

SCOTT SYME – 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?

Affordability and economic opportunity

Affordability is about more than housing. It is also about good-paying jobs, taxes and the cost of living. Council should make Salmon Arm a competitive place to invest, build and do business. By the end of my term, I would like to see a stronger commercial and industrial tax base resulting in more high paying jobs.

Managing growth and infrastructure

Salmon Arm needs to keep up with growth without overbuilding or creating infrastructure we cannot afford to maintain. Council needs to prioritize water, wastewater and roads first, while planning responsibly for recreation and community facilities. I want to see measurable progress on our major infrastructure needs and a realistic long-term plan for the facilities our community needs.

Opportunity for the next generation

Young people need to be able to see a future for themselves in Salmon Arm. Council can help by supporting recreation, safe public spaces, economic opportunity and connections to local careers and skills. By the end of my term, I want Salmon Arm to offer more opportunities for young people to work, participate in the community and ultimately build their lives here.

2. 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?

I think the City's role is to create the conditions for a strong, diversified year-round economy.

We need to look at affordability from the income side as well as the cost side. Growing our industrial and commercial tax base and attracting good-paying, year-round jobs gives residents more ability to support restaurants, coffee shops, boutiques and other local businesses throughout the year.

We should look at recreation facilities as economic infrastructure, not just facilities for local use. When we invest in recreation, we should consider whether those facilities can also attract tournaments and events during the spring, fall and winter. Those events bring people who stay, eat, shop and spend locally.

We need to be more strategic about tourism. Visitor numbers alone don't measure economic impact. Through my engineering business, I've worked with destination clients whose customers were spending as much as \$50,000 per person for a week-long experience. I'm not saying that

SCOTT SYME – Council Candidate

Salmon Arm can or should replicate those destinations but understand different tourism markets can have dramatically different economic impacts.

We should identify higher-spending tourism markets that fit the resources and experiences we already have. We have two uniquely different bays that can appeal to different markets. We should consider not only how many visitors we attract, but how long they stay, how many people they bring with them, and how broadly their spending benefits local businesses.

With wildfire smoke making our traditional summer season less predictable, diversification is important. The goal should be good-paying year-round jobs, stronger off-season tourism and events, and an economy that supports our local businesses in January as well as July.

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?

I'm pro-business. I own two small businesses and employ eight people, so I understand the challenges businesses face, including attracting staff to Salmon Arm.

I've become more appreciative of our downtown as I've gotten older. I enjoy the farmers markets, coffee shops and restaurants, and I try to spend my dollars locally. Downtown has a character and charm that big-box retail simply can't compete with, and I want to protect that.

Supporting downtown means supporting the broader Salmon Arm economy. People want to shop local, but when household budgets are tight, price matters. We need good-paying jobs, housing and a strong local economy that gives people the ability to support local businesses.

Adding density downtown is challenging because of existing land constraints. Much of our growth is occurring outside the downtown core along 10th and Uptown. We need to be realistic that most people still travel by car. As we grow, we need to plan for long-term parking needs and/or improving connections that make walking, cycling and other modes transportation.

4. 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 think that community infrastructure is the primary role of the municipal government (water, sanitation, roads). We need to be realistic about the costs to maintain and replace our existing infrastructure – especially when choosing new infrastructure. I would really like see infrastructure decisions to include an economic lens. Return on tourism, return on attracting business and return on attracting qualified people to our community.

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5. 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, 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?

Perception is reality. If people perceive downtown as unsafe, they will avoid it and businesses will suffer. At the same time, the actions of a few should not define everyone experiencing homelessness, addiction or poverty. That isn't fair to businesses and property owners, and it isn't fair to people who are genuinely struggling.

Municipalities are often left dealing with the consequences on our streets without jurisdiction over many of the systems needed to solve the underlying problems. Our role should be to maintain safe public spaces, enforce the bylaws within our authority, support organizations equipped to help people, and work with and lobby other levels of government to act where necessary.