



Jeff Piattelli 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: Kelowna's infrastructure is, in my opinion, one of the most crucial things we as a community need to address if we are to continue growing at the pace we have in recent years. We have tried adding extra lanes to some parts of the highway and some roundabouts where they were needed, however, it has proven to not be enough to manage the growing traffic.

Here are a couple ideas that I believe would help fight this growing problem:

- We have too many lights! Most of the problem when driving in our city is that it's so much stop and go; there is hardly any flow to the traffic. I think if we took out a couple of the unnecessary lights and went with more of an "Exit" approach it would dramatically improve the flow of traffic. There are many spots where the intersecting road is a much quieter and less used route, but we are putting a stop light there and slowing up the bulk of the people either on the highway or other routes. As one of

Canada's fastest growing cities I would hope the province of BC would approve potential changes made to our highway to support the influx of residents.

- Every left turn lane should have a brief advance. Too many times I have seen a backlogged turning lane that ends up spilling onto the adjacent lane going straight. This can cause potential accidents and is not efficient for moving traffic. Apart from this, many spots around the city seem to need re-calibration with their sensors. Often it seems they aren't working correctly.
- Lastly, I don't think there's much way around it. We will need to look for unused areas where we can develop new roads and shortcuts.

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: Many of my friends and family around the downtown core have been impacted by crime. There is no easy solution to this issue, especially now that we have allowed it to get to the point it has. The first step is finding an ethical way to help the huge homeless population that is growing downtown. I believe we need to invest in existing shelters/addiction centers, or potentially build a new one that is moved from the downtown core. Giving them a proper place to get treatment will give these people hope for a fresh start. As it stands, the downtown core has gotten way out of control with the homeless population. This hurts local businesses and it detracts people from spending time and money downtown. This is from fear of having their car broken into, having something stolen or being constantly asked for money. As a City that relies heavily on tourism, it is vital that we keep our downtown core safe, not just for tourists but for everybody.

Apart from this, I have been thinking about whether or not having the Queensway bus station where it currently stands is a positive or negative thing for our community. Obviously we need proper means of transportation for our community, but as someone who puts on many events just down the street, I witness everything from full on fights, drug deals, constant panhandling and sometimes people so intoxicated they can hardly stand, all around the Queensway area. We can still have bus stops there, but the way it's setup right now it just seems like its a hub for unwanted activity. I propose we make that a drivable street and add some parking stalls, while keeping some bus stops there for those who are actually using the space how it's intended.

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: Our current Councils “streamlined approval process” is one of the main reasons we are facing some of these huge issues. When a city experiences rapid growth like Kelowna has within the last 20 years, we must approach every issue with absolute caution and think of the potential repercussions years down the road. As it stands, we have over-crowded traffic, unaffordable housing, a homeless population that is constantly growing and local businesses that are struggling to get by. We’ve put important projects on hold (the connector from Glenmore to UBC took more almost 10 years to finally complete) while multiple high rises and thousands of condo units have been approved and built. As tempting as it is to ride this wave of growth, we need to take a step back and map out the future or that wave won’t last much longer.

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: One of our strongest assets in Kelowna is our local businesses and entrepreneurs. Going forward we must ensure that we set up these people for success and do everything we can to support our local favorites. In my opinion, we need less chains/corporations in our city and more potential business for those with their roots in Kelowna. We have seen before how all it takes is one or two big companies to come in and it severely impacts the livelihood of many local businesses. Lowering the business tax rate and limiting the amount of approved chains/corporations will allow our locals to flourish. We need to remember that our local businesses are what made Kelowna into the desirable city it is today. Whether its our Wineries, Restaurants, Farmers, University or Business Entrepreneurs. The attractions that have allowed for such huge exposure and growth of this city need to be maintained and taken care of before we give away business to outside corporations.

Aside from that, I believe providing a tax cut to to developers who are looking to build affordable housing is the next priority. We need incentives for builders to construct more than just high-rises and expensive condos downtown. Growth of a city is extremely important but we can’t leave our locals behind in the process, we must look to find a middle ground.

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 we must stand up for our city whenever necessary. In my opinion a lot of what brought the speculation tax on in the first place were realtors who were abusing/playing the system. If you look at Vancouver its a prime example, their city was full of corruption from Realtors and it escalated so quickly nobody could stop it. Now that the regulations for Realtors have become more strict I truly think that it will be a lot less common for a city to get out of control like that again. That being said, the speculation tax is only for extra housing that is sitting empty. We have a minimal supply of rentals in Kelowna, seems to me that renting out an empty unit solves both of those problems.

I also want to clarify that I personally do not have anything to gain by having a speculation tax or not having one. Whatever is the best decision for the future of our city will be good by me.

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: I absolutely think that with the rising costs of energy we should be getting everybody on somewhat of a even playing field. Moving forward we want our city to be as energy efficient as possible. The cost of living is already expensive enough in the Okanagan, it is our job to try anything we can do to help cut monthly costs.

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: Kelowna is a very desirable city, we have amazing attractions and activities to do all year round and those who move here don't want to leave. First of all, we need to slow down how fast we are building housing and condos without also changing our roads in the process. We can build all we want but we also need to properly supplement the influx of residents. An example of this is the Glenmore Connector, it was put on the back burner for nearly a decade while countless high-rises and expensive condos were approved and built. If we continue on this path, not only will not be able to afford living in Kelowna, but we wont be able to properly get around either.

A solution to this issue, is to provide builders with incentives to develop affordable, multi-unit housing. There is a ton of unused space in Kelowna, we should be developing in spots that create close knit communities. Not only housing that is affordable but something that will bring those people together with a sense of unity. We can't leave those people who made this city what it is today behind.