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Inner City Coalition

Of Calgary Society

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UP FRONT 2010 On Line Forum

Calgarians will be going to the polls on October 18 to vote in our municipal election and will be making important decisions on who they wish to represent them on City Council for the next three years. To maximize the benefit from this important democratic process, the Inner City Coalition (ICC) has identified a list of the key issues of concern to Established Communities in Calgary.

UP FRONT 2010, an online forum for all candidates running for City Council is an ICC initiative that provides the general public access to the vision and views of the candidates on key issues that affect quality of life. Responses of 250 words or less per issue will be posted at www.icccalgary.ca

Objective

Our primary objective is to heighten the awareness of inner city issues through a "Public Dialogue".

We believe that the inner core and established communities in any city are its heart, sole, and heritage. Therefore the health and vitality of the city as whole are affected by issues that manifest in its inner city.

This list of issues is being provided to City Council candidates. We believe that public awareness and debate of important civic issues will help increase the profile of and generate informed interest in the election.

THE ISSUES:

Quality of Life during the current moderate growth period

Perhaps the most important overall issue facing the new Council will be the managing the delivery of city services during the current uncertain economic times while maintaining the quality of life that citizens have come to appreciate. Quality of life is what sets great cities apart from other cities. The new Council's vision, how it deals with these issue, the tools it uses, and the consistency of decision making will determine how Calgary will be perceived for many years to come.

There are many challenges including increased traffic, greater isolation of individuals, many inefficient characterless suburbs, under-housed citizens, increased perceptions of crime, higher taxes, higher service fees and even public alienation of politicians. The impact of these effects will be the greatest on established communities. Planning and building policies, decisions, and public spending priorities are key elements of The City's strategy of what Calgary will become.

From an inner city / established community perspective, the 1999 Transportation Plan triangle (shown to the right) identifies important elements that must be kept in mind as Council makes its decisions. Too much emphasis on one or two of these elements will imbalance the triangle at the cost of quality of life in Calgary.

The issues listed below capture and reflect the potential negative impacts of growth and concerns about the loss of qualities, which Calgarians value (friendly, safe, affordable, healthy, and comfortable communities). Each issue is prefaced by background information as viewed by the ICC membership while specific questions solicit ideas on possible solutions.

- 1. Perceptions of Influence**
- 2. Council's Leadership Role**
- 3. Number of Aldermen / Wards**
City Charter
- 5. Environment and Sustainability**
- 6. Housing**
- 7. Transportation**

1. Perceptions of Influence

a/ Issue Statement:

Democratic representation is a key tenet of government in Canada. In Calgary, this means our mayor and aldermen should represent the interests and beliefs of their constituents, even when this may be contrary to their own personal opinions. Unfortunately, other influences, such as professional lobbying, can overwhelm this representation.

Currently, donations to municipal election campaigns are only partially regulated and there are no limits placed on total expenditures. This increases the perception that elections can be bought and those candidates who spend the most are perceived in turn more likely to be influenced by those who help finance those campaigns.

We believe that civic election campaign total expenditures should be limited to reduce the potential for abuse.

b/ Background:

The perception that the will of constituents or communities is not always represented by elected representatives is intensified by unbridled financial support by certain industries and lobbyists.

While community volunteers represent their issues with very limited financial resources, there are individuals and organizations that have the resources to make sure council members understand their point of view. Average citizens and community volunteers, unlike industry professionals, experience greater difficulty in getting their message, issues, and concerns across to elected officials, due to the need to take time off work, the impact on personal costs, and the lack of technical or professional credentials.

c/ Questions for the Candidate:

Do you support limiting the total civic election expenditures by individual candidates? If so, what limits would you suggest?

I would suggest a per-voter spending limit established for each of Calgary's wards. If candidates are able to spend unlimited amounts of money, costs may spiral out of control, making them focus more on posting signs and getting their name out, rather than focusing on the ideas that should drive people's participation. [ZP]

What other election financing policies would you champion to provide limits, checks and balances against actual or perceived preferential treatment?

