

**Downtown Surrey BIA**  
**Questions for Council Candidates 2018**

1. What makes you think you are qualified to run as councillor?

A big part of my campaign is about rejecting the ways we have thought about politics in the past generation. Every person who is qualified to vote is qualified to seek and hold office, in my view. The quality of an office-holder does not come from a set of professional qualifications or apprenticeship but from a strong connection to voters and a principled and coherent set of values underpinning a policy agenda. I have a set of strong principles concerning social and environmental justice and I am connected to the social movements fighting for those things. I have been politically active since the age of thirteen and I have always tried to think about how government can contribute to solving the major problems our society faces. I feel that I am consistent, principled and civic-minded; and one of my core principles is that each and every person has within her- or himself the capacity and qualifications to be a city councillor.

2. What skills do you bring to Council if you are elected?

Again, a professionalized civil service is where most governance skills need to reside in a mature democracy. When it comes to the role of representative and legislator, there are a number of skills I feel I can bring to the job. As an activist for electoral reform and as the leader of a small political party in the 1990s, it has been very important for me to hone and maintain cross-partisan coalitions and alliances around issues that are important to me. My work in building the Electoral Change Coalition, Fair Voting BC and the Toronto Democracy Initiative brought together diverse constituencies like the Christian Right, Canadian Taxpayers' Federation, David Suzuki Foundation, BC Liberal Party and other groups. In 2013, we conducted a small reunion of this group including Nick Loenen (former Social Credit MLA), Gordon Gibson (former BC Liberal Leader and Fraser Institute Fellow), Troy Lanigan (head of the World Taxpayers' Federation) and Charles Boylan (leader of the BC Marxist-Leninist Party). At the end of the 1990s, I was successful in forging an agreement among the Victoria and Vancouver Labour Councils, the NDP and the BC Green Party to create municipal coalition slates in our province's then- two major cities. I feel that coalition-building a strong suit that I believe can help make a multi-party council more functional.

I also have a PhD in History and Religious Studies and I have presented at interdisciplinary conferences like BC Studies, Socialist Studies, American Society for Theatre Research, American Academy of Religion and others. I am highly versed in the social sciences and have taught courses in a wide variety of disciplines including Public Health, Geography and Criminology. I believe that any council can use a social science polymath to help contextualize information we get from the civil service and from other jurisdictions.

3. In your opinion, what do you think is the most positive thing that has happened in Surrey recently that makes you proud to live in here?

The things that make me proud to live here are not big policy events. They are things like coming home to my apartment and striking up a conversation with the homeless person who is reading himself to sleep in his sleeping bag, or watching a whole team of people on the #96 bus reunite a separated mother and child during rush hour crowding. Obviously, the Wake-Up Surrey rally was a good event that made me proud to reside here but most of my pride resides in smaller things.

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4. Are you committed to a strong City Centre and the creation of a vibrant Downtown core? What is your strategy and commitment to business - arts – culture – technology and community in Downtown Surrey?

I live in Whalley, as I insist on calling downtown/centre/central and moved to this part of the city in 2014 precisely because I am committed to being part of this future. A key part of our party's platform is a reduction in the large private parking lot space in the core, permitting the conversion of 50% of the spots in large parking lots to residential or commercial buildings, to create the kind of spacing between business and residential openings necessary to foster a pedestrian community and one that welcomes and is easily used by people visiting by transit. You can read more about this policy here:

<http://www.proudlysurrey.ca/platform/urban-vrs-rural-spaces/>

When it comes to the arts, our party has a detailed policy to create a Bear Creek Arts Strip just south of downtown (<http://www.proudlysurrey.ca/platform/creating-jobs-through-the-arts/>). We believe that will have substantial spinoff benefits to the north. Policies like ending the Arts Club contract in favour of commissioning local productions, prioritizing gallery space for local and indigenous artists and civic practice and recording studios will further enrich the music and visual arts scene downtown. We also note that many of the older developments surrounding downtown like the one in which I used to live (13786 103<sup>rd</sup>) still have the characteristic privacy hedges, privacy fences and are surrounded by steep embankments that undermine pedestrian community and reduce pedestrian visibility and, especially the consequent safety of women and kids. Our hedge and fence reduction policy (part of our larger public safety platform), as well as our front porch/stoop incentives will help to make the edges of downtown safe and more attractive.

