

Les Bellamy Answers to Rutland Residents Association Questionnaire

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your 2026 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire. I appreciate the time that has gone into preparing these questions. Many of them speak directly to issues I have been discussing throughout my campaign.

My responses are below.

1. What are your three main reasons for running for Mayor or Council?

I have spent more than 30 years in business and have watched Kelowna grow and change considerably. I decided to run because I believe that experience can bring a practical, results-focused perspective to Council.

Second, I believe we need to restore confidence in how decisions are made. Residents deserve to understand what problem we are trying to solve, what it will cost, what success looks like, and whether we are prepared to change course when something isn't working.

Third, I want Kelowna to remain a city where the next generation can build a life. That means addressing housing affordability, public safety, infrastructure and economic opportunity together rather than treating each as a separate problem.

My campaign really comes down to: **Less Politics. Real Solutions.**

2. Are you in favour of limiting the number of years an individual can sit as Mayor or City Councillor?

No. Ultimately, I believe voters should decide when a councillor or mayor has served long enough. Experience on Council can have value, just as new perspectives can.

Elections already provide residents with the opportunity to impose a term limit every four years. If an elected official continues to earn the confidence of voters, I don't believe an arbitrary number of terms should prevent residents from choosing that person.

What I do support is greater accountability between elections so residents have the information they need to determine whether their elected representatives are delivering results.

3. Should major City projects be done using public/private contracting?

It depends on the project.

Major projects can involve partnerships between the City, provincial and federal governments, and private-sector investment where that model provides value to taxpayers.

When it comes to construction, I believe major City infrastructure projects should generally be competitively tendered, much as a private development company would tender its work. The City should establish clear specifications, invite competitive bids, evaluate qualifications and price, and hold the successful contractor accountable for cost, schedule and performance.

I am open to public-private partnerships where they make financial and operational sense, but I would not assume that either public or private delivery is automatically the best model. The appropriate structure should be determined by the project, risk, cost and long-term value to taxpayers.

4. Are there too many staff, managers and directors at City Hall?

I have been campaigning on conducting an **independent external operational audit of City Hall** to identify efficiencies and ensure taxpayers are receiving value for their money.

I don't believe a candidate can responsibly declare that there are too many staff or managers without doing that work first. The audit should examine staffing levels, management structure, duplication, departmental responsibilities, use of consultants, service delivery and whether resources are allocated where they are actually needed.

That review would help determine whether we have too many staff or managers, too few in certain areas, or simply have people and resources allocated inefficiently.

The objective isn't predetermined cuts. The objective is an independent assessment of whether City Hall is operating as efficiently and effectively as it should be, and then acting on the findings.

5. Should taxpayers have more say in development within their neighbourhoods? Has the process gone too far in eliminating residents' voices?

Yes. I am frustrated by the degree to which the Province has increasingly imposed land-use policy on municipalities and reduced the ability of local governments to make decisions collaboratively with the communities they represent.

Municipal government is the level of government closest to residents. Kelowna's neighbourhoods are not all the same, and the people who live in them often understand local infrastructure, traffic, parking and other neighbourhood impacts better than someone developing province-wide policy in Victoria.

I recognize that the Province is responding to a serious housing shortage and municipalities have a responsibility to provide more housing. However, I don't believe addressing that problem requires removing meaningful local decision-making and community input.

Where provincial legislation has removed some traditional opportunities for public input, Council needs to work harder to engage residents earlier, particularly through neighbourhood planning, infrastructure planning and the OCP process.

Residents should not have a veto over every development, but they should have a meaningful voice in shaping the future of their neighbourhoods. **Local government should be governing with its community, not simply administering decisions made in Victoria.**

6. What would you do about street dysfunction, open drug use, crime and neighbourhood safety?

Residents have a right to feel safe in their homes, neighbourhoods, parks and business districts. Compassion for people struggling with addiction, mental illness or homelessness cannot mean accepting crime, threatening behaviour and chronic public disorder as normal.

One immediate municipal action I have proposed is changing how we schedule existing bylaw resources. Kelowna has substantially increased its bylaw staffing, yet regular coverage ends at 10 p.m. I want to shift some of those existing resources into overnight hours, when many neighbourhoods and businesses currently have little municipal enforcement presence.

