

Candidate Forum Questions – October 9, 2025

Lightning Round

1. Are you in favour of building another arena in Sylvan Lake?

Please choose from one of the following answers:

- Yes, we need it.
- No, we can't afford it.
- I'm not sure... I'd have to see the financial and tax implications.

No, not yet.

Our Recreation Master Plan just made in last three years identifies what sport facilities are needed to go with specific population levels. Though each community has different biases and hockey is well supported in our community. One of our own kids grew up playing it and still does at 39. However, we have other sports that are not being fit into ideal spaces. This includes indoor soccer and pickleball. Every one of these types of facilities will require debt financing because we are generally unwilling to raise taxes, or wait to save millions. Even with debt, we likely can't afford any building without some provincial grants, too. 1% tax increase generates approximately \$228,000. Most buildings cost millions, and with ice plants even more. We are still paying the debt of the NexSource build to this day which also supports ongoing sports.

Many groups have a history with the NexSource like the Seniors Center. They invested over \$600,000 into the construction of the Center. There are many historical nuances to building facilities, especially when they are shared.

Would you support converting the curling rink surface at the NexSource Centre into a facility for hockey?

Please choose from one of the following answers:

- Yes, it's a good compromise.
- No, the curling community needs space as well.

The simplest answer is no. However, if we built another facility for curling and all the other activities that are currently sharing that space, I would support it. Like the previous answer, it is a multi-million dollar endeavour. We would need several million for this. I understand just the ice plant for a new facility is over 1 million. That's equivalent to ~5% tax increase just for the ice plant.

2. Would you support measures by the Town of Sylvan Lake to combat climate change by working toward emissions reductions through increased density, increased transit use and walking/cycling options, and net-zero emissions targets for new constructions, especially in municipal infrastructure?

Please choose from one of the following answers:

- Yes. We need to do our part to deal with this problem.
 - No. The GHG emissions produced in our town are so negligible that anything we do won't make any difference on a global scale.
- or:
- I believe we need to be environmentally responsible, but focusing too much on GHG emissions would be counterproductive and not a good use of taxpayer dollars.

In the forum, I answered “no, but”. I also shared that if we work with other levels of government, we could do something good that lowers emissions and costs of running our town facilities and equipment. It's good to save money, running better insulated buildings, old furnace replacements, etc. It is also good to do these things for environmental reasons. Well-sourced data from many organizations show nothing is getting better if we do exactly what we are doing. I trust groups like NASA who demonstrate clearly that we are facing issues that will cost us money due to weather pattern changes. These issues are very hard to see in places like Alberta, because our weather is normally variable making it difficult to see what's average or normal. Other parts of Canada, especially places like Yukon where I lived before, it has become obvious to the long-time residents that things are different and not for the better, though we all joke it's nice to be warmer. I have a physics degree and that biases me strongly to analyze and follow data.

Pragmatically, we can do so little more than just maintain our town as is, based on our ability and unwillingness to tax ourselves. People can do little more than tolerate inflation pressures of our current budgets. For major adaptations, we need grants from other levels of government to retrofit or build new energy-efficient intensive buildings, or buy new equipment.

3. Will you commit to voting against any and all municipal property tax increases in the upcoming four-year term??

Please choose from one of the following answers:

- Yes. Our taxes are out of control and the increases need to stop.
- No. We need to be able to keep up with inflation and also consider the needs of the community... which may mean we need more tax revenue so the Town can fulfil its role of providing services

No, I think this is why provincially, and even federally we see a shortfall in health and education infrastructure. I don't want our local parks, roads, recreation facilities, water and sewer infrastructure to age without reserves being built up to replace them all. The best way to make infrastructure last is to maintain them well. Everything from the paint, internal cleanliness, to the basic repairs. Some lower taxes mantras are pennywise - but pound foolish visions. Save a dollar today and face major repairs down the road.

However, I am frugal personally and believe our town should be run that way, too. Let's do nice things, build beautiful things, but do it with the long-lasting mentality in all our decisions.

4. In ten seconds or less, what is the most important issue facing our community right now? (This is more than 10s:)

Our infrastructure (Water and wastewater/sewer pipes) under the ground needs some replacement, and some extra networking to facilitate growth, but also to create alternate routes for our water to get to our homes and businesses. "Redundancy" in water piping is insurance for when (not if) emergencies occur. There cannot be one path for water to flow to all our houses because there are times water has to be turned off to a zone to save our town from total loss. Just like the human body, the blood needs to get around things so tissue doesn't die.

