

Naomi Withers responses

Candidate for Calgary City Council Ward 9

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

Yes. When evaluating a project or a purchase you must look at total cost of ownership. By this I mean to be clear, the lowest price is not typically the best quality. As a City, we must spend tax payer dollars where we see the best return on investment. By supporting staff in our City Administration we allow the front line worker to take ownership of a role and I believe who heartedly they show up to work everyday to do their best, and they deliver.

Public Private Partnerships can be leveraged to achieve economies of scale in some instances, where Cities lack the expertise or experience to manage a project or program. P3s must be approached with caution as we ensure that the citizens needs are put ahead of the profit motive of private companies.

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, We drive value by having employees who feel valued and respected in the workplace. I oppose reductions to wages that put a living wage at risk. I will rely on experts in the field of human resources to ensure our pay for work is comparable to the market, and addresses collective bargaining fairly and with transparency. I would add here that I was a member of UFCW Local 401 from my time working in the grocery industry.

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 believe that pensions are part of an earned living wage but the legality addressed in this question falls outside of my area of expertise. I commit to upholding current agreements with AUPE** and always working in good faith.

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 have been clear to voters that I do not see a path forward that cuts residential property taxes, as we must provide amenities in our neighbourhoods. We must take ownership of our revenue sources and focus on revitalizing Calgary through investment in the Arts Commons Transformation, the Entertainment District, and by converting our vacant office space into other uses, including residential and coworking spaces. We must make investments in other industries including Technology and Innovation and create a thriving Calgary where people want to live and have families.

With my expertise in Supply Chain, I look at budgeting and purchasing as so much more than the cost of goods. We must thoughtfully design and plan projects to ensure that we are only buying what is necessary to execute the work. If we focus on the five rights (place, time, quality, quantity, and price) cuts to services can be avoided as we have done our due diligence at the start of the process. We must also utilize metrics and monitor our spending so we can identify challenges early.

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?

The best thing you can do to support your health and reduce the risk to the broader community is to get vaccinated. Vaccines are our best protection against COVID-19 and the safest and most effective way to protect against infection and severe illness. I support masking policies as a City Wide effort to limit the spread of Covid. I will rely on the chief medical officer for direction on all medical and health related issues and will give them the space to do their role.

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

I support the fair entry program to ensure equitable access to transit and other services including recreation and will work for its expansion. I will also push to keep transit fares at 2021 levels after the completion of the green line.

**** AUPE note: AUPE does not represent City of Calgary workers**