

Municipal Election 2021:

To, The Greater Edmonton Alliance.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Greater Edmonton Alliance for reaching out to me on these important questions and the great work being done by your group. It is through collective understandings that we can work together for the prosperity of others. The below are my responses to your questions.

Value 1: Workplace Mental Health: My opinion concerning psychological safety in the workplace:

There are many aspects of this issue that I feel strongly about. The first being the ability for all workers in any work environment to be trained to recognize issues around mental health and offer assistance to others as appropriate within their role.

The inclusion of various working groups also means that anyone participating can do so openly and voice new ideas and opinions without the fear of reprisal. Workplaces need to encourage dialogue within a safe and supportive environment and not only create policies, but to also follow through by actively engaging others to participate. Great ideas come from having collaborative discussions and allowing others to think outside the box.

No one should ever fear going to work or speaking up. The voices of workers help to bring about much-needed, healthy dialogue to improve things such as worker safety, productivity and trust, allowing for new creative ideas to be expanded on. With the ever-increasing diversity of workplaces, employers, bargaining agents and human resources departments need to adapt to include all parties in the decision-making process.

We know there are internal workplace culture and leadership issues affecting front line City staff and we also know many of these staff face serious incidences of racism, aggressive behaviour and outright abuse in their public service roles. If we don't have the right tone and practice set at the Council level and clear direction to the Executive Leadership of Administration, it's unlikely we will see the outcomes we need.

When elected I will commit to meeting and working with the Greater Edmonton Alliance to discuss Workplace Mental Health before the City Administration Report is presented and reviewed. As well, I am willing to meet on this subject matter prior to the election.

Value 2: The Path to Shared Prosperity: When elected I will commit to meeting with and championing the GEA's Living Wage/Quality Jobs Research/Action team.

I believe that reducing inequality needs to be among the top priorities of our city. Research tells us that socioeconomic inequality is linked to increases in social issues, growing demand for social support services, and poorer health and wellness outcomes. Improving economic security through living wages and a more equitable allocation of taxes and public services has significant returns in terms of both quality of life and economic impact.

End Poverty Edmonton was set up to bring awareness and action to tackling poverty in our city. Progress has been made, but the political will to push forward on the game changers that will make a real difference has been sadly lacking. A living wage policy is just one piece of what the City of Edmonton can do and for it to be effective, it must be followed. That means keeping services delivered publicly by unionized workers instead of contracting out services to companies that pay low wages. Additionally, it means making sure infrastructure projects and other contracts comply with the City's Sustainable Procurement Policy. Strengthening that policy to fully implement meaningful social procurement components into every sector of the City will be essential to changing the culture of procurement in our city to maximize local jobs and economic stimulus in our communities.

Paying living wages and proactively supporting our community members to increase their social wellness and economic security creates safer, healthier neighbourhoods and more vibrant, welcoming business areas. It also saves tax money in the long run and creates more buying power. It's a win-win.

Value 3: Truth and Reconciliation: I grew up in the North West Territories in a small mining town. At about the age of 9 years old I was told by our Indigenous elders about the children that were being taken away from their families to residential schools and the hardship it caused. Many years forward we further learned of the aftermath of such things as the residential schools.

As we are all visitors to Treaty 6 here in Edmonton, there is no doubt in my mind that I will commit to meeting with the Truth and Reconciliation Research/Action Team to discuss the call to action and how we may partner to bring any needed actions to our communities. I recognize that committing to action does not mean limiting our efforts to when it is convenient or when we also benefit. I know that moving down the path of reconciliation will not always be easy or comfortable and that it will require choices to do things differently. I look forward to building solid relationships with others that foster action in these regards.

Value 4: Just Transition for Workers:

The City of Edmonton contributes millions of public dollars to Edmonton Global and Innovate Edmonton to promote business development. As our city's economy continues to diversify and move toward renewables and energy efficiency as we recover from the pandemic, it's important that workers are included in the economic development focus of Council. If profits to shareholders are given priority over local jobs, skills training, and community benefits, the income inequality that we already see in Edmonton will only stand to get worse.

I believe that if public dollars are going to be used for private ventures, there needs to be expectations attached that ensure workers receive secure employment, living wages, benefits, and job training. This transition needs to include all employee representatives with employers in the process. This would include any new training programs which may be required from transitioning from one type of job to another more sustainable kind of work that will be globally competitive into the future. This can and should include partnerships with post-secondary institutions, labour unions, social enterprises, and existing and emerging local industries.

As a fellow Edmontonian, I will commit to meeting and working with the Greater Edmonton Alliance to explore the possibilities to keep quality jobs in the hands of Edmonton workers.

Value 5: Community Mental Health:

While mental health services fall under provincial responsibility, the City of Edmonton does currently offer short-term crisis counselling through Neighbourhood Services that is available within communities. These have been scaled back, however, over the years with a major gap now existing between the few sessions offered by the city and more longer-term professional mental health services. There are lengthy waitlists requiring referrals to access provincial mental health services and many Edmontonians cannot wait to get help and they cannot afford the services offered by private, independent agencies.

As a candidate, the role I see the City of Edmonton taking to support building community mental health initiatives is engaging more partnerships in communities and fostering more resources for citizens to have immediate access to services and an integrated referral system that doesn't turn them away. This would include consultation with experts who work in the mental health industry to see what our city can do to improve on preventative measures for those who may require early intervention. It would also be important to reach out to diverse communities as well to ensure that those that may be suffering from such health issues are not stigmatized by their families, peers and fellow workers.

As our population grows and we continue to face challenges of isolation, job loss, racism and social divisions, economic insecurity, stress on families, and all of the associated strain on mental health, we all need to be aware of the seriousness of not addressing these needs and the impacts of our community as

a whole. While we need to be strong advocates for proper funding and better provincially-delivered services, we cannot afford to just leave it to the province because the impacts are serious and they're felt right here in our neighbourhoods.

As a health and safety advocate, I will most definitely commit to meeting GEA's Mental Health Research/Action team and support the ongoing efforts of GEA to partner with departments within the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Public Libraries to create community mental health initiatives.

Regards,



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