

Grading summary: Amarjeet Sohi

Edmonton's mayoral race is highly contested with two prominent politicians with long track records running for office. In addition to the responses provided by Amarjeet Sohi, AUPE's Committee On Political Action is also providing insight into Sohi's track record as past city councillor and Liberal Cabinet Minister.

For 3 of the questions submitted we are providing context relating to privatization and workers rights based on Sohi's track record in those areas.

Q1: Will you oppose privatization of municipal services and infrastructure, including Public-Private Partnerships aka P3s? Will you support bringing previously privatized services in-house?

Sohi's response:

I believe good quality, public-sector jobs are crucial to our city's economy and our ability to provide quality services to the public. I oppose the privatization of public jobs providing core services, period. Privatization and contracting out does little to create savings over the long term, degrades the quality of services, and only succeeds in creating lower paying, less stable jobs. I support keeping public infrastructure public as well.

I believe public and private services can interface with one another to provide coverage and options across systems. Transportation is a good example, where the City provides core services like roadways, bike infrastructure and transit, and private providers can create more specialized services, like rideshare, e-scooters and taxis, all of which give residents more options. But I believe strongly that those public services should be held in the hands of the public sector.

I am committed to reversing the recent privatization of ATU Local 569 bus cleaning jobs and I will review other areas that have been privatized and options the City may have to bring them back in house as well.

Context from AUPE COPA: During his previous time as Edmonton City Council, Sohi had voted to use a private P3 deal for the south leg of the LRT. He then spoke proudly of the decision to the P3 Global Hub, saying: "As a councillor, I championed Edmonton's largest LRT project – a major P3 as you will all know." The remainder of his speech spoke positively of the value of P3 services. For this Sohi receives an F. <https://www.canada.ca/en/office-infrastructure/news/2016/04/the-honourable-amarjeet-sohi-minister-of-infrastructure-and-communities-to-the-p3-global-hub-presented-by-the-canadian-council-of-public-private-partnerships.html>

Q2: 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?

Sohi's response:

Yes, to all of the above. Quality public service jobs are essential to our economy and to providing good service and outcomes for taxpayers. I want City employees to be empowered in their roles, to take on work with the community, rather than bringing in outside contractors. That means the City as an employer must provide stability, healthy workplaces and supports for employees.

Context from AUPE: While in Justin Trudeau's Liberal cabinet, Sohi voted in favour of bill C-89 which stripped Canada Post workers in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers of their right to strike, which is a fundamental component of collective bargaining. For this, Sohi receives an F. <https://openparliament.ca/votes/42-1/950/>

Q3: 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?

Sohi's response:

I am committed to standing up for municipal employees, which includes protecting hard-earned pensions and most definitely their Charter-protected right to strike. I was a municipal employee for years as a bus driver with ETS. I'm also proud to say I was an activist with ATU Local 569, where I helped organized DATS drivers into the union. They enjoy better pay, benefits and pensions to this day because of it. I'm not shy to say my time in the union, and the well-paying job it ensured I had, was a big reason I was able to blossom and succeed as a new immigrant to this great city. I will not forget this should I be elected Mayor on October 18th.

AUPE Context: As noted in Q2, Sohi has voted to take away thousands of workers rights to strike. Absent any acknowledgement of or apology for his harmful vote, it is difficult to take his current position on the right to strike seriously. F