



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Tell us about who you are and why you decided to run for City Council?

I immigrated to Canada and Northeast Calgary with my parents and younger brother. I spent my formative years in Northeast Calgary and graduated from Lester B. Pearson. After finishing high school, I knew that I ultimately wanted to go into engineering but decided to first study and obtain a B.A in International Relations, a subject that I was and still passionate about. Following that I went on to attend the Schulich School of Engineering, where I obtained a degree in chemical engineering. For the past ten years I have been working as an engineer in oil and gas sector with Suncor.

Family is very important to me, and I now live in multi-generational household with both my parents, my wife and my two young sons.

When we lived in India my father was a professional engineer and my mother was a homemaker, but when we moved to Canada my parents worked several jobs to provide a better life for my brother and I in Canada. There were hard times and there were struggles, but I know my story is not unique in that sense. Ward 5 is home to many people who are working hard, working multiple jobs but still struggling to make a better life for themselves and their families. The past few years have been particularly tough. The Northeast has been hit hard by the economic downturn, the Covid-19 crisis and the hailstorm. People are hurting and this is not a time for cuts, I want to ensure that people are supported by their city.

The diversity of the Ward 5 makes it unlike any other part of the city. I have seen Ward 5 grow. I have seen positive changes over the decades but also the challenges that still face the community. My friends and family live in Ward 5. It is where I volunteer, it is where I shop, pray and spend time with my family and friends. I want to stand up for them.

2. Why should Calgarians vote for you?

I am a life long learner who genuinely wants to do politics differently. I want to do what is in the best interests of our great city. I am not interested in “playing politics” with people’s lives and I will fight and stand up for them. I will make sure that our residents are not just taxpayers but treated like investors who should get the best return.

3. Calgary’s current City Council has a history of erratically delaying the Green Line, and the provincial government continues to threaten the project with further delays. Do you feel the Green Line should be a priority? If so, how would you approach getting the project back on track?

Accessible transit is a priority of mine as there are many Calgarians who rely on public transit to get around the city. We need to change Calgary’s reputation as a “car city” and build more and better transit infrastructure that makes sense so people will use it.

I believe that accessibility to transit is integral to the future of Calgary and I fully support the Green Line and believe it should be priority to get it built as Calgary lags behind cities such as Vancouver and Toronto when it comes to transit options. Transit is also important for individuals who cannot drive such as those living with disabilities or can’t afford private transportation.

I believe that citizens need to understand how important and valuable the Green Line is to the functioning and economy of the city and ensuring that we engage high stakes partners and supporters, like Project Calgary and other organizations that are working to get the Green Line built, in vocalizing the support that exists in the city for the Green Line. I also think its important to work with the different community associations that continue to be directly impacted by the delays in the Green Line to get direct support and engagement from people and have them vocalize that to the city. Green Line is also a great selling feature for new businesses to invest in our city, which will support our economic recovery.

4. Over the past year, Alberta has seen more residents leave for other provinces than the reverse.

A. What do you feel are the main reasons that residents (particularly youth and young adults) are leaving?

There are a number of reasons young people are leaving Calgary and Alberta. In my view I believe it has a lot to do with the continued emphasis by the current provincial government on the oil and gas sector as the savior of the Alberta economy and the perception that little is being done to diversity the economy or invest in new technologies and industries in the province. There are many young people who do not see a future in the oil and gas sector either because of its boom and bust cycles, doubt that it will return to what it once was but also because they care about the climate crises. They see the rest of Canada and the world working hard to move away from oil and gas but when they are in Alberta it is all they hear about as well as the Provincial government's attempts to bring back even more environmentally irresponsible and dangerous industries like open pit coal mining. Calgary needs to be known as more than an oil and gas town because many young people do not see a future in that industry.

Also, young people have been through a number of economic events and their futures are more precarious than ever and in a time when they need services more than ever, there are continuous cuts being made to education and health which is making it more and more expensive for them to remain in Calgary.

B. What would you do to keep young Calgarians from leaving the city?

Calgary needs to create an attractive environment for new industries and move away from its reputation as an oil and gas town only. We need to create high quality job opportunities to retain our young talent and their skills. I will work and collaborate with other levels of governments, professional associations, post secondary institutions, and public sector to ensure that young Calgarians have jobs locally.

I also believe that retaining and attracting our young people requires better transit. The transit system that expands to all parts of the city, and the one that is safe, reliable and accessible. We need to make the city affordable and easy to navigate for people going to school and to and from work.

We also need to ensure that we are actively working to prevent a housing affordability crises like Vancouver and Toronto so that young Calgarians know that they can actually afford to buy a home and build a life in the city.

We also need to continue to provide vibrant and diverse spaces that young people want to live in, like the East Village.

5. Thousands of Calgary residents are employed through our city's public services with even more relying on them to go about their daily lives.

A. In your view, how important are public services to fostering a successful city?

Public services are integral to the functioning of a city without them you cannot have a successful or functioning city. These should be continuously improved. Public services help us achieve basics like getting to and from work, school etc... but they also make the city a joy to live in. Calgary has an amazing network of parks, libraries and community cen-

tres that add to the quality of life of all Calgarians. It is these things that draw people to live in or visit the city. Public services must also be equitable. I will work to ensure that we continue to support, grow, and sustain public services. I also want to make sure that our marginalized communities receive affordable and accessible public services.

B. Are there any instances in which public services could be cut in favour of private-public partnerships?

I am generally not in favour of cutting public services for public private partnerships. From what I have seen, the quality of service decreases and jobs are always lost in the name of profit. And these jobs are lost forever.

