

Respondent

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Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

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Warren Pister Medicine Hat

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

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Since arriving in Medicine Hat in 1992, I have always been involved in community sports and volunteering for school functions and travel. I actively participated in instruction and competition of martial arts, canine training and care with local non profit organizations. I later began to provide support to our local Fish and Wildlife in the care and fostering of injured and abandoned animals. Working with my wife, and with the assistance of many volunteers we founded two non-profit animal rescue organizations. Sitting on the board of these organizations in different capacities, we began to assist the community residents with financial support in the care and support of lost and injured pets. With the cooperation of local veterinarians, we provided support as requested in the ongoing education and care of domestic pets. We assisted local authorities with major animal hoarding and abandonment rescues to successful endings. My police career in the RCMP had me actively involved with members of our community in times of need and where volunteer opportunity arose. I recently sat on the board of directors for AJs Loan Cupboard, only stepping down to seek election for city council. I provided instructional and motivational seminars for children and adults in schools, various clubs and organizations. To date I have been involved in promoting responsible animal care for domestic and exotic animals through working closely with the pet trade industry professionals of our city and area surrounding in pursuit of humane care and control of all pets, strays, feral felines to livestock. Community involvement is a very important function that we all need to share in.

## 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? \*

Our city and surrounding area is rich in the history as Canada was being settled. There are many important events that took place here that many are not completely aware of. From the March West of the Royal North West Mounted Police, to the battles on the prairies between people. Our city grew out of the prairies as the railroad made its way west, bringing people and goods into the area. We have a rich history that interests tourists and promoting this is as important as preserving it. With the geographic location of Medicine Hat and her proximity to major centres, we have the ability to support private ventures in becoming a main transportation freight hub. A vibrant multi cultural community with an abundance of ethnic talents offers a great selection of culinary choices to travellers into and through our area. Our local businesses have suffered tremendously through the pains of restrictions and shutdowns surrounding the Covid crisis. Cash injections by council has served to lessen some of the strain businesses have had to endure, however limited financial relief funding is not a solid solution going forward and we must make the best of the suggestions and ideas coming from our community to help with recovery post Covid.

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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In order that a municipality can operate successfully there is a requirement for taxation. We must work with our business community of small businesses to bring a fair balance to taxation. If we reduce business taxes too much then our residential tax rate may have to be adjusted to compensate for the difference. However, we first must determine precise income needs of our city to ensure that the best rates are offered to our business community and residents. Are we charging rates that exceed the actual needs and if so can we offer reduced rates? We cannot afford falling into a loss of necessary revenue situation that places our city at risk in affording the finances to operate efficiently.

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

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One of the comments I hear the most from small to large business in our city is how much frustration is generated as existing and new upstarts must wade through an over abundance of red tape and procedure. From the physical expansion of existing businesses to the

purchase of a business license, we are a city that imposes a barrage of fees and procedures that deter growth and start up of business. We have a very unique ability over other regions to be able to offer incentive pricing for new potential business ventures with electrical and natural gas rates falling under our direct control, absent of any external interference.

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

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We can no longer skirt around the issue assuming it cannot happen to me. With the percentage of factual cases coming from the larger percentage of unvaccinated people as well as the losses, we must accept the reality that numbers do drop as we abide by masking and interaction restrictions. Proof of vaccination is saying that you have done your part to help protect others and that you care. Our highest courts have made it clear that any challenge to mandatory vaccination as a condition of employment would not be successful. We have yet to develop a titers test for Covid and the variant to determine individual immune system strengths. Until then there needs to be an order for compliance that is best to come from provincial and federal levels of government.

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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Most importantly is to retain our electrical production facilities and all distribution infrastructure. We have the ability to become an even stronger contributor to the provincial grid to supply electrical energy on demand. Until feasible technology arrives allowing the storage of green electrical energy, it is the on demand electricity providers that protect us from the loss of this energy source. Our library is a living web of information and learning. A valuable asset to our community, the city Library holds opportunities for knowledge to be shared with a hands on ability. Funding must have a balance and as such we must continue to support our library/learning centre going forward. All publicly funded services must always fall under close scrutiny in order that we are always best situated to continue funding rather than reduce it.

