

Municipal Election 2018



The Chamber of Commerce is supplying responses to four questions that we sent out to candidates so that you can get a better feel for their vision and platform. We will send out responses to the first question on October 9 (today), the second question on October 10, the third on October 11 and the fourth on October 12 via our regular member email correspondence. It's a great opportunity for you to find out how candidates stand on business issues.

Question One

- 1. Help us understand the type of leader you will be, by describing your two highest priorities for change in our municipality, in the short term. What about in the long term?**

Smithers Mayoral Candidate Question Responses



Taylor Bachrach... I've proven that I'm a hard-working, accessible and enthusiastic mayor. I'm also an experienced mayor, having done the job for the past seven years. In the coming term, I'm motivated to work on strengthening our downtown, including business incentives, landscape revitalization and a new building for the library/gallery. I also believe it will be important to promote our airport, deliver better landing technology, and recruit additional airlines. Longer term, it is essential for us to fully embrace asset management. We've made solid progress on this, including the recent paved roads study, and we have more work to do to get to a position where we are putting aside enough each year to maintain our infrastructure



Randy Bell... Priority #1: Focus on fiscal responsibility in all our decisions with some common sense, whether short term or long term. We have some core infrastructure that requires attention. Priority #2 Making an encouraging partnership with business. This economic importance is what allows us to drive all the services, amenities and infrastructure we hold near and dear for now and future generations. I don't bring a particular project agenda, I believe that the council has a responsibility to bring forward ideas from the community that benefit the town as a whole. I am not running to bring my project ideas to sell it.



Smithers Councillor Candidate Question Responses



Gladys Atrill... I support moving the Library/Art Galley project forward now so we can benefit from the 90% grant funding now available for such projects. Ensure our basic infrastructure is maintained and replaced as required. The town has initiated asset management planning, so we will have good documentation of the quantity and quality of our assets including the cost of eventual replacement. That sets the stage for better decision making during budget and a better case for infrastructure grant funding in the future.



Colin Bateman... I believe strongly in sustainable economic development and am always looking at ways to protect, improve and attract small, medium and large businesses. I believe in keeping an open mind on all businesses, regardless of size, and taking the time to work through the process of determining the right development for our community. We also need to find ways to protect our existing businesses, while building development for the future at a sustainable rate. Secondly, I believe in looking into new ways to improve the amount of accommodations available in Smithers. I believe we need to address some of our town policies and zoning bylaws and think outside the box in researching better ways to encourage developers to build a wide variety of homes. That could involve looking at our current Official Community Plan and working towards updating, if and where needed.



Lorne Benson... My primary short and long term priority is to challenge the pressures that compel increasing municipal taxes. Property taxes are the primary source of funding for the municipal budget. The increasing cost for construction and operation of public projects, escalating pressures to expand municipal services beyond core infrastructural operations, and now the trend of increasing finance rates all add to the non-sustainable trend of municipal tax increases. Challenging the pressures that result in increased taxation is, by necessity, the first priority for town council.



Phil Briennesse... I have always been the type of leader who works hard, listens to people, and asks tough questions before making any decision. I think that openness regardless of the issue helps lead to fair, balanced decisions that benefit the whole community. For the next term I will focus on securing the 90% federal/provincial funding grant for the new library/art gallery project, continuing to implement asset management throughout the towns operations and finding creative solutions to increase the amount of housing available in Smithers, such as narrower minimum lot sizes, and continuing to work with BC Housing.



Greg Brown...

I will prioritize planning, sequencing and financing the maintenance and renewal of our infrastructure: both the basic services such as of transportation, water and sewage, ect... and I include social/cultural (ex. Library and Art Gallery) and economic infrastructure (ex. airport). For example, the past council did a study of the quality of our asphalt, we secured financing for and initiated the construction of the airport modernization and we completed the concept design and business plan for the Library and Art Gallery building. I supported these projects and will support continued work these projects. A long term priority is to position the Town's efforts in order to bring the ideas of community development and economic development together. I personally see development as a mix of economic and community.