I would have said 10 years ago, with my current knowledge, that we have "ok financial reserves". However, our provincial government has reduced infrastructure grants to all municipalities by \$1,000,000,000 (Yes, 1 billion) per year. What that means in practice is that we get turned down for water works grants or receive only a fraction of what we ask for. Last summer we applied for about 16 million (I recall) from the province and received a small fraction of it, I think about 3 million, (I recall). We had to borrow money to improve our fresh water supply. We are not at the maximum debt, but we have had to raise our own limit to improve our town's water piping.

Municipalities have been downloading a lot of extra costs by the province compared to historical support levels. The organization of all municipalities, and all rural ones, is lobbying the province to recognize this massive shortfall. It is starting to “catch up to us”. We have reached the “pound foolish” point.

General Questions

1. We have seen significant population growth in Sylvan Lake recently. Since 1994, population has gone from almost 5,000 residents to more than 20,000**. We are around 17,000 today. Does the Town need to increase its service levels to keep up with this growth... including in the areas of health care, education, social services, recreation, and municipal infrastructure? And if so, how should that be done?

Yes we need to improve services. Most of the question service levels are provided by the province. However as a town we can still do lots. Our town has been lobbying and is in good part, successful for health care improvements and a new high school. The Ambulatory Care (we call urgent care) has had few closures this last year. The committee has welcomed doctors who are considering our town, and successfully got several, which is why the clinic doesn't close hardly ever now. The government is also planning an upgrade to official “urgent care” status, which includes an ambulance bay and other services.

We need more social services in housing, home care, youth programs, family networking, high school build, more recreation, etc.

Some of these are dependent on the province too, but we have to continue to lead advocacy and develop the business case for them. Otherwise the provincial government doesn't know they are needed. They could figure it out, but they rather wait for us to tell them.

Outdoor recreation will be well served (not perfectly) by continued Pogadl Park growth. This has been controversial, in part. However, a family donated a substantial portion of that land. It is not something a previous council could easily say ‘no thanks’ to. However, it did put pressure on debt financing. To lessen it, the development had to be done in phases, with at least two more to complete. That doesn't help our debt, but it opened up an amazing space we will enjoy forever.

2. Also related to growth, we have an increasing senior's population. How will you address the increasing demand for affordable housing for seniors, and the need for more long-term care facilities in the community?

As president of the Seniors Association for two years, this question is music to my ears. On council and into the future, we can do this only if we are willing to be very involved as a municipality with the community boards like the Lions Club, Lodge Board, and others like the Sylvan Lake Community Housing Society.

Involved means helping these groups with some of the monies that are starting to be freed up from other initiatives completed in the Housing Accelerator Fund (\$6 million total) we got from the federal government. The strings attached to that money were all things we wanted to do as a community. In other words, spend this money towards helping these groups acquire land, or architects to build their plans.

Another critical thing is that affordable housing is never affordable without a subsidy. Otherwise, the private market would have solved this problem decades ago. Instead it just gets worse ever since the feds and province got mostly out of community housing projects back in the 1990s. We do this by either excusing property taxes for them or having tax levies like the Lodge's on our property tax notice. Every home subsidizes the Lodge currently by about \$50-60/year. That is how the Lodge offers seniors affordable housing and food.

3. **FOR MAYORAL CANDIDATES ONLY**

As mayor, what priorities would you focus on to ensure that the growth we are experiencing is managed in a sustainable way?

The town makes master plans to look ahead at least 10 years in every department. If we follow them, we have done half the work. Public consultation should happen as the plans roll out. Every Master Plan has public consultation in making all of them. This year we had two series of consultations. One for Waste Management and the other for the "social services" of our town, which are supported heavily by the province.

4. **FOR MAYORAL CANDIDATES ONLY**

Is there a way for a mayor to ensure that local contractors get first dibs on municipal construction projects?

Currently illegal by trade deals between provinces and even North American considerations too.

Plus, what if every town in Canada did that? I once watched a school built in Watson Lake, Yukon, by an Alberta company. Alberta companies go all over Canada and make millions from other Canadians. Even Picher would be stuck in Rocky Mtn House if we had that policy and they wouldn't be building Sixty West in Sylvan Lake.

