

OCTOBER 5, 2026 CANDIDATE FORUM:

Why are you running for elected office and what perspective, experience or priorities would you bring to council?

Keith Baldwin. I am a Creston taxpayer and I can certainly empathize with others on the local taxation impacts of municipal and regional decision making. I also recognize that our stakeholders include many residents that rent and I totally respect their importance in our civic mix of voters.

Everyone matters – we're all working for the common good, today, tomorrow and generations from now.

I have been on council since the fall of 2021 and have been thoroughly impressed by the incredible professionalism of our town staff and Council. Definitely well above average for our size of community!

I intentionally chose Creston from my experience travelling throughout BC after many years in the tourism industry. I really appreciate the unique qualities of our neighbourhood, the valley and the Kootenay lifestyle generally.

I see extraordinary opportunities to evolve the municipality's leadership role to enhance Creston as a desirable destination and dynamic hub to live, work and play in. I advocate for an active, friendly environment for all demographics, citizens young to old, allowing individuals and families to stay comfortably and thrive in this simply, magical area.

I truly enjoy the challenges and practical analysis of the diverse issues presented on Council and the external committee opportunities I have experienced over the past 5 years.

Acting with integrity and competence, I have seen the value in respectfully supporting and appreciating my colleagues, enthusiastically showing up to get things done without disruptive motives. I am both fascinated and honored by the responsibility.

The community, mayor and staff rely on us to be an effective, positive team!

Looking back on your most recent term, what is one accomplishment or contribution you made that you are particularly proud of, and why?

Through my involvement as a director on the Kootenay East Regional Hospital District board for the past 4 years I began detailed concept development of InterCareBC. This extensive proposal with well over 100 pages of content featured an optimized inter-

regional ground transportation service from Cranbrook across major Kootenay centres, including Creston, through to Kelowna several days a week, with specialized treatment at Kelowna General Hospital a priority.

IntercareBC also addresses a couple of potential solutions for cost-effectively providing incremental local long term care facilities across the Kootenays and has been supportively received by our MLA and the Minister of Health this summer.

I have created a preliminary overview of these concepts at **IntercareBC.com** and will continue to advocate for these solutions once the new provincial government is in place.

The Town provides a range of local services within limited financial resources. Are there any Town services you believe should be expanded, maintained differently, reduced or delivered in a different way?

No. Making specific operational recommendations is not the role of council.

Potentially reducing broad levels of service to save on costs may be considered by council at annual budget preparation time. However, based on customer service studies it has not been exercised to a substantial extent in recent years...no one wants to trade off quality service expectations.

After years of struggling to provide a consistent measurement standard to strategically support this process in future cycles, staff have this summer introduced a tracking system for all service units using pre-established Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to quantify ideal performance against realistic standards and variable conditions, identifying some specific expectations and determination of net financial implications of adjusting service levels. This is the <https://www.creston.ca/Creston-Service-Excellence-Initiative>

Typically we expect staff to provide a clear, balanced business case for evaluating these options where cost-benefit is the core objective. Our task on council is normally to consider reducing service levels below optimum targets to save money, not to determine how the related operational consequences should be resolved.

Local governments face competing demands for services and infrastructure while residents and businesses are concerned about affordability. How would you approach balancing service levels and community investment with the impact of property taxation?

I support the CAO-led continuous improvement of operational processing efficiencies, particularly in administration, as our older software applications are no longer

supported. An integrated **Enterprise Resource Planning** platform for the organization is being considered for 2027.

Systematic asset management is continuously being enhanced and ensures responsible dedication of funds for future asset replacement.

Detailed contingency pre-planning enables the team to have initiatives coordinated in readiness for suitable external grant funding.

We already have lower tax levels than most communities in BC: Last year Creston had the lowest municipal taxes per capita out of the 6 Kootenay municipalities with populations over 5,000, and 7th lowest out of all 81 BC municipalities with over 5,000 population. We were 74th lowest out of all municipalities in BC for municipal taxes, and 79th lowest for total taxes, including utility fees and Regional District taxes.

Is there anything we haven't discussed tonight that you would like voters to consider before casting their ballot?

My website is a long-term project and covers a unique range of topics, including strategic planning and the Town's exceptional financial performance over the past few years.

I have huge admiration for our dedicated leadership in administration, and it has been a wonderful experience working with the amazing members of our current council. It feels like family!

I would be thrilled to continue the excellent work we've accomplished together so far, and to maintain the relationships built with other leaders across the region.

OCTOBER 5, 2022 Candidate Forum Presentation

INTRODUCTION:

Hi, my name is **Keith Baldwin**, I am an incumbent councillor and my campaign website is **TEAM CRESTON.com**. Everything you might want to know about my relevant background and values should be easily discovered there.

The concept of Team Creston emerged in an essay I produced for the Creston Valley Advance during my assigned term as Alternate Mayor early this year, after 4 months on Council. The title was “Appreciation” and the audience response was very positive, including a surprising Reader’s Choice award of “Best Local Politician 2022”, just a month later.

It seems that my up-beat perspective on how lucky we are here, in contrast to 99% of the rest of the world, resonated. It would have been especially welcome as the worst of the Covid pandemic was passing, through the net effects of widespread vaccination.

The link to this essay is at the top of my site. In thanking the CVA readers for their kind recognition, I chose to characterize how great it felt to have the community working together to restore itself and looking hopefully to the future as a team, enabled in part by courageous and determined leadership at the municipal level. This ad is also near the top of my site and was published in the Advance in late March, with the headline “Thank you Team Creston!”.

Moving forward:

Our CAO is Council’s only employee. And he is awesome!

A sustainable working balance of mayor and council can only be achieved by a responsible group of independent candidates, free of external agendas, that works with the CAO pleasantly and professionally. Members must be capable of reliably doing the necessary issues analysis and decision making over the next four years, encouraging effective collaboration locally and with other organizations and levels of government.

