

Mayor and Councillor Candidate Questionnaire

This questionnaire is prepared on behalf of 2SLGBTQ+ voters in Kelowna based on community input regarding issues that are important to them regarding the October 2022 election. All candidates for mayor and council are invited to complete the questionnaire. Results will be published on Advocacy Canada's website as well as on social media. In the spirit of transparency, results will include a mention of any candidates who do not complete the questionnaire.

The deadline for completion is September 30, 2022. Thank you in advance for your response.

Email *

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Your First and Last Name *

Tom Dyas

What do you believe are the most critical issues for the local 2SLGBTQ+ community? If elected, *
how would you work with the local community to address these issues?

I know I don't know everything, so I am relying on the information that has been relayed to me from members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

From what I heard, the number one issue remains acceptance and the feeling of safety to live as one's true self in our community. Once again I have not experienced these challenges first-hand, but I know that while acceptance has improved over the last several years there is still work to be done.

My leadership style is extremely collaborative and involves admitting that no one person will have all the answers. As Kelowna's next Mayor I would absolutely work with the community to help bring about changes that will make a difference locally, here in Kelowna.

Participating in the Kelowna Pride Parade is the bare minimum and something that I will do, but that's not enough. Properly funding inclusive community events through non-repayable grants and speaking up against discrimination will go a long way.

Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are still prevalent in Kelowna, resulting in significant *
socio-economic disparities within 2SLGBTQ+ communities. If elected, how will you combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia?

As I stated in my above answer, I have heard that this continues to be an issue.

Beyond participating in the pride parade to show the City's support, I believe the City of Kelowna needs to be more involved in making Kelowna an accepting place. One way to do this would be to provide funding to the Kelowna Pride Society to help pay for the service they provide to our community.

Kelowna's Pride Week is a tourism draw with resulting economic activity, and yet while the City provides in-kind services through staff hours, they provide no source of funding to the Pride Society. This to me came as a surprise.

As Kelowna's next Mayor I intend on creating a non-repayable grant program for local non-profit events, like Pride Week, the previous Fat Cat Festival and others. Through this program, events can apply for grants to help fund their events, which provide a community service and create economic activity.

While marching in pride and providing funding to the Kelowna Pride Society will not solve homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, it would show an increased acceptance at City Hall and help recognize the benefit that our growing 2SLGBTQ+ community provides to our community.

Have you ever participated in 2SLGBTQ+ cultural competency or equivalent training? *

I have not, however I didn't know this was even something that was offered until a few weeks ago, and I am very will to participate.

I had a meeting with the President of Kelowna's Pride Society a few weeks ago to learn more about any issues the society was facing, and I started off the meeting by pre-emptively apologizing if I used the wrong terms, words or said something that was offensive, and asking them to correct me if I did. It wasn't because I intended on saying something wrong, it's simply because I don't know.

The Society's President then explained to me that Kelowna Pride Society actually offers cultural competency training and how it works.

This is something I find helpful, and will undertake regardless of the outcome of this election.

If elected, how would you address the ongoing issues of homelessness and mental health, especially as they disproportionately affect members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community? *

As you may know, mental health and housing both fall under provincial jurisdiction - but that doesn't mean there isn't a role for local governments, particularly on the housing front.

As Kelowna's next Mayor I would be a strong advocate with our provincial government utilizing relationships I've built over my career and new ones I would make in this role. I was on the City of Kelowna's Journey Home Task Force and am intimately aware of the struggles faced by individuals who are homeless and/or are struggling with mental health challenges.

I believe that when it comes to housing options for homeless residents, we need to have more flexible options. Not everyone is comfortable in a shelter with men, with alcohol, that bans pets, that doesn't have storage, isn't safe for how they identify, etc.

If we want to get people into shelters and into long-term housing with treatment, we need to ensure the housing options we are offering are flexible and respond to everyone's unique needs and challenges.

If elected, how would you address issues impacting 2SLGBTQ+ seniors, particularly with regard to affordable housing? *

Access to affordable housing is an incredible challenge within our community, and with a vacancy rate of 0.6% housing is becoming harder and harder to find. Seniors on fixed-incomes face particular challenges because as rents go up, their ability to pay doesn't change.

In order to encourage and promote affordable housing, we need to encourage more and different kinds of housing. This includes townhomes, carriage homes, and basement suites. We also need to encourage and incentivize the construction of accessible homes.

To do this, we need to start by talking the talk and walking the walk. The City of Kelowna owns 32 homes that it has purchased to turn into parks at some future and unknown date. While we wait for the funds to create the parks, the City rents these properties out at market rate. We must rent these properties out at affordable rents. Even if it's only a temporary home, it's better than nothing - it's the least we can do.

There are number of means the City can incentivize affordable units, such as offering development charge rebates to developers who choose to build affordable units, providing land to BC Housing to develop affordable rentals, and offering development charge rebates for the creation of fully accessible units.

Do you agree with the statement that "trans rights are human rights, and must be protected as such?" *

☒ Yes

☐ No

If elected, would you support funding for 2SLGBTQ+ community and social services? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

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