

Respondent

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Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

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Robert Dumanowski - Medicine Hat

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

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I am very honored and privileged to have served on City Council as Alderman/Councillor since first being elected in 2001. I have been the Chair/Vice-Chair of every Standing Committee at City Hall over my years. My day job is an elementary Principal with the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education. I have been in education for over 25 years. I believe that my experience and proven leadership, coupled with a strong sense of commitment and integrity, make me an inviting candidate of your support for re-election.

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? *

Economic development and vitality is critical to a growing city. I am very proud to have supported the initiation of IMH (Invest Medicine Hat) at it's onset. IMH 2.0 has even been more successful. To soften the challenges being experienced by the business

community and general population in Medicine Hat, as Councillor, I supported investing \$10.9 million of the eligible \$13.4 million ICIP funds towards COVID-19 Resilience Stream. In October 2020, City Council approved 13 projects (and funding) to stimulate economic recovery in our city. As Councillor, I also supported the \$2M MHBIG which was part of an \$8.2M COVID-relief package approved by City Council on May 4, 2020. The object was to support businesses in coping with and recovering from the economic impacts of the pandemic (in conjunction with Community Futures Entre-Corp who were tasked with the responsibility of facilitating the fund on behalf of the City). I'm also very proud to have supported passing a motion, directing staff to prepare a second COVID-relief program in the amount of \$4.5 million on July 5, 2021, to be administered to utility account holders with a one-time credit of \$136.00. The fact of the matter is, all of these decisions were the right decisions to make. The next council can and must do more of the same to safeguard our business community and the residents at-large.

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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Like every other community in the Province, the City of Medicine Hat strives to achieve an optimum Non-Residential to Residential Tax Ratio. Since 2008, Medicine Hat's tax ratio has consistently been shrinking – but we can always (and will) do more. A careful comparison of the top 18 communities in Alberta shows a median 2.00 tax ratio. Medicine Hat's ratio continues to shrink and is ever so close to 2.00. A growing and sustainable tax base will only serve to close this gap/tax ratio even more. We can't afford to transfer that burden to one sector unfairly. Strong and robust residential sector development will create the opportunity for the City to chip away at the non-residential base. This should in reality, further stimulate a strong business climate, which in turn will foster even more residential growth. Finding the right 'balance' is critical to the long-term vitality of the community.

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

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The notion of new 'smoke stack' industries rising in our region anytime soon is just not a reality anymore. That era has come and gone. We are in an era where growth will and most often comes from 'within.' The City must continue to do everything possible to create an economic climate that fosters a strong growth mindset. Small business is an incubator for medium-sized business. Medium-sized

business is an incubator for large business. A reasonable and fair (stable) property tax base and a shrinking non-residential to residential tax ratio, will only serve to make Medicine Hat and area "the place" to do business. IMH (Invest Medicine Hat) has been extremely nimble and innovative in their approach to not only retaining and growing local business/industry, but finding and incenting new (ancillary) business ventures to set-up shop in Medicine Hat and area too. At the root of all growth is the entrepreneur. As Councillor, I understand and appreciate the challenges that entrepreneurs face to establish and grow their business. I am resolute in my commitment to do even more.

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

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The COVID-19 pandemic continues to reek havoc on our people and our business sector. An appropriate 'balance' between Public Health/Alberta Health Services and municipal governments needs to be struck if we want to get through this whole situation with as minimal damage to our services and business sector as possible. That said, it's difficult to find that happy medium. Masking mandates and the possible introduction of vaccine passports continue to divide our community, all of whom care deeply about Medicine Hat in their own way. I supported the mask bylaw at it's onset. (I don't regret that whatsoever). I have (and continue) to hear from the residents and the business community that "if" we ever hope to get back to normal, as soon as possible, the likes of provincial masking mandates and the possibility of a vaccine passport is not only necessary, but desirable. These initiatives put all businesses and the community at-large on a level-playing field. They also promote reluctant citizens to get vaccinated which is the number one goal. Our businesses just want to do what they do best, serve the customer. Masking and vaccine passports will remove bias and allow businesses to stay open and get this pandemic.

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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The Libraries Act in Alberta came into effect in 1922. This legislation set the groundwork for the establishment of public library boards to provide municipal and regional library service. The Act not only sets out the powers and duties of these boards, but it also gives them full management and control of public library service in our community. I firmly believe in its autonomy from political

interference. Libraries need to be funded adequately to continue their public need and mandate. I support that fully. To that end, I also support keeping our utilities publicly-owned. They are the envy of our community. However, with the ever-changing, dynamic, and challenging situation being put on our utilities (i.e. an escalating Federal carbon tax), we must be prepared to tackle that head-on. This in turn gives cause for us to examine its impact to our utilities. Countering the challenges associated with the carbon tax will be paramount to us moving forward and maintaining ownership. The main way to combat this is to diversify our holdings, and by creating alliances and investment/partnerships with carbon-offset/neutral industries. Being the only other municipality other than Edmonton to establish a "hydrogen hub" right here in Medicine Hat is great news. Carbon capture industry and growth will allow us to offset the Federal tax being put on our public utilities. The fact is that we need to be honest with ourselves if we hope to stay relevant and to be able to maintain the status quo. Once again, an examination of how we generate energy can't be ignored. The outcome of this examination must be accompanied by a commensurate public education campaign before any significant changes or major industry pivots are pursued. I am and remain committed to doing just that if I am privileged to be re-elected as Councillor.

