

Tofino Ratepayers Association



John Enns

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

I am glad to share with Tofino Ratepayers as I have been a member for a while. I am a 25 year resident of Tofino and have been active in the housing scene for most of that time. I work at the Coop Hardware and run the Tofino Fish and Loaves food bank and the Tofino Rental sites on Facebook. I have watched Tofino change and good people having to move away and I want to help the locals have a secure, happy and balanced community.

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

I have served on various boards and on Tofino District housing committees, I have a Master in Intercultural Ministries, and have traveled to many countries. I been both a renter and a landlord in Tofino.

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 see many concerns are important and some are also urgent. I feel many can be addressed with the same time/effort and need not be ranked. For example climate change is a vital issue but won't be solved without some time spent. The water supply is foundational to any new housing or development. First nation's issues may also help with developing economic diversity and with climate change. But although this mix is intertwined my personal strengths are in the housing area. I expect to work with a team that has other skills and other priorities and hope we will, together, work on all the important issues. I would like to add the issues of preserving nature, the environment, the salmon and the trees...

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?

Yes, they should pay their fair share. We have many tourist dominated costs and infrastructures, especially massive sewer and water needs that are due to tourists and resorts

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more so than residents, and yet the few residents are on the hook for everyone's sewer to be treated.

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?

I would support pay parking, as long as the pay parking we have continues to exempt locals by recording their license numbers, and this could easily be expanded to the whole town **and the off shore residents** with mainly a positive effect on these residents. I would like to see some of the money used to encourage bike and bus and other transportation alternatives.

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.

We need to implement a tourist bed limit in town asap. No more tourist/short term vacation rooms to be added. As it is now we have out of town people buying houses, evicting the locals, and making those houses into "mini hotels" with no commercial responsibilities/taxes. This needs to be stopped.

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?

YES – In the case of vacation rentals, but **NO to the people who work here** and just want to live in their own RV or van. Those who host such workers should be REWARDED not harassed or

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punished. These places should be safe and clean with town water and power. If these rented homes are pushed out not only will we lose many workers, but the only option for the landlord is to use these spots for vacation renters. We don't need more vacation rentals,.. but we do need homes for workers..

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?

Yes, this has happened too much already and is happening even more now. We have a “Gold Rush” of investors coming here and buying up places and evicting locals for their mini hotels.

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.

This is a good tactic and I would support it.. but we can also have a “Tourist tax” that is voluntarily included by the resorts and restaurants in each bill. Other places have used this successfully.

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.

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.

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Please comment.

Absolutely we have a crisis now! So many locals have already left town, even those who did own property are leaving as they see the changes here. Property taxes go up with the high prices, and it mainly hurts the people who want to stay here and don't make a fortune on tourists or flipping houses. Housing is a big factor, but the cost of food and clothing is also a factor. Transportation is also more costly now which can be needed for medical and other vital issues.

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?

I do appreciate the town's upgrades in storage and in the Ahkmaksis water treatment plant, but we all know we are short on water and it will get worse without changes. However we have more rain here than most places and we can use this by encouraging homeowners to put in tank systems and a bylaw for purple pipe in all new construction. (Purple pipe is for non-potable water only, like toilets) I know locals who would shower in a basin to reuse that water and meanwhile tourist have their giant three head shower warming up their wetsuits. Charging much higher rates for resorts may help bring change as they care about the dollars. Putting a cap on tourist beds will also help this.

11) What else would you like to address?

We need to stop cutting down old growth and building residences that we don't have enough water for anyway. We need to change some tourist accommodation back to locals and worker homes. Local workers who live in their own RV or van or tiny home on private property should have the right to do so without fear that bylaw will evict them. We need safe and healthy places for our workers, especially the young women who are vulnerable to being abused. And we need safe and good recreation places for all ages, ...

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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 hope this happens and it would not be "my successful efforts" ...It would be because of the team working together in a responsible and informed way. I hope it will be a place that has a limit on tourist beds and therefore more affordable and more plentiful housing for locals and workers. That those who are using homes (where they actually don't live) for commercial vacation rentals will be limited and will be treated as - and have to pay as - a commercial enterprise. Taxes will be lower for local full time residents and higher for tourist businesses. Local people will feel secure in their homes and not fear having to move out for tourists. Families will be happy and secure and children have fun activities and learn in this beautiful place.

Thank you for this opportunity and thanks to all you locals for creating this community that I love and live in.. and hope to contribute more towards.. –

John Enns