

## **Kelti Baird responses – Candidate for City Council, Lethbridge AB**

1. This one is a complex issue for me. I can appreciate the idea of wanting cheaper services through privatization for budgetary reasons, but I can't support anything that will cost unionized jobs. Personally I am pro-union and left-leaning, however I do think there are opportunities for the City to leverage community involvement in unison with union work. An example I have is park clean-up or community care projects: I would like to use volunteer labour of various groups such as neighbourhood associations to help take ownership of the public space and help keep it clean (and in so doing build community within the city, as well as civic pride), however those work parties should always be supervised and working with unionized city employees. My goal there would be to use volunteer labour to turn the efforts of a few people into the efforts of many for greater effect. I would not outsource this labour to other organizations for fees. Additionally, bringing previously privatized services (an example that comes to mind is organics disposal or internet) under the mantle of the city as utilities is, I think, a great option for the City going forward.
2. As an employer myself, I support the Union's goals of living wages, job security, full time hours, and collective bargaining. I appreciate that the City asks a lot of its employees, and as a result those employees should be compensated well for their time and effort. I believe that all of those goals are appropriate and imperative for maintaining good working conditions and reducing turn-over and burn-out of great employees.
3. The current provincial government is very anti-union and I do not support any of their attempts to stem the activities or benefits of the Union. I support workers' rights to strike, to demand better of their employers, and I think reasonable contracts can be achieved if everyone at the table keeps in mind what is best for the community. As a significant part of our community is made up of unionized workforces, I appreciate the role everyone plays and would support the citizens of Lethbridge against the Province if it comes to it.
4. I don't favour spending cuts over tax increases, but I don't want to raise taxes either. I think there are optimizations that can be made at City Hall by proactively reviewing outdated/poor policy that was written decades ago that no longer should have a bearing on City life today. By reducing the conflicting bylaws and policies, I believe we can relieve workers of additional duties, recover funding, and prevent wasted time and money at the municipal level. I believe the City should invest in alternative funding sources and revenue streams other than raising municipal taxes. Balancing the budget over the next four years is going to be very difficult, but I am not in favour of cutting positions or losing valuable employees.

5. I am in favour of all measures that will reduce the spread of COVID19 in Lethbridge. This pandemic has been very mishandled by senior provincial leadership, and the shortfall of leadership has fallen to the cities to make up. I do think that any staff who are required to work with the public should be required to have up-to-date vaccinations for all preventable diseases, including COVID19. The last thing the City wants to do is be a vector for disease spread. That being said, accommodations could be made to people who are unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons, and those folks should have the option to complete their work from home. I do think that City Employees who can be accommodate to work from home, should have that option regardless of their vaccine status, and would encourage the City Manager to allow people who prefer the work-from-home lifestyle to work from home. It's 2021, I think we can be as productive, or more, within our preferred environments.
  
6. Excellent question. I am a transit/active commuter myself and appreciate the high user fees for these services in our community. My ideal would be to reduce transit fees to \$0 to increase usership of public transportation. This may not be possible within the next 4 years as budget concerns will be very tight. However, I would support another program similar to a fare cap. This type of program ensures that even if folks are unable to outlay a bus pass cost all at once (\$80/month is an idea) the system would cap their fees after they hit \$80 in rides. For example, I can't afford \$80 outlay, but I ride the bus every day several times a day, and the breeze card would no longer be charged once I reach that \$80 limit within 30 days. Other cities like San Francisco and Seattle use a fare-cap system and it helps people immensely. This would be simple to implement in the City. I believe, particularly in the case of Transit, the program should be fast, efficient, frequent, and free to use. This would have the added benefit of inducing usership of average citizens, and reduce traffic in our community. To compensate for this cost, I would be interested in implementing an increased land tax on commercial properties that cause irreparable environmental damage (some of our manufacturers, gas stations, etc) as well as commercial properties that have fallen into disrepair due to landlord neglect. These ideas still need some fleshing out, but I have looked at them in other jurisdictions, and they do seem to work there.