Those companies help other local economies too. The Watson Lake example was not well received there. The Alberta company even brought their own groceries and didn't support the local store. Then they walked over to a private home and plugged their equipment in. (It was a rough start for them, though the school turned out mostly ok :)

5. Sylvan Lake applied for and received Housing Accelerator Funding from the federal government, but the money comes with strings attached.... strings including forcing more density infill into existing neighbourhoods. The funding also stretches our already fragile infrastructure, including access to water. Would you support more of these kinds of "string-attached" grant requests?

Yes, and I did. Densification is in itself not bad, but bad if there is a radical change. No neighbourhood should be prevented from some change, and no neighbourhood should have to face too much radical change.

Allowing no change, creates stagnation and deadzones in communities.

The results of one densification idea was secondary suites in our town. Across our whole nearly 6000 home town, only a dozen secondary suite permits came up for permits in the first year. Normally there are about three. (I am not counting illegal secondary suites. I think we all know tons of our community are building these too). That legal suite count wasn't much more than before the incentive and expanded permission given. Secondary suites were already legal in our town, but partially restricted.

6. Franchise fees are collected by the Town from the utility companies, and the utility companies then charge their customers for these fees to recover the charges from the town. Do you consider this a hidden tax, and is there anything you would like to change about that system?

Though the town sets the fee to a maximum of 20%, these fees are regulated by the provincial government and how they have to be reported on the bills.

The fees are actually the equivalent of the utility company's property taxes. No other business in town, itemizes property taxes on their bills. I.e. When I buy a hamburger, it doesn't say how much of the cost goes to property taxes of the restaurant.

What is not fair because the province itemizes this as a "fee" is that GST is then charged on it. That is a tax on a tax and very unCanadian. The Alberta Municipalities Assn will need to lobby our provincial government to work with the federal govt to make this end. The province is ultimately in control of this regulation.

7. What is your understanding of the role of a Councillor?

Make decisions on behalf of Laker. However, that also includes many skills like listening, but also, following a three inch thick binder of rules made by the province. The rules are called the Municipal Govt Act. That is the main one, but there are tons more. I know the government of our province always says cut red tape, but the school system and municipal world are so full of red tape, it is not funny.

We have to navigate that legalise, collaborate for grants to pay for most of our big infrastructure, keep our communities sustainable, (Sustainability is used in Alberta in a more economic sense, though we are also not allowed to pollute our environment either.) We have to follow every law of Alberta, not just that one three-inch binder.

As a councillor I have to vote. We are never allowed to abstain unless we have declared a financial conflict. That is why it is very important to read the hundreds of pages of reports each month, do your own research, and to ask every question you have until you have clear understanding before a councillor votes.

This is why populism is a little bit simple minded. We all joke about going to the bar, having a few and solving the world's problems. However, to make clear minded decisions, we don't indulge in spirits and we read tons and ask questions until we understand. Then we make decisions that are the best we can. (And guess what? - we still are human and make mistakes :)

8. How should Council hold the administration, (in other words, municipal staff) accountable for results without crossing into managing the day to day operations of the Municipality?

Council has to demand reports on our strategic plan and details of the actions taken on our motions we pass at the meetings. The CAO (Chief Administrative Officer) routinely provides reports on the plans we set out for all the staff departments.

It is completely unlawful to harass staff, period. To ask staff details of what they are doing or telling them what they should be doing is not appropriate. It is completely appropriate to share your thoughts with the other councillors and make motions to direct the CAO to do change the way we do business, or to investigate new ideas.

Administration generates a lot of ideas and brings them to council often. Councillors are responsible to consider their ideas for adoption too. A council is like a board of directors of a large firm. We set policies and plans. It is the CAO's role to coordinate the staff to make it happen. Council steers the ship through the CAO

9. **FOR MAYORAL CANDIDATES ONLY**

A question related to the one we just heard. The Mayor/CAO relationship is different than the relationship between councillors and staff generally. How involved do you see yourself being in directing the Town's priorities and managing its workforce? Is this exclusively the purview of the CAO, or do you, as Mayor, get involved.... and if so, to what extent?

A mayor has very few special powers. Even though the Mayor has oversight with setting the agenda, it is the whole council that approves it and the mayor has only one vote.

The mayor is the official spokesperson of the town. The people choose them for those unique functions. Councillors take turns as Deputy Mayor, and then take on the mayor's role in their absence, but otherwise all councillors are but one voice in a room of seven. No one councillor does anything without the authority of the rest. Even going onto other committees like the Library or Wastewater etc., the councillor must report their work to the group. The group establishes every appointment to all committees, each year. The mayor normally coordinates these assignments to make the decisions efficient and effective.

