



Colin Basran 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: The movement of goods throughout the region is vitally important for our local economy, and for employees to get to work in a timely manner. We are on a path to build a sustainable infrastructure to ensure efficiencies of operations and provide a healthier environment for future generations.

I believe in developing a balanced transportation network (roads, transit, active transportation), like the recent completion of John Hindle Drive increasing connections to UBCO and YLW.

The CN Rail corridor will change how we get around our City and be a major tourist attraction plus economic generator. Our Council has accelerated the timing of construction of South Perimeter Road and Gordon Drive extension for residents living in Upper Mission.

A top road priority moving forward will continue to be the extension of Highway 33 (North End Connector) from Spall Road north past UBCO. This will ease congestion on Highway 97 and Enterprise Way. This major project is dependent on grant funding from senior levels of government. When Provincial and Federal governments unveil a new funding program for roads (which doesn't exist currently), the strong relationships I've built with both will improve our chances of successful applications.

We also applied for funding to improve access to YLW and UBCO - two pillars of our local economy. This could help speed up planning and construction of a highway interchange. Council is currently developing a Transportation Masterplan that will identify projects needed over the next 20 years to create a cost-effective and sustainable transportation network for our future. Learn more about it here:

<https://www.kelowna.ca/our-community/planning-projects/long-range-planning/transportation-master-plan>

Transportation planning goes beyond City boundaries. A comprehensive Regional Transportation plan is already in the works. With the loss of Greyhound bus service, we are continuing to lobby BC Transit for increased service to better connect Kelowna with Penticton, Vernon and beyond.

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: As a father of two, safety has always been a top priority. My position will not change moving forward. I will always look for opportunities to increase our collaborative efforts with stakeholder groups in the community.

We've invested considerably, adding RCMP officers, Bylaw officers and private security with a view to addressing crime. 50 new first-responder positions. Together, we are uniting against those who think they can take advantage of our City.

Criminals who prey on the vulnerable, homeless, addicted or mentally ill or committing property crime will not be tolerated. We will continue to dedicate focus and resources to eliminating crime. We hired former RCMP Superintendent, Bill McKinnon to increase to find long-term solutions. His report will be completed this fall, outlining measures to increase safety downtown and we've already implemented recommendations like a needle pick-up program.

Homelessness is a very different challenge. This issue impacts every community across our nation. Our nationally recognized 'Journey Home' program, led by community stakeholders including business and leading national experts, has

taught us we need a housing-first strategy with wrap around support programs so people can get off the street and stand on their own feet.

88 units of supportive housing for the chronically homeless will be available in a couple of months with 100 units to be built next year. This will provide housing for almost 2/3 of the chronically homeless in Kelowna.

The Journey Home demonstrates Council is working tirelessly to address this issue with the Provincial and Federal governments. This will lead to the closing of the Cornerstone emergency shelter in March. It's been proven to us that societal issues cannot be solved by one person or City Council in isolation. They've been growing for decades and require a strong commitment from everyone to bring about meaningful change.

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: Keeping tax increases to a minimum and making tax dollars go further has always been my governing philosophy. In fact, we were recently ranked #1 by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for keeping our operational spending low for taxpayers and third best for overall spending.

When you compare Kelowna to the 20 largest communities in BC, our tax rates are one of the lowest and well below the average. A collaborative approach, innovation and strong leadership have enabled us to keep taxes low while ensuring Kelowna residents have the services they need in our community.

Today, nearly ¾'s of spending for City projects, services and infrastructure comes from sources other than taxation. For instance, we received \$148.8-million in external grant funding for City projects to grow our infrastructure and to support residents' needs. For example, years some areas of our community were failing to meet National clean water safety standards, so through hard work and collaboration we secured a \$43.9-million senior government grant, to implement Phase 1 of the Kelowna Integrated Water Project for clean water. An additional \$12-million provincial grant has been secured for Phase 2.

The reality is that our community is being challenged by continued growth and aging infrastructure. Since elected, we've had to build the new RCMP building for \$48 million and increase the number of first-responders in our community. These challenges need to be addressed in a timely and fiscally responsible manner. I strongly believe that not addressing these issues, in order to keep taxes artificially low, will only push this problem onto future generations and increase our infrastructure deficit.

