

Zane Novak responses
Candidate for Mayor of Calgary

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?

As mayor, serving the taxpayer is the most important priority. Instead of just turning to privatize services I believe public services can be made more efficient through programs like Gainshare which will reward city employees for finding ways to save taxpayers money. Another one will be managed competition which means all keys services and infrastructure projects will be open to bidding from both the public and private sectors. This will allow services to come in-house if the public sector can do a better job. This will be further reinforced by bi-annual review to ensure infrastructure projects by the private and the public sector are on time and on budget.

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?

All city employees who provide a needed service to the city deserve a living wage and job security. I support collective bargaining as city employees deserve the right to advocate for their needs. However, we can't risk the delivery of crucial and necessary services that Calgarians depend on being interrupted. Thus, disruption to services can not be taken lightly.

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?

As I said previously, I support union's rights to collective bargaining and strikes as long as it doesn't halt essential services. As for LAPP, people have already been investing in it throughout their careers, and ripping it out from them on short notice would be unfair. Going forward we must make sure it is still feasible for everyone.

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?

The only way to deal with the shortfalls while continuing to provide the services Calgarians need is to create a more efficient city. This can be achieved through programs like Gainshare which incentivizes city employees to find efficiencies by rewarding them with some of the money saved instead of the current culture of silence that city hall promotes. In a situation where I am forced to choose between the 2, I would be in favour of spending cuts over tax increases.

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?

Whenever I hear the word mandatory being proposed by any level of government, I tend to be hesitant to embrace it as a good thing. I am not in favour of vaccine passports. Enforcing passports will lead to a two-tier society.

I would not continue the current program. Instead, I believe what the city must do is to implement a program of universal rapid testing among ALL city employees, regardless of vaccination status, and create centers around our city that provide free rapid testing for constituents. The rapid testing program will replace the discriminatory and unaccommodating mandate implemented by city hall on city workers, many of whom face firing after decades of service. I would also invest in Air Purification systems in municipal buildings. This is a readily available product and businesses in Calgary lead the world in this technology. Not only would it remove the airborne Covid-19 bacteria, but it would also help remove all airborne pathogens. This is an investment in a healthy workplace for years to come.

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?

I have several concerns with our current transit systems. Our train stations along with trains in general are often unclean and not a safe environment for the staff or riders. We need affordable transportation, but we also need it to be safe, clean, and efficient. Ridership is low and currently, we are heavily subsidizing them. If we can make our transit more appealing in a

way that protects riders and staff, we will see an increase in ridership and will make subsidize ridership more viable. We also need to factor in the impact of Covid on our mass transit system.