10. If elected, what three steps would you take to put our community on a firmer financial footing?

Keep debating every area of the budget. Make sure the budget aligns with the strategic plan. Give more attention to financial reserves. Keep collaborating with the province to advocate for grants to cover the cost of the largest infrastructure, like water and new arts and sports facilities.

11. How will you connect with segments of the community that are outside your current circle? How do we know you'll be working for all residents, not just the ones who supported you in the campaign?

I volunteer many hours a week. Campaigning I knock on hundreds of doors. Little slower than three years ago due to my knee, but then I knocked on 1400 doors. Attend as many Chat with Councils, take and encourage contact from citizens all the time. I am not tied to another busy job, though I do work on some projects outside of my volunteering and council work. This allows me the freedom to meet many people.

12. How would you deal with uncomfortable questions from a constituent... particularly someone who quite obviously doesn't agree with a position you've taken or the way you voted on a particular issue? Would you encourage them to express their opinion? Or would you try to ignore them because... after all... the vote has already been taken.

I've been doing that for 40 years. From before becoming a public servant in public schools (teacher, VP and many other leadership roles for my profession and Ministry of Education, including discipline and ethics committees) to now as a municipal politician. I find people are even better than I imagined. I expected more knives in my back actually. I find FaceBook is nearly the only place I get personal stabs. But even there, only maybe three times in three years. And one of those people who was not so nice to me is often referred to around town. The other one or two seem to be keyboard warriors hiding in another country, maybe:) In person it has been better than that even. So it's better than many think, for me. It is hateful for some others. And all the data shows that some people are especially vitriol towards women in politics, which I find disgusting.

Nonetheless, to deal with difficult situations, I always start tough meetings with setting the goal of understanding our situation better. The meeting is a chance to share our concerns and information. Through that process, I often find that the goal of the meeting is exceeded. People, including myself understand better and can make better decisions for others, or maybe are able to accept a past decision, now knowing what happened and how it affects others.

(Another person asked the question this way: "How would you handle personal conflict with a community member or group?"

13. **FOR MAYORAL CANDIDATES ONLY**

The mayor is the key spokesperson for council, and advocacy for our community to other levels of government is important. What is your advocacy track record,

and how have you helped our town or any other groups you may have been involved with to see success through your advocacy efforts?

Since I joined in a byelection and advocacy points were already made and most roles assigned I didn't get to be one of the three councillors to take the lead on one. However, in my professional life, I am a great partnership builder and collaborator. Once the Yukon Minister of Education asked his top staff, what does Ian want? He trusted my judgment as president of the teachers' association. He knew that I do not make my ego the goal. I want the best for the community.

14. What's the best thing the Town could do to support small business, and to reduce the amount of vacant commercial space downtown?

The council just took a large step on this. There is a property tax break for improvements made by private businesses in the waterfront. 75% of their property tax excused for 5 years based on the value of the improvement. (They still pay their original property tax for those five years.) This will also be applied to Light industrial areas, but not new residential developments.

There is a plan already reviewed by the public open house to totally upgrade the downtown streetscape. I was going to vote against this at first. I was concerned that we would invest money in the streetscape but the private property owners would leave many ill-maintained buildings on our Main street. Public works assured me in their reports and answers that the work is not only for the streetscape, but for the stormwater coming off the buildings and down the street. We need to keep this stormwater out of our lake. I run on a #HealthyLake bias. I have to show that I put my/our money where my mouth is. If I am elected, that means I will bias decisions that help the lake.

As a side note, many businesses downtown do excellent work in taking care of their businesses and making it appealing. However, most business owners lease their space and we all depend on the property owners to upgrade the buildings. My wife and I have run a business for a year on Main Street and noticed this dynamic in ours and others business situations. We wanted to make more improvements, but it was the landlord who saw that as pure rental costs, rather than business investment.

15. In your opinion, is it OK for Councillors who own and operate small businesses in town while serving on Council, or is this a conflict of interest?

Yes. I don't anymore, but we need Council to be diverse. That means a business owner is as important as any other occupation. We don't want everyone from one industry, or occupation, either.

