

Councillor and Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire: Individual Responses



Councillor: Shaun Cameron

Ward: 4 - University

#	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?	✓	As a small business owner myself, I feel there should be a great deal of emphasis placed on attracting business to our community. I work with balanced scorecards and skills matrix measurements in my daily work and I feel there are of good benefit for identifying need. They also streamline the process and timeline for information turnaround. In a business friendly climate that can often be the difference maker when attracting new business, enhancing investment opportunities or furthering an existing business offering in a community.
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?	✓	I feel this could be of tremendous benefit to the business community. I have long felt that Brandon has lagged behind in retention of top talent. We often lose some of the strongest students coming out of post-secondary to larger markets where there are more opportunities to further their career. I feel the Brandon market is well positioned to retain some of that talent through an aggressive marketing strategy positioning our city as a hub for transport, as well as positioning our community to further harness the agricultural sector in the region. Land acquisition and the subsequent marketing of that land should be part of an overall strategy that would attract investment to our city.
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?	✓	I feel Brandonites deserve to know where their tax dollars are being spent and to what percentage departments are holding the line on that spending. I would be supportive of moving more to outcomes-based supports and a balanced scorecard to measure not only progress but successes. This would help continue to define the best areas for investment in our community. It is important that we weigh investment through a lens of betterment to the community (increase to quality of life) and return on investment, and I feel any potential increase to property taxes should be both predictable (so households can budget for it) and affordable (to continue to make our community attractive to outside investment and migration to our city).
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?	✓	I feel it is a good strategy to always budget a certain percentage to long-term sustainability. We do it in our own households on a daily basis and a city should be no different. Having a stable amount that is a 'known commitment' to infrastructure reserves provides the aforementioned predictability to and potential tax increase.
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?	✓	I feel we need to ensure sustainability. As a taxpayer in the community I know the challenges we face in the rising costs of products and services. We need to make sure that any potential increases are kept at a reasonable rate while ensuring we continue to deliver a service that meets the expectation of residents. As mentioned in previous, I feel any potential increase to taxes should be both predictable and affordable. Residents deserve and expect that of their elected officials.

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?		I feel that as our city continues to grow, all options should be entertained. We should ensure that first and foremost that we are supporting those who have committed their careers to working in the public sector, at the same time, I feel it is important that as we continue to grow as a city we find ways to build on our offerings in a cost effective fashion. I think there is still plenty of work to be done on the overall effectiveness of the 3P model, but it should be something that is, at the very least, part of an overall consideration.
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?		I answered no on this point with a caveat. I have spent the past number of months visiting with residents (some of which) who have been directly impacted by the absence of the bridge. I feel, after listening to the residents, the city should exhaust every option for shared cost on the project prior to moving forward. If the project is deemed as a project that is of necessity to the 'flats' then I feel as a city we should look at the best way to serve the residents and maybe the bridge is the best option. If this is something that is not deemed as a true necessity to that area, other forms of satisfactory alternatives should be researched (dedicated transit routes etc.).
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. I feel the Keystone Centre is one of the biggest assets to the region. If there is a mechanism the Board deems necessary to move the Keystone Centre forward, then we as a council should be open to hearing their thoughts. Being that the Centre is a shared responsibility I feel it is important to engage members of the Provincial government in this discussion as well.
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?		I feel it is important to be ahead of the curve on the infrastructure costs associated with any sort of growth. If we are to delay issuance until the reserve is adequately funded we are creating a greater infrastructure deficit that is likely to drain the fund upon issuance when at a maintainable level. I feel in years where we are able to adequately build reserves then investment should continue to take place at the same or greater levels than in the years when reserves may be depleted.
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?		As mentioned above, I feel decisions on taxation should be made through the lens of return on investment and/or increase to quality of life in our community. Strategic investments in infrastructure that yields growth should be near the top of that list. Return on investment should not be the sole reason for investment though as not all decisions will yield a financial return, but a holistic return on the quality of life in the community.
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?		The City of Brandon has had its own version of a provincial charter since the late 1990's. With that said, its effectiveness is somewhat limited when compared to the Winnipeg Charter. I feel we as a community have unique needs that are somewhat different than other communities in the province (being the largest urban centre outside of the City of Winnipeg). I would be in favour of exploring further the enhancement of a city charter, but would not want something that is regulatory in nature take precedence over meeting the needs of the community and its residents.

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)?		I feel any improvements we can make to expedite growth or make Brandon a more "business friendly" climate would be beneficial. With this said, we must keep an eye towards continuing to ensure that the growth we seek meets the ultimate needs of the community and its residents. There has been some movement in the past to streamlining processes at city hall/planning etc., further efforts toward finding a common ground there (in consultation with business) I could see as being beneficial.
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?		As the past chair of the Downtown Development Group and a former downtown resident, I'm an ardent supporter and a firm believer in the potential for our downtown. The ultimate gauge of a city's vibrancy can be measured in the way they care for their downtown. I see this as being one of the biggest opportunity zones for business in the next decade. With existing infrastructure and quantities of available land coming into play, our downtown could be seen as a good opportunity for investment in the foreseeable future. I'm in favour of council continuing to research and find ways to work with downtown partners to further investment and opportunity in our downtown.
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.		I believe that holding property owners accountable for the presentation of their business and/or properties is a good option. Absentee landlords and the resulting disconnect from the community has created problems in the past for our downtown. I would like to continue to see investment in the downtown led by locals looking to further the growth of our community.
General Comments			
Thank you for the opportunity to speak to these issues. I welcome anyone who is interested, to check out my website cameronforuniversity.ca for more information. Kindest Regards, Shaun			