

Funky Banjoko responses

Candidate for Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Councillor

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?

Funky B : I will be open to weigh the two options in-house versus privatization options and then take the decision that benefit both the municipality and community. For already privatized services, they should be reviewed to ensure that the strategy is beneficial to the community. Strategies should be based on benefits. Privatization should be subject to regular reviews for efficiencies and cost effectiveness.

We need to prioritize expanding what we do in terms of developing our infrastructure, whether that means additional training for employees, or a diversification of the current services offered by the municipality.

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?

Funky B : Every worker deserves to be paid a living allowance and feel secured in their positions within the municipality especially being in a region that has a higher cost of living than most others. Additionally, unions and the preservation of the collective bargaining rights is something I will stand in defence of. The rights of workers have been fervently fought for and improvement is continuous.

At the end of the day, the labour we use enables us to reach our goals and without employees that are well taken care of, respected and prioritized, this region will suffer greatly.

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?

Funky B : I will oppose any attempts by the provincial government to reduce workers rights in Alberta, including the Local Authorities Pension Plan or restrictions to workers rights to strike.

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?

Funky B : My priority would be to increase sources of revenue to increase incoming funding for the municipality, after that I will explore cost saving opportunities not affecting employee's income as a last result, increasing taxes. However, luckily for RMWB, only about 7% of our municipality comes from individuals while about 93% comes from industry. All government initiatives to favour / support growth of industry withing our region would be supported. We must continue approaches that would result in win-win for both the industry and citizens in the region.

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?

Funky B : I support safety of all of us, so I do support the encouragement of mask use and vaccinations against the deadly infection. I however stand for freedom of all, people should be able to make a choice if they are also considerate. If they feel sick, they should isolate and if they feel the symptoms of Covid-19 they should seek medical help as soon as possible and not spread the infection or endanger others.

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?

Funky B : I totally support working class equality; however, I will not support total eradication of transportation fees because of the need to generate some income necessary to operate as part of diversification of RMWB income. The strategy I will support is subsidized rates for low-income citizens and seniors, students and others that might find the rate challenging, in addition the vulnerable and no income could get free rides.

Emission reduction measures would get my support we all know the impact of climate change on our environment global warming, we have to learn and copy best practices around the world and see how we can continue reduction of emissions especially partnering with the industry and other businesses where the greater percentage of emissions occur.