



Bob Schewe Candidate for Mayor

Question #1

Transportation.

There is increasing frustration among citizens and visitors alike regarding traffic congestion, particularly on the major routes around and through the city. This is resulting in added commuting time for employees, and delays for trucks and services vehicles moving around and through the city. A previous vision of Council and the City included placing a high priority on the north end connector to ease congestion while reducing green house gas emissions. There have also been past discussions on a second crossing and an improved regional transportation network to make it easier for semis, logging trucks, delivery vehicles, etc. to move through the city to keep the economy moving while ensuring efficient supply lines for commercial businesses.

Q: If elected, aside from improved transit for those that don't require a vehicle to commute or as part of their employment, what would you do to further improve the City's/region's road/transportation network?

A: Some of our major routes --such as Springfield Rd., Lakeshore Rd. Gordon Dr. have recognized bottlenecks that need to be addressed. Area truck routes should also be reviewed and updated for better efficiency. Some review of major routes speed limits could also possibly improve traffic flow.

Question #2

Downtown Kelowna.

The downtown Kelowna street environment has changed over the past twelve months. There has been an increase in criminal and nuisance behaviour.

Q: If elected, what role would you as Mayor/Councillor play in ensuring a safe environment for businesses, their employees & customers, and for tourists and residents visiting and living in the downtown area?

A: If elected I would make this serious issue one of our top priorities of the City. We also have to clearly recognize it is no longer just a concern of the downtown. And whatever we do, must not just push the problems to other parts of our City. Recently retiring from the City's Bylaw Dept. and being an insider of the bureaucracy has given me a first hand knowledge of where to take this. To start we have to recognize not all the street people are the same. Also part of the problem is substance abuse and mental health. There are those that we have to help, that qualify and are willing to work with the system and live within the community rules. Journey Home, low cost housing and related programs and social services are all good components to support. We also have to recognize there are those street people which are not willing to live within the community's rules, and clearly clarify they and their way of life are not welcome. Also recognize some of these street people are not homeless.

My difference from the other mayoral candidates is that I recognize we need to change priorities and policies on this complex issue. The current mayor and council has just recently started to blindly throw money at the issue with hiring more bylaw, RCMP officers and bringing in experts, with the pending election. However there is no change in priorities or policies as to enforcement. So it continues to only get worse. Our current policies are really just enabling the street people's way of life and it is in effect killing them. Another example, a complaint to the bylaw dept. of a vehicle parked over 24 hrs on a residential street is the same priority as street persons/activities in a park. Answer shortened; limit reached.

Question #3

Cost of Government.

The increasing cost of government (municipal tax hikes beyond the rate of inflation, raises in services fees, and development cost charges) are a concern. The Chamber understands the City has a critical role to play in providing services and regulating businesses, but believes in continual efforts to cut red tape, streamline approval processes and explore cost-saving service delivery options.

Q: If elected, how would you address this concern?

A: As formerly part of the City bureaucracy, and also a former business owner and landlord, I clearly believe we can be much more efficient. I would directly participate in the continual scrutiny of all departments and services, which I believe the mayor should be.

Question #4

Variable Tax Rates.

Municipal governments have the authority to establish variable tax rates for the various tax classes. Many organizations have called for a ratio that should not exceed 3:1 for commercial vs residential class.

Q: If elected, what would you do to ensure businesses are not carrying an unfair amount of the tax burden, given business owners don't have a vote but still are required to pay for public services, they don't use?

A: If elected, I would push for a freeze of all City taxes including business taxes, at the current levels as I feel we all pay enough. A comprehensive review should also illuminate if there is anyone not paying their fair share. I do believe in a level playing field with taxation.

Question #5

Dealing with other governments.

Local Government is often called upon by citizens who have concerns about new or existing taxes/regulations that are in place at the provincial/federal level. The proposed speculation tax and provincial health employers' tax are two recent examples of provincial policy that will have a negative impact on small businesses and the economy in Kelowna and elsewhere.

Q: What do you believe is the Mayor's/Council's role in dealing with these concerns?

A: I believe the speculation tax will do nothing to improve housing costs in Kelowna and only adversely affect our City overall. It is just another tax grab by the current provincial government, money that might very well be spent in Kelowna. And I hope we can make it an issue in the next provincial election. If someone can afford a high end home here for their retirement or speculation and wants to rent it out or leave it empty part of the year, that is their business and they are certainly still contributing to local property taxes. They could also possibly help with the shortage of rental housing experienced at all levels. I hope we can drag our feet on co-operation with the province on this issue until after a provincial election. As to the the provincial health employers' tax, I also do not agree with small business being targeted. Mayor and council are obligated to pursue this issue with the province and local provincial representatives and hopefully make it one of many political issues with the next provincial election.

Question #6 – submitted by the Canadian Home Builders Association - Kelowna

BC Energy Step Code

Research indicates that homes built pre-1985 use 100% more energy than homes built today. Statistics Canada reports 60% of homes in BC were built before 1985. New homes built this year account for only 1% of housing stock in BC.

Q: If elected, would you support government bringing existing home stock's energy efficiency on par with today's standard of efficiency, before further increasing costs to new construction?

A: Yes I possibly would support this but further scrutiny and negotiation is very much before any commitment. This should primarily be a federal and provincial initiative and so should also thus be funded as such.

Question #7 – submitted by the Urban Development Institute - Kelowna

Affordability.

The issue of housing affordability has grown in prominence over the years with many people finding it more difficult to afford to live in the place where they work.

Q: If elected, what would you do to help address this difficult and complex issue?

A: If elected, this would come under my commitment to address the issue of affordability in Kelowna. As noted this is truly a complex matter that cannot be simply addressed with any short answer. I do support the opening up to development to some degree, some of the agricultural properties that truly are not being currently actively utilized with agricultural practices. Also I believe we could relax some of the rules with number of secondary suites/carriage houses allowed on some of the truly active agricultural properties