

SLDC Questionnaire for City Council Candidates

*Responses from Mark Prebble, Candidate for Ward 6
City Councillor*



1. 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?

I support increased investments in the following public services:

- Better maintenance of Meewasin Valley Authority trails
- Further acceleration of street repair work
- Improved frequency of bus service
- Investments in an expanded bike lane program in the City
- Investing in better infrastructure to prevent flooding in areas of the city that now regularly flood during heavy rainfall events
- A renewed role for public libraries in our community as gathering places
- Increases to the number of neighbourhood parks and expansion of our urban forest
- Improved public options to support waste diversion (i.e. Public access to Recovery Park).

I support paying for the above-mentioned investments through levying property taxes.

I also support an expanded investment by Saskatoon Light and Power in electricity efficiency measures and in renewable energy development, particularly solar power. Saskatoon Light and Power would in turn purchase less fossil-fuel based electricity from SaskPower.

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

I do not support privatization of current services offered by the City of Saskatoon. I have observed a considerable amount of contracting out by City departments, often because existing staff capacity within departments is insufficient. There are opportunities to reduce this contracting out and instead establish more permanent positions at City Hall.

As an elected councillor, I will request an itemized list of all contracting out in the previous and current fiscal year, and will then meet with union representatives and with

city management to discuss where there are opportunities to reduce contracting out in favour of full-time City staff positions.

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 am strongly opposed to locking-out City of Saskatoon employees, as was done during the transit strike. I will be a supporter of fair collective bargaining processes. I will also promote the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

Technological change is an issue of concern and notice provisions are not always adequate. For instance, in the current collective agreement between the City of Saskatoon and CUPE and its Civic Employees Union Local No. 59, there is only a 3-month notice provision in advance of technological change that can result in a change in the employment status of city employees. This notice provision is insufficient. I will support increasing it.

I will also support increasing compassionate leave for City employees in the event of terminal illness or the death of an immediate family member.

Finally, I will be a strong supporter of actions that express appreciation for good work done by City staff.

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?

I believe the City has a central role to play in the provision of affordable housing in Saskatoon. This role should extend beyond financial investment and include the provision of land (as it does now) for affordable projects and incentivizing greater participation of market builders in the construction of quality, energy efficient, and creative affordable housing solutions. In recent years civic monies have been largely directed at supportive (i.e. capital funding for the Lighthouse) and entry-level housing (i.e. first-time buyer grant funding) forms. The City has also been central in supporting various other proponents, including service and faith-based groups, in becoming participants in local housing provision through the important funding of the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP). I support maintaining these efforts.

Our city's homelessness numbers continue to signal a need to provide additional shelter and supports for Saskatoon's most disadvantaged. I will advocate for partnerships in and increased support for assisted and supportive segments of the housing market.

I will also see that new affordable rental options are encouraged in partnership with Saskatchewan Housing Corporation through the provision of land for such developments. These homes should be ambitious in their energy efficiency targets given their tenure and the inherent opportunities for cost recovery through efficiency savings in the long term.

Special attention should be paid to providing homes for those with disabilities and seniors.

Emphasis in the provision of affordable housing in our city should also be placed on accessibility to services and locating it within established and walkable communities. Brownfield renewal (such as the Radiance co-housing site) projects and development in our core neighbourhood's vacant and under-utilized sites will not only satisfy sustainable growth objectives but social planning criteria through necessary access to core neighbourhood services and enhanced conditions for social inclusion.

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

Economic goals of strong local business, economic diversification, attracting investment and business competitiveness can and should be pursued in concert with goals of producing high quality employment opportunities (i.e. full-time, living wages), social sector growth, and environmental sustainability objectives.

I will seek to enhance the health of local business through stable business tax rates and community planning practices that cultivate highly walkable local business districts and where mixed use development is encouraged. Local business areas that are inviting to pedestrians as opposed to car-centric commercial districts are known to enjoy greater patronage and encourage spending. This has been the model of success for areas in Saskatoon such as 2nd Avenue, 20th Street and Broadway Avenue; areas where local business, arts and culture and social enterprise have flourished together.

Residential and commercial construction industries operate best when growth is modest, stable and predictable. This has been a long held position of the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders Association for ensuring quality of building, housing affordability and stable employment of our trades. As a land developer, the City of Saskatoon is uniquely positioned to influence the pace of new building and subdivision expansion and should seek to maintain balanced market conditions through development policy and control of new lot inventories.

The consistent application of smart growth planning principles will stand to benefit residential and business taxpayers alike. The city should seek to reward higher density construction, brownfield development and energy efficient projects through tax breaks. The advancement of net metering for businesses, expansion of renewable energy installations and district heating opportunities will also contribute to savings for Saskatoon business and to their long term competitiveness.

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

The key to Saskatoon becoming a low-carbon economy is to use energy and land more efficiently and to replace fossil-fuel based energy sources with renewable power sources such as wind and solar. Here are examples of measures I will promote:

- a) The City has the authority to adopt an energy efficiency code for new building construction, but has not done so. Nor has the provincial government. I will propose that City Council adopt R80 (Energy Star) as the official code for residential construction. This will significantly improve the energy efficiency of all new homes built in Saskatoon, save homeowner's money on their utility bills, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- b) I will be an advocate on Council for encouraging best practices in new commercial and institutional building design and energy efficiency. This will include changing new commercial building requirements to see the installation of water-saving faucets, toilets and fixtures in all new buildings.
- c) I will support policies aimed at accelerating the adoption of solar power in Saskatoon, including reducing building permit fees for solar installations and making it possible for residents and businesses to pay off the cost of solar installations via their property taxes (with the City assisting with the up-front capital cost of solar installs). Greenhouse gas emissions from solar installations are 1/17 those from coal-fired power.
- d) I support exploring expanded lighting automation in public spaces and installing LED street lights in all city neighbourhoods in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; LED street lighting is currently only installed in new neighbourhoods.

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

We have seen the success of reconciliation exercises grow in Saskatoon, however the challenges our Aboriginal neighbours face as a result of the decades of cultural genocide and systemic discrimination remain apparent today as they have ever been. Steps to promote reconciliation should include:

- a) The acknowledgement of the shared history between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents. This must be articulated in our schools and reflected in municipal policy. Only once we have mutual understanding can we move forward as a community.
- b) Rebuilding trust between our communities. Central to this will be the relationship with our Aboriginal communities and the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS). Our police leadership must continue its work to mend this relationship, contribute to the elimination of systemic discrimination, and seek inclusion of our most marginalized.
- c) Building capacity and cultivating conditions between the City, Province and Aboriginal communities for improved social outcomes of our urban Aboriginal populations. This will include collaborative work in housing, public health support, education, addictions and mental illness treatment, in the provision of access to proper food, and employment services. Particular attention should be paid to supporting Aboriginal youth.

I appreciate the opportunity to share some of the positions of our campaign and contribute to these important discussions. Thank you to SDLC for its ongoing work on such issues in our community.

Sincerely,

Mark Prebble

Candidate for Ward 6 City Councillor

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