We also need to stop treating homelessness, addiction, mental illness and criminal behaviour as though they are all the same problem. Different problems require different responses. Those committing crimes need accountability. People seeking treatment need access to treatment and recovery.

I support pursuing a regional treatment and recovery facility based on the Red Fish model so people in the Okanagan have access to longer-term voluntary treatment and recovery support.

I also believe harm reduction must begin with **prevention**, particularly for young people. We will never solve this crisis solely by managing its consequences after someone is already living on the street.

When low-barrier or supportive facilities are located in a neighbourhood, government has a responsibility to the surrounding community as well. We need measurable operating standards, appropriate security and enforcement, and a willingness to intervene when a facility is creating persistent negative impacts.

We can be compassionate toward vulnerable people while also being compassionate toward residents and businesses living with the consequences of street disorder. Those objectives are not mutually exclusive.

7. Are you in favour of the increasing elimination of single-family dwellings in previously single-detached neighbourhoods?

No, I do not support eliminating single-family housing as a choice. I believe Kelowna needs more housing choices, not fewer.

There is a place for apartments, townhomes, multiplexes, secondary suites and single-family homes. Different people need and want different types of housing at different stages of their lives.

Again, I have concerns with the Province imposing blanket density requirements across communities rather than allowing municipalities to determine how and where additional density can best be accommodated.

Increasing housing supply is necessary, but good planning also considers infrastructure capacity, parking, transportation, neighbourhood character, trees and greenspace, and the services required to support additional residents.

Good housing policy should expand people's choices, not replace one mandated form of housing with another.

8. Do developers get too many breaks at the expense of taxpayers?

I think we need to distinguish between a reasonable variance and continually making exceptions to our own rules.

I am concerned by how often we see applications asking for the same variances, whether for parking, setbacks, height or other requirements, and Council repeatedly approves them. If we consistently believe a particular requirement no longer makes sense, then we should have the discussion, amend the bylaw and create a clear rule that applies fairly to everyone.

Conversely, if an applicant is asking for something beyond what our bylaws permit, there should be a reason. What meaningful public benefit are residents receiving in exchange for that additional consideration? If there isn't one, Council should be prepared to say no.

Too many decisions can become driven by ideology or a desired outcome without clearly defining what success looks like. I want our rules to be predictable, defensible and measurable.

If we are always saying yes to the same variance, change the rule. If someone wants special consideration beyond the rule, demonstrate the value to the community. Otherwise, the answer should be no.

9. Should infrastructure be a priority before development rather than constantly playing catch-up?

Infrastructure should be **planned before development and delivered concurrently with growth.**

It would be unrealistic to build all the roads, utilities, parks and other infrastructure years in advance of development. There would often be no funding source to pay for it, and taxpayers would be financing infrastructure before the population exists to support it.

What concerns me is when growth occurs first and we only begin planning the infrastructure after the problems appear.

We should know what infrastructure will be required, where it will go, what it is expected to cost, how it will be financed, and at what stages of growth it needs to be delivered. Development and infrastructure can then proceed together in a coordinated way.

Plan ahead, establish the financing, and build infrastructure concurrently with the growth that requires it.

10. 15-minute communities, parking and greenspace

I support the concept of creating complete communities where people can walk, cycle or take transit for more of their daily needs. I do not support treating that concept as an ideology that ignores how people actually live.

A family transporting hockey equipment, school bags and groceries cannot always use a bicycle or bus. Tradespeople cannot move tools and materials that way. Agriculture cannot get products from farm to market that way. Where walking, cycling and transit are practical, we should make them attractive options. Where vehicles are necessary, our planning needs to recognize that reality.

On parking, I would not apply one parking requirement across every development. Parking requirements should reflect location, housing type, access to transit and the realistic needs of the people likely to live there. If developments consistently produce parking spillover into surrounding neighbourhoods, however, that is evidence our assumptions need to be revisited.

On greenspace, yes, I believe it should be incorporated into developments wherever reasonably possible. A park 15 minutes away does not provide all the same benefits as trees, landscaping and usable outdoor space where people actually live. As density increases, access to quality nearby greenspace becomes more important, not less.

