

Thank you for your thought provoking questions which go to the very core or essence of a caring and prosperous society. Children are our greatest asset and need to be nurtured and supported by all facets of society. Hilda and I have raised five children and know much care and love must be given in order for them to develop their life skills so important to their well-being and society's stability and growth.

Your questions are so deep that I can only rely on professionals in the field for advice that would be effective in our community. I can contribute in a way where I have some knowledge, ie in city development planning. I think Mayors and Councilors need constant refreshers on this aspect of our community's well-being. Thus, my comments can only necessarily be general in nature without further discussion with you and others like you who are experts in the field of child care.

1. COMMITMENT TO EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- Municipalities are important partners in planning for and supporting Early Childhood Development services for families.
- Childcare is being listed as a number one condition for successful recruitment and retention of employees locally and from outside of Terrace.
- Municipalities are responsible for many administrative tasks, such as development zoning and registering new businesses, and can:
 - Require that child care spaces be included in new buildings;
 - Reduce administrative fees for new businesses that benefit young children and families;
 - Require and protect green spaces and child friendly spaces.

If you are elected to City Council, how will you:

- a. *Ensure that our community is child-friendly? Influence the city to make decisions using an early childhood development lens. In other words ask in all of city plans and decisions "Will this be good for our children?"*
- b. *How do you plan to provide attractive conditions for increasing the number of available quality childcare spaces to encourage full employment of parental workers and decrease stress for families?*
- c. *Encourage residential and commercial developers to investigate the inclusion of childcare and/or other ECD services in their plans?*
- d. *Support non-profit agencies providing ECD services to keep their services affordable.*
- e. *Develop protocols for subsidized use of recreational facilities by ECD services?*
- f. *Support low-income families to allow them to attend ECD programs? Transportation is often the number one barrier stopping families from accessing services.*
- g. *Be actively involved in working with other partners on collaborative community planning for ECD: health, education, social sector and business in coordinating efforts.*

Your response:

- a) Our City has 3 distinctive geographic areas; the bench, the horseshoe, and south of the railway. I believe each of these residential areas needs to be "child-friendly" through the tools the City can use, ie zoning, green space, roads and sidewalks, nearness of schools, bicycle paths and so on. Lots more work to do here.
- b) The provincial government has rules and policies with respect to children spaces but the City can certainly augment their goals and objectives by providing land for nearby child parks, etc., and by encouraging employers to provide for childcare at the worksite. Residential zones can provide opportunities for day care establishments where required in every neighborhood. Building and fire inspection are constants in our City and perhaps more vigorous inspection and standards set would be useful for rental units.

- c) The City has an Official Community Plan which generally hints at inclusion of childcare and other ECD services but, with the new Council will automatically be reviewed.
- d) Support for non-profit agencies is always done when asked for, primarily by lobbying senior governments, who also have considerable responsibilities in this area. Non-profits are generally tax exempt on their owned building in the City.
- e) see f, below
- f) Subsidized use of recreational facilities has been tried and has been controversial because it can stigmatize low-income families. In my view, it is better to provide supplements in child care assistance to pay for transportation and recreational fees.
- g) The City has that in place now. All our Councilors have liaison positions to health committees, education, social and business organizations, so the City in effect serves as a linking inter-agency.

2. SUPPORT IN TRANSITIONS FROM CHILDHOOD TO YOUTH AND ADULTHOOD

- Civic leaders can emphasize youth-friendly spaces in areas such as parks, community centres, schools and libraries, and cities and towns can create more safe spaces for youth to congregate.
- Municipalities can create events that children and youth can help plan and be involved in, such as art shows, festivals, or performances.
- Cities can subsidize and increase accessibility to after-school programs offering sports and arts activities, homework clubs, and safe places to meet friends.

If you are elected to City Council, how will you:

- a. *Support for universal access to affordable recreational facilities and activities throughout the city with well scheduled public transit?*
- b. *Create a welcoming and inclusive environment for youth in our community where they will be actively involved in the affairs of their own community.*
- c. *Create more public youth-friendly spaces?*

Your response:

- a) Please refer to the previous discussion under section 1 since those responses also apply here. Public transit in Terrace, I believe, is reasonable but there is always room for improvement.
- b) I do believe we desperately need a drop-in type community centre and this is high on my priority list. If Council agrees, I will work to see this in place during the next term.
- c) Our parks can cater to youth better. Our school gyms can cater to youth better. The building of the community centre will cater to youth along with our expanded Sportplex and meeting rooms for “other” recreation.

