

## ***Nelson & District Chamber of Commerce Candidate Question One – September 2018***

As the October 20 municipal election approaches in Nelson and the Regional District of Central Kootenay, it's an opportunity for voters to help shape the future of our region. This year's election has a diverse range of committed community members who have put their names forward to help lead us over the next four years.

In its role of providing important information and advocacy for the business community, the Nelson & District of Chamber of Commerce is helping scratch beyond the surface with candidates to help understand what contributions these candidates would make should they be successful at the polls. The Chamber's Board of Directors have posed three questions to all candidates for mayor, council and RDCK Area E (Area F director Tom Newell is in by acclamation). The answers to Question One are provided below.

It is important to note that each candidate had a maximum of 250 words to answer the question. All candidates were contacted with the question and provided the opportunity to respond. With the exception of Bernie Brown (mayor), Robin Cherbo (council) and Robbie Kalabis (council) who did not respond by deadline, you will find their responses. The answers are provided in the order received. Questions Two and Three will follow in the next two weeks.

We hope that this is helpful information in determining which candidates will provide the kind of leadership that you value. And please don't forget to vote on October 20!

Further details and all the answers can be found by clicking the link. Thanks for your interest

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### **QUESTION ONE: How will your experience help foster a stronger business climate through your work on city council?**

#### ***Charles Jeanes (council)***

Nelson has one of the best, most vibrant business climates of any city of comparable size anywhere in BC and far better than most. I just travelled by car across western Canada to Ontario and back this summer, and I kept my eyes open for signs of prosperity. My opinion is grounded in observations.

I am fairly disinterested in working for the business climate, since I perceive Nelson businesses to be in such an enviable position. Baker St. is the wonder of small towns anywhere, the main draw for many tourists who are not outdoor enthusiasts, and I love it for the lively cultural ethos and feeling that it is a place pedestrians are comfortable. Citizens of Nelson are blessed with this public space where we meet our friends and enjoy aesthetic architecture.

Panhandling does not bother me. Homelessness most definitely does. But that is question three, and I will wait to say more about that.

Frankly, I expect Nelson business owners know my established reputation for socialist views, and my dislike of the economics of growth preached by business; I have been making these views known in public all sorts of ways.

Here is an initiative by city hall I know I would support, and Baker Street businesses would not: creating a permanent pedestrian mall on one or two blocks there. People before cars!

***Jesse Woodward (council)***

I feel that with my seven years of experience organizing and managing the Nelson outdoor summer markets (Downtown Market, Cottonwood Market, MarketFest, GardenFest) I can offer, as a city Councillor, a unique perspective on fostering and developing local business in Nelson. I have helped to improve and grow many small entrepreneurial ventures at the Nelson markets over the years. Many of these business ideas matured and became profitable enough that their owners have left the markets and grown their businesses into larger more complex companies or they continued to refine their market operation so that they are now profitable market projects. I deeply understand how important a strong local economy is to our local residents and have tried, through the markets over the last seven years, to make an open, fair and inclusive business environment where a diverse range of people can come sell their food, their crafts and their art. If the markets are anything, they are a local and affordable way for a small business person to incubate their business ideas and see what works and what does not without taking large financial risk before they are ready to do so.

***Rik Logtenberg (council)***

For more than 20 years I've been an entrepreneur, including stints as a small business owner, a startup founder and, currently, a software CEO. I hold a software patent and I've been awarded Kootenay Startup of the Year. This experience helps me understand what it takes to create a successful company in Nelson. Given that my company pays almost \$250k/year in salaries to Nelson-based employees, I also sympathize with the unique challenges we face as employers, including how difficult it can be to recruit (and retain) strong local talent. I've been a member of the Nelson Business Association, and, among other things, I helped organize the 2010 Buy Local Campaign.

I understand that creating and growing a business is hard, uncertain, and often unforgiving work. If elected, I will be a strong voice for the business community, and a sympathetic ear.

For Nelson to prosper, for us to have diverse, secure and well-paying jobs, we need a strong business community. City Council plays a key role in supporting that community and helping businesses thrive. I will work on fast tracking development, especially any worker housing developments, and passing bylaws that will make it easier to grow a successful business here. I will also act as a networker for Nelson. When I travel for my own business or on behalf of the city, I will look for every opportunity to promote Nelson businesses and help them find new customers and new partnerships.

