

Respondent

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Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

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Linnsie Clark, Medicine Hat

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

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After receiving my Juris Doctor degree from the University of Victoria, I worked as a lawyer in Vancouver for about 10 years, but always wanted to move home to Medicine Hat. In February of 2017, I started in my role as a solicitor with the City of Medicine Hat. I decided to take an unpaid leave of absence to run for Mayor of Medicine Hat, because I care deeply for our community and our shared values, and I want to help protect and strengthen what Hatter's have built to secure a bright future for our great city. Over the years, I have brought our values with me. I worked at The Law Centre in Vitoria providing legal services to individuals not able to afford a lawyer. I participated in developing the Green Bylaws Toolkit for Conserving Sensitive Ecosystems and Green Infrastructure and I have given many presentations related to human rights, privacy, workplace, and immigration matters. I have also enjoyed my time playing, coaching and watching softball. As a solicitor with the City of Medicine Hat for the past 4.5 years, I've learned a lot about our City's departments, policies, infrastructure, assets, services, and programming. This opportunity has provided me with valuable knowledge and unique insight that I can apply to a leadership role within our Council.

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? *

In my role as a City lawyer, I have been so fortunate to gain a better understanding of our economic landscape, through the BREWD and other economic development activities. To attract people and business to our City we must ensure that the people and businesses that already call Medicine Hat home, love it here! Our existing community is our best focus group, letting us know when we are excelling and when we are off track. If our community feels well served they will be the best ambassadors for our City. As a Council, we need to be leaders in initiating and supporting the development of a comprehensive data-driven Economic Development Strategy, prepared in consultation with our current economic development agencies, local businesses, and other levels of Government. This is not a new idea. For example, the Chamber has been advocating for such a strategy for the past two council terms. We already have a great start through the data obtained through the BREWD (Business Retention and Expansion and Workforce Development) project, in 2019. This project identified 42 different initiatives to help support and enhance our community's existing businesses. Of these 42 initiatives, only 15 have been implemented through the partners involved in BREWD. So we still have lots of work to do. To be most effective, an economic development strategy should be comprehensive and address tourism, investment attraction, and businesses retention and expansion. Such a strategy will provide a roadmap for building, diversifying and growing our local economy and foster alignment with local economic development agencies, to reduce duplication and ensure the effective use of our community's limited resources. Our city has some truly amazing organizations, like the Chamber in its advocacy and business support role. Tourism Medicine Hat has also accomplished great things since it was created as a non-profit. The Medicine Hat College and Community Futures offer support to businesses through education, training and support services for entrepreneurs and workforce development. Strong collaborations already exist with organizations and initiatives like APEX and Alberta Innovates (focused on technology and innovation) as well as other regional economic development groups like Palliser Economic Partnership and Verge Economic Development. To capitalize on the expertise and support of our community's impressive group of economic development organizations, the City first and foremost needs to demonstrate leadership. Let's continue to collaborate to help our businesses thrive and grow. As a municipality, let's commit to engaging with our partners to set targets and get things done! Here would be my first steps: Focus our resources on supporting business, not towards justifying internal structural changes. Discussions about changing IMH structure, especially at such a pivotal point in the economy of our City, has become a distraction. Reengage BREWD partners, update the BREWD report with a post-COVID lens, work with partners to implement projects on a priority basis. It is important to focus more intentionally on what is realistic, achievable and will have the most impact on our businesses and community. Economic Development is a regional team approach. This means working with our region's municipalities more intentionally. We should collaborate and reengage with regional organizations, rather than go at it alone. The development of a data-driven, collaborative Economic Development Strategy including: BREWD. Industry cluster strategy. Investment attraction. Entrepreneur supports. Brownfield redevelopment strategy. Incentive and taxation policy review. Marketing and communications. Strong relationships with other levels of government.

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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We must work toward increasing the City's tax base, especially through the redevelopment of serviced but abandoned, underutilized or contaminated properties within the City. In this way, the assessed value of the property increases, without the City incurring significant additional infrastructure liabilities. This would be part of a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Our tax policy decisions should be based on evidence and include opportunities for our community to meaningfully contribute to the decision making process. The City should investigate the possibility of implementing additional sub-classes in the Residential and Non-Residential Property Classes. The City should analyze the tax policies used in Alberta's comparable municipalities to determine where the City differs, how those tax policies are working for each community and whether there is a reasonable justification for the City's approach, based both on our lived experience and the body of research in the area of tax policy. The City should inform our community of the various approaches to municipal taxation, including the pros and cons of each, and provide an opportunity for residents to contribute their ideas and concerns in relation to the City's tax policy moving forward.

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

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Review the City's incentive and taxation policies as part of an overall Economic Development Strategy. Improve processing times at City Hall. Path find – Municipalities are often the first point of contact for entrepreneurs. We need to ensure staff are aware of our community's support service and programming for both new and existing entrepreneurs. BREWD – If we improve the environment for our current business community, this will naturally improve the ease of start-ups. Remove barriers to incremental business growth, for example by enabling more creative use of space and smaller "storefront" options.

