

Jay Unsworth responses

Candidate for Calgary City Council Ward 13

Privatization, including P3s:

AUPE members know very well that privatization regularly fails to find “efficiencies” and any cost savings are often off the backs of workers who become de unionized, with lower pay and benefits.

They also work on the front lines of service delivery and see the problems caused by high-turnover low wage private providers, and the bureaucratic burden caused by having to deal with a third party instead of an in-house provider.

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

Understanding the impacts of outsourcing services simply to save money is not the answer. We do not need to look beyond the Provincial Government's outsourcing of the 911 dispatch services to see the implications and the damage this can cause.

I understand the cheapest price has the highest cost - environmentally, socially, and economically. I see outsourcing as a way to shed expense on the back of employees, decrease service on the back of citizens, and remove fiduciary responsibility of government.

I believe that through efficient operations, proper management, and implementation of effective and efficient procedures, there is no reason why outsourcing should outweigh in-house operations. It is called accountability and responsibility.

Municipalities as employers:

As our economies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, good jobs are an important factor. Public sector workers spend in their communities, and many households impacted by private sector recessions have been able to keep the bills paid thanks to a stable public sector job.

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?

Yes. All employees deserve to be treated and compensated fairly. I believe culture trumps strategy. If we are not all “rowing” in the same

direction, we will never hit the finish line. We need everyone from top to bottom to push our city forward.

As Joe Strummer from the Clash said, “Without people, you're nothing.”

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

Yes. The provincial Government has no business operating cities. This is the benefit of not having political ideologies in municipal politics – it is about the people and communities in which we all live, not about ego or ideology.

Funding:

For decades the trend on public services has been cuts and defunding, with fees downloaded onto workers, and the tax burden shifted away from the wealthy and corporations to the working class. At the same time, workers in the public sector know that tax freezes and cuts mean cuts to services and jobs. Any promise political candidates make can only be realized through proper revenues.

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

Three points:

- We need to look at our taxation system. We send approximately 40% of our tax dollar to the province and then ask to have some back for upgrades and operations; this needs to be fixed, and we need to push back. I find it interesting there are 14 City Councilors (the same amount as in 1979 when the city had 450,000 people) and the province has 26 MLA's in Calgary. We need to look at the big picture of where spending is actually occurring.
- We need to look at our built environment and start bringing in more revenue per acre. This starts with looking at how we approach densification. Continuing to build out does not make sense environmentally, socially, nor economically.
- Cutting spending comes with trade-offs. I do not believe cutting taxes is the answer, nor do I believe we need to raise taxes without

justification. I believe we need to keep up with the rate of inflation, and I believe we need to deliver essential services that people expect, and this comes at a cost – most people understand this. I believe that the majority of people are happy paying for services where they receive value.

COVID-19 Safety:

With the negligent provincial response to now three preventable waves of COVID-19, municipalities have been put in an awkward position of needing to take measures to protect their citizens throughout the pandemic. Many are introducing measures of their own, but not all have.

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?

Yes. People have the choice to be vaccinated. If they choose not to be vaccinated then they are also making the choice not to participate in society; again, it is a choice. This said, I fully support people who are medically unable to get the vaccine.

Affordability:

With workers squeezed by increasing costs, municipal fees add to the burden. Service fees are a form of flat tax that require the same payment from a CEO as a low-income worker.

Transit affordability is an important piece of working class equity. Fees add an extra burden for many people who cannot afford the costs of private transportation in the first place. The reduced emissions on increasing transit ridership can also be a part of how cities take positive action on climate change.

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

Yes, this needs to be looked at. When the Stelmach Government eliminated healthcare fees there were many people who could still afford to pay these fees, which would have pumped more money into healthcare. Instead, the Provincial Government painted everyone with the same brush and eliminated the healthcare premium. We need deeper thinking about connecting actions to outcomes. This is the problem with some politicians wanting to play “hero” without understanding the big picture ramifications on society as a whole. We could sure use the healthcare premium now, and there are people who can afford to pay it.