Each councillor is morally required and also by statute to remove themselves if they have a pecuniary (\$\$) conflict. I have seen this with two councillors in the last three years. I have never yet had a conflict. PS. The law allows us to vote on the budget. We all have a financial gain in keeping taxes low and cutting services. But the law allows us to stay and vote on our own taxes because every property owner in town has that same bias.

16. What is your take on the water shortage in Sylvan Lake? Is it a problem? If so, how serious is it, and what should be done to address it?

There is no shortage.

However, when we were all trying to water our lawns in a drought last year, there did appear to be one in summer 2024. Public works discovered during that crisis that three major valves were leaking in our town. That's why the south reservoir could not refill enough at night for two weeks and put us in crisis.

Since then, all three valves were repaired. The pumping of water to stop the leaking immediately went down to near zero.

However, before that crisis happened, the public works department had already approached the council to look for more wells north of town and this year, the wells are being drilled. We have water for at least 22,000 people. However, it is prudent to "drill baby drill" so that we have enough water for thousands more. We likely will be prepared for 30,000 and then 36,000 once another phase of drilling occurs.

Lastly, people are starting to talk about an allotment of water from the Red Deer River which is an old discussion from long before I ever moved to town. That is not a pipe dream, but realistically, it is not going to happen for years or decades. Years ago, it was estimated to be \$92,000,000. Today it would be much more with construction inflation. We could never pay for that. The province normally pays for 90% of those costs. We could not make the case for more than a hundred million dollars being spent on us while we still have great wells. (Yes, it is hard water.) Adding wells is a few million. Far less than a pipeline with a treatment plant.

Side note: The province oversees all licencing of wells. We ask them if we can drill. They have all the science data to say if the aquifer can supply us.

On another side note, the Gull Lake residents wanted to start pumping out of the same (Paskapoo) aquifer to raise their lake. I do not support that for many ecological and other reasons. We could be affected by that too. And the oil and gas industry competes for that water too.

Our public works department has been designing networks of new water pipes to create the best flow of water throughout town. We need to move more water and have alternate routes for when there is breakage or maintenance needed. That means more water pipes to give us more water security. We don't just need more wells. If the tons of water can't move through the town fast enough, we would still be short of water.

Public works used to work with me on the Wastewater commission and now with Cslr Dakin to protect our interests. Eckville is hoping to join our wastewater (sewage) system and have requested the same number of votes. The other partners of the commission and the town are considering an alternate route around the lake for sewage collection. This route might save us money, but our public works department is promoting greater engineering design work of these ideas to make sure we actually will be saving money. However, we would need to spend more money, to save this money, because the route is longer than the original next phase to Halfmoon Bay but will encapture a greater zone of Lacombe County who want to approve many developments around the lake. These urban-like developments are all part of the risks we are putting around our lake. Planners report for years now that we have to prepare for 150,000 around our lake. Lacombe County would be a big part of that growth, not just our town.

17. Should the Town of Sylvan Lake do a better job of protecting its heritage and historical buildings than it has in the past?

Yes,... We just zoned a few buildings into a heritage classification a few months ago. That's nice, but not enough. We should preserve several buildings and features in our town. However, let's put our money where our mouths are. How can we expect a private property owner to save a building because we said it's historical. We have to partner with owners to encourage them financially to.

Also, one of the most beautiful sites of Sylvan Lake, from the water, or from coming over the hill and seeing the vista, is the trees that fill the cottage area and line the shore. We allow old cottages and other buildings throughout our town to be knocked down and

many of the owners want to maximize profit and land use by building the largest building possible, remove all trees and having lots of pavement. Within thirty years I predict we will lose at least half our tree cover. Some of the loss is due to this building trend, and the others due to the urban forest aging out and being taken down tree by tree, and not being replaced. Many people like trees on other people's property, but don't want messy leaves on their own. I always have a bias towards accepting nature. My horticultural father and my years in Yukon molded that bias.

I think we should have guidelines about tree replacement, just like our neighbours in Jarvis Bay Summer Village, and to designate our tree canopy as a historical feature. It is not just about aesthetics. Trees save our shoreline, filter our stormwater and slow overland flooding.

18. Do you have any thoughts on following the lead of communities such as Lacombe and Taber, and replacing RCMP policing with a municipal police force?

I have a preference to the RCMP serving us. Having a police force that sees no jurisdictional boundaries fights crime better. The RCMP are the best trained in the world. Their history has some mixed "ratings", but they have acknowledged their past and work towards reconciliation with those wronged.

