

Councillor and Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire: Individual Responses



Councillor: Rick Chrest

Ward: Mayor

#	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?	X	While some manner of incentives are periodically required to be negotiated especially with respect to the provision of required infrastructure, having a "standing" slate of incentives may be excessively costly for the taxpayer and difficult to manage on a day to day basis. This is an area that requires more examination prior to implementation.
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?	✓	Only to a modest degree. We have currently developed an industrial lands strategy which outlines areas of higher priority. Generally when it comes to industrial development, it would be difficult to begin actually servicing land as the needs of industry range very widely. The City should coordinate and partner with private developers to enhance our efforts in this realm.
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?	✓	This will ramp up over time. Some departments lend themselves to this form of budgeting more than others and we should be careful not to confuse taxpayers by making wholesale changes to our budget 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?	✓	Council pays a lot of attention to reserves and most are quite healthy and taxpayers should feel good that we have savings accounts for more of our future needs - a long time strength of Brandon.
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?	✓	The past Council 2014-2018, increased taxes by one-third of consumer inflation - an average of 0.52% per year. This did provide some gains for taxpayers against inflation but I doubt we can maintain that low level of adjustment but certainly keeping increases at or below inflation should be our goal.
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?	✓	Currently the City has a blend of using City services versus private. Most of our major infrastructure work is tendered out and done by private firms. We have considered other areas but generally the service requirements expected by citizens are difficult to meet with private providers. I believe we've maintained a good balance that provides good service and respects tax dollars.
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?	X	I would likely be in favor of something a little more than a third but we simply can't afford the entire cost on our own. We're optimistic that other funding will come available and that we can find a suitable path to proceed.

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?		No Comment.
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?		No Comment.
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?		However we must certainly maintain the balance of the City and continue to serve all taxpayers which means consistent infrastructure renewal. The funds from DCC's however will only be used towards growth infrastructure.
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?		Brandon actually already has its own Charter. We are pursuing options with the Province to expand and modernize it to respect the growth of Brandon.
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)?		As the Brandon Area Planning District is now dissolving with the 2 RM's going out on their own, we expect to find ways through the Province to further streamline the approval processes for development matters.
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?		No Comment.
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.		Possibly however I would need to more information and examination on such a practise.
General Comments			
No Comment.			