

Ij Uche-Ezeala responses

Candidate for Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Council Ward 1

Privatization

1. Public Private Partnership may not be perfect in all of its execution but to achieve optimal efficiencies in the operations of any government which is usually burden with lack of adequate funding, it truly requires the involvement and synergy of private partnership. Privatization generally help governments save money and increase efficiency. Governments all over the world get involved with privatization to reduce the burden of underutilization of resources, fiscal burden, financial crises, heavy losses and subsidies for them to improve and strengthen competition, public finances, funding infrastructural requirements and increase quality of living for the people. It honestly improves government finances by raising revenue and reducing surplus spending. Therefore, while understanding the burden these partnerships bring to our municipal employees, we cannot overlook the benefits they contribute to our economy and the increased efficiency we derive in our operations. The public parastatals are here to serve the public and I believe any and all ways to improve our ability to serve more efficiency should not be ignored. In the light of the above, I will not oppose privatization but I will ensure proper balance, education and training to equip our municipal employees to execute their tasks more efficiently.
2. I believe the public sector workers and in this case our municipal employees are key to my agenda running for this office. I want to be a voice that stands for them and gives them reasons to want to work more efficiently and contribute to the growth and progress for our municipality. I strongly believe they play pivotal role in strengthening the working infrastructure of the region for us to achieve our set goals of fostering local community engagement and improving stakeholder relationships, supporting local business and social profits, improving our infrastructure and also revitalizing the downtown core – giving it a beautiful facelift. So yes, I will support our employees with good wages and all they need to live well and enjoy working for the municipality.
3. I will also oppose strongly against attempts from our provincial government initiating legislations targeted at introducing cuts to the Local Authorities Pension Plan or any restrictions on the rights of our municipal employees to freely engage in strikes if and when the conditions of work are repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience.
4. I believe in my opinion that part of my responsibility as a Council member is to use my voice and the opportunity given to me to serve this region to push and support legislation that ultimate impact positively on our community members and the region as a whole. That the byelaws brought forth will enhance the lives of the working class, our children, our youths, our seniors and every individual living in this community regardless of their race, colour, beliefs system, religion, culture, etc. That our policies favours our public sector – ministries, departments, our hospitals, municipal centers, recreational centers, infrastructure care, education, police, social

services, places of worship and also private sectors – our oil and energy sector, our service industry, our local businesses and every creative systems that helps brighten the story of Fort McMurray and eventually make us once more the envy of comity of cities around the nation. So our story won't be spoken in the language of the past – “that they were once a strong region” but rather that we are a continuously striving, progressive and forward thinking people working together to make our region great again. I will engage several methods to deal with the funding shortfall by;

- Soliciting for increased private partnership engagement with our private sector such as the Oil and Gas companies in the region to help bear the burden of funding shortages. Because governments have a lot of responsibilities but perennially short of funding, it is imperative to involve the private sector to play a role in many public infrastructure initiatives for us to deal with the lack.
- I will also use well balance fiscal policies to deal with the funding short falls. Everyone will pay their fair share to continue enjoying the benefits provided by the public sector
- I will introduce business models that will identify the gap between the infrastructure needs and infrastructure spending and help prioritize what needs the utmost attention.

I favour spending cuts over tax increase. Not arbitrary spending cuts but relying on data and evidence to make strategic decisions in reducing unnecessary spends.

5. My take on this is that I believe health is personal and I respect that but the other critical thing which is a MUST is that everyone must act in a way that their personal health beliefs does not jeopardize the lives of people in our municipality. They must do what is needed to ensure the safety and health of the general public.
6. I do not support measures to reduce municipal reliance on services fees and fares such as eliminating transit fares but I support measures on exploring ways of reducing the fares given the negative impact of the COVID-19 and how a lot of families are struggling to stay above water. And I believe this should be a temporary measure until such a time when things are back to normal or near normal. Service fees are revenue generating means through which the municipal uses to run the operations of the region. No Government runs without the help of its people and I believe what makes our economy run smoothly is because the people pay their fair portion in taxes and service fees etc.