***Michelle Hillaby (council)***

I've been a sales rep for 16 years, and for the last six, I've been covering every town in the Kootenays. My job is based entirely on talking to small business owners, and in sales, building relationships is what leads to success. Through those conversations and connections, I've learned so much about just how big of an impact local government has on the ability of these small businesses to keep going. I've got a big personal network of entrepreneur friends here in Nelson too. One of the most-important things I've learned is that running your own business is not some sort of guaranteed path to riches. I'm concerned that many past and present councillors view the business community as a group of wealthy elites who "need to pay their fair share," instead of recognizing that many of them are struggling just to keep paying their employees. And since they are paying two or three times the residential tax rate, they are already paying their fair share, plus the fair share of a couple of others!

My pledge to business owners is to be mindful of the challenges they face as they keep our economy moving, and to always seek their input on decisions. The business community is a huge stakeholder in the success of Nelson for all of us who live here.

***Janice Morrison (council)***

In my first job with my family's home-based business I learned quality customer service, budgeting and marketing. For sixteen years I've managed Kastlerock B&B with my partner, Mike, and adapted to fluctuations in tourism, the advent of competitive platforms such as Airbnb, and the implementation of new short-term rental regulations. As a Chamber of Commerce member, (both individual membership and for our B&B), I served on the board, including being President. As past secretary-treasurer of the Health Sciences Association of BC representing 18,000 members across BC, I was responsible for overseeing an \$18-million operating budget and a \$3-million investment portfolio. I am currently a director of the Working Opportunity Fund, a venture capital company whose focus is investment in BC start-up businesses with its more than \$100-million fund. I've also participated in City of Nelson business, grants and budget decisions in my seven years on city council.

No one can know for sure which new enterprises will flourish and which will struggle, but my experience in fiscal management, in understanding the fluctuations in commerce and the challenges business owners face, and in knowing what makes businesses successful, will allow me to help keep Nelson's business climate strong, helping weigh the importance of commerce in a city like Nelson with fairness and realistic decision-making. This type of strong fiscal management has kept the business tax rate in Nelson reasonable and allowed for the 2018 BC City guide to list Nelson with the second lowest business tax rate in the province.

***Brittney Anderson (council)***

The local business community is the economic engine for our region. I envision the City of Nelson to be actively supportive, welcoming and efficient when interacting with the business community. I am a small business owner and I understand how frustrating bureaucracy can be. We need to have a streamlined approach with as few hurdles as possible. When people are looking at opening, expanding or modifying their businesses I want them to feel like the city is on their side. When the business community are facing hardship, we need to listen and act.

My education and career, including as an entrepreneur and while working at the RDCK, have provided me the opportunity to conduct policy research, advocacy and development. Recently I was in Ottawa speaking to politicians about the need to ensure that cannabis legalization does not have the unintended consequences of harming our environment and our local economies. I have witnessed how uninformed policy makers can have a negative impact on our society and I am dedicated to listening to the community, informing myself and using evidence-based decision making to inform public policy.

Fostering good relationships strengthens our vibrant local economy. Businesses in Nelson are very supportive of our community donating to local charities, opening their doors for events and supporting various initiatives. Without the support of our generous local businesses our sports clubs and arts community wouldn't be able to thrive.

***Brian Shields (council)***

I owned a regional Fire Safety Company for five years. West Kootenay Fire Safety averaged about five employees during that period, so payroll tax, the CRA and Human Resources were a part of daily business. We organized and provided fire suppression for the Kootenay region. Having actual business experience helps me appreciate the real challenge it is to run a small business in Nelson. Many people think business think that business a license to print money but it is actually hard work on a daily basis. As a Councillor, I would advocate for less red tape and more timely service for the business community. Small business is part of the heart of our community and Council must support and nurture the business community. Council should never stand in the way and always stand with local business.

***Rob Richichi (council)***

My work as a councillor will help foster a better business climate because I will be available to discuss issues with business owners. I can help them with some of the challenges we all face on a daily basis. It is not easy running your own business, and even harder to do so in Nelson. Rents are extremely high, triple net costs are expensive, and other costs associated with running a business are steadily increasing.

We have been business owners in Nelson and the surrounding area for almost twenty years. I can honestly say that compared to our neighboring two towns, Castlegar and Trail, Nelson is our best chance at succeeding in business in the Kootenays, even with the high costs.

