

Tofino Ratepayers Association



Ali Sawyer

1) So, the first question is the obvious one. Tell us about yourself and in general terms why you have chosen to run.

Hello again! Thanks for sending out these questions. Some people might remember me from the last by-election that I ran in, but for those who don't, here are some fun facts about me.

I've been in Tofino for over ten years now, and have worked in the restaurant industry for that time. I grew up on the east side of the island in Campbell River, so when the time was right, a move to Tofino seemed natural. I decided to run again after my experience in the last election, and for the same reasons. People in town reached out to me, asking if I would, and I really think that's the best reason to seek election. There are many folks in town who have different concerns and values, I'd like to be able to represent them on council, and to help be a bridge between community members and the decisions that are made in our town.

2) What qualification or life experience has prepared you for the responsibilities you are seeking by running for office?

Every job I've had, I've worked with a sense of responsibility. Most recently I've been able to take on a more senior management role at my workplace of 5 years, Tacofino. That has taught me much more about how to work with people, and meet differing expectations from different sources. Dedication, hard work, perseverance, these are values that I hold highly.

3) Residents have expressed many concerns over the years. Number the items from 1 to 14 on the basis of your sense of priorities with #1 as your top priority. The item you would feel most urgently needs to be addressed. Should you wish to comment on any item please do so below your ranked list.

I'm going to stick with the same answer I had last time, as I still feel it stands true. The point isn't to pick one issue just to ignore another, but rather use our funds as wisely as possible to get the best results we can without wasting taxpayers money. Some of these issues have the same funding base, while others don't, but they are all important to the people who live here.

4) Recent studies have identified that, over the course of a year, for every Tofino resident there are 300-500 tourists, depending on the study. Should tourists be paying a greater share for operating the municipality?

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I think that the District has done a lot to work creatively with the RMI funding, but there are still constraints. I look forward to being a part of finding solutions to this.

5) Last year Tofino initiated a pay parking scheme for the beach areas. Partly in an effort to secure money from tourists to help the town in paying for needed infrastructure. It seems to be a success. The plan was that this year the program was to expand into the downtown area where summer parking problems abound. The implementation of that plan has been delayed, apparently while the need for Offshore parking and the parking needs for downtown businesses are reconciled. Do you think pay parking is an important initiative for the community and a good way to generate money? How would you proceed? How should any revenues over the costs of operation be spent?

Revenue from pay parking is a much needed help, and if done wisely can be pursued further. I would be cautious of pushing parking into residential areas if people are trying to avoid paying in the core, and keep in mind the needs of all locals who also need to conduct business downtown.

Increasingly, housing issues in Tofino are becoming complex. Businesses are buying existing residential homes and converting them to staff housing. Vacation rental by absentee property owners seems to be commercializing our residential areas. These more commercial uses of residential property can apparently pay a higher purchase price for the home than families trying to live here can afford. They may also be able to write off expenses against income that resident homeowners are unable to do.

Rates of home ownership in Tofino are in decline.

Housing has been and will continue to be one of our biggest issues. Whatever actions the District takes, we need to prioritize existing and future members of our community.

6) Currently we have a complaint driven bylaw system in which bylaw responds to problems only when infractions are reported by citizens. Issues such as illegal vacation rentals and illegal uses of property with, for example, trailers and motor homes parked as rental units on residential property are becoming increasingly problematic. This pits neighbour against neighbour. The argument is that lack of enforcement of vacation rental infractions and other forms of commercialization results in a loss of much needed residential housing units while the quality of neighbourhoods is deteriorating as they fill up with temporary and substandard rental units. For the good of the town, does bylaw need to be more proactive in enforcing important Municipal bylaws?

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This past summer I saw more of a presence from Bylaw, and while the complaint system will always be necessary with the area they have to cover and the number of staff they have, I believe there are solutions that can ease tensions in neighbourhoods and take the burden off some shoulders.

7) Going forward, will increasing numbers of vacation rental with absentee owners, and other quasi commercial uses of residential property actually reduce the number of residential properties and pose a threat to the long-term viability of Tofino as a place to live?

Whether the number of legal rentals increases or decreases, our residential properties are important. There is no getting away from that. When a residential property is a vacation rental, it changes the way the occupants interact with that neighbourhood. Whether this is a positive or negative is something that we as a community can guide.

8) Tofino's taxation and spending increases at a rate exceeding the rates of population growth, inflation, and wages for the average Tofitian. It has been argued the divergence is so apparent in terms of livability, versus the cost of operating the municipality, that spending must be curbed, and/or alternate sources of revenue must be found. In response to this dilemma, it has recently been proposed that Tofino petition the provincial government to allow a sales tax to be applied to all commercial transactions (hotels, retail stores, charter operations, restaurants, etc.) in an effort to 1) secure the infrastructure Tofino needs as it grows and 2) to place the burden of the necessary taxation more properly on tourists. Please comment.

Seeking new ways to use the resources we have and research potential future incomes is something that we have and will continue to need to do. Whether it is from a new tax source, a grant, or existing funds, it is always good to consider all our options.

9) Do you think Tofino is facing a crisis as families leave because they cannot afford to live here? The **Tourism in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region A Vital Snapshot | 2021** report states the following re: the Living Wage:

At \$19.63, our region's living wage—the hourly pay that each parent must earn to cover the basic expenses of an average family of four—was the highest in BC in 2019.

Few people actually receive this wage, however, and more than half of the region's population earns below \$31,000.¹⁵ Over 16% of women and 18% of men earn less than \$10,000 a year.

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Between 2017 and 2019, monthly family expenses have increased by approximately \$300 (or 5%) in our region. Rising housing costs are largely driving up the cost of living.

Please comment.

I can't help but agree with this, as I have seen too many friends have to leave when they start their families. Given that that is the amount needed from each parent, what do we expect our single parent families to do? I'd hope to be able to help find solutions that allow our families to stay and grow here.

10) It has been 20 years since Tofino has done anything significant to improve/increase its water supply. It is an issue for discussion in many reports and council meetings. For example, the availability of water is often cited in regard to the consideration of rezoning for housing development. Recommendations from the most recent staff report offer, as a solution, further water restrictions and methods to reduce consumption layered on top of the current system of seasonal water restrictions. It also tentatively suggests the consideration that certain businesses in Tofino may need to close for the summer months. As well, the study identifies opportunities for increased supply and storage to avert the potential for summer shortage. The report identifies that within a few years of the end of the upcoming council term, Tofino's water demands will begin exceeding supply. Are you prepared to make the decisions necessary to avert Tofino's current and looming water insecurity?

Having enough water to meet our demands, and managing our demands to work with our supply go hand in hand. This issue is huge, and has many ins and outs. Yes, I am prepared to be a part of discussions that will help our town remain viable for future years to come.

11) What else would you like to address?

I'd just like to say thanks to everyone who made it through to the bottom of these questions, and I look forward to seeing you around. Let me know if there's anything else you'd like to ask me!

12) Let's say you have a very successful term in office. How would Tofino be better in the future than it is today, because of your successful efforts? How did you bring that about?

I can't see the future, but if that time comes, I'd hope to leave Tofino with less issues than it has today, and a few more solutions for the long term. I think the only way we can do those things is with a lot of work and community involvement.