

AUPE Committee On Political Action:

Candidate Responses Craig Curtis Red Deer City Council

1. Will you oppose privatization of municipal services and infrastructure, including Public-private-Partnership's aka P3s? Will you support bringing previously privatized services in-house?

The City of Red Deer has a balance of services delivered by city staff and contracted out. The services contracted out generally relate to specialised large scale construction projects, design and engineering services. The city also has some partnerships with non-profit groups such as the Y.I believe the current balance is reasonable and I would not support further contracting out or bringing previously privatised services in-house.

I would, however, support a sustainable procurement policy for city purchasing to the extent permitted by the city's trade agreement obligations. This could include requirements related to labour standards, employee treatment, wages and benefits, working conditions and ethical standards. In Red Deer it may be necessary to phase in such an initiative.

I am opposed to public-private partnerships for facility development at the local municipal level. The city receives an excellent borrowing rate and has reasonable debt capacity. The only area I could support the city using a P3 would be for a large energy generating project serving the region.

2. will you support your employees and your community by ensuring the municipality employs staff with living wages, full-time hours where desired, job security and collective bargaining rights.

I would support a living wage policy for all city and contracted staff in Red Deer. There are, of course, different ways in which a living wage can be calculated. I support the general methodology used in the "2018 Living Wage Update: Red Deer" commissioned by the City when I was City Manager.

I support having the majority of employees hired on a full-time basis. However with seasonal work and special projects part-time employees are required.

Job security is difficult to guarantee with the province frequently downloading costs to municipalities. In Owen Sound, Ontario, where I was City manager for 10 years, I negotiated job security as part of a collective agreement which responded to major cuts from the Province. In 1996, The City was awarded a National Work and Well-Being Award from the Canadian Mental Health Association. The nomination was made by the local union to recognise the City's approach in dealing with reductions in funding from the Ontario Government.

3. Will you oppose attempts from the provincial government to legislate against municipal staff including cuts to Local Authorities Pension Plan, or restrictions on the right to strike.

The current government seems intent on limiting the powers of local government. Local governments are closest to the electors and residents can deal with issues by voting the candidates with the platforms and ideas they support.

I am strongly opposed to any action limiting the independence and authority of the LAPP Board, unless there is evidence of illegal activity. From my perspective the Board has handled investments well and performed better than most other provincial boards.

I have always supported the right to strike, while maintaining a level of support for critical emergency services.

4. How do you propose your municipality deal with funding shortfalls, cuts and downloading of responsibilities from Federal and Provincial governments? Do you favour spending cuts over tax increases?

No

When faced with major cuts in transfer payments and grants, I have always favoured a balance between spending cuts and tax increases. However, spending cuts are better characterised as service cuts. Consequently, as a former City Manager, I have always portrayed the impact of the cuts in service terms. I have

often recommended one time funding from to maintain a service and related staff until revenues increase. As noted in #2 above, I have worked closely with unions to find the savings mandated by Red Deer Council.

#5 Do you support measures such as mask mandates, vaccine passports and vaccine mandates for staff to limit and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in your municipality.

I retired from the city before the pandemic, so I am not aware of all the facts. However Red Deer has been slow to take initiative and has generally just followed the provincial direction

I strongly support mask mandates and enabling staff to work remotely, wherever possible. I support “vaccine passports” and the City’s participation in the Provincial Restriction Exemption Program for its facilities. I understand that the Province may now be requiring support staff in these programs to be vaccinated as well. I do not support mandatory vaccination for all staff.

#6 Do you support measures to reduce municipal reliance on service fees and fares, such as eliminating transit fares?

This is one of the most difficult issues facing municipalities. Councils don’t want services to be cut and resort to approving higher service fees. The Red Deer administration developed a policy regarding which services should be “subsidised” and which should be full “user pay”. This was only partially successful. However, a fee assistance program was introduced for recreation participants and fees were either waived or eliminated on selected days.

Transit is particularly difficult in Red Deer because of the city’s low density and low ridership. This has been further impacted by the pandemic. The handibus is an essential service for those with mobility challenges.

In a post pandemic environment, I would support reducing fees and lowering municipal reliance on user fees, where affordability is an issue and introducing full user pay where it is not (e.g., real estate information)