While the emphasis on innovation and technology is certainly trendy, we believe that our city needs to branch out in its partnerships with postsecondary educators. That is why we prioritize Emily Carr as the next university we will attempt to reach a local campus partnership arrangement with and seek to lure SFU departments like the World Literature program back to our campus, following its withdrawal in 2016.

5. The Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association had advocated for the past five years for a professionally managed purpose-built shelter in Surrey. What is your commitment to have this project move forward?

We strongly support his initiative and would make it a key early priority of the housing authority we propose to establish. The transfer of street homeless people to modular housing will largely be ephemeral and only affect those who were on 135A at the time of the provincial initiative. As long as Vancouver Coastal Health has a housing department and a housing budget for those difficult to house and Fraser Health does not, shelters will be needed.

6. What do you see as the top five issues facing Surrey?

1. Metro Vancouver's affordability, especially housing affordability crisis
2. Meeting our obligations to fight climate change by aggressively developing a zero-emission transportation system
3. Providing adequate school facilities and youth programming for our huge population of children and youth

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4. Improving both public safety and the feeling of public safety for all residents
5. Keeping Surrey family-friendly, noise-tolerant and pet-tolerant as it densifies

7. We know there is always a debate between perception and reality. Everyone wants a safe place to live and do business. What is your strategy to deal with the root causes of crime?

We have the most comprehensive strategy of any of the parties in this election and received substantial coverage for this in the summer. Many of the root causes of crime cannot be addressed by a municipal government. The Drug War, for instance, is out of our jurisdiction and much of the economic system that creates structural, multi-generational poverty is as well. Similarly, many people state that “until parents teach kids responsibility” the state cannot do anything, which is self-defeating and absurd.

We will address the causes of crime that we are able to as a municipal government. Our plans are outlined here (<http://www.proudlysurrey.ca/platform/a-safer-surrey/>) and here (<http://www.proudlysurrey.ca/platform/gang-violence-platform/>). Highlights include:

- An “eyes on the street” approach that includes
  - Incentives for front porch building and occupancy
  - Reduction in privacy hedges and fences
  - New licenses for corner stores in residentially-zoned neighbourhoods and subdivision of single buildings into residential and commercial
  - More and re-routed sidewalks and bus stops to ensure adequate safety through lighting and visibility
- A youth community engagement strategy including
  - No fees for community/recreation centre admission or programs
  - Municipal busing and transit vouchers for kids’ sports practices and games
  - Ending school and municipal field rental to sports teams that are not zero-barrier
  - Sports equipment bank for low-income kids
  - Surrey youth hiring program for civic services
  - More low-barrier licit youth hangout spaces
- A new municipal police force with
  - Intervention worker training through a polytechnic rather than the Justice Institute
  - A beat cop program for pedestrian turf and community policing
  - Improved second language training for officers
  - The same per-capita police presence as Delta
- A new transportation authority with
  - Improved nighttime busing
- Municipal marijuana dispensaries staffed by qualified, informed personnel
- A new partnership with MCFD and the police to permit off-the-record interventions to prevent unnecessary apprehensions and arrests for non-serious crimes to keep families together
- Martial arts training both for self-defense and hierarchical belt progression free at community centres

Ultimately, our approach is to provide kids with clear, less expensive, attractive alternatives to criminal enterprises by competing with gangs over the basics our kids get from them like hangout spaces.

8. Do you support child care space in private developments?

The demand of child care is sufficiently acute that we cannot afford to reject any potential childcare space. However, we will be cooperating with the BC government to ensure all childcare spaces are

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licensed and we will not permit the municipal licensing of any childcare facility that does not admit the children of parents receiving provincial subsidies to pay fees. If a company wishes to operate in private space it must provide childcare for all parents, irrespective of whether fees are paid through government programs or privately. We will work to ensure zoning becomes more permissive of childcare as proximity to work or home vastly improves convenience and accessibility, especially for transit-dependent families.

9. How should requests for decreased amenity space in new residential or mixed-use developments (both indoor and outdoor) be addressed by the City?

Such decisions must be made case-by-case but, generally, indoor and outdoor amenity space are important for residents and tenants, irrespective of their status as owner-occupiers. Space reductions should be considered only in the event of a broad consensus incorporating a majority of owners *and* occupants. An exception to this policy, however, are instances where amenity space reduction may be exchanged for more continuous access to and incorporation with public space. Our “eyes on the street” approach to crime, as well as our zero-barrier approach to the use of civic space means that the creation of clear sight-lines to public space, pedestrian pathways to public space, removal of privacy hedges and fences can be achieved, the city may consider incorporating some public space as compensatory *de facto* amenity space. Such a policy, however, should not permit the elimination of a specialized amenity space use such as swimming or off-leash dog play.

