

Respondent

< 14 Anonymous >

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Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

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Ramona Karen Robins - Medicine Hat

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

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For the past 20 years I have been a Crown Prosecutor and for the past 12 of those years I've been the Chief Crown prosecutor. As Chief Crown I've been responsible for the safety and justice in our community and until my promotion in July 2021 I made daily decisions that impacted the community. During my tenure as Chief Crown I provided training to MHPS, worked with countless victims of Crime and provided training to Victim's services programs. I also worked with the Mental health diversion program and Drug Treatment Court. I've also volunteered on a number of different Boards over the years - Friends of Medicine Hat Public Library, Medicine Hat Film Festival, Medicine Hat Musical Theatre, Medicine Hat Highland Dance Association, Palliser Health Ethics board, Medicine Hat Family Services to name a few. Each of these roles improved the City whether it was by Library support, support for arts and culture or by providing affordable counselling services.

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? *

I think that the current Council has a tendency to try to get big companies with big investments. Post-pandemic I think we need to continue to promote Medicine Hat as a development-friendly city but I think more importantly we need to provide support for our local businesses. Grants to expand their online business, website development and training programs for new employees are what I think will help pull us out of the pandemic into a flourishing economy.

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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I think we need to look at what services businesses can expect from the City for their increased tax rate. Do the current City policies favour businesses or provide something that other cities with lower tax rates do not? If not I would be prepared to review the tax rate to determine if it is equitable and if it promotes or harms local business interest. Again, I think the only way out of this pandemic is to lift local businesses up not push them down.

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

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I think that there are a lot of businesses (and people with ideas for business) who need help navigating funding available to them via various grants (municipal, provincial and federal). I think a grant navigation hotline should be established so some smaller businesses can call to have someone walk them through the grant application options they have and to follow up with new opportunities as they arise.

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

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I think as a Councillor I have a duty to protect the citizens of Medicine Hat and the businesses that operate here. I think a mask bylaw would make it easier for local businesses to have clear rules and some enforcement options when dealing with their customers and it would provide additional protection for medically vulnerable citizens. Despite what many current Councillors have said the City does make bylaws from time to time that touch on health issues to make it easier for businesses to enforce. The smoking bylaw is a example of that. I do not think that a vaccine passport system is something that the City can do - I think that unless it is in place across the province it simply sets up a false sense of security to do so in Medicine Hat alone. I think some business owners would appreciate some clarity on certain parts of the current exemption program and if the City can do that it should be discussed with input from affected citizens and businesses. I don't think we can assume a one size fits all approach on these complicated issues.

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 think that Medicine Hat has the advantage of having excellent publicly funded services that are used to enhance the lives of its

citizens every day. Those services come at a cost and Council needs to balance the number of people who use the service and the cost to determine if the service remains reasonable in a time when our income is down. I do not support the sale of the power plant - if it has value to a private company it has value to Medicine Hat and the City's reasons for sale contain a lot of assumptions and little facts to support sale.

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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It is critically important that we have a local College. Education is expensive and those who are able to complete their education in the City should be able to do so to start their careers without large amounts of debt if possible. I think that the City can create more partnerships with Medicine Hat College - specifically to find summer jobs and internships within the City (through a matching grant program) to allow local businesses to hire local students to create more economic growth. We need to have students feel hopeful for the future and I think the City can be a big part of that by working with the College and local businesses.

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

At one point in 1998 I was a newcomer to Medicine Hat (I'm originally from Northern Alberta) and I came to Medicine Hat for an entry level job after finishing my law degree. The beauty of the City, the friendliness of its citizens and the amenities the City offered made me stay. I think that the same things that drew me to Medicine Hat will draw other people if the City continues to promote Medicine Hat as a City where work/life balance and work/nature balance are possible.

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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One of the reasons I've run for City Council is my passionate belief that we need to talk and support mental health and wellness in our community. As a Prosecutor I've seen the other side of not providing these services and the City needs to fund mental health programs and counselling. We need to partner with lots of different groups to make sure that anyone who needs mental health support receives it in our City.

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

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I think that every decision made by Council needs to be reviewed with emphasis on diversity and inclusion. One way to do that is to ensure that there is broad representation on different City-appointed boards and committees. City Councillors must represent all citizens not just the ones who look or act like them and the opportunity for real change is now starting with a diverse Council.

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

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We need to review all recommendations regarding land development and infrastructure to make sure that the City is not causing pollution or climate change. I do not think that we have fully explored all of the various renewable sources of energy as our focus for many years has been on the non-renewable sources. I think the City could be a province-leader if the Council were to recommend strong action that still supports business and economic growth but balances that with the need for responsible development.

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

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I will maintain my website which contains a chat function to correspond with citizens. I've enjoyed the questions I've received and knowing what citizens think is important before making any decision about the future of the City. I will be out and about in the City talking to people and learning what concerns they have. I will use email to make sure I understand and respond to the requests I receive. I will talk to the media when asked to inform and be accountable for decisions made at Council. I'll be a regular at the Venier Centre to get the perspective of our senior citizens!

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

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I think that we need to do much more for our Senior population. I think the City has largely ignored the tremendous resource we have at our fingertips - their knowledge and experience can help guide us through the obstacles we are facing. We need to find ways for the younger generation to interact with Seniors and to provide more opportunities for multi-generational events.

