

## Michelle Landsiedel responses

### Candidate for Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Ward 1

Privatization, including P3s: 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 deunionized, 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?

I would never place a blanket opposition or support to something as complex as the topic of privatization, in all of its many forms. There are clear and proven limitations to privatization, particularly when it comes to services or assets that are paid for with tax dollars. There are clear, and proven benefits to the ownership that results when public employees are the stewards of public services. I will commit, in the event that privatization of any municipal service or asset is brought to council, to do the work in understanding all of the key inputs related to that decision, including the important voice of the public employees who would otherwise be entrusted with the delivery of that service or care of that asset.

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?

To the extent of my purview as a municipal councillor the interests of my constituency will always come first. It will be my responsibility as an elected official, to safeguard the interests of the people who elect me. I will remain committed to facilitating strong relationships between the civic administration and the unions which represent our municipal employees, including the collective agreement, and in agreements reached during the collective bargaining process. On a personal level, I have a great deal of respect for the work that unions do on behalf of their members, and I would have to take a long hard look at any proposed measure that seemed to put profit before people.

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?

I am unclear as to the role a municipal councillor might have in conversations between AUPE and the provincial government in regard to LAPP, but I would be interested to hear the thoughts of the AUPE Executive on what these conversations might sound like. In terms of government interference on strike rights within the guidelines of the governing CBA, I would personally stand with those who are advocating for themselves, as long as it were being done safely and legally.

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?

I do not favour spending cuts over tax increases, but as a taxpayer myself, I don't love the idea of tax increases either. The reality of our region is that we have been gifted years of abundance that have put us in a strong financial position coming into the next 4 years. Fiscal responsibility is more critical now than ever, and fiscal responsibility does not always mean fiscal frugality. It will be our responsibility as a newly minted council to ensure that we develop a robust strategic plan that is supported by funding decisions made with a lens to recovery and sustainable economic growth.

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?

I do support mask mandates the ongoing push for participation in vaccinations, and proof of vaccination as a requirement for engagement in crowd-related activities. I also support vaccine mandates for some staff in some sectors, particularly where those sectors serve vulnerable people that cannot make the choice to be vaccinated themselves. I would look to community leaders in the private and public sector to ensure that any by-laws

proposed, meet the intent of supporting them, their staff, and the viability of their businesses, and that those by-laws are consistent and enforceable.

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?

Although I am unclear on how much revenue is brought in by fees such as transit fares, I would be surprised to learn that it's a significant revenue stream given our regions reliance on property tax. I do believe that services that incur cost should also have a revenue stream, so while I'm sure that I would support policy aimed at "reducing municipal reliance on service fees and fares" in the broader sense, I would need to understand the impact of the loss of these revenue streams, and the replacement streams proposed.

On the topic of emissions and climate change, I understand from some riders that there are a number of obstacles to fully utilized urban bussing, including the infrastructure that supports it. However, I'm not confident that the bus fare is a significant contributor. If it were shown to be a significant barrier to usage, I would look to council to support policy that ensures access to those that would benefit from the service.