

Good Afternoon Council Candidates,

In an effort to get to know the candidates better, the Chamber of Commerce membership has requested some answers to a few questions. We will be compiling your answers and posting them to our website.

- How would you propose the City of Lethbridge decrease regulatory burdens on business using cost impact assessments?

I believe this would be a good opportunity for the City of Lethbridge and Chamber to partner on a study around regulatory costs, cost impacts, and how we compare to other communities. Ultimately, it comes down to listening to what local businesses have to say and where they find challenges to doing business in our city.

This falls under the “Business” pillar of my platform (www.jennschmidtrempe.ca), in the form of economic recovery and development.

Focussing on economic recovery and development is key to our city’s future. I’m committed to:

- Promoting the benefits of doing business in Lethbridge
- Cutting red tape to make it easier to do business in our city
- Updating and reviewing polices that create artificial barriers to growth
- Exploring private business opportunities to enhance public service options
- Working with local businesses to achieve their goals for recovery, retention, and expansion

- How would you propose the City of Lethbridge reduce zoning and bylaw complexity?

I sit on the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB), so I understand the complexities around zoning and bylaws. The Municipal Government Act establishes many of the processes and timelines for zoning matters.

While simplifying the process often means shortening the time frame, this could result in reducing community input and create greater friction between neighbours. We’ve recently seen this with a few rezoning and development requests.

I’d like to see a stronger process of getting consultation done on the front end so that the process can go smoother with greater community buy-in. For example, in some rezoning cases we could look at the inclusion of a Good Neighbour Plan to be submitted with land rezoning or permitting applications. As part of that, we may also require an applicant to provide signed communications from each area neighbour, proof of engagement sessions, and meeting schedules, and other communications with area neighbours. Getting this work done before an application is submitted may seem complicated, but in the long run it would streamline the process, allow for better success, and save time (eg: fewer appeals going to SDAB or City Council).

- How would you propose the City of Lethbridge accelerate and streamline permitting approval processes?

It would be worth doing a comparative study on what permitting times look like in different cities throughout the province. Once we have that information, we can tie back to the City to find where streamlining the process could happen. From there we can update and review policies that create artificial barriers to growth, and work with local businesses to achieve their goals for recovery, retention, and expansion.

That being said, streamlining the process should not come at the cost of community consultation, when consultation is a significant part of doing things right. Communication is key, and as I stated in response to the previous question – consultation on the front end so that the process can go smoother with greater community buy-in.

- If elected, would you support the City of Lethbridge working with chambers to promote shopping local?

Yes. We need to be promoting local wherever we can. It's important for our residents to understand the importance of local. In speaking with downtown business owners, there is a need to promote the importance of supporting downtown and local businesses. We need to build the understanding of the value and return these businesses and their employees bring to our local economy. Supporting local businesses strengthens our local economy and helps us to become a more vibrant community. The "BuyLocal, ExploreLocal, BuildLocal, and InvestLocal" campaign can serve to do this.

Where procurement laws permit, the City should always be looking local first. We can explore private business opportunities that will truly enhance public service options.

- If elected, would you support accommodating affordable housing in long-term planning?

Yes. This is outlined in my platform under my "People" pillar (www.jenschmidtrempe.ca) and is covered under both Age Friendly Lethbridge and Homelessness, Addictions, Community Safety.

Age Friendly Lethbridge is a designation that recognizes age-friendly cities and communities that promote healthy and active aging. This includes helping our city move forward in a number of areas including affordable housing.

During this campaign there has been a lot of discussion around how to help those experiencing homelessness as well as those experiencing addictions. These issues will require community solutions and will only be solved when we work on them together as an entire community, which includes supporting both short-term and long-term housing needs through planning and strategy.

I also see value in looking at the seamless approach that Medicine Hat has developed in response to homelessness. It's worth examining how that plan may work for us.

- Do you support working with chambers to attract, develop, and retain skilled workers?

Yes. This is a key part of my platform under the "People" pillar (www.jenschmidtrempe.ca).

Developing and retaining our local workforce is key to our city's economic recovery. I'm committed to exploring and supporting ways to develop and retain our local workforce. I want to keep our talent in Lethbridge. This includes:

- Working with community organizations, educational institutions, and businesses to identify what career opportunities are available in our community and how to access them. This includes an information-sharing strategy about employment and skills-building opportunities.
- Advocating for and finding creative ways to promote local practicum placements, internships, co-ops, and applied studies in sectors throughout our community.
- Connecting graduates and job seekers to local opportunities by supporting the organizations that are already making those connections, and working with existing and new businesses that are making commitments to support our post-secondary graduates in Lethbridge.

- Would you support the City of Lethbridge publishing annual benchmark reports on service improvements?

Yes. I would see this as an opportunity where the City of Lethbridge and Chamber could partner and develop annual benchmark metrics on services. Partnering would give an opportunity to the business community, through the Chamber, to provide input on how City services were serving the business community and business needs. It could also allow for comparators from other like-sized cities.

Potentially, this could become a part of the City's Annual report, which would also be a place where service levels could be compared to budgets.