



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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

For the past 20 years, I've worked hard to help citizens and businesses in my jobs at The City, and I am proud of what I have accomplished during that time. As a City employee, I could only do so much, but I wanted to do more – think bigger, try new things that maybe we haven't done before. I felt the best way for me to do that was by becoming a Councillor. And what better Ward to run for than the one I have lived in and loved my entire life?

2. Why should Calgarians vote for you?

Calgarians should vote for me because I am well rounded individual who has 16 years of private business ownership experience, and 20 years of public service employment with The City. I understand what it takes to run a business, the accountability to serve citizens, and knowing the ins and outs of City Hall. I have pushed for change and positive projects through the bureaucracy cutting red tape along the way. Championing change is not easy, but I have a network of great relationships and I am not afraid to work hard to make sure things get done.

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?

I am in support of the of the Green Line, as it will provide better transit service to underserved areas, while creating jobs and support economic development. I will admit I'm a little disappointed on how the project has been run so far; project management turnover, no accountability and increased costs to the project as the scope gets smaller. I am eager to hear how the new CEO will move forward, specifically what his plan is to ensure fiscal transparency and accountability on this project for our city. My goal is to raise accountability and transparency at City Hall - costly projects such as the Green may provide public benefit, create jobs and vibrancy when complete, however I know there is a lot of work that happens behind closed doors and the public does not get the full story on how projects dollars are being spent and at times wasted with little to no regard to accountability.

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?

I would say number one reason is the brain drain – we aren't staying competitive with other municipalities/provinces/states in the jobs we can offer young adults graduating from post-secondary. The pandemic has brought this to the forefront in our city. We need to support our existing industries, while promoting Calgary's competitive advantage as a great place to do business. The City needs to highlight the highly talented and educated pool of potential employees that are available in Calgary.

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

We need to engage young Calgarians, making sure they feel represented in the decisions that Council makes for our future. We need to make sure we are fostering their needs as we do for other generations. Clear lines of communication with the younger generations need to be established, they need to feel represented so they can be connected to the city. We want the younger Calgarians to have a voice and a feeling of ownership in how their city will evolve.

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 provide great jobs, and feed into the greater economic ecosystem of what makes a city successful.

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

Many times, we hear that privatization of essential services will save money upfront, but what is the risk that there will be future costs incurred under these private businesses, what happens if they go under, how is this recuperated and finally what is the cost of re-instating The City as the service provider? Will this result in higher taxes for our citizens? Unless I was shown significant data to suggest otherwise, at this time my opinion is that we should not privatize essential services. I do support responsible spending and budgeting when providing these services and for all City spending.

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 would disagree with this philosophy. We need a balanced approach when dealing with deficit and spending. It is about accountability - where is money spent and how is it spent? Are cuts a part of this process at times? Yes, but if you are singularly focused on cuts, this will never lead to prosperity

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?

This is a very complex topic, there are many things that need to be considered when looking for solutions. When you consider the problem of urban sprawl from a macro level, the market dictates what the actual housing need is. At the moment, the market (individuals and families) are indicating they are willing to drive greater distances for access to affordable single-family homes. We can't tell people what they should want when it comes to their home, we need to find ways to make the alternatives more attractive and affordable to balance the sprawl.

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

I support some of the policies. I have major concerns on how the engagement of the Guidebook played out, and the lack of engagement with the business community on it. Community engagement and input is critical to these decisions. When you don't bring the community to the table for the decisions being made in their community, there will be a sense of fear and distrust in how The City is going to impact their neighborhood. This will lead to an opposition for any project. The community members are the subject matter experts of their areas, it only makes sense to hold meaningful engagement as part of the process.

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?

Ensuring a vibrant downtown starts first with decreasing the high vacancy rates within the core. To do this, we may need to create meaningful incentives for businesses and citizens to entice them to choose downtown over other areas. I know there has been a lot of money put into understanding the problem with our downtown and there is much data available to form strategies. My focus would be to ensure Administration does more than strategize, but takes actions that have impact, measuring progress through hard numbers such as vacancy rate improvement, businesses opened and pedestrian traffic scores.

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?

I do believe the new Event Centre will be an economic driver for Calgary, that being said, the project is already over budget, and we have not even broken ground. This goes back to my platform of transparency and accountability. A deal was made in good faith, and although a portion of people are excited about a new event centre and arena, taxpayers were already very concerned about the cost to the city when we have so many other deserving projects/areas that are in need of funding. Questions need to be answered and people need to be held accountable for the increase in the budget. This is one of those projects that needs proper oversight and responsible spending for the times. I was happy to see how the recent cost overruns were handled, specifically that the team owners will be paying for the bulk of those costs.

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

I will work closely with the vulnerable population of Ward 1, holding myself, other members of Council and City Administration accountable to implementing the advocacy, education and poverty reduction in their decision making.

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?

First thing we need to do is build a better relationship with the Province. I will admit this will not be an easy task. One of the advantages to having up to 10 new members of Council and a new Mayor is it's an opportunity to have a clean-slate with the Province. I am non-partisan (as Municipal Government is intended to be) and will maintain a neutral position with the federal and provincial governments. I will look at every issue and project individually and through the lens of my Ward constituents and the greater city only. I believe staying objective, professional and removing theatrics from the issues at hand is how we can rebuild our relationship.

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

I'm running my campaign like I lead, with trust and conviction. I believe in strong collaboration and I'll bring that approach to my work as a Councillor, and ensure I work with other Councillors to get the support needed to move important initiatives forward. I am running my own campaign and it reflects who I am as a person, what my beliefs are and my long-time experiences as a Ward 1 resident.

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

sonyasharp.ca

Facebook

Twitter

LinkedIn

Instagram