

## **Rene Wells responses**

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

1. My position on the issue of private-public partnerships is something I commented on elsewhere. I believe there are some things that the private sector does well, and some things that the public sector does well - and then there are some things that the two can do well together. Positive relationships will pave the way to leverage partnerships that ultimately enhance the quality of life for residents across our region through the services they receive. To me, it is all about the end-users – the clients – that matter.

2 & 3. I know that municipal elections tend to be a time of uncertainty for some public servants in municipalities. Having once led a large municipal department, I offered employees the following advice: don't worry about the rumors swirling about out there. Instead, just focus on providing quality service. After all, we cannot make our region the best place to live without you.

4. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is presently working its way through a 10-year plan to lower rural business taxes on oil developments to reach a tax ratio of 5:1, which is the most a municipality can charge after Bill 21 was passed in December 2016, (up until then, the Municipality had been charging an 18:1 tax ratio on oil sands operators). This requires a degree of flexibility on the part of leaders. Spending cuts and tax increases are two measures that I believe should be a last consideration, especially in these uncertain economic times.

5. I am concerned about the growing politicization over the response by various levels of government to the Coronavirus pandemic. When asked for my stand on vaccines, my response is simple and continues to be: get proper medical advice from your physician, make an informed decision, and exercise personal responsibility. I do not believe the requirement to wear masks is a limit on individual freedom. Rather, it is a reasonable measure to reduce the risk of transmitting this virus. As for "vaccine passports," great care and caution should continue to be applied as all levels of government work through this, something I believe they are trying to achieve.

6. Finally, I want to see continuing improvements to the transportation corridors linking communities within our region, and those connecting our region to other parts of the province. Locally, I favour a review of our current transit services plan, with some adjustments made to ensure this critical service better meets the needs of those who use and rely on them. On-Demand Transit – which the City of Edmonton is now pursuing – is a concept that would allow for more effective transit services within Fort McMurray. Bringing users of these services from their neighborhoods to established transit hubs is one way of improving their mobility and thus their quality of life.