

Jeffrey Carlson response
Candidate for Lethbridge City Council

Privatization, including P3s:

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?

For me this is not a 'one answer fits all' scenarios question. I do believe that most of the services the City provides should not be privatized, and certainly not our core services. Many times when municipalities have gone down that road, the 'savings' evaporate in a short time, and costs seem to rise and service levels degrade. I have never been a fan of P3's, as they never seem to live up to the hype and expectations they promise, but I am always open-minded and don't like to dismiss any ideas out of hand before exploration. I would need an example of "bringing previously privatized services in-house" in order to make a fair comment. I do know that we have done this in the past with Access-a-ride (formerly Handi-Bus), and that transition has been extremely beneficial.

Municipalities as employers:

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. As a founding member of Vibrant Lethbridge (our poverty reduction committee) I am committed to this. Further, I believe the City should become a 'living wage employer', and include living wages in all our contracted services.

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?

I would firmly oppose any of these moves, and would suspect our Advocacy Committee would recommend actions to Council.

Funding:

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?

I can't say I would 'favour' either! However, at different times, each approach may be necessary. There are also other options/avenues to add into the mix: a dedicated advocacy strategy to the other orders of government could limit or cancel any aforementioned possibilities, and redirecting resources from other areas of expenditure could also be employed.

COVID-19 Safety:

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 have been very clear on this matter since the beginning of the pandemic: When our provincial government is slow to act, or fails to act, I believe it is the duty of Council to act in order to ensure the health, safety, and security of our residents, visitors, and employees. I support all the above measures.

Affordability:

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

As a member of Community and Social Development, as well as Vibrant Lethbridge, we worked hard to provide low cost or free transit passes to those in need. We also started an initiative where private businesses/individuals could buy/sponsor transit passes for similar purposes. Working towards keeping not just transit, but all our City's services affordable and accessible is very important to me, and I would pursue any opportunities presented. Ensuring that ALL our residents have access to ALL that our community has to offer is one of my highest priorities, and I have ensured it is included in every Council Strategic Plan that I have been involved in.