

AUPE Municipal Survey

Lorne Harvey responses

Candidate for Strathcona County Council Ward Ward 3

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?

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.

Answer: I can tell you from my experience in the provincial government that the expected efficiencies and cost savings from privatizing do not usually occur and in fact at times it ends up costing more with poorer service. I cannot commit to bringing privatized services back to the municipality and a review would have to be done to ensure this would result in savings and/or better services. I would be willing to look into the matter.

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?

Answer: Yes, I know the importance of the staff in the community and I am not looking at any staff reductions.

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?

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.

Answer: Pensions and rights to strike are off limits. Staff have earned their pensions and their rights. As mentioned above, I have no plans to reduce staff.

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?

Answer: This is a tricky question; I am not in favour of either. With that being said, it depends on where the shortfall is and the reason for the shortfall. I would like to look and see where we could find other efficiencies before it come to either of these choices. Strathcona County has done a good job with ensuring that taxes are kept as low as possible.

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?

Answer: As I have stated on my campaign website, I am in agreement with the scientist and medical professionals that mask mandates, vaccine “passports”, and vaccine mandates for staff help to reduce the spread of COVID and that I fully support these initiatives.

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 can not 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?

Answer: I don't have an issue with some sort of fees to help offset the cost of some services. However, that does not mean the fees have to cover 100% of the cost of the specific service. I would like to see some reduced or eliminated service fees for youth, seniors, and low income individuals.

Thank you for participating in this survey from AUPE's Committee On Political Action. The Committee is asking for all surveys to be completed by Thursday, September 30. Please send your responses or any questions of your own to AUPE via email at t.zimmerman@aupe.org

The committee intends to publish the responses (or lack thereof) during the week of October 4.