

Brad Field responses
Candidate for Mayor of Calgary

On the contracting of certain city responsibilities to private sector companies, I will begin by pointing out that I have been a contractor with the City for some 25 years. My company, BRC, helps the city to maintain, repair and refurbish large vehicles. This arrangement is working well for both the City and for my employees. Amongst my workforce, I employ many new Canadians and my entire team is well remunerated and well respected in my shop, as evidenced by their long term loyalty and our multi-year ability to provide quality service to the City. We should not assume that contracting certain services is automatically a negative choice. We need to decide on a case-by-case basis, and evaluate the results.

My 25 years of working directly with City employees has been a positive experience. I firmly believe that City employees come to work every day wanting to provide excellent services in a reasonable time frame and at an efficient cost. Often, however, their hands are tied by various processes or by the discouragement of innovation and creativity in providing those services to the City's customers. I propose to untie their hands. I want to reward creativity, innovation and efficiency. I want to empower employees to do the excellent job that I know they want to do. And I want to see them remunerated with a fair wage and benefits package. I will not try to tear up signed contracts.

In terms of budgeting, I am proposing to introduce Priority Based Budgeting. This is a system that is in use in some 200 municipalities across North America, and it has been proven to work. Instead of such options as freezes and across the board cuts, or on the other hand, unsustainable tax increases, PBB takes a different approach. We begin by determining how much revenue it is reasonable to collect from homeowners and businesses. We then use a robust citizen consultation tool, one that uses modern technology to be much more broadly available including in multiple languages, to put services/purchases in order of priority. We start funding from the top of the citizens' list. Low priority items may fall off the bottom of the list if we cannot afford them, although Councillors still make the final decisions and there are, of course, certain municipal services that must be funded. But the end result, as evidenced by the cities already using the system, is a much clearer sense of deliverables and outcomes. Other cities have found the system helps to break down silos and excess supervision or process as departments work together to deliver excellent services within the budget envelope. This is part of my approach to empowering employees. I believe the City employees know how to deliver excellent services on time and on budget, and are eager to use their creativity and innovation to do so. This system helps to untie their hands, and to reward them for improvements.

On COVID, it is important to remember that Canada's Constitution provides the vast majority of health care jurisdiction to the provinces. I appreciate that not everyone agrees with all of the decisions that the province has made, but municipalities cannot simply override provincial (or federal) jurisdiction. I agree with the recent bylaw passed by City Council that provided greater clarity around the presentation of vaccine documentation or negative tests. The provincial regulations were too ambiguous, and multiple businesses requested consistent practices that they could be certain about in welcoming customers into their shops. It is important to reduce the pressure on hospitals, ICUs and health care workers and in this case, the City was able to assist businesses by providing a clearer set of rules. With respect to future decisions, the pandemic changes regularly, research is ongoing, and we will have to deal with each situation as it arises.

I support public transit, including infrastructure for personal non-vehicular transportation. World class cities have sustainable transportation options. I also support the tiered system of transit fares that offers

lower fares to lower income people including students and seniors. As for the question of eliminating all fares and fees from city services, Priority Based Budgeting will be a useful tool in determining how citizens would like to see their tax dollars spent. Should the consultations show that citizens would prefer to pay for these services through their property taxes rather than on a user-pay basis, that is certainly something we can study to detail the impact and take back to the citizens to determine their final choice. Citizens should drive choices about how their taxes are deployed. Priority Based Budgeting gives them a robust tool to make their preferences known, and I would expect City Councillors to pay close attention to what citizens tell us.