

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 sent out questions 1 and 2 and on Tuesday and Wednesday. (Today) we have the third question. Tomorrow, October 12, we will have the fourth (and final) via our regular member email correspondence. It's a great opportunity for you to find out how candidates stand on business issues.

Question Two

2. **Do you think our main street/downtown/Frontage Road business community is healthy and successful? If not, what would you do to change that and amplify an "open for business" and "community appreciation" profile everywhere?**

Smithers Mayoral Candidate Question Responses



Taylor Bachrach... I do think our business community is healthy and successful. I'm always impressed by the dedication, ingenuity and community spirit of local entrepreneurs. I believe the key to further success is creating open dialogue about challenges and opportunities, and being willing to shake up the status quo. We've demonstrated this with our Small Business Task Force and through changes to off-street parking, off-site works requirements (sidewalks, etc), and the Town's sign bylaw. There is always more we can do and I remain open to the opportunities.



Randy Bell... This is one of the reasons I'm running: lots of talk that we are 'open for business', but our town has a habit of bureaucratic roadblocks. Back-to-back in National CFIB paperweight awards recognizing government departments who have made life difficult for business owners by adding or enforcing unnecessary rules and regulations because they are doing a good job. 1. Policies behind these roadblocks need to be fixed or removed; 2 We need ideas from our business leaders and put them into practice to help our business community.

Smithers Councillor Candidate Question Responses





Gladys Atrill... I do think our business community is generally healthy and successful. The quality of businesses in this community never fails to amaze me. I am a local shopper and it is a rare day when I can't find what I need here. However, I do realize there may be individual businesses facing challenges at different times. Being open for business means being open to new ideas and at the same time matching business and development opportunity to shared community vision. This is where an updated Official Community Plan can help guide us and I support a review of the OCP.



Colin Bateman... I believe that we need to work on ways to entice business into all areas of Smithers. Our focus should be on Smithers as a whole. A healthy business community would bring in more people and this in turn would make it easier to maintain our retail businesses. I would like to see our town use an Economic officer with a clear mandate to drive and help business. I believe we need to have an assist to liaise the process with Town that has seems to have a perceived hard to work with process. I also believe a healthy relationship with the Smithers Chamber of Commerce would help promote business in Smithers. I would also like to make sure that we don't become obsessed with just one area but look at all areas with equal value.



Lorne Benson... Our Main Street and Highway 16 frontage are an example of the best that Smithers has to offer. Business owners have stepped up, committing to construction and landscaping that reflect the direction set by our Official Community Plan (OCP). The current OCP was adopted in 2010. These plans should be reviewed every 10 years or so. During this next four year term council can again engage the community, to ensure the OCP still reflects the long term direction needed in our changing market and business environment.



Phil Briennesse... The business climate in Smithers is very healthy. The majority of spaces on main street are full and we have seen substantial development over the last several years. During this last term we held a small business task force which led to the removal of parking requirements in the downtown. This allowed new developments to proceed. The revitalization tax exemption is another example of how we have made it easier for development while at the same time adding vibrancy to the downtown core. Saying you are open for business or business friendly is one thing, this council has shown how we are.



Greg Brown... Our town has zoning areas for business: downtown/main street, highway commercial, light commercial, heavy commercial and airport lands. The current council focused on downtown/main street and we made significant changes (with help from the Small Business Task Force) to make it healthy and successful and as a result our community will be well served for years to come. I'm receptive to hear from interests in the other areas regarding changes the Town could make to ensure that these areas are healthy and successful as well.

 **John Buikema** ... Main Street/Downtown/Frontage Road: I believe that Smithers has a fairly healthy and and diverse business community, but through my work at Todd Larson & Associates, I also know the challenges of having a thriving business in a small remote community. Online shopping, out of town shopping, and small customer base are only a few of the challenges that the business community faces. Town leadership needs to do all it can to support local business because a healthy business community is vital to a healthy community. Town leadership must also sharpen its pencil so that costs offloaded onto business are not prohibitive.

 **Tim Sharp** ... I believe that some businesses have moved off of main street due to some of regulations that have been enforced. Removing such bylaws and lowering the tax rate would help address this.

 **Casda Thomas**... We are fortunate to have several outstanding businesses who have stood the test of time and are valuable contributors to our community. So, in that sense, yes, we have a successful business community. However, something that I find concerning is the number of commercial vacancies currently present, specifically in our downtown. Encouraging higher density residential in our downtown can be one way to support our local businesses. Additionally, our zoning bylaw should be consistent with our Official Community Plan and provide a clear path for developments that fit our community's vision. This would remove perceived barriers and leave everyone on a level playing field.

 **Frank Wray**... I believe that we do have a healthy and successful business community, but there is always room for improvement in the "open for business" atmosphere. I would support another Business Task Force that would look at the processes and bylaws of the Town to see if they could be changed in ways that could help both new and existing businesses. The recommendations that were implemented from the last task force resulted in some positive changes but I believe there is more work to do in this area.

 **Ryan Zapisocki** ... I do think our local business community is vibrant and healthy. It is one of the big draws of Smithers to have such an active and welcoming main street/downtown. I think continued innovative ideas for maintaining and building upon the vitality of our local business community is important, and I hope to learn more and am in support such movements. Listening to our current business community, and having a healthy dialogue is integral to maintaining and improving upon the health and success. Addressing the business community's commonly identified concerns will improve what we have, and make our town more welcoming to new businesses

Question Two

2. Do you think the Telkwa business community is healthy and successful? If not, what would you do to change that and amplify an "open for business" and "community appreciation" profile everywhere?



Brad Layton ... Is it healthy? – I think the businesses that are in Telkwa and well established are healthy. But is a business culture or "open for business" climate present in Telkwa? I would say depends on what type of business but generally no. Our biggest issue is how to compete with Smithers or how do we get traffic to Telkwa. We need to work at finding a solution but I am not convinced we can for businesses such as store front sales or service businesses. Promote, solicit and nurture new types of business like internet services and sales as an example maybe?. This will be a focus of many future meetings I am sure.



John McDivitt N/A

Regional District Candidate Question Responses

Question Two

2. Do you think our rural business community is healthy and successful? If not, what would you do to change that and amplify an "open for business" and "community appreciation" profile everywhere?



Mark Fisher... People want to live and work here, which shows we are generally in good shape. Entrepreneurship and supportive policy is key in my view, as are more streamlined RDBN industry websites and business linkages (promotion, human resources, access to local inputs). One thing I would do early in the terms is hold a joint rural / municipal Advisory Planning Commission meeting so that each jurisdictions perspective is understood. This could include the business community so that rural land use planning and 'open for business' relationship is discussed.



Leah Germain ... The Regional District Area A business community is very diverse, each with their own strength and challenges. Part of my job if elected is to engage with the business community within Electoral Area A to properly assess how strong and resilient it is. I am interested to hear directly from the business community through open discussions on their concerns and where they feel improvements can be made.