6. Some would argue that the solution to Calgary's economic woes is to cut our way to prosperity. Do you agree with this philosophy? Why or why not?

I do not agree with this philosophy. Though we strive for equity, the reality is we are not all equal in this city. Therefore social services, transportation, health care etc.. make a difference in the quality of many people's lives. I believe the first goal of government should be to make life better for all citizens and to strive towards the goal of creating an equitable society. When cuts are made, the first to suffer are those who already suffer and struggle the most. Cutting only leads to excessive prosperity for a few while the majority are left to struggle.

7. Urban sprawl has been shown to increase costs for building and maintaining public infrastructure as well as creating more disconnected and exclusionary neighborhoods.

A. What solutions would you present to combat urban sprawl?

- Ensuring we have more mixed use areas where people's jobs are at their door steps - this will also help with pollution and traffic - so we also need to have transit options that make sense - people should be able to work in their neighborhoods - the more time spent in your neighborhood the more connected people will feel to it, and the more they will invest their time and their money into it

- We should look at repurposing previous industrial land within the city - advocating for better planning legislation - developers who want to build subdivisions should be able to provide a plans that meet goals and objectives - there are many ideas out there - mix housing styles (diverse looks and prices mean you get diverse populations) - retrofit strip malls and other spaces - invest in small business so that people do not have to make long trips to purchase daily necessities - they can access them in their own neighborhoods

- Calgary is not the only city to be impacted by Urban sprawl - but there are cities such as Hamburg and Los Angeles which are taking steps to combat urban sprawl that can also be looked to as models "New Urbanism" which is an idea that is gaining traction in the United States is something that the city should look to as a guiding principle in future development

B. Do you support the policies laid out in the Guidebook for Guidebook for Local Area Planning?

There are policies that I support such as the encouraging diverse housing options, amenities and local businesses in all communities.

8. Many Calgary businesses and residents in the downtown core are struggling. How important is a downtown revitalization plan to you? What solutions would you present to get the downtown core thriving again?

While working downtown, I have seen rapid increase in vacancy rate first hand. Downtown needs diversification as we can no longer expect the same oil and gas companies to fill those spaces and therefore need to diversify and draw people from other industries and also change the usage for spaces - Calgary's downtown is a commuter downtown. We need to increase investment in our downtown, which will also help with combatting urban sprawl. A robust transit system is essential for bringing a vibrant nightlife to the downtown. We must continue to invest in downtown public spaces to attract more investment and spending by visitors. The plan:

- improve the quality of life for people who choose to work and live in our downtown. This will need further investment in services, infrastructure and amenities
- support for downtown connectivity for walking, and biking options
- investing in arts and culture including more public hubs for residents
- enhance the existing tourist destinations within core

9. Calgary's new arena is already over budget before construction has already begun and CMLC has continuously been excluded from critical negotiations. What are your views on the arena deal and are you in favour of moving forward with the project?

The exclusion of the CMLC in the negotiation process is concerning which means that the deal needs to be scrutinized from every angle. And CMLC does have track record of delivering projects on KPI's. Though it is hard to give an answer as I do not know all of the details and the structure of the deal has changed so many times. However, while I am a hockey fan but when it comes to taking taxpayers money and giving it to private enterprise - I do not support that. But of course then again if it creates good sustainable jobs in Calgary then that needs to be taken into consideration and weighed against the costs. I believe taxpayers are investors in our city, and deserve a robust return.

10. How do you plan to advance actions in the City of Calgary's White Goose Flying Report: Calls to Action report?

Reconciliation is a path forward to build a strong, inclusive and resilient Calgary. We need to encourage and support indigenous led initiatives, policies and strategies. There must be a framework in place to support all 94 calls to action in city's plans moving forward. It's been over 5 years since this report was issued and there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done. We need to engage with our Indigenous brothers and sisters when it comes to making important decisions within our city, and ensure that all city staff and city council members have training and context to understanding the situation - and its integral that we educate our children about Indigenous history and what was done in the Residential school system and the impacts that this has had

I also think when working with community associations that help newcomers that we discuss with them the important of educating new Calgarians on this history - as someone who immigrated to this Country and attended school in Calgary - not much was taught about Indigenous history and their treatment by the Canadian government while I was in school. I've had to educate myself on the issues - and I know many others who came to this country from somewhere else and still know little about this part of Canadian history.

We need to also make sure that IRO and CAUAC are fully funded and resourced.

11. The provincial government continues to make cuts that affect the lives of Calgarians for the worse. How would you approach standing up to the province and advocating for the needs of Calgarians?

I will be vocal in the public domain when required. I am also committed to speaking out at every opportunity. Also, making sure that we engage our residents about possible short and long term repercussions of such cuts. More knowledge means more public desire to stand up against cuts. I will make sure that continuous advocacy is happening on my behalf at every level of decision making.

12. Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

I will stand up for not only ward 5 but for all Calgarians. We are at a pivotal moment in the history of our city, and we need to make sure that we are investing in our city moving forward. We need to make sure that we grow and sustain public sector. We must continue to support initiatives that create an inclusive and resilient city. The city that does not leave anyone behind. We need to create an economy that works for all and not just for few. We need to make sure that our economic recovery is supported through investments in job creating opportunities. I believe the future is now!

13. Are there any websites or social media accounts that you would like to direct Calgary's Future supporters to?

Website: voteraj.ca

Facebook: [@voteraj.ca](https://www.facebook.com/voteraj.ca)

Instagram: [@voteraj.ca](https://www.instagram.com/voteraj.ca)

Twitter: [@Raj_Ward5](https://twitter.com/Raj_Ward5)