

ARRON CANART – Council Candidate

1. Community priorities and leadership

What do you believe are the three most significant issues Salmon Arm will face during the next four years? What role should City Council play in addressing them, and what specific progress would you hope to see by the end of your term?

The three most significant issues are (1) how we will build needed infrastructure for a growing community on budget without burdening taxpayers, (2) how we will allocate capital given we increased taxes while we reallocated \$1.7million from the park-aide reserve, while also taking money from the wharf reserves and carrying forward a \$2 million surplus, (3) how we keep Salmon Arm a vibrant community with a hustling downtown and growing recreation.

The City council has the responsibility to ensure building contracts have consequence for cost overruns and holding those responsible for negotiating and building. While not just managing the costs, we will have the responsibility to determine cost recovery is equitable and do not burden our businesses, industrial manufacturing, or our residents. Beyond just managing new capital projects we should be held accountable to evaluating current spending and services as to their necessity, efficiency, how it brings us closer to our goals of growing a vibrant, competitive city. This goes beyond just managing dollars in and dollars out, but how we promote and facilitate new business and old. This means listening to business and developers to how we can take costs out of the system with permits, regulation, and all constraints on growth. If it fits our long-range plan, we should be a facilitator and work with those wishing to invest in our community. This doesn't mean sacrifice quality or increase risk exposure, just use common sense to execute more efficiently making Salmon Arm a destination and grow our tax base so we can all enjoy the facilities and services we deem necessary to our growth and maturity as a city.

2. Year-round economic vitality and resilience

Wildfire smoke and increasingly unpredictable fire seasons can significantly affect the summer economy that many Salmon Arm businesses rely on. At the same time, local spending alone may not be enough to sustain a diverse small-business community throughout the year. What role should the City play in building a stronger year-round economy, attracting customers and investment during the spring, fall, and winter, and supporting partnerships, infrastructure, events, and community amenities that help local businesses remain viable in every season?

Salmon Arm should be a four seasons destination, and the city should play a significant role in providing a foundation where recreation in Spring, Fall, and Winter have both the infrastructure and support in needs to succeed. A new recreation facility would lead to increased tourism and showcase our city to many teams and individuals across our region and beyond. The addition of an Olympic pool and a performing arts facility could itself provide a more balanced attraction seasonally to Salmon Arm. We also have the potential to host many events we currently do not within our current infrastructure. We have a great arena that is vastly underutilized outside of the hockey season. We have not hosted a concert here for years. We must be more creative to utilize the assets we have today, this is definitely an area for improvement.

I believe we have all kinds of potential to promote Salmon Arm as a destination outside of the summer season. Our local businesses do need more than a single season to be successful. The City should be exploring and searching out opportunities to use its infrastructure during these times and understanding how it can actively support community events and other recreation that will lead to economic activity. This is such a great question as it leads to prioritization and intentional economic growth during specific periods of time that best benefits local business..

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3. Growing and protecting our downtown

Downtown Salmon Arm is one of the defining physical attractions of our community and continues to be an important draw for residents and visitors. Protecting its character and long-term vitality requires a healthy balance of commercial activity and thoughtful, higher-density residential development. What is your vision for growing our downtown, and what actions would you support to attract investment, increase housing, strengthen existing businesses, and maintain the qualities that make the area distinctive?

Long-term vitality requires accessibility for shoppers and tourists and includes a higher density downtown for locals to support downtown business. I believe we need to recognize that parking is an issue in this city to make it easy for people to come and shop, play, and work. Council and the mayor are on the record stating that parking is not an issue and “We are making a problem where one doesn’t exist”. I don’t believe downtown business operators believe this, and I will begin by listening to business owners over occupancy spreadsheets. This should be a priority for growing downtown.

My vision for attracting investment and increased housing begins with the real action we have control over. Therefore, we must immediately work to change the mindset of the city to help facilitate business and development when it falls in line with our long-range plan and not regulate it with costs. I am not suggesting growth for the sake of growth, but intentional growth that protects the character of our growing city and maintains healthy balance. I would want to create a list of everything the municipality has discretion over in the building code and development landscape and make it publicly available and easy to access. We as a city then need to work to help business and developers get things done in a high-quality manner at a low cost. The city can protect itself and ensure proper development without increasing costs and being an obstacle to growth. These savings find their way to small business in lower rents, we beautify the city, it truly is a win/win.

My vision also includes a more active downtown, on weekends and holidays we are currently caught in between it not being viable for businesses with high costs and lack of consistent shoppers to justify being open. I believe it’s a bit of chicken and egg problem. I would explore how the city can both support and encourage businesses to have more open hours downtown. I would also be open to exploring what incentives are available to incentivize high-density development within the downtown core that fits specific parameters.

4. Infrastructure, economic growth, and community attractions

Maintaining and improving municipal infrastructure is essential to the success of existing businesses and the broader community. At the same time, Salmon Arm must continue investing in amenities and attractions that enhance quality of life and help draw visitors, residents, investment, and new businesses. How would you approach these priorities, and what infrastructure or community investments do you believe should be advanced during your term?

I believe that the Recreation Center has been kicked down the road far enough. This term there should be a concrete plan for what to build, the structure of ownership, and how it will be paid for. The wastewater facility is a non-negotiable and I believe has stood in the way of contemplating further infrastructure projects that are also necessary. I don’t infer I have all the answers in how we will have both projects on the books simultaneously, but I do believe it is our responsibility to find those answers. We need to work with our regional partners, community associations, and invest in top-of-the-line grant discovery and grant writing to make these projects happen, or at the very least bring it to a referendum.

A safe, welcoming, and compassionate downtown

Salmon Arm’s street solicitation bylaw was controversial when it was introduced. In our experience, Bylaw 4273, together with an increased bylaw presence, has helped reduce persistent solicitation and loitering downtown, concerns that have become more pronounced across many BC communities. People experiencing homelessness,

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mental health challenges, addictions, and poverty require appropriate and compassionate support. At the same time, a healthy business and property base is essential to the municipal tax base and our community's ability to fund services. How would you pursue compassionate solutions while ensuring that downtown businesses and property owners are supported when dealing with these challenges?

This is a broad issue that encompasses a number of challenges. First and foremost, Council should create city objectives and points of measure for the future. We will act compassionately to those with mental health challenges and addictions, and we will be equally compassionate to businesses and property owners. With consultation from our local RCMP a statement of objectives and measuring points will be created. One that goes beyond property crime as detailed in the quarterly reports to the mayor.

As a newly elected councilor I would understand I don't have the solution, however I do feel the responsibility to residents and business owners to utilize the resources available to council to better understand the problem, know the obstacles, understand the possible use of new bylaws, have consultation with RCMP, consultation with other municipalities, and spend time and energy understanding our options and will ultimately improve our situation. I do know If we simply accept "it is what it is" and don't enforce equivalent or better than other municipalities we will have a larger problem going forward.