

Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce Langley-Abbotsford All Candidates Meeting

Aldergrove Heritage Hall
Wednesday October 2, 2024

Candidate Introductions

- Thank you to the Langley and Abbotsford Chambers for hosting this event and for all the good work you do.
- For those of you who don't know me, my name is Karen Long, and I am running as an Independent.
- I have lived in and been involved in this community for over 25 years. I know the issues and concerns. I have the connections, work ethic, and leadership experience to get things done.
- I believe in free enterprise. As the former co-owner of Bob's Bar and Grill and two other local restaurants, I know the challenges that small business owners face every day.
- This is a historic time in BC politics.
- Many former BC United colleagues – including 5 former BC United MLA's – are running as Independents to make sure that voters feel they have a centre-right option, so that decisions in Victoria reflect the true will of the people.
- During my 25 years as a community leader in Langley and Aldergrove I have held positions in many organizations – Director, Secretary, Treasurer, Executive Director.
- I am Past President of Aldergrove Rotary, the Aldergrove Fair, and the BC Farm Museum. I've been involved with the Aldergrove Business Association for many years.
- I founded the Langley Volunteer Bureau in 2016, which today places nearly 10,000 volunteers annually.
- As your Independent MLA, I will work tirelessly to consult widely and advocate for common-sense solutions, ones that won't have to toe party lines.

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- A team of elected Independent MLAs would hold the balance of power in the next government, ensuring the right and the left work together for moderate centrist solutions.
- I want Langley-Abbotsford to have a seat at that table of Independents in Victoria.
- I have committed my heart and soul to this community for over 25 years.
- On October 19, I'm asking you to vote Karen Long, your Independent candidate.

Topic Areas

Supporting Housing and Population Growth with Consistent, Structured Infrastructure Funding for Municipalities (2024)

- We are seeing a lot of new development in Langley and West Abbotsford.
- Infrastructure has not kept pace.
- We have challenges to meeting our needs for water, sewers, and schools.
- Skytrain will only increase demands on Langley.
- As an Independent MLA I would consider supporting ideas like the BC Conservatives' plan to deliver \$1 billion in provincial funding to local governments each year for a decade.

Continuing to Improve the Employer Health Tax (2024)

- I support the Chambers' recommendation to fully exempt the first \$1,000,000 in payroll of all businesses from the Employer Health Tax, allowing businesses with more than \$1,500,000 in payroll to deduct that amount from their total remuneration before calculating their taxes owed.
- I think that ensuring payroll exemption thresholds are indexed to inflation makes sense.

New and Increased Provincial Taxes Hurting Business and Economic Growth, Introduction of Clear Taxation and Implementation Policy (2023)

- The BC NDP increased or introduced 30 or so taxes and fees while in government, resulting in many businesses being forced to close.

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- The National Payroll Institute announced survey results just last week that almost 1 in 4 British Columbians are living paycheque to paycheque.
- I was a bookkeeper for over 20 years, so I understand that you have to work to balance the ledger.
- As an Independent MLA I'd like to push whatever government gets elected to get a firm handle on understanding this province's finances and provide a detailed plan for getting us back on track.

Amending Paid Sick Leave in BC (2022)

- The Paid Sick Leave program introduced by the BC NDP in 2022 had good intentions coming on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- But, it's placed a heavy burden on businesses and probably has unintended negative consequences for employees and should be tweaked.
- I would support the BC Chamber's recommendations to:
 - Allow for partial sick days
 - Implement a minimum-hours-worked requirement for eligibility for paid sick days
 - Amend the Employment Standards Act to reduce the number of paid sick days to three
 - Cap the total number of sick days someone can claim in a year regardless of how many different employers they have

Addressing the Costs Businesses Face Due to Crime and the Consequences of Illicit Drug Decriminalization (2023)

- In Langley we are fortunate to have the Langley RCMP and Community Policing Officers who are connected, engaged, visible, and approachable within the business community.
- The catch-and-release justice system must end. The police's hands are tied. Repeatedly sending people back to the streets, where they are at risk to themselves and the community, is not the solution.
- I do not support safe injection sites.
- Free drugs only perpetuates the petty crime.

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- The BC NDP government often seems to focus on band-aid solutions, not the root issues.
- We need to focus on solutions that provide people addicted to drugs with treatment options, including a much greater focus on mental health.
- Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) responds to individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis. This program is successfully in place in Abbotsford and several other BC communities.
- The BC NDP has made previous announcements about putting this in place for Langley but it hasn't happened yet.
- The ToL has written to government expressing the urgency for this to happen.
- As an Independent MLA I will push for MICR to be implemented in Langley so that we can get people in crisis the help they need, and free up officers' time to focus on other community policing issues.

Long-Term Infrastructure Plan (2024)

- We are seeing a lot of new development in Langley and West Abbotsford.
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- We have challenges to meeting our needs for water, sewers, and schools.
- Skytrain will only increase demands on Langley.
- As an Independent MLA I would consider supporting ideas like the BC Conservatives' plan to deliver \$1 billion in provincial funding to local governments each year for a decade.
- We need funding that is stable and looks to the future.

Building and Investing in Highway Infrastructure – Ensuring Safe Roadways for All British Columbians (2022)

Transit / Hwy 1

- There is limited bus service in Aldergrove – challenge for people to connect with employment opportunities in Gloucester Industrial Estates.
- Increased bus service would also benefit the Greater Vancouver Zoo's employees and volunteers.

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- A number of people trying to get to north Aldergrove use motorized scooters to travel along 264th – this is DANGEROUS!
- In my various volunteer roles I have tried to fight for better bus service in Aldergrove for more than a decade.
- The widening of Hwy 1 is long overdue, and way over budget. We need to start thinking longer term.
- I support plans to build a transit exchange and truck parking at 264th and Highway 1.
- This would help to improve rapid bus service from BC Transit east of Langley and TransLink west of Abbotsford.

Fraser Hwy

- Everyone knows that Fraser Hwy through Aldergrove is gridlocked. This issue has been studied extensively and unfortunately there are big challenges to finding a solution.
- Aldergrove is growing. The widening of Hwy 1 and improved transit has to happen now to reduce the pressure on Fraser Hwy. As an Independent MLA I would push for these improvements to be sped up.

Candidate Closing Statements

Karen Long

- Again I want to thank the Chambers for hosting tonight, and thank all of you for coming out to hear most of the candidates speak.
- I have lived in and been involved in this community for over 25 years. I know the issues and concerns. I have the connections, work ethic, and leadership experience to get things done.
- As I mentioned earlier this is a historic time in BC politics. I was proud to be running as a BC United (formerly BC Liberals) candidate.
- I've put in 9 months into campaigning because I believe I can be an effective MLA for this riding, maybe even more so running as an Independent.
- There are MANY qualified Independent candidates running because they feel that a centre-right option was stripped away from voters.
- In all of my many roles as a community leader, I have always consulted widely to try and find common-sense solutions.

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- Independent MLAs may hold the balance of power in our next government, and I want Langley-Abbotsford to have a seat at that table in Victoria.
- I have been committed to this community heart and soul for decades.
- On October 19, please vote Karen Long, your Independent candidate.