10. The temporary modular housing is scheduled to be removed from the locations in Downtown Surrey in two years. Do you support the City’s housing strategy that moves people from the current temporary housing into supportive housing throughout the City? If not, what is your solution?

Since the arrival of the temporary modular housing, we in Proudly Surrey have been in communication with the Ministry of Health concerning an important asymmetry in the provision of supportive housing: while the Health Ministry grants funds to the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to cover housing for individuals with serious mental health and substance use issues, the same funding is not extended to Fraser Health. This means not only less funding for supportive housing but less clinical expertise in its design and maintenance. While we favour this move, we will continue to demand that Fraser Health be resourced to join us as a partner so that this transition has as good a chance of success as Vancouver’s does.

11. How would you make Council decisions more transparent?

Proudly Surrey rejects the idea of “commission government” and sees many of our transparency problems stemming from it. In Surrey, we have a voting system in which most voters cast votes that elect nobody. So, the 53% of Surrey residents who voted to defeat Surrey First have no representation on council. So, when those residents need to have input, they have no elected representatives. Proudly Surrey will change this by implementing a new voting system. But currently, because so many people are unrepresented, bureaucrats run ‘public consultation processes,’ processes that are designed to listen only to a subset of local residents and then shape that input towards a predetermined outcome. And because they do not need to be re-elected, there is no incentive for these civil servants to alter their plans based on the will of the people they consult.

Another key feature of “commission government” is the role of the city manager, who enjoys broad independence from elected officials and, in many ways, functions as a *de facto* mayor. In this way, city bureaucrats are not directly responsible to elected officials who, in turn, are not responsible directly to

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voters. Public consultation processes then make it appear that permanent bureaucrats are the only ones directly in dialogue with and connected to the public. But, as studies by Mariana Valverde and other legal scholars have shown, these processes are designed to primarily hear the voices of individuals with more free time and more flexible time, owners rather than renters, with stable, flexible white collar jobs and individuals whose do not need to be in full-time work.

Proudly Surrey has a comprehensive program to restructure municipal government and reinvigorate democratic institutions:

- Instituting the Cumulative Vote electoral system to ensure that nearly all voting residents have at least one councillor for whom they voted and who represents them
- Increasing the number of staff directly responsible to councillors, especially those conducting public consultation processes to ensure that a clear line of accountability exists
- Reducing the number of staff responsible only to councillors through the office of the City Manager
- Assigning a “lead councillor” to every public consultation process undertaken by the city to produce clear lines of accountability through councillor staff
- Dividing the city into eight “major areas” and assigning a single councillor to represent residents from that area who either did not vote or are part of the small minority whose votes elected no one
- Requiring that all recommendations made by staff to councillors concerning matters on which public votes are taken be presented in written form and made available to the public upon request unless doing so breaches provincial privacy legislation

12. What do you think is the priority for public transit South of the Fraser? What do you support?

I support Phase I of the Surrey rapid transit plan. We need to proceed with constructing the LRT line down King George Blvd and 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It is grossly irresponsible for some candidate for council to imply that they can replace Phase I with Skytrain and somehow fund it solely with municipal funds. One cannot purchase a \$4 billion Skytrain with \$44 million. Phase I is my highest priority because it is the transit development that will most immediately go into effect. It will also reassure senior government that Surrey will conduct itself in a more mature fashion than the Toronto megacity government in its waffling about transit projects and tearing up contracts.

I believe that proceeding with Phase I in good faith maximizes our city’s chances of persuading senior government to invest in a Skytrain extension down Fraser Highway. I believe that Skytrain is a preferable technology to LRT for the Phase II extension but it will require a strong negotiating practice to persuade senior government to extend the system using Skytrain rather than LRT technology. It is my view that the more of the Skytrain route that can be built at-grade, with intermittent overpasses and underpasses, the more successful we will be in selling the idea to senior government.

I also believe that splitting the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority along the Fraser River is the right way forward. South Fraser gas taxes should be directed from south of the Fraser. This has been successful for Laval in the Greater Montréal area in creating a transportation authority that responds to the needs of newer, less dense suburbs on the rise.