

Councillor and Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire: Individual Responses



Councillor: Jeff Plas

Ward: 1 - Assiniboine Ward

#	Question	Answer	Comments
1	The offering of a wide range of incentives, in a timely manner, can be a critical component in the negotiation to attract new business. Are you in favor of the development of a comprehensive incentive package, including performance parameters to allow for increased flexibility to address "calls of interest" at an administrative level in a timely manner?	✓	But it must be balanced ensuring not to hurt current, established business here and certain guarantees of local employment.
2	The City of Brandon is challenged in attracting business, in part due to the lack of unserviceable land, the access to land, undefined development plans, etc. Are you in favor of investment in servicing and / or land acquisition, as part of a business attraction investment strategy?	✓	Yes, but it has to be carefully planned. The city cannot afford to blindly go into the business of land speculation. Depending on the industry/company being courted to come to town, I have found many local companies own property on the outer limits of the city and would be willing to offer it.
3	Administration of the City of Brandon have referred to the concept of program and /or outcome-based budgeting and reporting, allowing for more transparency of the impact budget dollars are having in priority areas. As part of your mandate this term, are you in favor of making this a priority for administration to fully incorporate this approach into the budget process?	✗	Although it offers a comprehensive view, with consistency and accountability, there is no qualitative evaluation that shows certain variations of each project. It is strictly a "black and white" reporting system.
4	The funding of reserves is meant to ensure that as an asset is being used, funds are set aside to plan for its replacement. In recent years, increased tax revenues have not been used to proportionally build reserves. Are you in favor of reserves being proportionately funded in line with the percentage of increase in tax revenues in any given year?	✓	It is important to plan for the inevitable future repairs or replacement of any project to avoid a last minute scramble to properly fund these.
5	Citizens can only absorb so much when it comes to having the ability to pay tax. Do you support ensuring increases in taxes do not exceed municipal inflation, even if this requires adjusting the services currently being provided?	✓	A city cannot go into a deficit to fund services. What a city's administration must do is properly prioritize services from most to least important and act accordingly.
6	In some municipalities, specific community services that are also provided by the public sector are identified and requests for public proposals are opened to determine if there are more cost-effective solutions that could be offered by the private sector. Do you support this concept of private, public partnerships to help improve the city's overall operating efficiency?	✓	Not only can this save the city money, it will help the local economy, businesses, and constituents which it serves.
7	The 8th Street Pedestrian Bridge has been identified as a solution for people to gain access from the "flats" into the downtown core at an approximate cost of \$8.2 million. A number of programs and partners have been identified, to assist in cost sharing this investment. If this project costs the Brandon taxpayers more than a third of the total cost (\$2.75 million), are you in favor of it proceeding?	✓	Yes, but Only if it serves All of Brandon. Currently there is a bicycle/pedestrian bridge crossing the Assiniboine River from The Discovery Centre to The Flats meant to hook up with the proposed 8th Street Bridge. The problem is someone built a baseball diamond on the Flats immediately at the exit of this path blocking any access to the new 8th Street Bridge.

8	The Keystone Centre has been identified as needing to explore and adopt alternative funding streams to become more self-sustaining in both its operational and capital requirements. Are you in favor of the Keystone Centre actively pursuing these alternatives?	✓	Absolutely, The Keystone Centre encompasses prime real estate on the corner of 18th and Richmond. Part of this area could be developed by the Keystone Centre into a small shopping area thus creating extra revenue for the Centre.
9	The City of Brandon gave approval to move forward with the use of Development Cost Charges to build a reserve for growth related infrastructure. Are you in favor of funding growth related infrastructure as needed, as opposed to delaying these investments until the associated reserves are adequately funded through DCC?	✓	Yes, but the city must also be careful that the charges to any home builder does not exceed their immediate capacity to pay. DCC in other communities has forced smaller companies out of business.
10	The City of Brandon has a significant infrastructure deficit. It is Council's role to prioritize where capital dollars are spent to ensure that critical infrastructure is taken care of ahead of the non-essential investment. Do you support prioritizing strategic infrastructure investment that would yield a return on investment or that would facilitate growth?	✓	Although infrastructure is important throughout the city, it must ensure that all the Wards receive at least basic infrastructure dollars.
11	The City of Brandon has started to explore the concept of developing and seeking the approval of the Manitoba Government to govern its own Charter, which would provide for similar autonomy to what Winnipeg currently has related to development, planning, rate structures, etc. Are you in favor of Brandon having its own Charter?	X	The issues other communities across Canada are facing is once they have control of their Charter, some provinces have become more difficult to deal with on shared services and infrastructure.
12	The City of Brandon administration has said that they are "Open for Business", however there continues to ongoing complaints from developers, business owner, and citizens about the level of bureaucracy, regulation, and time associated with doing business in Brandon. Would you be in favor of identifying key processes and putting in metrics / measurement systems to gauge actual performance (i.e. approval time on a permit)?	✓	The City of Brandon has been decent to deal with anytime I have interacted with it, but the issue is there is no one body or department a business can go to to get what they need. A liaison or "311" for businesses needs to be implemented.
13	Downtown Brandon continues to be a challenge, as more buildings have vacant storefronts, and the area has gradually been allowed to degrade in appearance (garbage, weeds in the sidewalks, graffiti, overgrown lots, etc.), resulting in some businesses choosing to leave the area. Are you in favor of investment being made by the City of Brandon to address these issues?	✓	The city already has the Brandon Downtown Development Corporation but it is not widely known. I have spoken to many downtown shop owners who knew nothing about this program.
14	Would you be in favor of the concept of charging a tax levy on downtown properties that remain vacant, as a means to encourage the active redevelopment of buildings in the area.	✓	Yes, but only as a last means. An effort should be made first to work with the owner to populate that space

General Comments

It is important for the city, businesses, and the residents to work together as one. I have seen incredible generosity and spirit from all 3. Although we all have challenges, Brandon has always united as one!