



## Graeme James 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:** Expected population growth in the next 20 years is 38%. We cannot expect our current transportation network to meet the demands this growth will place on the system.

I supported the continuation of the North End Connector Spall Road to Hwy. 33 when on Council and will do so once again if elected. As part of this process I would actively lobby the provincial and federal governments for funding to help defray the costs necessary to complete this project.

Realistically, a second crossing is something for future consideration and the immediate focus should be on improving the existing local roads. Our population continues to grow. Bicycle commuting and public transit are growing alternatives and should be supported and encouraged but are not enough to absorb the increasing pressure on our roadways.

## 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:** Kelowna continues to rank high in illegal drug possession crimes. This indicates high rates of addiction which leads to more crime, especially vehicle and bike theft, break and enter, and theft from vehicles. There isn't one, easy answer to any of these problems. However, statistics show that creating a more visible police presence in troubled areas can reduce crime. Also, having police identify and interact with high-rate offenders have shown to be effective methods of crime reduction in other cities. With this in mind, I would advocate for more bike patrols and the instigation of police foot patrols in Kelowna's high risk areas. Foot patrols would be targeted and planned with officers patrolling high crime rate areas and focusing on information gathering, becoming with familiar with the street population of the area, and interacting with business owners.

## 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:**

- Create a reasonable, set timeline to bring each application through the system.
- Consider that the size and cost of a project should determine the length of the approval process.
- Create reasonable lists of requirements (based on size and cost of project) so applicants are not sent back time and again for information not initially requested.

## 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:** According to the April 10, 2017 Report to Council 2017 Tax Distribution Policy, "Kelowna has the third lowest Business Class ratio and was one of eight municipalities over 75,000 populations that had a

Business class ratio under 3.00.” It’s the City’s policy to stay below the 3:1 tax rate policy. I supported this tax ratio during my previous term on Council and will continue to support this policy when elected.

## 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:** Mayor’s/Council’s role is to lobby the provincial government to take a sober, second look at the implications of the speculation tax imposed only on certain areas of the province. The speculation tax has created a disadvantage for certain municipalities and has penalized hard-working Canadians who have invested in properties throughout BC and who support the local economies where these properties are located. It’s an ill conceived tax and should be scrapped altogether. At the very least, Canadians should be exempt from this tax.

The provincial health employers’ tax has just downloaded the cost of health premiums on employers and businesses which is unfair. Again, I believe that the provincial government must be lobbied to review this decision and create a more equitable solution.

## 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:** Pre-1985 homeowners should be able to access grants and programs from federal and provincial governments. If elected, I would lobby for and support incentives and grants so owners of older homes are encouraged to upgrade their homes to a higher standard of energy efficiency.

## 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:** In my previous term on Council we partnered with government agencies to provide affordable housing. The City of Kelowna supplied land and the building was funded by other levels of government and run by non-profit societies. I would continue this work to provide affordable housing, especially for low-income families and individuals.