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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With MHC being a degree granting institute, further support through municipal and government grants can assist to increase class and subject availability. There could be an expansion of the current operations strategically into the downtown core of new subject learning and increased technical subject options. A stand alone separate institute may be a great vision but the cost effectiveness could potentially exceed practicality.

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

In order to do this, our city must have something to offer that is better than other centres. By providing incentives to the development of new businesses and industry that works well within our ability to do so, our city can realize the much needed employment opportunities that must be available to encourage new comers. Our council has spent large sums of tax dollars trying to land that proverbial "Big Fish" in hopes that such would provide a strong stimulus to our economy. However, suppose we are able to attract multiple smaller operations rather than one larger employer. Should one or more of the smaller employers require to reduce staffing levels, the effect is less noticeable on the grand scale. Loose that "Big Fish" and the cost to the city is much more severe. As I had indicated earlier, we must reduce red tape and procedure for businesses, focusing on fair fees and quick approvals. We only need to look at how places like Lethbridge realize stronger growth over our meager .5 %. We even can look around our city and see just how much the overall presentation/appearance has been let go.

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 situation of mental health through Covid has created an huge strain on our citizens. With limited provincially funded resources we sit at a disadvantage over larger centres. Although the costs associated to mental health fall under the provincial umbrella, there is no reason why as a municipality and region that we cannot collectively lobby for additional resources and staffing. Implementing smaller moral boosting programs that foster cooperation and the extension of goodwill as a community. We must be careful not to send tax dollars out the door where provincial funds may never reimburse us, we need to look at what do mental health professionals need to want to locate here and raise their families as would be expected of any occupation. Our city is as good if not even better than others, given that we have remained smaller lending to a closer knit community. Qualities that most look for when seeking where to live and work.

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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I believe the answers and comments I have afforded in the list of questions here complement the points of the Chamber's Vote Prosperity.

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

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We have to support initiatives to better accommodate renovations of buildings for improving overall efficiency. Perhaps instead of throwing away money at experimental projects such as the failed solar mirror site, maybe residents would allow the city to lease applicable roof space for solar panels where the return to the property owner is subtracted accordingly from their electrical and utility billing. Perhaps a venture not as feasible as a large unsightly solar field in one area, but one that would directly benefit property owners. We must get better at what we allow into our landfill site. From the largest of commercial disposal bin contents never sorted accordingly to the incredibly slow to decay mountains of Styrofoams that use up large portions of the landfill. We have a ways to go to realize efficient trash sorting and recycle, but we also do not have time on our side either. Carbon capture as a municipality is a very viable option and one that we should not linger on. We can introduce pollution control measures as a municipality that apply to

requiring a predetermined percentage of all building demolition to be recycled and or repurposed to exhaust emission levels of motorized vehicles. The use of too many city owned vehicles where less is more feasible than one person per car can further reduce our footprint.

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

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From local hard copy media to social media. Mail out packages and public broadcast announcements along with regular open house meetings. Getting out into the community and walking from business to business, through our neighborhoods, we have many options to keep the public up to speed where such was not necessarily the practice in the past. We also can simply request input on many topics and plans to best obtain what the majority feels. Less "In Camera" sessions where possible as well will carry far more trust of the residents and lend to creating that "Your Voice Our Actions" opinion. We must share as much as possible with residents so they clearly understand they have input.

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

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As a city that sits in an area where we have the ability to not do as others but to be unique, we need to foster ways to truly bring back the lost Medicine Hat Advantage. No more keeping us average amongst other areas, but unique in ways that attract business, investment and opportunities which in turn means jobs, necessary jobs and a stronger economy. We can no longer play the game of favorites and allow internal decisions to face influence at the desks of past preferred developers. We must level the playing field for fair opportunities that do favor local first at all opportunity.