



# Brad Sieben

## Candidate for Council

### 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:** Focus on COMM-C (otherwise known as the HWY 33 connector or North End Connector) is a key link that would take some pressure off of Hwy 97. A large undertaking that has been planned for 20 years, but steps need to be taken to pursue and explore how to fund it's construction.

### 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:** I believe it is important to elaborate and provide greater context surrounding the first sentence that leads to the above question. The challenges that our city currently faces has a root cause that is deeper than just suggesting "criminal and nuisance behaviour." The crime we are seeing on our streets is fueled by drug addiction and is being committed to fund these habits. RCMP crime stats suggest that crimes

against persons are actually down, but thefts from autos, bicycle theft, etc. is up. “Criminal and nuisance behaviour” are the symptoms vs. the cause. The effect on business, residents, and property owners is significant and recognized.

This complex problem is not unique to Kelowna and requires strong planning and subsequent execution of the plan. The Journey Home provides a framework for solutions, but requires significant funding and support from Provincial and Federal Governments. It is a blueprint for an extremely complex issue and it was built by an outstanding group stakeholders in the community that have day-to-day and firsthand experience with the challenges we collectively face. Citizens are looking for results and an improved “sense” of safety as this does affect quality of life. We must strive to deliver improvement.

Construction of housing is needed, but substantial social and healthcare supports are necessary to dovetail with new housing in order for true progress to be achieved. I do not believe one can be successful without the other. I believe Council’s role going forward must be the strategic and relentless advocacy of rehabilitation “beds” for addictions. Availability of treatment beds must become more readily available and the waiting time for rehabilitation programs must be reduced to hours and days from current waiting time which is measured in months. Without this significant change we will be dealing with the symptoms and not the cause.

### 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:** We currently have an over reliance on taxation for funding of capital projects. We must be innovative and generate revenue at source to help pay bridge the infrastructure deficit we face. The success of YLW via its own self-generating revenue and Airport Improvement Fees provides valuable lessons for other city services. Infrastructure renewal fees should be introduced for recreation, cultural and other city services to help offset the need of taxation for their capital renewal. Moreover, this places the cost recovery for renewed infrastructure more on those that use these specific services eg. Pool, ice, fields, community theatre, etc.

Furthermore, Developer Cost Charges (DCC) as they relate to parkland acquisition need to be shifted to also allow for parkland development. Currently, parkland developed is reliant on taxation (in most cases) and the acquisition of land has outpaced our ability to actually build the parks. Council, working with staff, need to rebalance this allocation in the DCC program.

### 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:** Even prior to my time on Council, Kelowna has been proud of the business environment created for entrepreneurs. It is important to ensure our commercial tax rates are competitive and fair. Value and respect for the money contributed. Having been (am) in business, I don't think the characterization of "pay for public services they don't use" is quite that simple. In the businesses I have been (am) involved in, our customers use city roads lit with streetlights to arrive at our business, park in city funded parkades/lots, enjoy city amenities near businesses like parks, beaches, trails, etc. and it is often these characteristics near businesses that act as the "draw" and drive traffic to these businesses. We all, as a community, benefit from our public services.

## 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:** The Mayor and Council must be the voice of the community and advocate to the Provincial Government. The Speculation Tax was brought forward by the Provincial Government with ZERO consultation with City of Kelowna Council and Staff.

It is important for the public to understand that the announcement of the Speculation Tax (and Kelowna's inclusion) was made with ZERO consultation with the City of Kelowna. I take great offence to this, find it disrespectful to our Citizens and completely irresponsible. Moreover, I don't believe the Speculation Tax, as proposed will produce the desired results – more affordable housing. Fewer new housing starts are occurring than in the past number of years which equates to a reduction in the supply of housing coming onto the market. This message has been conveyed, but it's very difficult to deal with Provincial policy when it has been imposed upon a city as part of a political platform, regardless of the obvious flaws that are inherent. The Provincial Government has not been open for dialogue and exploration of this issue. As the Premier was quoted, we're "pretty locked in on this one." Conversations with Ministers and the Premier must be strong and solution based. Advocating to sympathetic MLA's (including Andrew Weaver) with vigor must be continued. Good progress made at UBCM and some hope provided in the commentary from Andrew Weaver. A defeat of the legislation would remove the cloud of uncertainty that is currently present and allow business leaders to plan for the future with a consistent business horizon.

## 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:** Housing affordability is a great concern throughout the province and beyond. Although the step code may produce reduced operating costs for housing post-build, I'm concerned the increased construction costs that are incurred for greater operational efficiency in are front loaded at purchase This must be examined closely. Home ownership is becoming a greater challenge for more and more of our citizens and the step code has the potential to continue to push entry into home ownership further out of reach. I support progress to increase energy efficiency, but I believe we need ensure we are not pushing housing prices even further. As a homeowner, I'm keen to see increased incentives for energy efficiency upgrades for existing housing and perhaps greater incentives to offset the increased costs related to new energy step code builds.

## 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:** This issue is complex. Kelowna is one of the best places in the world to live and people who have the option to live anywhere choose to call Kelowna home. This factor will keep demand relatively buoyant and provides a complexity other places in Canada may not experience. Increasing the variety of housing types throughout the city – condos, apartments, townhouses, etc. both for sale and as purpose built rental is critical to providing housing options. This housing is often referred to as the "missing middle." As town centers continue to densify and be built as complete communities with substantial amenities, a greater proportion of people will choose to live in smaller, efficient and well-designed spaces vs. single family residential houses. The "Canadian dream" of a single family house with white-picket fence is changing. Preferences will change more rapidly when the urban experience and amenity package is even more compelling (as it has become in areas throughout the city). The key is to provide a diversity of housing types. The City should continue to provide incentives for new purpose built rentals in desired town centres where a great quality of life and services are readily available.