



**Manitoba Home
Builders' Association**

2018 Winnipeg Municipal Election Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Mayor Brian Bowman:

As a candidate in this year's municipal election, your opinion and position on issues important to our sector is highly valued. The MHBA asks that you please answer this brief questionnaire on the following four important topics:

1) Increasing Costs and Fees

According to Statistics Canada, residential construction costs in Winnipeg have risen over 14 per cent, more than double the national average, since the beginning of 2017. Between January 1st and March 31st, 2018, the cost of building or renovating a home in Winnipeg has shot up 7.3 per cent. To put that in comparison, the city with the next highest increase in construction costs during that time was Vancouver at 2.2 per cent.

During this same time, builders in Winnipeg saw increases on numerous permits and fees issued by the City of Winnipeg, including a 5% increase to the City's Impact Fee. These fee increases, while generating increased revenue for the City, are compounding other increasing construction costs and have negatively impacted the affordability of all housing – not just new homes - across Winnipeg.

What is your plan to stem increasing fees being charged to new and existing home owners in Winnipeg?

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the critical importance of the homebuilding industry to our local economy, as well as the input of the Manitoba Home Builders' Association in the policy discussion at City Hall.

Winnipeg is home to more than 750,000 people and we are on our way to grow towards a population of one million people. Planning for this kind of growth requires vision and foresight and the home building industry will be a key part of this planning effort.

The purchase of a new home is often the single largest investment that a family will make, and City policies need to ensure that we do our part to continue to make homeownership affordable.

As you are aware, property taxes are a major part of the cost of owning a home and municipal property taxes in Winnipeg are among the lowest of all major cities in Canada. My first campaign promise was to limit annual property tax increases to 2.33% which will be exclusively dedicated to road renewal and financing Stage 2 of the Southwest Rapid Transit corridor. This will ensure that we have the necessary resources to invest in our infrastructure, while keeping property taxes affordable for homeowners.

I have also committed to freezing the frontage levy for the next four years as well as the water and sewer dividend rate.

As you are likely aware, Winnipeg continues to be one of the most affordable cities in Canada to purchase and own a home. A recent report from RBC Economics indicates that Winnipeg was one of only 2 major markets in Canada that saw an improvement in housing affordability

in the first quarter of 2018. This same report also notes that Winnipeg continues to be one of the most affordable cities in Canada to own a single-family home in 2018.

Home ownership continues to be affordable in Winnipeg and we must continue to ensure that property taxes, fees and charges are reasonable and remain competitive to other cities in Canada. That is why I remain committed to working with important stakeholders like the Manitoba Home Builders' Association to ensure that homeownership continues to remain affordable in Winnipeg.

2) Infill Strategy

The City of Winnipeg's implementation action plan for the Residential Infill Strategy has been developed and is currently being presented for public feedback. The MHBA supports an active and thriving infill housing market. More and more, the City of Winnipeg will rely on infill housing to sustain its long-term population growth.

What is your plan to help promote infill housing development and to create more certainty around investing in infill housing?

As we continue to grow towards a city with a population of one million people it will be critical that we support a variety of housing options for citizens and that includes infill housing. In Winnipeg, we are seeing the positive impact that infill housing can have in terms of renewing and revitalizing established neighbourhoods and leveraging existing city infrastructure.

As you have indicated, the City is currently conducting public consultations on a new Residential Infill Housing Strategy. As we continue to grow our city I believe that having a clear strategy on infill housing is important to provide certainty and clarity to the development community, the homebuilders as well as citizens in general.

Some of the public feedback that the City has heard so far on Residential infill development, which I agree with, includes the need to improve the City's public communication on residential infill development proposals as well as the need to provide easier access to information to both industry and residents on how infill development works. However, I expect that there will be many more elements that will make up the City's Residential Infill Housing Strategy and I look forward to reviewing the recommendations of our Public Service on this matter.

3) Development Approvals

Timing is a critically important component in securing private investment for major development projects that help provide Winnipeg with a consistent and reliable supply of housing. Winnipeg's development approval process can be an onerous one and added delays can potentially put investment at risk. Streamlining this process, which involves multiple City departments, would significantly help both Winnipeg's builders and land developers.

How would you support improving the development approval process?

I certainly appreciate the financial risk and time commitment that Winnipeg's land developers and builders assume when undertaking a land development project. I believe that as a city we always need to be looking at ways to do things better and more efficiently in all of the services that the City provides, including the land development application review process. I am open to reviewing this process with a view to improving it and I believe the best

way to do this is through constructive dialogue with key stakeholder groups such as Manitoba Home Builders' Association.

4) Our Winnipeg Review – Plan for Growth

Our Winnipeg is the City's road map and vision for future growth, planning and development for the next 25 years. It sets out the goals, policies and guidelines intended to direct all physical, social, environmental, and economic development in Winnipeg, now and into the future. A stable and predictable residential housing supply is critical to ensure that Winnipeg is able to grow in a sustainable way.

What are your thoughts on how Our Winnipeg can be a tool for residential growth?

Our City is currently experiencing a level of population growth that we have not experienced for decades. Planning for this level of growth requires the City to support a variety of housing options which include housing in new areas of the City as well as a robust Residential Infill Strategy.

Our Winnipeg is the blueprint for how we grow as a City. Determining how, where and when we expand the supply of residential housing requires careful consideration of the new infrastructure demands that comes with residential growth and a plan to pay for these new infrastructure demands. In short, we have a duty and an obligation to existing and new homeowners to grow our City in a responsible and sustainable way, such that the economic benefits of growth exceed the costs.

Please provide your response to our questions via email to lmcinnes@homebuilders.mb.ca by **4:30 pm, October 12, 2018**.

Your responses will be shared with MHBA members through our e-newsletter on October 16, 2018 and will also be posted on the MHBA website.

Building Excellence since 1937

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