

SDLC Questionnaire for City Council Candidates

Responses by Robin Mowat, candidate for Saskatoon City Council, Ward 9

August 25, 2016

1) The City of Saskatoon provides vital public services to its citizens. What public services need to be strengthened through the injection of new financial resources? How would you propose to pay for better public services in Saskatoon?

We need to reinvest in key city infrastructure and services, including roads, snow clearance, transit, and parks. The number-one concern of residents in Ward 9 has been, and remains, the condition of our roads. This is a road-safety issue and is a top-priority of mine. The major source of revenue for these improvements will be through property-tax reallocation or prioritization. In order to keep property-tax increases low, I propose to defer more discretionary spending.

2) What is your view of privatization of public services? Would you reverse the services that have been privatized by previous city governments?

My main goal is have the most efficient and cost-effective services provided to the residents of Saskatoon. I'm neutral on privatization. In theory, privatization promises increased competition and innovation. On the other hand, many public services, by their very nature, are ill-suited for the private sector. I'm not convinced there are terrific efficiencies to be gained by a privatization route. Should the matter arise, I will look at the merits or disadvantages of the specific circumstances. The City does have two projects underway that were developed through public-private partnerships. They appear to have been positive for Saskatoon, but it will be some time before we are able to fully assess the success of those partnerships.

3) What could the City of Saskatoon do to improve its relationship with its employees? How can the collective bargaining rights of City of Saskatoon employees be better protected?

I'm the Past-President of CUPE Local 1871 and was a member of our Bargaining Committee during the last bargaining session. In my work at the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, I routinely engage with unions – and management – across the province. To be frank, some of the issues I've observed are due to a lack of adequate action or, more commonly, inaction on the part of a union. A healthy work environment is directly related to the health of the workers' union(s). Of course, I've also seen some inappropriate decisions made by managers – sometimes because of inexperience, and sometimes because they lack the necessary information. Everyone is better off when they are well-equipped with knowledge about proper labour and management practices. Unfortunately, Saskatoon itself was deemed guilty of an unfair labour practice in 2014 in relation to the ATU, to the detriment of everyone – especially Saskatoon citizens. I'm determined to ensure such an event does not reoccur.

4) What can the City of Saskatoon do to provide safe and affordable housing? How can we ensure that marginalized residents have a say in community and social planning?

The United Way's Plan to End Homelessness is, for me, an excellent framework with which to pursue improvements in this area. The City of Saskatoon has been working collaboratively with community organizations on this plan. The City has ten-year Housing Business Plan, which is on track to create 5,000

new units of affordable housing between 2013 and 2022. This will be about 17% of the estimated total new housing built in Saskatoon over that time. I'm interested in finding new ways to increasing contributions to the Affordable Housing Reserve. Saskatoon also has a number of programs and incentives regarding affordable housing.

5) What role do you see for the City of Saskatoon to improve around economic development?

Saskatoon can influence the shape of development through our zoning regulations and our other bylaws, as well as through select tax abatement, rebates, or other incentive policies. Ensuring that Saskatoon has good quality infrastructure will be an essential component for economic growth. This includes ensuring we have safe drinking water, healthy soils and inviting public spaces. It's also important to keep in mind that the arts, entertainment, and leisure amenities, as well as our parks and green spaces, are important quality of life considerations for investors and their employees. I consider, for instance, our riverside parks and trails maintained by the City and the Meewasin Valley Authority to be fundamental infrastructure for our city. Saskatoon has been, and must continue to be, a leader in this area. As well, further coordination and partnerships with the RM of Corman Park and the municipalities surrounding Saskatoon will be necessary as the city grows.

6) What specific initiatives would you propose to move Saskatoon to a low-carbon economy and reduce our greenhouse gas emission?

Saskatoon has set GHG reduction targets for 2020 that will be difficult to meet. Some of the enabling actions and goals detailed in the City's 2009 Energy and Greenhouse Gas Management Plan remain viable options for the future, even though they have not been successful to date. I have no further specific initiatives to propose in this area, but am supportive of energy conservation, and alternative-electricity production projects. As the city builds or renovates its properties, we should seek LEED registration and certification. Standards to lower operation costs as well as lower GHG production.

7) What can the City of Saskatoon do to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians?

The City of Saskatoon's has a number of initiatives underway in response to the TRC calls-to-action. These will require ongoing attention and support. The City may be able to expand its collaboration with the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Gabriel Dumont Institute, CUMFI, OTC, and faith-based groups in various initiatives to promote dialogue on reconciliation and Indigenous inclusion. Internally, the City should continue to educate its employees on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools. The Saskatoon Police Service has a particular responsibility in this regard. We must actively seek to be an employer that reflects the social make-up of the community we serve, and continue with initiatives that move us in that direction, such as the employment equity program. There is much to be said for giving increased prominence to First Nations contributions to our city through public art and (re)naming of streets, parks, and other prominent city assets. Overall, the City – and its elected representatives – should set the tone, through positive, inclusive messages.