To avoid unfair advantages to incumbents, donations toward campaigns should only be permitted to be collected within a year of the upcoming election date. For similar reasons, there should be no carry over of donations from previous election and any excess funds should be distributed to charities by a City agency. [ZP]

Do you believe there should be new rules in regard to people and organizations lobbying Council members?

One of my competitors has gone on the record at a recent forum saying that donations could buy access to city hall. I am appalled by this suggestion – as an Alderman, my door would be open to all residents of Ward 8. However, to improve trust in City Hall and prevent the perception of impropriety I would support the introduction of a lobbyist registry provided the benefits outweighed the costs according to an independent auditor general. [ZP]

2. Council's Leadership Role

a/ Issue Statement:

Aldermen and the mayor are elected to direct the operation of municipal services for the benefit of the citizens of Calgary and to plan for the needs of the city and its citizens. Municipal governments are a child of the Provincial government, under the Canadian Charter and constitutional agreement, so these tasks are defined and authorized currently by the Alberta Municipal Government Act. As elected municipal officials you must establish policy for the civic administration, set standards, determine financing options, and respond to citizen concerns. To this end you must direct civic administration in their tasks, their goals, their financial needs, and balance the priorities between various departments against the funding available. This management of the administration appears to be lacking in coordination, in setting priorities, and in assuring efficient and effective operations.

We believe that Council should be setting the priorities and provide clearer direction to civic administration and related civic authorities and organizations.

b/ Background:

There have been many instances where administrative sections appear to be making decisions that conflict with or are counter to Council directions. Budget and policy issues on policing, transit funding, Calgary Parking Authority, Calgary Housing, Calgary Properties, Enmax, Calgary International Airport, Convention Centre, Stampede Board, and even Parks seem to arise continually with various managers proceeding with apparently independent actions. For example the Airport Authority appears to be telling Council how it will arrange airport access for its citizens rather than Council providing leadership. Or Parking Authority setting their own rates, system options, and uses of parking in-lieu grants. Or Enmax profits staying with corporate structures rather than active programs on energy options and costs reductions for citizens. Or Police Department indicating what they won't do if their funding isn't to their liking. Or a new Land Use Bylaw that is tremendously complex, convoluted, inefficient and unintelligible to all but the most experienced and expensive of consultants (over a thousand pages when in 1960 36 pages did the job for its citizens then). Yes many of these Boards and Committees are independent or semi-autonomous and have provincial charters or authorizations, but they often have tax breaks, council membership, funding independence, and other benefits not available to normal businesses or citizens.

c/ Questions for the Candidate:

How would you, as an elected alderman or mayor of Calgary manage to direct these various entities to the benefit of all the citizens and the future of Calgary?

This is a question of building opportunities for building policy capacity and

strategic leadership for City Alderman. At the moment, Council is tied up addressing issues such as secondary suites and renovations on an ad hoc basis, leaving little time for substantive policy discussion. Council needs to re-focus its efforts to build policy umbrellas, rather than trying to catch raindrops one at a time. [ZP]

How would you assure the citizens that they are being treated fairly, efficiently, and honestly by these various organizations and their processes?

Citizens need to feel trust that City Hall has their best interests in mind if they are to feel that they are treated fairly, efficiently and honestly. To do so, residents must see that City Hall operates transparently – the best way is to refresh its relationship with City Hall by electing a new Alderman in Ward 8, an alderman who will lead in the creation of the office of an independent Auditor General. [ZP]

3. Number of Aldermen / Wards

a/ Issue Statement:

While the mayor is elected by the city as a whole, aldermen are elected to represent a specific ward. Issues and perceptions of Calgary residents can vary significantly, depending on where they live. Aldermen need to be in a position of representing those issues and perceptions, hopefully for the ward as a whole. The larger the ward, the more difficult it is to represent the various points of view within a ward.