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

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I decided to get a COVID vaccine when I was eligible. I must admit, I had concerns at first. However, after talking to my doctor and weighing the risks that a vaccine might have, against the risk of getting COVID or giving COVID to someone else, I believed it was worth it. I understand that there are people in our City who are opposed to taking any of the available COVID vaccines, based on their sincerely held beliefs. So, I want to make sure I distinguish between: 1) forcing vaccination upon people who do not wish to take any of the COVID vaccines, which has not been proposed and which I do not support; and 2) imposing limitations on non-essential activities for individuals who do not wish to get vaccinated, as are necessary to protect other members of our community, our businesses and our healthcare system, which I do support. In Canada, we are blessed to have the rule of law and our fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (the "Charter"). However, even in the Charter, our rights and freedoms are not absolute – nor can they be. For example, individuals cannot smoke, go to the bathroom, throw trash, build a fire, shelter, keep livestock, or grow crops, wherever they want. Our rights and freedoms are subject to reasonable limits that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. It is, of course, important for us all to question whether any such limitations are reasonable and proportionate. Requiring citizens to mask or show a "vaccine passport" to participate in certain social and recreational activities, are government-imposed limitations. However, these limitations must be contextualized. The goal is to protect the health of the other members of our community, our hospitals and medical staff, and our local businesses. In my view, this goal is both pressing and substantial and the provincial masking and "vaccine passport" requirements are minimally impairing measures necessary to achieve this goal and proportional and rationally connected to this goal.

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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I would ensure that our priorities as a community and evidence guide our spending. Our treasured neighborhood facilities and the livability of our neighborhoods are part of what turns our city into our home. Being cost-effective means taking good care of what we have and need. The City should immediately develop a long-term plan for stabilizing the forecasted value of our electric utility.

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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Our College is one of the most important institutions in the future growth of our community. The College is instrumental in the following areas: 1) Developing a skill workforce for our community; 2) Supporting business through applied research; and 3) Attracting young people to our region. The role of the City is to support the College in furthering these important means to grow our community. How is this done? A workforce development strategy – not only do we need to train for our current business needs, we also need to understand where we are heading so we can ensure we are building for the future. This requires a College/City/Industry approach. Collaboration is key. Supporting MHC to advance applied research – innovation and research fosters economic development. Once we get students to our community we need to introduce them to the business community. Initiatives like the Chambers/MHC Work Integrated Learning Initiative is an excellent example of how we as a community can work together to promote and support more of these type of initiatives. Support MHC to equip graduates with the skills, knowledge, and competencies they need to succeed now and in the future, increase work-integrated learning opportunities

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

Local governments who successfully integrate new workers, families, and entrepreneurs will grow. Communities that build a welcoming environment will attract newcomers to the region to fill jobs, start new businesses, and support existing businesses, thereby strengthening the economy. As a result of the survey of businesses from the BREWD initiative, labour attraction was an identified need in our community. Businesses and governments are having challenges attracting skilled employees. We need to continue working on this together to strengthen our workforce. Supporting tools such as www.movetomedicinehat.ca will help employers attract workers with the skills needed to expand and stay within the region.

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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The City should take whatever meaningful steps the City can, to identify and alleviate the sources of mental ill-health, and its consequences, within our community. There are health and wellness initiatives linked to the City's various departments as well as many non-profits and coalitions in the community working on both mental health and wellness programs. Our community is amazing at collaborating and working together. The City can enhance its leadership role in convening and engaging groups in our community to address this important need. Starting with what initiatives are already happening is important for leaders to gain further understanding and awareness of where we are at and what our needs are. This can help us to make informed decisions as to the City's role in supporting the health of our community. The City must ensure that we are considering human and environmental health in our development decisions. Mental health is generally under the jurisdiction of the province, but we should seek to collaborate with other municipal governments and the provincial and federal governments to develop a mental health strategy.

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 can be further enhanced by collaboration with groups such as Medicine Hat Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) who have identified actions to address gaps within our community. We know that immigration can offer long-term potential for growth, sustainability, and economic development. Support for action items such as the development of resources to help newcomers become more aware and help navigate the complex system of services, developing volunteering, networking or professional mentorship programs, or increasing awareness of different cultures in the community will further diversity and inclusion in the community.

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

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Leadership and education. "SMART" transportation initiatives. Renewable integration with our Electric Utility. Engaging City departments with expertise, in community education and awareness (e.g., HatSmart, recycling and waste management programs). Continuing to promote the Hat Smart Program, a made-in-Medicine-Hat incentive for residents who upgrade to energy-efficient air conditioners and furnaces as well as rebates to purchase and install solar PV systems on their homes.

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

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Accountability is a shared responsibility between citizens and their leadership and involves both a. a horizontal dimension - the systems of checks and balances within government; and b. a vertical dimension - the relationships between the citizens and government (e.g., citizens' participation in the policy making process, and ability to demand that government justifies its actions). Transparency is a prerequisite for both accountability and public participation. If citizens don't know what their government is doing, they cannot hold their government to account or participate in and contribute their talents to the City's decision-making processes. Technology and digital media have made it easy and inexpensive to provide the public with access to public records. I believe those who are affected by a decision should always be provided a meaningful opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Public participation in the City's decision-making processes and formulation of City policy fosters trust in our City government, promotes accountability and allows us to capitalize on our community's talents and ideas. This collaboration requires: a. City government providing our community with the information necessary to meaningfully participate; b. City government regularly providing opportunities for members of our community to be heard using a variety of formats in-person or online public meetings, townhalls; and c. members of our community participating in these opportunities; and d. City government listening to and genuinely trying to understand what our community wants and what it has to offer. To the extent that community members are providing input to the City in a forum that is not public, this input should also be made available to the public to ensure transparency and accountability in the process.

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

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