The provincial government has keenly wanted to get rid of RCMP. We often have to do what they want. This may be one more of those cases, and it won't matter what we think.

19. What do you propose to do with respect to solutions for the youth in our community... specifically vandalism, bullying, petty crimes, and the ones causing harm. Would you support a return to a time and age-based curfew for young people to discourage unsupervised behaviour after hours?

I am not too excited about curfews, but not a solid no, yet. Councillors are obligated to keep an open mind, and to be open to the influence of others. We are allowed to have our own ideas or positions entering a debate, but by law we have to be open to influence.

A curfew is complicated severely by the fact we can't define youth. Kids can drop out at 16. In other words our province considers them an adult at 16. They would need to work and as young workers, take the nightshifts etc. Kids often have jobs, and how much time do police have to determine what youth are working versus just hanging out or walking back from a movie at a friend's, or babysitting. It sounds easy, until we have to

do it ourselves. Imagine how long it takes to get a hold of someone who is working in the bush for two weeks, while their 16 year old kid is in town legally, but out late and you have them stopped by your police car wondering if they are telling the truth?

I have worked with alternative schools and many youth at risk for 35 years. There are more exceptions than most people can imagine, by those who see it every day.

There are very few youth in our town who cause most of the vandalism, bullying and irritations. It is a known fact that “hurt people, hurt people”. Often, early interventions by supporting families avoids crime in the youth’s future. By having as many family programs as we can get grants for, the better we can help families dealing with extraordinary stress and in turn their youth grow up with more hope and the good behaviours associated with hope.

Creating spaces and programs for youth also allows them to have something to do. Idle hands are the devil’s workshop is sometimes said, but nearly always true. I have run on a platform of #HealthyYouth.

20. What should be done about rampant speeders, stunting, and loud mufflers?

(And the questioner adds “... in the majority of vehicles on our streets.” Not sure that’s accurate. I visit here frequently, and the majority of drivers I’ve seen are pretty well behaved. But it’s a legitimate question...)

I don’t agree that it is rampant. However, it is an irritant. I live off 60th Street and even while I was typing I heard a high-speed motorbike in the distance.

The RCMP have consulted (annually) for the priorities of the communities they serve. We have agreed that traffic enforcement is one of the priorities.

The province has nearly eliminated the use of speed cameras by towns. The government thinks they are just cash cows. Since 60th, and most arterial roads are not near schools, we can’t use them. Only cruisers and some radar traps are permissible.

I also support the use of traffic calming features. Over the last term, Public Works has been approved to build some 27 or 29 stick out crosswalks with flashing beacons. There are many more planned, especially around schools. Calming devices could be placed on major roads, too.

21. What is your position on gender diversity... specifically, whether the Town needs to do more to support this diversity, including transgendered, non-binary, gender fluid, and gay/bi/lesbian youth? Would you support the notion of giving them safe spaces where they are free to be themselves away from bullying from their peers and from adults?

I think before the latest government changes schools have done a very good job with GSA safe spaces and youth clubs. Parents I have worked with as a VP with kids of gender and orientation diversity are very happy with how schools treat their kids. Our public spaces need to be safe for all citizens of all human rights code criteria. One day I imagine a world where all the bullies are not welcome, and all the others have the freedom to simply be, and of course not imposing on others.

Some people I know feel this is ridiculous. However, as a public educator for 35 years, I have seen far too many deaths some of which are related to these issues. (I can't even count them anymore. I have to block it out.)

22. How will you work to ensure that Sylvan Lake is a welcoming and accessible community for families with disabilities, both generally and in the provision of services like recreation?

Our buildings are being assessed currently for accessibility. Especially the old Community Hall. We can afford some of these changes needed, but we depend on provincial infrastructure grants for some of these too. Over the next few years, big changes will be happening across our town in these old spaces.

Council approved some monies for the Steffie Woima school playground that is built to be very accessible.

After Pogadl Park is finished (Which has great accessibility), Four Seasons Park (Think Skateboard park area) will be hosting an accessible playground. A future council will have to budget that. When I say budget that, it can include moneys from general taxes, provincial grants and town recreation reserve. The Recreation Reserve is a special levy on our property tax bill.

Our trail system needs to be expanded to a few more areas of town. The Ryders Ridge shopping area is a prime example of how car oriented we are. There are no sidewalks, despite how new that development is. Even the Hewlett Park retail area was built without any pedestrian access. Some improvements were made. This is a shared responsibility of government and business.

