

Respondent

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Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

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Jay Hitchen

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

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Active since moving here in 1990 due to my career in the media we were a part of every event in the city. Every year, it's what we do. Leading the creation of events like The Sandfly Music Festival and CHAT 94.5 Food Drive cast a national spotlight on our community with our Sandfly crowds growing to around 10,000 during my time on the project. Food Drive model was replicated in many markets. Outside of my previous profession I've coached and lead the development of the Medicine Hat Judo club 1991-2017. I'm currently the president emeritus.

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? *

This could be a novel. My strength lies in communications and promotions. We have very good infrastructure and it's constantly

improving. I want to see that growth continue with a vibrant waterfront district, Echo Dale expansion but we need to continue to promote outside of our community. Continue development of our trail system, parks and facilities will make Medicine Hat even more desirable to young families. Continuing education will aid in keeping them here. I am very excited about the latest digital development tools for businesses looking to attract and retain both employees and new clientele.

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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Reducing impediments to growth should be a primary focus for any council. A higher tax base would certainly play into that decision for any new business development or current expansion. We do know that businesses create higher use scenarios for transit but I would need more research here before creating an effective strategy.

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

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Not a one size fits all scenario. Research would be the indicator on where we want to grow. Do we need more breweries, coffee houses, greenhouse or tech? What are our strengths and how to play to those so we can focus on the areas that will create new growth. Once we know exactly where we want to go we would need to formulate a plan on how to attract that sector that benefits the city.

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

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Masks work so let's continue this practice so our economy can resume. Vaccinations also work as continually proven on a global level. Instituting vaccine passports has proven to be a motivator, particularly in the younger demographics which are being hit the hardest today. First and foremost we need to transition to the open for business model and if passports allow responsible residents to get back to normal I approve.

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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My plan would be to review all services and ensure that we maximize our returns. Specifically, libraries are an important part of local development. Current funding models need to be reviewed and community input sought as these areas have been hit by provincial cutbacks and covid. The Power Plant is a much larger more fluid discussion. I love that we own it and would hope we can continue that position but it's not a decision to be dealt with emotionally.

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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This is a personal issue for me with know clear direction. My two boys attended MHC and advance to U of A. then Edmonton consumed them personally and professionally. Had we more opportunities here I know there was desire to return home but we couldn't meet their needs. Growing our continuing education is an area I believe we should focus on in order to stem the loss of young homegrown talent.

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

Steps are being made in this direction currently and I believe they will reap benefits. the on-line portal for employers and new promotional material released in the last few weeks will be exceptional tools in attracting talent. Communicating the advantages of living here will be a ongoing need as is identifying where we need to grow and looking at the needs of those specific demographics.

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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This is a large issue that has effected our community on many levels. We have been or all know someone who has been effected. I recognize this as an important vision for the city that demands our attention. For me, outdoor space is part of what centers me. Having access is important.

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/voteprosperty2021/> (<https://www.medicinehatchchamber.com/voteprosperty2021/>)

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Development of ideas like Shop YXH are the direction we need, This concept should expand its base to other industries that could benefit. Review of the Hydrogen Hub and keeping an eye on renewables and how they fit with us is huge. Development of facilities and planning of our parks and recreation system is top of mind for me. Promotion within and outside of our community must continue and expand. Identification of growth areas and the workforce required will help develop a plan for attraction and retention. Post pandemic will be the largest challenge with no clear timeline. We must be ready to act.

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

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Use of more affordable and greener fuels will be at the forefront of every community plan. This will include a full viability study into hydrogen, solar and wind. In addition we need to continually search out new ways to use less. Weather it be through xeriscaping open spaces or hydrogen fueled transit.

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

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Research has been crucial in all my endeavors. You can never presume to know what is best. Ongoing independent research combined with continual public feedback must be part of our plan. This information must be tracked to identify trends.

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

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Let's be forward focused on a positive path forward. The road ahead is not clearly defined and will take our collective efforts to navigate it successfully.