Nelson is the most beautiful city in the area. Baker Street is alive with restaurants, coffee shops, clothing stores, and an abundance of other small but quaint businesses. That coupled with our historic beauty, and the diverse community, Nelson is still, the best place to live.

Our business attracts over 10,000 customers per year. I am able to explain to existing businesses and future small business owners how they will be able to survive in such a small town. Nelson has just over 10,000 residents. However, we draw customers from all of our neighboring towns. I would estimate customer population to be closer to 50,000.

By dealing with the same issues all of the other businesses are experiencing, we can then work together to suggest solutions.

***Travis Hauck (council)***

Working retail downtown for more than 16 years, I feel I have good relationships with most of the business owners and operators. I understand the issues they face, and understand the challenges the city has created or not dealt with properly. I'm an entrepreneur myself and can see what is needed to make the local businesses more attractive to consumers.

Economic Development is one of CORE's four lenses through which every decision will be viewed, and I believe in our pledge that the City should start with the default position of saying 'Yes' when an entrepreneur wants to invest in Nelson, bringing jobs and economic vitality to the region.

Business is about more than just downtown of course, but addressing the issues on Baker Street with aggressive panhandling and crime is a priority, and I want to support the business community in their efforts to find productive, proactive solutions.

***Cal Renwick (council)***

Council has to have a positive outlook and respect for business. I believe this has been missing with the last two councils. Council needs to understand the trials and tribulations of owning and operating a business. I believe that with my many years of business experience, time served on the chamber board, and my experiences on volunteer boards that I can help foster a healthy respect for business. Business needs to know that they have councils ear and support when important decisions concerning their livelihood are brought forward. I will work hard to bring a shared respect between the business community and city hall.

***Margaret Stacey (council)***

One portfolio in my two terms on Council was the Nelson and Area Economic Development Partnership. I really enjoyed this think tank and action group funded by the City and RDCK areas E and F; it surveys, researches, advocates, and connects. The NAEDP measures business retention and expansion, and will follow recommendations of its recent study of the Manufacturing Labour Market. It also focuses on the digital economy for an Intelligent Community and Digital Hub status. It studies the workforce needed and tries to align local training with upcoming needs. I like the NAEDP plan for a “Come Home” campaign to repatriate younger citizens who have left, and the Junior Dragons Den. The NAEDP will be working with developers, business and local government to produce more rental housing for the local work force in our zero vacancy city.

I think our City Council will be very involved in the next term with transport and shipping issues: an overall transport challenge will be to get people and goods in and out of here. Greyhound’s departure is a gap and an opportunity. Rail here is under-used. There is new thinking about the airport management (I have been airport liaison to Council).

Economic Development seems slow and invisible until things happen, in my experience; and then they really happen!

***John Dooley (mayor)***

Having spent 15 years at City Hall, with nine as Mayor, I know how municipal government should function to support business retention, growth and economic development. I regularly visited the businesses in our City and felt it was important to understand what was working and what wasn’t for this vital part of our community. I have always had the view that open and active communication is essential to understanding and resolving issues.

I have also had the advantage of owning my own business, working as an employee and have spent the last four years working as a consultant for two large companies. This, coupled with the fact that I have been a Director on the Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce, gives me

a well-rounded understanding of the challenges and opportunities business owners, large and small, face every day.

A community must also offer access to educational, health care, recreation/sport, social services and arts and cultural opportunities: These all go hand in hand to support citizen well-being, create civic pride and contribute to a business friendly environment. My experience as a strong advocate for Nelson demonstrates that I can and will influence other levels of government and NGOs to contribute to the overall well-being of Nelson and its business community.

As a lifelong volunteer, I continue to demonstrate my commitment to building our community by giving back, part of this giving back comes from a desire to enhance the quality of a life that has provided so much to myself and my family.

### ***Leslie Payne (council)***

My early career was in sales and marketing for entrepreneurial software companies. As the Canadian Sales Manager, I travelled across the country listening to the needs of Fortune 100 companies and communicated those needs to my team to develop solutions. When I became the National Sales Manager for a firm operating out of Portland, Oregon, I worked with the VP of Sales to develop and implement strategic plans for the growth of the organization through to the company's IPO.

Full-time motherhood was my next and most rewarding career. This was when my skills of negotiation, problem solving and empathetic listening were tested on a daily basis and honed to a high degree. Volunteer opportunities and event planning have always been a large focus for me as well. Coordinating and motivating volunteers to work together towards a deadline or coaching sales professionals to meet their targets both require a high level of coordination and collaboration among the whole team.