My approach is practical: **create more choices for walking, cycling and transit without pretending the automobile no longer has an important role in how Kelowna functions.**

11. Should the City prioritize purchasing new parkland and protecting existing City-owned land from development?

Yes, acquiring and protecting parkland needs to remain a priority as Kelowna grows. As density increases, parks, trees and accessible greenspace become more important, and acquiring that land becomes increasingly difficult and expensive if we wait until neighbourhoods are fully developed.

However, I would not say every piece of City-owned land should automatically become or remain greenspace. The City owns land for many reasons, and Council has a responsibility to determine its best long-term public use.

Where existing public parkland is proposed for another use, I believe the threshold should be much higher. Council should first demonstrate why that location is necessary, what alternatives were considered, what environmental and recreational value would be lost, and what the community receives in return.

My involvement with the proposed Performing Arts Centre at Pioneer Garden is a good example. I supported broadening the site review because I did not believe we should sacrifice existing public greenspace without first properly evaluating other viable locations.

Once public greenspace is gone, it is extremely difficult to get back. That value needs to be part of the decision before we give it up.

12. Should cultural infrastructure only be downtown? Would you change bylaws restricting cultural development to downtown?

I am not aware of a City bylaw that requires cultural infrastructure to be located only downtown. If there is a specific regulation this question is referring to, I would be happy to review it.

More broadly, I don't believe cultural infrastructure should automatically be concentrated downtown or automatically distributed throughout the city. **It should go where it makes the most sense.**

Location decisions should consider accessibility, proximity to hotels and restaurants, transit, parking, walkability, complementary cultural and entertainment uses, land and construction costs, operating economics and the type of facility being proposed.

For a major regional facility such as the proposed Performing Arts Centre, I currently favour the Cultural District because many of those complementary uses already exist there. But I support evaluating all viable locations and allowing the evidence to determine the final site.

13. Should more parking be made available so all Kelowna residents can enjoy the shoreline and beaches?

Public access to Okanagan Lake should remain available to residents from across the city, not just people who happen to live within walking distance of the shoreline.

As areas such as Pandosy-Lakeshore become denser, we need to consider the cumulative impact of removing parking while simultaneously increasing the number of residents and visitors using the area.

That does not necessarily mean every lost parking stall needs to be replaced one-for-one. We should look at actual demand, available public parking, accessible parking, transit connections, cycling and pedestrian access, and whether additional or shared parking can be provided efficiently.

I am concerned when planning assumes people simply won't drive because we have reduced the amount of parking available. Many residents live too far away, have mobility limitations, are travelling with children or recreational equipment, or simply don't have a practical alternative.

Our public beaches belong to the entire community. Transportation planning should make them reasonably accessible to the entire community as well.

14. What are your thoughts regarding Resident Associations and Affiliate Agreements? Should Resident Associations be restricted from speaking against City decisions?

No. I do not believe a Resident Association should be prevented from criticizing or opposing a City decision simply because it has an affiliation or working relationship with the City.

Resident Associations exist in part to represent the interests and concerns of their neighbourhoods. Sometimes that will mean supporting the City, and sometimes it will mean disagreeing with it.

An Affiliate Agreement can reasonably establish responsibilities around funding, use of City resources, governance and conduct, but it should not become a mechanism for controlling an association's legitimate advocacy on behalf of residents.

I would rather Council hear concerns directly from organized neighbourhood groups, even when those concerns are uncomfortable. Good consultation isn't about surrounding ourselves with people who agree with us. It is about hearing different perspectives before making a decision.

A relationship with City Hall should not require silence when residents believe City Hall has it wrong.

15. What efforts will you make to include Resident Associations in consultation?

Resident Associations should be included early when the City is considering decisions that materially affect their neighbourhoods.

I would support establishing a consistent process to notify and engage recognized Resident Associations when significant planning, infrastructure, transportation, parks, safety or other neighbourhood-level decisions are being considered within their boundaries.

The important word is **early**. Consultation is of limited value if residents are brought into the conversation after the major decisions have already been made.

Resident Associations will not always agree with City staff or Council, and different residents within the same neighbourhood will not always agree with their association. Their input should therefore be considered an important part of the consultation process, not the only voice of the neighbourhood.

Consultation does not mean Council must agree with everyone. **It means people should have a genuine opportunity to be heard while there is still an opportunity to influence the decision.**

Thank you again for providing the questionnaire and for taking the time to engage candidates on these issues.

Regards,

Les Bellamy

Candidate for Kelowna City Council

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