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: Small business owners and entrepreneurs are the backbone of our local economy. The more money in their pocket, the more they can invest to grow business and help create employment opportunities for residents. To support our local businesses and allow them to thrive, the City of Kelowna has maintained one of the lowest business tax class ratios in British Columbia. In 2018 it was 2.37:1.

To remain competitive, we will ensure that business property tax ratios remain below the average of other large BC communities. We've put policy into place to prevent it from going higher than 3:1.

Kelowna is a great place to start a business and I will do whatever it takes to keep it that way. Earlier this year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business named Kelowna the top place in British Columbia to start a small business. The low cost of business licences and the lack of red tape were highlighted in the report.

In 2016, Kelowna was named to top place in Canada for entrepreneurs by the CFIB and the most cost competitive region in the Pacific by KPMG. It's no wonder we have one of the strongest local economies in the country. The number of job postings in the Central Okanagan grew 22.4% in the first half of 2018, doubling the provincial job growth rate of 11.2%.

As Mayor, I regularly visit businesses in our community to get feedback from owners and entrepreneurs on what we as local government can do to help them be successful. This information is useful when considering policy that may impact their operations. Our City has a Director of Business Development and Entrepreneurship that works closely with industry to help them grow and we also help fund and support the great work done by *the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission*.

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: One of the most important roles of Mayor is building and fostering strong relationships with elected officials and staff from the Provincial and Federal governments. Strong connections are needed in order to convey local issues and concerns about policy decisions made by senior levels of government.

Effective leadership, interpersonal skills, trustworthiness and integrity are just some of the traits needed in these situations because you may be voicing your opposition of a decision one day and asking for grant funding the next.

My strong relationships with the Federal and Provincial governments have served Kelowna residents well over the past four years. As an example, it has allowed us the opportunity to share your concerns directly with the Premier and opposition leaders about the proposed Speculation Tax.

Our excellent relationships with senior levels of government has helped us receive almost \$150-Million in grant funding over my term. That includes the largest amount ever received in our City's history when we were awarded almost \$60-Million from the Provincial and Federal governments for the Kelowna Water Integration Project in 2017.

Fostering collaborative relationships will be incredibly important moving forward as we work together to tackle major issues of homelessness, mental health and addictions. For example, the strong working relationship Kelowna Council and City staff has with BC Housing, will soon see 188 much needed supportive housing units built in Kelowna. As a result, the Provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has lauded the 'Journey Home' plan as a model for other communities to follow.

I also look forward to continuing to build upon the relationships I have with our current local MLA's and MP's. We have accomplished a lot together but there is still much work to be done to address the needs and concerns of Kelowna residents.

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 believe we should do both. There is no doubt that existing buildings are far less energy efficient and there is a need to look at what can be done to bring them up to a higher standard. However, there are new and innovative ways to improve the efficiency and sustainability of new homes that are under construction that can be implemented with little cost implications and which could save homeowners money in the long term. In a fast growing City like Kelowna which is seeing record development levels, it's just as important that new buildings will be able to serve us well long into the future.

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: As more people move to Kelowna, if we don't build more housing the prices will reach levels much higher than today. We can continue the sprawl, taking away the beauty of our green spaces or we can build up density. If we continue to grow outwards, the costs of building and maintaining the necessary infrastructure will require large tax increases that most Kelowna residents will not want to support.

The only responsible way to address housing affordability and traffic concerns is to encourage density and diversity of buildings in our town centres where people can live, work, and play in the same neighbourhood. With this in mind, we amended zoning bylaws to remove barriers for builders to diversify housing options. We partnered with BC Housing to bring more than 300 affordable housing rental units to Kelowna. We also completed the Urban Infill Challenge (RU7 Zone) to promote multi-family units in existing neighbourhoods.

Additionally, we've launched the 19-point Healthy Housing Strategy - found at this link:

<https://www.kelowna.ca/our-community/planning-projects/current-planning-initiatives/healthy-city-strategy/healthy-housing>. This strategy is one of the initiatives we're implementing to ensure all residents have a place to call home - from rental properties to townhouses, to taller buildings in each of our city cores - building places where people can live, work and play!