23. Are you connected with, or a volunteer for, or have any volunteers from any group assisting in your campaign from any formal or informal group or party such as Take Back Alberta, the Alberta Prosperity Project or the Central Alberta Municipal Conservatives?

No. I seriously disagree with partisan politics at the municipal level. I see it as the provincial government trying to turn the whole province into a partisan control zone. I do support party politics at the provincial and federal level. However, I don't think the labels should be on the ballot papers. We should actually know what candidate we are electing, not just choosing them by "brushing" them with a partisan judgment. It is interesting to note that in the NWT, there is no partisan politics. Even the premier is decided by the representatives elected. One of them used to be my brother-in-law, Joe Handley.

24. Our current public library is just over 7,000 square feet, and getting too small for our current population. What is your perspective on building a new library?

I was a member of Friends of the Library for 10 years. No surprise, I support a great expansion to the facility. I have raised money with others for a decade making it a better space. It is one of the only free locations to run programs for non-profits. Only place anyone can access information for free and freely. Even though I know there are some in town who want to limit what books others can see there. The first place I could get internet when we moved to Sylvan Lake was the library as we awaited utility connections. They are a very valuable resource to us all and raise all people up.

I think a new library should be combined with a group like the Archives Society (currently in Town office basement (open every Tu and Th). That society originally was going to start a museum. I think a form of museum would be a good fit with a library as well. There are other combination ideas too.

Provincial grants, our own local taxes, and fundraising will be necessary to build a library combination.

25. There has been a trend at all levels of government and in some industries toward a hiring policy that includes so-called "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" considerations to benefit under-represented demographics in the hiring process. This sometimes leads to people being hired at least in part in recognition of their racial status, sexual identity, or disability. Sylvan Lake does not currently have a DEI hiring policy. If elected, would you support a DEI hiring emphasis for the town?

No. but, I believe our workforce should be diverse. I believe that our HR department is very fair in their assessment of skills and not biased against people. However, let's not be naive or dismissive about the historical exclusion of so many people in our society. Even Europeans, who might pretend to be uniform today, would have ranking orders between nationalities. I know my father knew in the 50s and 60s, that he, with his light brown hair, and blue eyes, would not get work with Vancouver Parks Board as he was not Scottish. Sounds pretty stupid today, but bias still exists today in many organizations. I think we should be aware of our Town workforce composition and make sure any kid in our community, or any community, can imagine themselves being eligible for work in our town if they had the skills.

26. Tourism is a big part of Sylvan Lake's economy, but it can also put pressure on our environment and our lake health. As a councillor, how would you balance promoting tourism with protecting the lake and surrounding environment for long term sustainability?

Tourism does put pressure on our lake. That's why I am not too excited about increasing total access to the Lake. I fear that we are going to love it to death.

However, tourism is not the greatest threat to our lake. The stormwater of our urban environment is. Our farming community is also a risk, though we are lucky that there are no feedlots in our lake's watershed. There is one on the SE corner of town, but it luckily flows downstream to the southeast. That might worry Red Deer City.

Stormwater is water that flows off our lawns, our roofs, down our streets because of our washing of cars or rainstorms, etc. Roads are covered in small amounts of pollutants. One third of all our stormwater in our town flows through storm retention ponds and the creek directly into our lake. The rest flows into Sylvan Lake Creek and flows to the Red Deer River.

Naturalization of as many storm retention ponds, and slight modifications to most of them would save our lake from most sediments and many of the poisons of our urban environment. That is why I say I run on the pillar of #HealthyLake. Naturalization, means to just let nature do what it does. In an urban setting, you do have to interfere a little. Dangerous trees have to be removed, etc. However, it leads me to one of my favourite dreams. I imagine a corridor, like a regional park that will preserve our one last remaining nearly natural creek in our town. (The other one is basically a ditch now). We

should use the Canada -wide environmental standard of keeping development at least 100' away from open water. Keeping a natural barrier will prevent overland flooding, purify water and absorb many pollutants from our streets from entering our lake.

I just recently saw data from 2024 that shows our creek is high in phosphorous. That is a fertilizer nutrient that should not be in our lake in those quantities. It threatens the formation of an algae bloom. That would make us yet one more sick lake in Central Alberta. Sylvan Lake would be the final lake to fall into that sickness.

