



Mohini Singh

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 greenhouse 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: To work on further improving our city/regional transportation network I would support exploring and implementing new solutions to ease traffic loads on our major road networks in a logical manner. Alternative modes of transportation are very important for our region, however, the utility of the existing road networks must be re-assessed and determined based on the changing needs and increased volume. Our citizens who are daily 'car-based commuters' must also be considered through our transportation planning and policies.

I support actively exploring and creating a timeline for a north-end bypass connector, in addition to assessing the efficiency of our current major arterial routes. I would support policies to make better use of the current road network, in addition to supporting policies and infrastructure to provide the most feasible expansion options for our growing city and increased demands of the same networks. I believe that the expansion of our road networks, to accommodate growth and population increases, must be factored into capital infrastructure spending and planning. As our city continues to grow, the viability of our road networks to handle the increased traffic volume is absolutely essential to ensure that we have the capacity to meet the needs of our citizens.

In considering the overall regional road network, I support positive and mutually beneficial collaboration and initiatives with the City of West Kelowna, as individuals on both sides of the bridge work, play, and shop on either side. I believe a coordinated effort would decrease congestion, and allow for stronger

advocacy to meet funding and infrastructure needs in the future need when dealing with other levels of government.

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 have heard from and interacted with many residents on this issue. This is a topic of significant importance, as highlighted over the last several months especially. During my terms on council, I have voted for additional support measures e.g. more boots on the ground (adding RCMP officers as requested from time to time), and funding/opportunities for local agencies to partner with enforcement. I believe that this has afforded our frontline officials the personnel and resources to proactively focus on prevention and deterrence, as well as frontline response when required. However, we still have specific areas in the City where incidences are occurring far too frequently, and this must be addressed.

I believe crime in any city is a symptom of underlying socioeconomic issues (e.g. poverty, homelessness) in some instances, and willful conduct in others. I believe the distinction between these two categories is very important in addressing the issue and finding solutions that fit. If re-elected, I will continue to support funding for: 1) additional RCMP officers as requested from time to time, and community policing; 2) partnerships between our local social support agencies and law enforcement to work on reducing the frequency/severity of incidences, and overall impact on our community; and, 3) foot patrols and bylaw enforcement e.g. as currently occur in the downtown core. As we move forward, I think these measures in tandem with other initiatives like *Journey Home* and harm reduction projects undertaken by our local community agencies will best allow us to decrease crime rates in the downtown core.

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: I support effective and efficient service delivery options for our businesses. I believe that the dollars saved by our local businesses result in increased investment and job opportunities for our citizens, as businesses generally tend to operate more confidently in favourable economic conditions.

As Kelowna grows and our business base expands we must adapt our processes to stay attractive and competitive with other cities in the province, country, and North America. Streamlining and reviewing cost saving service delivery options are two incredibly important measures to accomplish this goal. I will support policies and strategies for city staff and city operations to monitor, implement, and evaluate our current service delivery models, and make strategic changes as relevant based on this process to ensure optimal efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, I support on-going discussions and conversations with our local business community to solicit feedback and recommendations based on their experiences. I believe our service delivery must be based on evidence-based on best practices and I support continually engaging in the above processes to accomplish this goal.

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: I would certainly be willing to look at establishing variable tax rates and their impact on our tax revenue. Currently the city has a practise within the Tax Distribution policy that manages the desired cap on the business class ratio to a maximum of 3:1. That means the business class ratio cannot exceed residential taxes by 3:1 without council input and approval. That has been the practise for the past ten years.

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: My concern with the speculation tax is that it will drive investment and confidence away from Kelowna. While the goal of the speculation tax was to cool down the housing market (initially only in the lower mainland), there are significant - potentially unintended - consequences of the speculation tax for our region. The lower mainland housing market issues and subsequent policy solutions are not the best fit for our region. I believe there are other avenues that need to be explored to make housing affordable and attainable by citizens in all demographics and the speculation tax is not one of them. The provincial health employers' tax is likely to also result in a similar negative ripple effect as the speculation tax for small businesses in our region. The increased tax burden on small business owners will undoubtedly result in the same owners implementing cost saving measures, possibly leading to job loss and a decreased investment.

By driving investor confidence from the city, both of these taxation strategies will also drive away those wanting to set up businesses, directly impacting the economic well-being of Kelowna. We have worked hard to create a vibrant community, one where investors want to do business. However, I believe that the speculation tax could be a huge economic set-back for our city, resulting in a negative ripple effect.

If re-elected, I will support the on-going feedback/advocacy provided to the provincial government requesting Kelowna be exempt from these taxation policies. Furthermore, I believe Council's role in dealing with these concerns will also include collaborative advocacy efforts in partnership with the City of West Kelowna to raise our concerns at the provincial government level. Lastly, I believe Council can facilitate and create advocacy opportunities for industry stakeholders to voice their concerns to their local provincial government representatives.

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: This is an interesting issue, one that potentially affects many homeowners in Kelowna and other cities. Energy efficiency has a financial benefit for the homeowner and ultimately for the environment. I would advocate for the city, senior governments and the development community to work hand in hand to explore innovative solutions to address the issue. I certainly support measures that make it possible for homeowners to take advantage of incentives to upgrade their residences to a more energy efficient standard.

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: Housing affordability is a multi-faceted and complex issue that our council and councils before us have grappled with. I'm proud of the work our council has done to ensure Kelowna is a more affordable city to live and work. As a councillor I have supported housing developments for lower income residents including young people, single parent families, students and seniors. I have supported tax incentives for developers to encourage new rental developments as well as policies to expand secondary suites, new carriage houses and new zoning to increase densification in neighbourhoods. This helps make homeownership more accessible while increasing our stock of affordable housing units. I have also advocated for inclusive and family friendly development communities that are safe and consider places for children to play.

The demand for a spectrum of housing options exists in every city, and Kelowna is no different. The ability of our city to meet the demand across the affordability spectrum is incredibly crucial to ensure that we have an inclusive community for all citizens, regardless of socio-economic standing. This issue will be one councils of the future will also be dealing with as the prediction is that in the next 20 years over 40 thousand people are expected to move to Kelowna.