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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We are blessed to have the Medicine Hat College in our very own backyard. In fact, my wife and I are proud alumni of the MHC. The City of Medicine Hat has had a longstanding relationship with the Medicine Hat College (as we should). The relationship is truly symbiotic. My goal as Councillor is to continue to challenge and explore ways in which we can strengthen our ties even more. I support an annual meeting of City Council with the College Executive/Governors to facilitate a free-flow discussion and exchange of ideas that will have a mutual benefit/end.

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

The number one way to attract newcomers to address the need for a growing skilled workforce is to make it inviting for them to move here in the first place. We are very fortunate to have some of the best public facilities (for a mid-sized community) in the Province. Likewise, we must be resolute when it comes to maintaining (and in some cases) expanding these facilities, as needed. Medicine Hat's "Quality of Life" and growth depends on it. A variety of housing options must be available to attract and retain honest, hardworking people. Transportation links/corridors must be present and reviewed/expanded (i.e. reliable transit, airport expansion, attracting

WestJet, etc.). It is vital that a growing and vibrant community like Medicine Hat continue to monitor, and when prudent, invest in the maintenance and addition of new recreational facilities (i.e. the ever expanding recreational opportunities at the FLC, such as pickleball). A growth mindset is necessary - but activating all areas in unison is what creates attraction and retention.

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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Mental Health is on the mind of every citizen and the community right now (in fact, it has been for a long time). The Covid-19 pandemic has exasperated this conversation, truth be told. There's not one family or private/public institution that hasn't been affected. The number one priority of Public Health and all levels of government is to TALK - period. We have a universal need to collaborate and identify ways in which we can combat the mental health crisis looming in all of our communities. Pointing the finger will accomplish little if nothing. That being said, we need industry experts in Alberta Health Services and Public Health to cheerlead this public dialogue. City Hall's senior administration and public servants must be meaningfully prepared to contribute to this public discourse, with the shared goal and vision to improve the overall mental health and well-being in Medicine Hat.

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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The pillars as identified in the Chamber's Vote Prosperity document challenge everyone to work together to attain the mutual end-goal of a stronger and more vibrant community in which to live. I fully support using innovation and competitive strategies to foster a stronger and more resilient business and educational community. Walking the Talk by investing in initiatives my MHBIG & Invest Medicine Hat make a difference. Likewise, maintaining our infrastructure and always looking ahead will put us in good stead to grow sustainably and responsibly. The fundamentals like access to clean water, reliable power, and well-maintained roads/bridges cannot be overlooked. To become a "Community of Choice" has to be more than a vision statement. We need to all contribute to the same

narrative of being at our best, so we can be the best. Everyday citizenry play a vital role in this. Attracting and maintaining newcomers for a growing workforce is critical to making Medicine Hat stand out and garner the attention of even more business and growth. The right talent will make its way to our community if the conditions are ripe and rewarding. Supporting our business and industrial bases every way possible is paramount to create and sustain a thriving community. More good, high-paying jobs means more people and more talent moving here. More people moving here means more growth and economic stimulus. More economic stimulus equals a larger tax base, which translates into lower property taxes.

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

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The best way to tackle climate change on a municipal level is to first admit that it's real, and that we have a part to play. Natural gas used as the primary source at the powerplant is one of the more greener sources of energy out there. That being said, we can't allow ourselves to be blinded by the fact that with a growing Federal carbon tax, we will have an ever-growing need to look toward non-renewables. Offsetting our greenhouse emissions through carbon capture initiatives will create a levelling effect which will allow our public utilities to be maintained for the foreseeable future. Medicine Hat being named as the 2nd hydrogen hub in the province is almost certainly going to come with positive dividends. It will also act as a counter effect to carbon emissions at our powerplant. The cumulative effect is that it serves both as a means in reducing pollution and at the same time advancing our part in helping reduce (or at least slow down) climate change.

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

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As Councillor, I have always maintained an open-door policy with the citizens of Medicine Hat. I remain available to them. After all, having the privilege to be elected to public office means that I work for and represent them at City Hall. I answer emails and take phone calls as they come to my attention. And, when possible, I even take the time to meet them for a coffee from time to time. Likewise, I make myself available to meet with the citizenry before/after committee and council meetings. One thing you can always be assured of is that I am approachable and not afraid to take the time to communicate with the people that I proudly serve.

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

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Being elected as Councillor to represent the citizens of Medicine Hat at City Hall has been one of the most gratifying roles/positions that I have had the honor to be a part of in my life. As a first generation Canadian born to immigrant parents, I understand the virtues of hard work and dedication. I remind myself every day that I work for the people. My entry into public office was built on the adage of "giving back to my community." I can honestly say that I hold that true to my heart to this very day. I want to thank the citizens of Medicine Hat for their support in the past. I am truly humbled to be your public servant. Likewise, it would be an honor to continue to be a strong voice on their behalf at City Hall once again.