And don't even ask in this question about goldfish. We spent soooo much money and time killing 12,000 goldfish in the Lakeway Landing pond. That pond water flows directly to the lake through the creek. There are invasive species of fish in our lake as confirmed by ALberta Environment. Goldfish might be next. This is a very very serious concern.

This is why I say the tourists are not our greatest threat to the lake; our town is.

27. Is there a way to generate fees from the tourism industry to clean up the lake so taxpayers do not foot the bill?

We have tried to lobby the province with the top 5 tourist towns of our province. The province denied the request to give us resort town status like in BC. That status comes with some extra funding to support tourism services. The province wants to multiply the tourism industry multiple times, but they do not want to support the municipalities in that specific way. We are now engaging with Travel Alberta directly as one of our key advocacy goals. I hope the next council does too. We are essentially reevaluating our approach to support our town.

For years now, we have charged parking fees and now raise , depending on the weather of the summer, in excess of \$400,000 a year. This covers nearly all the extra costs of running the waterfront. However, there has been a recent groundswell of complaints about tourism in our town by many people. I agree, that improvements can be made. The parks department is working on a business plan that will enter the next budget debates for the new council. Council will set the direction on those service levels based on what we want versus what it will cost.

Also, whether there are tourists or not, we would spend hundreds of thousands on the waterfront regardless. Tourism is not the only reason to keep the lakeshore sustainable and beautiful. We can do it for ourselves. I am also of the opinion that we neglect our parks and boulevard trees generally. We ask the small staff to cover too much ground.

We are past the point that we should hire another horticulturist to assist the crews and an arborist, or at least contract one often to assess dangerous trees, fire risks, street trees, etc. I noticed a whole bunch of dead trees on Lakeshore Drive. Someone on Facebook blamed the property owners. An arborist would be able to assess what is true about that rumour and eliminate the trees if they have a contagious sickness.

Raising money by taxing the tourism business has been raised by many. However, taxing the businesses too much also could harm them. These are fine balancing acts. Those who profit from tourism have a responsibility to uphold our community, but not so much it threatens their very existence.

28. FOR MAYORAL CANDIDATES ONLY

If elected, what do you hope Sylvan Lake residents will remember about you after your four-term term in office is complete?

I hope people will say I made every decision with as clear and informed a mind as possible. I advanced services to reflect our growth and I used data-informed decision-making where possible. That I used cold hard facts, but warm human empathy to make decisions.

I hope that people will note success in advancing a Healthy Lake, Healthy Youth, and that they see me promote collaboration amongst us as councillors, with other municipalities, business communities, community members, and the province especially for grants to sustain ourselves and keep our infrastructure going and expanding.

Questions Asked From the Floor

1. **Mayor ONLY** – Are you in favour of turning short term (Air BnB's) into a commercial tax rate? If yes, would you consider it for home-based businesses, as Air BnB's are no more discreet than a home-based business'
When someone converts a complete property to an Air BnB then they have built a hotel effectively. They should pay the same (prorated) fee as a hotel.
2. **Mayor or Councillor** – I wish to develop a casino hotel conference center with an auditorium in Sylvan Lake. Will you approve the removal of the gambling bylaw in Sylvan Lake?

There is no bylaw that I can find. However, a referendum by all Sylvan Lake citizens said no, about 20 years ago. I gamble about \$50 every three years... I am not anti-gambling, but I know the industry depends heavily on those addicted and it literally ruins families, rich and poor. It conflicts me strongly. I would rather not have one, but I also honour the freedom and legal rights of others.

3. **Mayor or Councillor** – How do you handle concerns in various areas of our town? In the city, there are wards. How is it handled in Towns?

Our town isn't even half the size of most wards. It is not easy, but I make sure I talk to people of all walks of life. My wife and I have friends in every neighbourhood in town, except for two of the newest ones.

4. **Mayor or Councillor** – A common theme for newly running candidates is “transparency”. While a great talking point, what specifically do you recommend should change for more transparency?

I think that the newly running candidates will have a surprise when they are elected. They will be shocked how available so much information is. They will be shocked by how few people will pick up on what they say between elections. The world is busy and people are distracted by everything. But, this is no excuse to do what they hope. We have to be open to all communication across all platforms including the in-person ones. We should never stop trying to clarify messages better each year. And then, when we are asked to vote on something, we have to put our deepest integrity to the question.

Then, four years from now, we each will be judged, and often replaced, again.