Currently, there are 14 wards for a population that has grown to over a million people. As the city has grown, boundaries of wards have been adjusted. This has become an increasingly more difficult task and one that is more open to political tinkering.

As the number people represented per ward has increased, access to our elected representatives has decreased due to very heavy time demands on them. Being an alderman has become a huge job time wise. The ability of aldermen to have sufficient time to consult with their constituents and research the issues in their ward is ever decreasing.

We believe that the number of aldermen in Calgary should increase.

b/ Background:

In 1950, there were 12 aldermen to represent 120,000 Calgarians. In 1976, the number of aldermen increased to 14 when the population had reached 470,000. There have been no changes in the number of aldermen since.

In 1976, each alderman represented around 34,000 people on average. This had increased to around 76,000 in 2009, more than double the 1976 number. By comparison, there were 23 MLA's representing an average of 46,000 Calgarians in 2009. This means that aldermen represented on average 80% more people than an MLA in Calgary. There have been many reviews and adjustments on the number of MLA's over the years. The latest proposed change would add 2 MLA's to Calgary.

c/ Questions for the Candidate:

Do you support increasing the number of aldermen in The City of Calgary?

The smaller the wards and the closer that the Alderman can be to the wards, the more effective government can be. There are 78,000 people in Ward 8 spread over about 20 communities. As we have gone door knocking we have heard diverse needs and issues that might be better addressed by an Alderman who is closer to the community. This is how we will build stronger communities. However, given the City's current fiscal challenges, I understand that this option may not be feasible. Instead, I suggest that Community Councils could be an

effective way to increase the policy capacity of the City Council. [ZP]

What number of aldermen do you think there should there be in Calgary to adequately govern and represent ward residents and on what basis do you base your position?

The issue is not just about adding new Wards, but also about how Calgary's communities served by this redistribution. Any change of this type must be made in the interest of better serving community residents. I would not make any sort of decisions on this kind of change without first consulting them extensively. This way I could best determine which redistribution would be best for Ward 8 residents. [ZP]

4. City Charter

a/ Issue Statement:

Calgary has a population of over 1 million people, close to 30% of Alberta's total population. Being the largest city in Alberta creates new and complex challenges. Alberta municipalities of all sizes are governed by the Municipal Government Act (MGA). Other large cities in Canada that are in the same league as Calgary have their own city charter. These charters provide specific powers to help those large cities deal more effectively and more independently with their unique large city challenges.

We believe that The City of Calgary should approach the Province of Alberta to explore creating a city charter for Calgary.

b/ Background:

St John's Newfoundland, Saint John, New Brunswick, Montreal, Quebec City, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver all have city charters. Some of these charters responded to rapid growth, not unlike what Calgary has experienced and will experience in the future.

The most recent charter enacted was for the City of Toronto. Part of the rationale for this charter was to give Toronto powers and responsibilities that match that City's stature as the largest city in Canada and it being a significant economic centre. Certainly Calgary's growth and it becoming a significant economic centre in recent years promotes Calgary to be in the same league as Toronto in many respects.

City charters also help make the cities that have these charters more of an equal partner with their provincial government when it comes to matters impacting those cities.

c/ Questions for the Candidate:

Do you support exploring the concept of a city charter for Calgary?

Yes. [ZP]

Would you please expand on the rationale for you answer to the above question?

As a rapidly growing city and economic centre, Calgary needs to be more responsive to its challenges. Cities are providing services that were not previously anticipated, there should be powers to facilitate the funding and delivery of these services with fewer strings attached by the province. Because Calgary has expanded its commitment to service delivery beyond what was

originally expected of cities, the time has come to introduce a new city Charter that better described the roles and responsibilities of both the City and the province of Alberta. [ZP]

Do you believe that Calgary would be better served by having increased jurisdiction on matters facing a large city?

