

Josie Steeves (Ward 6)

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?

Cities have been saddled with a lot of responsibility in providing social and public services, even though they don't have access to necessary resources. This large fiscal imbalance between the three levels of government needs to be addressed; we as a city council need to become better advocates for our community and demand long-term support from the provincial and federal governments so we can prioritize and plan, instead of relying on property taxes and targeted grants during election cycles.

We also need to use the resources we have wisely. Urban sprawl is expensive, and a surplus of research shows investment in people has a high financial return. Investing in education and training, healthcare, Housing First, addictions support, access to healthy food and nutrition, childcare, and public and active transit is not only the human choice, but it is the only choice for the long term financial and social health of our city.

Lastly, we need to spend some money on our basic infrastructure. Well-maintained roads and sidewalks are necessary not only for a city in the 21st century, but also for a quality active or public transportation system.

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

Public services should be just that: public. Privatization, including P3s, cost governments money that in turn cost our residents more money. While it's really hard to reverse something that's already been done, if the opportunity presented itself I would be in favour of creating new or reclaiming former public services. One area in particular we need to look into is how contracts are distributed and carried out; I have a feeling there are some areas the city could do it better and cheaper.

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 cannot imagine the frustration ATU members have about their current reality, and I can barely fathom that it's been four years since they've had a contract. First and foremost, the City needs to get back to the table and be ready to talk. We need to demand better of our leadership to ensure workers are treated fairly, as they're entitled under the law! This shouldn't be a tall order, but some work needs to be done.

Saskatoon should be a leader in providing living wages to employees and residents. Part of that responsibility is ensuring contractors and others who provide service or support to

the City are being paid a living wage. Sometimes, that might mean paying a bit more for that service or support, but people deserve to be paid fairly for their labour.

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?

Any new policy or program in the City of Saskatoon needs to be operated under the principle of Housing First. Safe and affordable housing is the first step of many to healing for many members of our community, and it is the bedrock to providing stability in anyone's life. Investments must be made.

I have felt unsafe in my home while renting, and I know how housing impacts every aspect of a person's life. The city needs to advocate for amendments to the rental tenancy regulations in Saskatchewan. I suspect some people are being taken advantage of by both landlords and tenants, and the system that's in place does not provide a supportive environment to pursue claims.

We also need to start talking about how we can share power with our communities, and commit to more than simple 'consultation'. There have been many in the city that have tirelessly worked to increase community engagement and they must be applauded, but we need to continue pushing that envelope.

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

The City of Saskatoon could play a larger facilitative role in our economic development, and create spaces for ideas to converge. There is a lot of potential and exciting energy in Saskatoon, and we need to provide opportunities to actualize the outcomes of collaborations and new ideas. In particular, there is an active community of social entrepreneurship within Saskatoon and beyond, with well over 900 social enterprises in operation across the province.

Another part of creating an economically successful municipality is building a city where people want to live, work, and play. In many cities, economic development is tied to cultural development, and this is a path Saskatoon could follow. When the community is culturally rich and healthy, people and businesses will want to invest and operate business here.

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

Climate change is real and we need to consider how it will impact our community in the short and long-term. These are not issues unique to Saskatoon, and other municipalities and experts have innovative and financially viable ways to make a significant difference in our carbon emissions and how to adapt to our new reality. I believe strongly in evidence-based decision making where we look to experts for concrete solutions. I know we can

make a lot of headway in retrofitting existing buildings, investing in green energies like solar and wind, and supporting urban agriculture and permaculture. We also need to reduce the rate of our urban sprawl and grow smart instead of achieving growth for the sake of growth. This means investing in active and public transit, including basic infrastructure such as roads and sidewalks, and reviewing how council and administration makes decisions surrounding city planning.

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

Each of us has a responsibility to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. From events in the past month, it's clear that we need to have some tough but important conversations. We have a lot of work to do. As a non-Aboriginal Canadian I personally strive to be the best ally and listener I can, and this is where the City of Saskatoon needs to begin; we first need to learn to actively listen to our First Nations peoples and communities, and then we can explore how to share power.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission released a number of Calls to Action for different audiences, and there are a number directed specifically at municipal governments (e.g., 43, 47, 57, 75, and 77). We need to integrate these Calls to Action into everything we do, and recognize they are not endpoints, but instead stepping stones to a more respectful and equitable relationship with our First Nations peoples and communities.