

Zaid Sulaiman responses

Candidate for Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Council 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?

ANSWER: First and far most, I have an immense amount of respect for public sector workers, your members, and the valuable work that they do on the frontlines. Their effort and hardwork truly cannot be matched. Furthermore, I believe privatization should not be done at the cost of/ or to replace the valuable work that is being done by these individuals, but rather to offer an alternative when required. In some cases when a certain level of expertise is required that is not available in-house or to enhance services when there are resource constraints or other challenges internally that can not be addressed quickly or easily and may impact service delivery. I will continue to support the in-house provision of municipal services and commit to take into account all considerations and potential impacts so I can make an informed and right decision always in the best interest of the RMWB.

Municipalities as employers: 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?

ANSWER: Public sector workers are valuable members of this community, and I will always stand by the rights of all workers to earn a living wage and be able to contribute and participate in the community. I believe collective bargaining is an important part of the system and I respect that and support the rights of all workers.

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?

ANSWER: I will always stand up for the municipality and the people we employ, preserving their rights and ensuring that their pensions are secure, they work hard and should not have to worry about losing pensions.

Funding: 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?

ANSWER: Preserving and improving quality of life for all residents of the RMWB is important to me and it is important that we continue to fund essential services for our residents. My goal would be to look for efficiencies and streamlining of processes where possible with least impact to services and jobs. I don't believe that increasing taxes helps any of our residents including public sector workers so we need to find a balance between cuts and taxation.

COVID-19 Safety: 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?

ANSWER: I would look to the Administration to make recommendations on the most appropriate required measures in response to Covid. I will support any and all measures that will keep municipal employees safe, protect our services and limit the spread in the community.

Affordability: 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?

ANSWER: I am supportive of exploring measures that reduce costs, eliminates barriers for those on a limited or low income and improves quality of life for workers.