The separation of powers between federal government and the provinces made sense in 1867 when cities did not play a significant role in the lives of people who lived there. However, the role – and expectations – of cities has grown significantly since then. The present complexity of municipal government was not imagined at the time, and a city charter for Calgary would guarantee roles and responsibilities that were not even considered at Confederation. [ZP]

5. Environment and Sustainability

a/ Issue Statement

Environmental concerns continue to be an issue to Calgarians. While there has been a lot of progress on number of fronts, the ecological footprint of individual Calgarians continues to increase and there are still additional steps that need to be taken to control this growth.

We believe that the City needs to continue to strive to improve its ecological record and implement additional measures and steps towards this goal.

b/ Background

The many sustainability successes achieved by Calgarians, Corporate employers and The City of Calgary are a credit to the progressive spirit amongst all people that call Calgary their home. Despite these successes, some businesses in our city still prefer to act like we live in 1970. Some still waste water, are not fully supportive of recycling, employ poor material storage and are situated in locations that are difficult to reach except by car. The City can play a role in changing this situation though leading by example, encouraging these businesses to make changes and looking at land use and location of where these businesses can locate. The City can also encourage alternative means of transportation for the workers of all businesses.

In addition, the Blue Cart Recycling program has missed a significant portion of Calgary's population, those who live in multi-family developments. This needs to be addressed sooner than later. By comparison, Vancouver is far ahead of Calgary in multi-family recycling, which has existed there for many years.

The City could also lead by example by encouraging transit use by its employees and perhaps should subsidize transit use by its employees and encouraging employers do the same, possibly though incentive bulk purchases of bus passes.

c/ Questions for the Candidate:

Do you support expanding recycling to multi-family developments?

Yes. Recycling for apartments and organics is needed in Calgary. Ward 8 contains many apartments who are currently left out of the City's blue box program. I would support extending the City's recycling plan provided that the costs are reasonable and can be covered by recycling fees. The city needs to clarify costs and develop a long-term plan to include apartments and organics in its waste and recycling system. I have read that the city will actually save money if we initiate a composting program. Communities and local businesses also have a role to play in our recycling system. [ZP]

Would you support encouraging use of transit by City employees?

Yes. The City should lead by example and if its employees are seen to be supporters of this service than others should be encouraged to do so, as well.
[ZP]

Would you be willing to work with the private sector towards increasing use of transit by their employees?

Yes. By making transit infrastructure more attractive and by making it easier to get around downtown I am confident that private sector workers will use transit.
[ZP]

What other measures would you support towards reducing our ecological footprint?

When we start building walkable, bikeable, transit-friendly communities close to services we will not only have healthier more vibrant communities but also more financially sustainable ones. We can address urban sprawl – and its associated environmental effects – by prioritizing inner-city growth, as emphasized by Plan It, over new suburban development. To drive inner-city growth we will need to work with local businesses: home builders, restaurants, art galleries, etc, by speeding up the business licence approval process and finding a more equitable taxation balance. We can also make the core of Calgary a more efficient and affordable place to live by improving our inner-city public transit network. [ZP]

6. Housing

a/ Issue Statement

In spite of being a relatively wealthy city, Calgary still has many citizens struggling to find adequate housing. Working poor, fixed income people and new immigrants are amongst those facing this challenge. While local and provincial housing plans have been formulated, much still needs to be done.

We believe that The City needs to be proactive in the implementation of these housing plans and explore additional means to address the provision of adequate housing.

b/ Background

In Calgary, there continues to be shortage of affordable housing. While much work has been done in regards to homeless people, there is the continuum of need including working poor, fixed income people and new immigrants. Immigration is key to providing people for future growth and economic sustainment.