3. INCREASED ECONOMIC EQUALITY

- Cities can pay their employees a living wage and can agree to only contract for services with companies that pay a living wage.
- Cities can support the development of affordable sustainable housing, provide incentives for landlords that do not exploit their tenants, and move towards discouraging of slum landlords.
- Municipal governments can advocate for reduced fare or free transit passes for low-income families.
- Municipalities can increase food security. Governments can ensure through zoning that neighbourhoods, particularly low-income areas have access to reasonably priced, quality fruits and vegetables. Cities can support community gardens and help develop and sustain local market. Municipalities can provide free or discounted recreational services and access to programs for low-income children, youth and families.
- Affordable Housing - universal issue facing most, if not all communities in BC Terrace is no exception. Here are some examples of suitable types of housing that Terrace would benefit from:
 - *Co-op housing* where the tenants can be trained and engaged right from planning phase to completion. These housing complexes would be open to diversity of tenants coming from different income levels, diversity of abilities, cultures, ages, types of families, etc. to create a model of vibrant community.
 - *Single occupancy housing attached to social services hub and employment opportunities* (eg. local recycling program, etc.).

If you are elected to City Council, how will you:

- a. Work towards bridging the disparity between neighbourhoods ensuring that we move away from ghettoization of Terrace?*
- b. Create conditions that attract development of more sustainable affordable housing, ensure that existing rental units are livable?*
- c. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities was instrumental in getting the Campaign 2000 agenda to eliminate child poverty into the federal spotlight. What is this municipality going to do to ensure that child poverty is not ignored?*
- d. Support food security and moving towards local production and markets; sustainability and growth of FoodShare Program, Good Food Box and community gardens.*
- e. Would you support the development of a Regional Food Policy Council? What would you see as their most important task?*
- f. What is your understanding of the homelessness issue? How would you go about solving it?*

Your response:

- a) If we can improve the income of families, that will insure they have a meaningful choice where to live provided the availability and affordability of housing.
- b) This question refers to section 1 where I have outlined some ideas. Affordable housing needs to be provided through cooperation with the province and possibly the private sector. The City can provide land and tax incentives but the province needs to come to the table.
- c) The FCM is made up of municipalities. They provide us with assistance and their recommendations are followed up by our City.
- d) I believe Terrace has made a start on the programs mentioned. Along with that, I have been able to convince the government to allocate \$3 + million dollars to dyke our farmland along the Skeena River to save it from erosion. I grew up on a farm in Terrace; all of our vegetables were home grown. Community gardens are an excellent way to provide pride and well-being in a community.

- e) The Premier has recently appointed me to a Citizen’s Coalition on Climate Action and I would promote your idea there. The less food we transport from far way, the better.
- f) The homelessness issue is a symptom of what’s gone wrong in our society Canada wide. Affordable housing needs to be available in our community and better health care also needs to be provided, but more important, extended families need to be involved and a mindset of “inclusiveness” and “respectful caring” needs to re-introduce itself in our Society.

4. SAFE AND CARING COMMUNITIES

- Cities can encourage usage of their public spaces and parks by making them interesting, diverse and welcoming.
- Municipalities can support and promote free, low-cost and family-friendly festivals, celebrations, public performances and sports events.
- Cities can take action to promote neighbourhood safety by opening a community policing centre, adding improved lighting at night or taking traffic calming measures.
- Simple structures such as small walls, fountains, designs in the pavement, or water ways have a positive effect on children’s lives and are relatively easy for cities to work into their design plans.
- Creating more bike routes and including them in new road structures will positively affect recreation, health and community cohesiveness, and increase bicycle safety.

If you are elected to City Council:

- a. *What measures will you take to increase child and youth safety and active participation in our community?*
- b. *What steps will you take to make Terrace a welcoming and inclusive community for all?*
- c. *How will you ensure that the build environment is child-friendly?*

Your response:

- a) Please refer to sections 1, 2 and 3 above. Again, the City needs to develop a mindset that all of us care.
- b) Please refer to 1, 2, and 3 above. Certainly, at the beginning of Council’s next term, we will need to invite yourself and other experts in the field to make sure we have the right game plan to properly move forward.
- c) Please refer to 1, 2 and 3 above. Zoning and building codes can be an effective option for a community and Terrace needs to insure all our regulations are in harmony with the overall goals and objectives.

Thank you again Sasa, for this thought provoking discussion. And as I indicated earlier, I am not an expert in this field but look forward to inviting you and others to Council’s initial discussion where we set out our priorities before we determine how to implement what Council has stated as priorities for our community.

Jack Talstra