

The Crowsnest Pass Herald Q & A

1. What is your position on coal mining and the role it should play in the future of the Crowsnest Pass?

The Crowsnest Pass is a community deeply rooted in coal mining; this is not lost with me. I value keeping the heritage of the community as core to how people see the Crowsnest Pass. However, the beauty of the Crowsnest Pass must be maintained. Understanding the importance of the mineral deposits of the region must be recognized by the council and the residents of the municipality. Information about the environmental impacts is limited due to the lack of current engineering monitoring and instrumentation in place. Only one monitoring well exists on the lease, and its position only monitors the existing ponds. Further development of the site is required to increase environmental monitoring to fully understand the risks.

The Grassy Mountain Mine Site will be developed eventually and now is the time for the community to be involved. By having a community that is cooperative with Northback we can ensure our interests are valued. If Northback does not develop the mine, another company will and may not respect the community or conditional acceptance. Industry brings economy; economy brings people. Without people we have no community.

2. What is your opinion of the current Strategic Plan, and what would you change or support?

There are many great points of discussion when it comes to the future planning of this community. Diversity in the local economy is essential to the quality of life in the Crowsnest Pass. The Strategic Plan is needed to ensure proper foresight. However, planning expectations must be managed and decisive action must align with the community's plan.

I support creating vibrant downtowns that attract people to local businesses and facilitate an engaged community. I share concerns with rapid beautification projects that appeal to specific demographics, but introduce higher expenses for small, local businesses. Further issues regarding infrastructure to support the initiatives must be properly identified and handled accordingly. The Crowsnest Pass is a community not a resort.

Council must keep the focus on making the community affordable for the young and generational families before accruing debt that must be carried by the taxpayers

3. How do you see the role of council versus the role of the CAO and municipal administration?

I see council as the collective voice representing the diverse demographic of the Crowsnest Pass residents. Council approves or denies policy and bylaw changes for the betterment of the community while ensuring that transparency is maintained in the decision-making process.

The CAO (Chief Administration Officer) facilitates the decisions made by council. The CAO must be capable of working with council and trust that decisions being made are for the well being of the community as a whole. The CAO must be transparent with council and not have bias towards the specific issues.

All Municipal administrative employees and designates must uphold their commitment to being transparent in their dealings. Integrity must be the highest virtue by all parties.

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4. How would you help address the housing shortage in the community?

I am a renter with plans to own my first home in the Crowsnest Pass. Too often I have heard people inside and outside of the community talk about purchasing homes for rental properties as a viable path to residual income. I believe many of the older homes in the community should remain on the market as first time home buyer properties. The market scarcity has left many entrepreneurs eager to buy up less expensive older homes to facilitate their real estate portfolio in efforts to create residual income from rentals. Council needs to investigate different tax plans that will help with affordable renting while encouraging homes to stay on the market for first time home buyers.

Council should work with developers in creating more properties. I believe that council working with developers will establish middle grounds between building homes and upgrading infrastructure.

In return we can keep the affordable housing viable for first time home buyers, keep markets available for entrepreneurial landlords and help the supply and demand of the current housing market. I believe condos will eventually play a part in the housing market but is a short-sighted solution that only solves the issue of rental availability.

5. How would you approach municipal taxes and spending - would you reduce costs, shift priorities, or invest in new services like recreation and beautification?

Reducing spending lowers tax increases and should always be the focus of the municipality. Strategic spending is paramount for complex budgets with high subsidiary spending. I support the subsidy of essential services, but I believe there is a responsibility by the local government to ensure subsidized businesses and facilities are not running inefficiently. It should be the goal of the municipality to clean up the subsidiary spending and not perpetuate higher tax increases from mismanagement.

I would look at ways to bring more visitors to the Crowsnest Pass by investing in the amenities we already have before dedicating high amounts of funds towards beautification projects. The Pass Powderkeg is one of the highest potential sources for ROI. The ski hill has one of the shortest operation timelines out of all the ski hills in Alberta. For the majority of the year it is not operating. Investing in lift operations in the summer for mountain bikers, we could bring in more revenue and reduce, if not eliminate, the current subsidy.

This is just one example of potential quick investments in amenities that would have cascading effects on diversifying local economies and bolstering efforts to increase tourism.