours. That could include town halls, focus groups, easily accessed online data, working with neighbourhood associations and service clubs, Q & A's over coffee. There are lots of ways, it just needs the will to reach out.

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

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City council is a governance board. It is a collaboration between the citizens, the business community and the members of council. While we all like to speak of what we will individually do, it is much more complex than that. Council has a single employee that runs the day to day operations while it paints the big picture and sets policy. Council's directions must be clear and unambiguous so that their strategic plan can be carried out.