I believe that our core considerations must be our community’s long-term Health and Safety, Happiness and Prosperity.

How would re-routing truck traffic to Cook Street impact downtown businesses?

Before considering any changes to the current configuration of Cook and Canyon streets, including realignment of Highway 3 and any intersection adjustments, Council will be undertaking a thorough downtown revitalization study using professional facilitators to help envision various impacts, options and future opportunities in the existing core.

The preliminary phase of this consultation and research process has in fact just begun. Together with Town Staff and other expert planners, in 2023 we will be considering a wide range of connected future implications including but not limited to the multi-modal transportation plan, parking, pedestrian and cycling flows, Market Park and a potential cultural corridor.

Collaboration is key.

Looking at any one variable in isolation such as diverting through-traffic would be unproductive and limit solutions to just either-or scenarios. Instead we will explore and discuss the options in a holistic, technically-informed manner with all stakeholders to ensure that we can reach a reliable, broadly-based consensus sufficient to open negotiations with MOTI, if that is the direction we choose.

In any case, managing current expectations will be critical as MOTI has no interest in making any enhancements to the roadway beyond current standards as there is no incremental functionality from a traffic point of view.

Even a no-frills realignment project could take 3-5 years to reach completion, provided that provincial budget priorities remain in our favour. Consideration of any intersection enhancements – such as a traffic circle - will impact land requirements and the town's budget significantly.

What steps would you take to protect water security in the future?

The Town staff and selected Council representatives are expert, long-term participants in water supply management organizations such as the Arrow Creek Water District.

Over recent decades, storage and distribution infrastructure has been established to supply high quality, safe and secure drinking water with enviable long-term capacity to support residents, business and industry.

We also have a sewer network in good condition with a near-new hydro vac cleaning and monitoring truck, and an exceptional waste-water treatment plant, with qualified experts operating the systems at the highest government standards.

Dedicated staff, efficient collaboration and commitment to long-term investment is key.

All of these inter-related systems are carefully managed, with maintenance, upgrades, expansion and renewal schedules strategically planned and budget reserves established for many years into the future. Emergency preparedness is of critical importance and backup processes exist to avoid disruption of services.

The Town's management team ensures that our water system crews are well equipped, well trained and well supported. Long term planning, reserve budgeting and technical diligence will maximize overall stability of all water-related resources.

On the consumer side, we will continue to encourage responsible efficient water use, including regular maintenance of local water facilities, with ongoing seasonal watering restrictions and education on emerging water-saving practices.

How can council encourage the development of affordable rental housing in Creston?

I am a member of the recently established Affordable Housing standing committee, working with a wide range of local stakeholders and in active collaboration with consultants experienced in the Quick Start program. This committee looks at all types of ownership, including rentals, and housing configurations. The regular involvement of the CAO ensures that the Town is directly connected to the discussions and objectives.

Again, collaboration and commitment is absolutely essential to keep this complex initiative moving forward, and the extreme challenges are obviously not unique to Creston.

We are working to make creation of Additional Unit accommodation more attractive through local tax incentives for new and existing buildings, while ensuring that safety and livability standards are enforced.

Many of the related long-term land acquisition and reconfiguration discussions that are being held at the Council level are still confidential but I can say that over the next couple of years we will be making substantial progress in encouraging relevant rental developments focused on higher-density and relative affordability.

There remain substantial challenges when implementation relies upon volunteer-driven associations able to mount shovel-ready projects that also need to have their ongoing commitment over time to manage.

This fall, through a long-term grant program we will be hiring a coordinator to dedicate a substantial portion of their time in tracking Affordable Housing opportunities and programs at all levels of government to ensure that we can facilitate timely decision-making and generate some tangible improvements in the near future.

Should Council prioritize transitioning Creston to becoming a net zero community?

Yes! This fall, through a long-term grant program we will be hiring a coordinator to dedicate a substantial portion of their time pursuing and promoting implementation of Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience opportunities at the civic level. All of us on Council and in the Town administration believe passionately in striving for carbon neutrality and many of us ensure that we lead by example.

Personally, I walk or cycle whenever possible, both commuting and for recreation, as Creston is a very compact community. I have bicycles for all occasions year-round, and even my boating is exclusively human-powered.

Realistically, to reach the global goal of reducing Green House Gas emissions by 100% (relative to 2018 levels) by 2050, clearly progressive actions must be undertaken promptly if we are to avoid traumatic and abrupt crises in our lives, locally and beyond.

Collaborating actively with RDCK and Columbia Basin Trust-related initiatives will be a given.

With the help of our new Climate Action coordinator, I expect that we will be regularly applying a Climate effects filter to our various decision-making processes, while encouraging adoption through incentives and positive compliance programs.

We're all in this together, near and far. By acting decisively and conscientiously, with kindness and collaboration, we will help preserve quality of life for the next generations.

Are you in favour of maintaining, increasing, or decreasing property taxes?

Maintaining - subject to inflationary patterns.

The current level of taxation is reasonably sufficient to safeguard the budget for the community's long-term strategic plan, currently in 5-year operational projections, and with much longer-term asset management planning in place.

Responsible amortization accounting of infrastructure lifespans will avoid subsequent administrations being faced with prohibitive replacement costs that would otherwise cripple core operational flexibility.

Current tax levels in Creston are relatively low and favourably consistent with similar communities in the Kootenays, and the rate of increase relative to inflation is also better than most, with no looming cash-flow crises that would otherwise discourage future investment and diminish attractiveness of the housing market.

We do get extremely good value from our existing Town Administration and tend to accomplish a lot with relatively modest resources. So stay the course, adjusting for inflation annually.