More recently, I have successfully managed a variety of small retail businesses. Marketing, inventory management, staff recruitment and training as well as meeting sales and profit targets. Most importantly, providing exemplary customer service.

As a City Councillor, listening to the needs of the business community and facilitating opportunities for growth; being open to new ideas and forward thinking solutions to the challenges businesses are facing would be a key focus. I work hard and smart. I learn fast. I love to collaborate to develop creative solutions to often challenging scenarios. Strong businesses equal strong community.

***Deb Kozak (mayor)***

As an independent public and private sector contractor, an experienced Nelson City Councillor (2005-2014), and current Nelson Mayor, I understand what it takes to foster a strong business community. To this end, much has been done over the past four years with more to come as we move forward. Major infrastructure renewal, beautification projects like MuralFest, improvements to Cottonwood Falls and IODE parks and added amenities like additional parking, electric charging stations and a public washroom have all added to the success of our strong downtown business community.

Providing support for businesses beyond those located downtown is also important. A lucrative and growing “knowledge and tech” sector now accounts for many of the 1,400 business licenses issued each year in Nelson. Growth in this increasingly important sector has been facilitated by the City’s ongoing investment in broadband and related services. Leaders in the tech industry are increasingly choosing to locate in Nelson in response to the amenities our community has to offer.

The Downtown Waterfront Masterplan, Railtown Neighbourhood Plan and Downtown Urban Design Strategy are important roadmaps to a promising future for everyone. As these plans continue to roll out, the resulting improvements draw new tourists and residents and create a more prosperous environment for business owners. Involved in the development of these plans from the start, I saw firsthand the significant amount of public consultation that went into them. These plans are solid and well worth implementing. Continuity in vision and leadership will facilitate further building on the many successes achieved to date.

***Joe Reiner (council)***

I bring a multitude of perspectives to working with the local business community, having worked for four years as a Job Developer and Customized Employment Counsellor with Kootenay Career Development Society. Furthermore, growing up in family run hospitality based small businesses; I’ve gained insight into some of the nuances business owners face.

I will work to foster an open constructive dialog with Nelson area business owners, around how city council, our by-laws, marketing and tourism initiatives as a municipality could better support the business community in day to day operations, while fostering future growth. Additionally, I feel civic representatives can improve their advocacy for Nelson when attracting Job Creation Partnerships and stimulus funds from the federal Economic Action Plan.

We have the ability, as a community known for our creative prowess, to use technological infrastructure and our vibrant arts community to attract new investment and infusions of capital that reflect our shared collective values.

Small business is the backbone of our local economy, thus job creation and a progressive climate for local business starts with creative collaboration between business owners and city council. As a candidate running for city council, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with anyone over a cup of coffee, to hear their perspective as a local entrepreneur on how to foster a vibrant Nelson economy. Contact me at [joe.w.reiner@gmail.com](mailto:joe.w.reiner@gmail.com) or visit my website [www.joereiner.ca](http://www.joereiner.ca).

***Stephanie Wiggins (council)***

My past work experience mostly revolves around Early Childhood Education, therefore I work closely with children and families. I have not had the opportunity to run my own business yet but would like to in the future. I believe that my experience as an Early Childhood Educator will help businesses see the importance of taking care of employees and their families.

There is nothing more costly, as I understand it, as staff turnover. Interviewing and training a new employee is time consuming and expensive. Employees with families of their own are looking for employers that will support them and be flexible when it comes to things like missing work because your child is home sick or needing a modified shift schedule to allow them to pick their child up from school. Employers who can support their staff when circumstances like this arise are more likely to have employees who will want to stay with the company.

I know that my experience working closely with families will make me an advocate for fair staff work agreements and contracts, benefiting the business climate by ensuring businesses have staff who are loyal, happy and want to stay at their company.

***Bob Adams (council)***

My experience as Director of Works for 26 years and Councillor for 14 years will help foster a strong business climate Nelson. I have worked with the business community for all those years. Baker Street revitalization in the 80s was the first large project. This project put Baker St in the highlights of Nelson. Storefronts were refurbished, trees planted and the 400 block Baker St planters cemented.

The new Baker St revitalization plan will be an addition to all businesses in Nelson, not only Baker St.

Remember... shop local.

