

Tofino Ratepayers Association



Sarah Sloman

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

I was born in Tofino and have lived here most of my life. My paternal family has lived here since the early 1900s . I graduated from Ucluelet Secondary in 1994, when I met my husband. We spent many years working in the restaurant industry and traveling and surfing. I attended post secondary school in Victoria where I studied horticulture. I returned to Tofino and started my landscaping business, with my business partner, and have continued to operate it for over 20 years. My husband and I bought our property in 2003 and began building our home. We raised our twin daughters here. They just graduated from a combination of Ucluelet Secondary and distance learning. In my free time I love to spend a large part of each day outside. I love surfing, gardening, beach walking, hiking, running and camping. I have chosen to run for council because I love our town and the people living here. I know each decision I make will be in the best interest of our community and the environment which we live in.

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

When I was a teen growing up It was during the war of the woods. This was a very influential time for me. At my dinner table sat my grandfather a retired logger, my father a salmon and crab fisherman and my mother one of Tofino's first bed and breakfast owners and me a teen with a passion for our environment and a bit of a loud mouth. This taught me that although I may not agree or maybe no one will agree it's important to listen and respect how our choices effect other people.

I have operated my landscape business since the early 2000s. In one month I service well over 50 clients both commercial and residential, balancing their needs with the needs of my staff, which continually battle for housing. This has also given me the opportunity to work with developers on landscape designs which further add to the beauty of our community. We reconfigure our schedule to work around the ongoing water shortages in town.

As a life long resident I have experienced the school system, parks and recreation, childcare, being a homeowner and an entrepreneur. I can relate to vast amount of our population through my life experiences and understand how current and future issues effect them.

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.

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Recreational facilities

8 I do think recreation is extremely important in our community. If people are healthy and active they will not only feel better but make others around them feel better. I personally support opportunities that can provide our children with recreational activities. I'm lucky my kids love to surf but not everyone does.

Climate change

1 it was a battle for 1st place but climate change effects our use and supply of water so its the most important. For me it is all about the ocean and the trees. I've noticed in my life the summers here are hotter and drier. I can see the trees are starting to show signs of stress.

More publicly funded housing

5 There has to be some place for people to live. As a small business owner this effects the capability of me securing staff; which over the years is becoming more difficult. I am hearing a bit of a divide in the level of support citizens are willing to put towards this. I am eager to come up with the best solution. I welcome input from residents on this.

More privately developed housing

10 I worry about the stress to our water supply. I would like to see people who work here be able to work towards one day owning a home. I would prefer new housing developments be homes not vacation rentals

More staff housing

13 I have heard this can negatively impact neighborhoods. Staff accommodation is needed. I would like to see priority with longer term staff vs the transient staff

Justice for First Nations

6 I absolutely think the First Nations need justice for the crimes committed against them.

Greater economic diversity

11 I think diversity creates versatility

Water Supply

2 water is everything and this is absolutely the most important issue going forward.

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High property taxes

4 I hate the tax bill... I save for this bill all year. This one stinks, just because my neighbours sell means my house is worth more but I'm not going anywhere and I love my home.

The proportion between commercial and residential taxes

14 I would like to learn more about this issue and how we can more equally share the burden. This could be rated higher but those other issues are pretty big too!

Promoting tourism

15 I think Tofino is busy enough, but I do understand tourism will need to continue to be promoted as it's our main industry.

Pay Parking

12 I like pay parking. I think it is an effective way to pass some costs directly onto the tourists. I want the discount system to remain in effect. I would like it to expand down town.

Vacation Rentals

7 I would like to continue to crack down on illegal vacation rentals

Making Tofino a more affordable community for those who live and work here

3 I would like to see more of our citizens struggling to make ends meet be able to thrive in our community. With rising costs those living on fixed incomes are at a higher risk

Other_____

9 I used childcare for my children and am disappointed to hear this is still an issue in our community

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 I would be interested in exploring options for tourists to pay a greater share.

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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?

Yes I think pay parking is a good initiative. I would like to see it expanded to the down town core. I think it is beneficial to have the free local parking pass and discounts remain in effect. I think it could be reviewed every year. A couple options for the expenditure could be to expand the free shuttle service to the long beach communities, and increase the frequency. This could make it a more convenient mode of transportation for workers, reducing emissions and easing parking strain

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.

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, I think this could be a better approach. I would prioritize illegal vacation rentals.

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?

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I think quasi commercial use of residential property does pose a threat to liveability in Tofino. This is a complex issue with a lot of factors like housing standards, caused by leaks and mildew. I worry about the increased burden on our water supply and fire department. I also have concerns for really small businesses that cannot afford staff accommodation and to stay in operation they need to do this. I find this issue to be a bit of a double edged sword and I think it will need a lot of contemplation on how to proceed.

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.

I know from being a middle class family it is increasingly difficult to save for the future. For seniors or those on fixed income it can only be more and more difficult to remain a home owner. Yes I would like to take the burden off of tax payers and more place it on the tourist.

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.

Please comment.

I was reading the pricing of local housing has increased even higher since 2020. It has slightly decreased and is projected to decline slightly more this year. Unfortunately with the increase in prime lending rates it has not become easier to buy a home, especially for first time home

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owners or median wage earners. I do think discouraging the sale of homes and property for these quasi commercial uses could lower the price of homes on the coast.

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?

Yes I think water is a key issue when talking about development. I would like to encourage all residents and commercial properties to collect water for irrigation and outside use at a minimum. I would like to see future developments have rain water collection systems . Continually as a landscaper I see new buildings be built with no water catchment systems for the irrigation of their new landscape. The more landscapes get watered the quicker they grow and then cool the earth reducing the impact on our environment. Once these landscapes start needing water they have to apply for water permits perpetuating the cycle of water shortages. I would like to explore incentives for existing homeowners and businesses to have water collection systems. We will need to have more available water if we continue to develop

11) What else would you like to address?

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 would like to see development in Tofino be more environmentally sensitive. I want to see more cooling shade trees planted and protection of wildlife corridors. I would like new developments to explore solar and wind options for energy. I want to see residents stay in our community. I will make this happen by putting the interest of the people that live here and our environment first in any way I can.