

Victor Doerksen responses Candidate for Red Deer City Council

Privatization, including P3s:

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?
 - ***The primary objective of Council should be to provide services to our citizens in an efficient and cost-effective manner. There can be several ways to approach this objective and if Public Private Partnerships can accomplish this, I would expect Council to be open to exploring this option, using due diligence.***
 - ***Previously privatized services and other contracts such as the RCMP contract are always subject to renewal and the same due diligence should happen at the time of renewal.***

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.

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?
 - ***A quick review of the collective agreements which are on the City website shows that these objectives are already achieved. I have worked for several not-for-profit agencies and know that we could not even get close to compete with City of Red Deer remuneration and benefits.***
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?
 - ***There are three elements to this question. First off, I am not exactly sure what you mean “generally” about legislating against municipal staff.***
 - ***As far as pensions are concerned the important considerations are that pension plans are fully funded, sustainable, and predictable. I support achieving all these objectives by working together with all stakeholders.***
 - ***For non-essential services the right to strike in a labor dispute is a right upheld by labor standards/legal precedent and I don’t see that this will change.***

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.

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?
- ***Budgeting challenges always involve a hard look at all options. In some cases, tax or levy increases are appropriate, in some cases achieving efficiencies is appropriate, in some cases reducing services becomes necessary and sometimes, all three are used in a budgeting cycle. As a starting place, I am in favor of keeping a lid on tax increases for citizens.***

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?
- ***The leadership of our country, at all levels of Government, through its unabashed rhetoric, has given sanction to its citizens to vilify those who are unvaccinated. It's no longer the virus that's the problem, it's the unvaccinated. All forms of manipulation and coercion have been applied, with the most insidious of them all, "Vaccine Passports", now in vogue. These so-called temporary measures funded by a \$1 billion promise from our current Federal government, along with implementation of QR code technology don't appear temporary to me.***
 - ***I am not in favor of the provinces Restrictions Exemption program as it is just a softer name for "vaccine passports". I have written about its implementation in two posts on my web site.***
 - ***The jury is out on lockdowns and masks. It appears that they help slow virus transmission, but also caused untold unintended consequences, the impact of which has not yet been seen. The other problem is that this virus will not be eradicated, and we are going to need to learn how to manage it.***
 - ***My question to you is: Will union leadership will defend the rights of their members to make their own personal health choice about vaccines without fear of their jobs. I will post your answer on my website.***

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?

- ***Public transit would fall under the purview of basic infrastructure as a necessary part of transportation infrastructure. It's not public transport if it's not accessible, affordable, and sustainable.***
- ***Similar to number 4, these are budget decisions that require considerations of a wide range of factors. I have a good understanding of financial matters and budgeting processes.***