***Laureen Barker (council)***

I have owned and operated a retail business on Baker Street for the past 13 years in partnership with my husband Vern. We are a chamber member and appreciate the work the chamber does on behalf of all Nelson businesses through lobbying and purchasing. Owning a business makes you a realist. I know how important it is to listen to one's customers. In the context of being a Councillor for Nelson City I would extend this to mean that it is important for me to listen to constituents and also for the City to develop and maintain open dialogue with citizens. In business it is important to be a close follower using technology too early and you are ahead of the curve unable to do it alone, to late and your customers have found other suppliers and you are trying to woo them back; just right is a close follower, the broadband initiative is important for the City of Nelson and her citizens.

***Keith Page (council)***

I have been working as a Business Analyst and Private Consultant in IT for over 22 years. During the course of that time, my company Green-Light Communications Inc. (est. 2004) conceived and established a DBA called The Repair Factory (est. 2012); [repairfactory.ca](http://repairfactory.ca) where we developed the branding, web presence and brick and mortar store on Vernon Street.

We attract and retain talent in this difficult Nelson market by practicing an Open Book Accounting system where all employee's at all levels participate in regular financial meetings which include Profit/Loss and Balance sheet review and profit sharing. We do this to promote transparency and nurture the financial literacy of our staff so they are empowered to make choices that are best aligned with our business needs.

As of this summer, I have established a third company with a close group of colleagues which is developing a technical analysis based system to participate automatically in the financial markets.

My experience communicating complex concepts in Information Technology to clients for 22 years combined with my successful run at starting and maintaining my second business entirely here in Nelson, combined with my experience working as a part-time employee for the city in the Nelson Fire Rescue Auxiliary provides me with the background necessary to understand the business of the city and the choices we need to make going forward to nurture a more robust business climate.

## **Area E Candidates**

**How will your experience help foster a stronger business climate through your work *with* city council?**

### ***Ramona Faust (director)***

I am passionate about Community Economic Development. On behalf of the Regional District of Central Kootenay, I sit on the board of the BC Rural Centre and the advisory committee of Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust to highlight economic development opportunities for the region. I have been around businesses and social enterprises for most of my life including leading a start- up business from bottom up and a family business. I have been a manager in hospitality, retail, social services and forestry. I understand the long hours, attention to detail and the multitude of skills it takes to own or manage a business.

As a rural director whose area surrounds Nelson on three sides I am in a unique position. Area E has a strong business community on Granite Road-Highway 3A, in Balfour/Procter and out on Ymir Road/Highway 6. Many businesses that are considered Nelson's key businesses are in Area E. Some Nelson business owners call RDCK Area E home.

I am keenly aware of the value of organizations such as the Balfour District Business and Historic Association, the Nelson Chamber of Commerce, Kootenay Lake Tourism Association and the collaborative Nelson and Area Economic Partnership and Inspire Kootenay. The last three were developed during my three terms as director. Supporting these organizations and having input in their strategic direction is important to ensure Area E has a place at the table.

Networks and inclusive strategies for the Nelson and Kootenay River sets us apart as an innovative business community.

### ***Reggie Goldsbury (director)***

Reggie Goldsbury hails from a demographic that is underrepresented but needed and wanted on the RDCK Board. Dynamic governance is closely linked to balanced representation, broader insight and energetic leadership. Reggie brings fresh ideas, is accessible, has energy and enthusiasm, is concerned about your opinions, and will show up for you. Reggie Goldsbury will champion what is best for Area E and Nelson, Kootenay Lake.

Reggie understands business vitality depends on economic development that moves forward yet respects the environment - tenets gleaned from experience as Communications Manager at the 2010 Olympics and from significant volunteer experience (BDBHA, Rec 10 Commission, LPC).

Reggie is a young professional, graduated in Business Administration who believes sustainable development builds a dynamic community. Reggie prizes our rural life and will stand up for it. He also understands the need to grow with technology, new demographics and changing trends.

With a decade managing customer service in Area E, Reggie has seen first hand the struggles facing small businesses like staffing and succession. He understands the need for policy aimed at retaining youth and skilled workers. He's committed to attracting families with economic and social initiatives that target their needs. We need these folks to sustain economic growth and our robust retirement sector.

With better communication, keeping and attracting families, and by working tirelessly Reggie will foster a stronger business climate. The guard is changing. With Boomers moving into retirement, it could be said Reggie is part of the succession plan. Vote [ReggieGoldsbury.ca](http://ReggieGoldsbury.ca) Area E.