John Buikema.. Priorities For Change: In the last couple of months, I've spoken with many members of the business community. I sense a certain level of frustration with town leadership. For some there is too much red tape. Others feel that business growth and economic development do not receive a high enough priority. If these perceptions are accurate, both a short and long term priority for me would be to work at building bridges and dialoging with the business community. Maintaining (and even enhancing) basic infrastructure without an over dependence on government grants would also be of both short and long term importance.



Tim Sharp... I would be a leader who seeks input from the people of Smithers including the Town staff in order to make wise decisions. One who would try to work with and alongside everyone that wants to build a better community. My two priorities for change in our municipality would be to remove some of the red tape the business community faces when dealing with the town so the local economy would thrive and so they could invest more effectively in our community. I would also address the social concerns by advocating for resources such as mental health and addictions treatment. In the long term I would like to see better planning when it comes to infrastructure budgeting and better decision making when it comes to what new infrastructure projects the town does. One of the funding models I would look into for new projects such as the library would be 3P funding models (Provincial or Federal government, town, and private investor



Casda Thomas... I believe that it's important to have healthy debate on Council as well as having the ability to work together to get things done.
In the short term let's: * Address the housing concerns within our community; and * Update our OCP and zoning bylaw to ensure that our regulations are clear and well understood to developers and those in the business community, and that they are in line with our community's needs and priorities. In the long term let's: * Increase infrastructure spending and keep on track in the coming years; and * Maintain and enhance our downtown core and highway frontage.

 Frank Wray... In the short term if re-elected my immediate priorities would be: To move the library/gallery project forward to the grant application stage (as a 90% grant opportunity is extremely rare) while concurrently examining the cost estimates; and to hold public consultations before council sets its priorities for the next four years. In the long term my highest priority would be to ensure that all Town infrastructure is fully funded for planned maintenance and eventual replacement. As some of this funding is not yet in place it must be phased in carefully.

 Ryan Zapisocki... It is a high priority for Smithers to address our ongoing housing shortage, and to find more ways to welcome new business to set up shop in town. I would love to hear ideas from the business community as to what they feel are effective strategies to entice more business in town, as well as if there are any barriers that they have faced that could impact growth and investment. As LNG industry just recently announced an unprecedented investment in the north west, we will need to prepare for the influx of people and business opportunities in the long term.

Telkwa Mayoral Candidate Question Responses

Question One

- 1. Help us understand the type of leader you will be, by describing your two highest priorities for change in our municipality, in the short term. What about in the long term?**

 Brad Layton.... The last term saw a lot of change and I feel that a large part of what we need to do this term is to see that change through. Working to make sure the Provincial government comes on board and negotiates a fair settlement for the Regional Benefits Alliance we are part of, so we get a fair share of our resource dollars back to invest in our communities. Aging infrastructure is our greatest potential cost items in the near future and we need to source and deliver funding without raising taxes.

 John McDivitt (No response)

Regional District Candidate Question Responses

Question One

1. Help us understand the type of leader you will be, by describing your two highest priorities for change in our municipality, in the short term. What about in the long term?



Mark Fisher ... Many factors go into decisions - Community Plans, legislation, budgets, input of partners, advisory groups, staff, and the public. My priority is to take all of this into consideration and to come up with creative solutions that keep cost down, service quality high, and are fair and realistic. This may sound like political drivel but I have demonstrated my win / win approach by knowing the issue and listening to all sides. I would like to continue to apply this to solid waste management, shared services discussions, emergency planning, and support for the agriculture industry in the valley.



Leah Germain...

- 1) Fuel Management , Risk Mitigation and Public Education - Educating rural areas about the dangers and how to prevent and minimize wildfire damage. Advocating for 100% funding from the Community Resilience Initiative Program to help areas become FireSmart and address flood prevention measures WITHOUT affecting taxes.
- 2) Regional Benefits Alliance - Lobbying so the Northwest is able to acquire a greater piece of the resource money that's being generated in the Northwest; ensuring this government fund is coming back to be used here locally. Several areas of the province receive this; the northwest should be eligible as well.
- 3)