There has been much discussion of secondary suites during the last three years and there is a wide spectrum of points of view on this matter. Nevertheless, this is one housing option that needs a concerted effort to resolve how it is approached and encouraged where appropriate. Some of the discussion has been coloured by the “illegal” suites that exist all over the City. Secondary suites are the legal alternative to illegal suites. By clarifying and, if possible, simplifying the approval processes and confirm the locations where secondary suites can be built, it would help depoliticize this issue. There needs to be proactive consultation with communities on this matter to first get the correct information to them and secondly explore under what conditions they would be acceptable to communities.

c/ Questions for the Candidate

What do you believe The City could do to increase the supply of more affordable housing in Calgary?

In order to increase access to affordable housing in Calgary, City Council must prioritize two policies - a comprehensive secondary suites policy and an implementation of Plan It. [ZP]

What is your position on secondary suites?

I strongly support the legalization of secondary suites in all existing, as well as new, neighbourhoods. Secondary suites can offer additional affordable housing for families and individuals in Ward 8 with little to no government assistance. They can also enable homeowners to earn income from their homes. This can help people on fixed incomes offset tax hikes.

City Council has repeatedly studied the issue and failed to deliver a city-wide secondary suite policy. This delay has resulted in reportedly thousands of illegal suites in Calgary. As Alderman, I would work with communities to address safety and traffic considerations with a view to implement, rather than study, secondary suites. [ZP]

7. Transportation

a/ Issue Statement:

Transportation is a top of mind issue with voters. It is the second largest personal expense, a big personal time consumer, and a significant tax expense with major impacts on both the environment and quality of urban living.

We believe that land use is critical for achieving Calgary's transportation objectives.

b/ Background

Technologies such as cars, bikes, trucks, busses, LRT, BRT, roads and bridges etc. are only the last step in solving transportation problems. This hardware is where the money and resources are spent, and where impacts on the environment and quality of urban life show up, but what actually determines the success of the transportation solution and the scale of those impacts, is the definition of the problem and the objectives.

We believe the problem is to provide people and goods with timely access to the places they need to be, at minimal cost and environmental impact. We believe the objective must include providing the less well off, the elderly, the young and a full spectrum of handicapped people with service. This is not only fair and responsible but reduces their dependence on others to the benefit of all. We believe that balancing the public / private transportation split is a significant way to reduce costs for individuals and to reduce the demand on public infrastructure.

In light of these objectives, we believe that the most potent tool in achieving timely and inexpensive access is through land use planning. Concepts such as balancing residential, retail, employment, educational and recreational land uses at the neighbourhood, community and city scale are a way to reduce transportation demand at the source. Concepts like transit oriented development, distributed employment centres, rational distribution of densities, neighbourhood schools and mixed-use developments will increase overall convenience and viability of public transportation. We also believe that hierarchical labyrinth like road layouts tend toward congestion and limited access when compared with variety of user choices available in network or grid like road layouts. Most of these concepts received strong support through the imagineCALGARY process.

c/ Question for the Candidate:

Do you agree that land use planning is an essential tool for achieving Calgary's transportation objectives?

Yes. Land use and planning are a significant part transportation infrastructure.
[ZP]

Will you take a leadership role in implementing Plan It?

Yes. Unlike Alderman Mar, I would follow the density requirements of Plan It. The original density requirements were developed after consulting a large number of Calgarians, and I would work to restore the density requirements to those that were agree upon by these Calgarians and those Alderman who worked with them. Plan It is an important document not only because it addressed the issue of urban sprawl within Calgary, but also because it was built on a foundation of citizen engagement. [ZP]

The Inner City Coalition was established in 1991 as a forum to:

- * Identify, address and communicate planning, social and other issues that directly or indirectly affect the well being of the established communities and to provide an inner city perspective.
- * Establish a unified response.
- * Be a positive force in directing the conservation and development of the inner city.
- * Promote the understanding of inner city concerns.

We operate by:

- * Meeting regularly to conduct the affairs of the ICC and to provide a forum for discussion between member communities.
- * Placing items on the agenda by the members as matters of concern arise.
- * Where possible a unified response is determined and a course of action chosen.
- * When requested and if appropriate, members act in support of other communities and will share in lobbying, letter writing, etc.

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