



Candidate Name:	_____ Jeremy Zhao _____
Ward:	_____ Mayor _____
Website, if any:	_____ www.jeremyzhao.com _____
Contact name/number:	_____ 891-8650 _____

### 1. What are the top three issues facing the city?

The top three issues facing Calgarians are public transit, affordable housing, and taxation. These three issues constitute the basis of Calgary's current problems, and its current interests in municipal politics. A lack of people generally come out to vote because they do not see it as being important or related to their livelihoods. In this case, taxation is the biggest issue for any level of government because everyone must go through the process of taxation. Talk about taxation, and you get people interested into other topics. Affordable housing and public transit are also issues that are relevant and important to the average Calgarian.

### 2. Urban Sprawl and Housing

- a. Do you support the concept of extending Transit-Oriented Development throughout the city, including in established neighbourhoods generally and in your ward? What is your stance on the proposed development at Dalhousie Station (in Varsity)?

I am very much for the concept of extending Transit-Oriented Development. We need to build our city around our transit routes, not the other way around. By building transit routes and LRT lines in communities which are less affluent, this will help those who actually utilize the services. As for the development in Dalhousie, this development was essential because the community needs it and encourages more people to start using transit in the area. Building LRT lines beyond Dalhousie should be a secondary issue, because those communities are more affluent. We should be looking at the Southeast

and North LRT plans for the next 2 decades, as those lines will be crucial for established communities.

- b. Are we facing a housing crisis in Calgary? If so, what should be done about it? If you are an incumbent, what have you specifically done about this?

We are facing a housing crisis, and the best one currently is to a) work with developers and work on strategies such as linkage fees, inclusionary zoning, and bonus densities for developers who do participate in inclusionary zoning; b) using existing land that the city owns for affordable housing or buying land from the provincial government; c) expanding secondary suites, and d) working with local charities such as the Mustard Seed in order to find solutions to the problems.

- c. Do you support legalization of secondary suites in all existing neighbourhoods, subject only to reasonable safety concerns? Why or why not?

I support the legalization of these secondary suites once we have worked out the problems and concerns that communities may have. The key issues are noise and parking space, which need to be addressed. As much as NIMBYism is a major factor, we do have to recognize that everyone has a voice and their concerns need to be heard before moving on with a proposal. We as a city can find a solution to bring in more secondary suites while working with the community.

- d. Do you believe that urban sprawl is a problem for the city? If you believe it is a problem, what will you do to address it? (If you are an incumbent, what have you already specifically done?) If you don't see it as a problem, please explain why.

One of the major problems is that our current transit line and future plans encourage urban sprawl. These routes keep extending to the ends of the city without finding alternatives to build more housing or increase density in established communities. If transit is more readily available in denser, established communities, there is no need to keep building outward and making inefficient transit routes on the edges of the city. However, the reality is that Calgary will continue to grow and sprawl, so more rapid transit services need to

be in place for these communities, which can replace LRT lines and cost less.

### 3. Transportation

- a. Has the City been doing a good job of addressing transportation needs? What, if anything, would you do differently?

The City has done a decent job addressing transportation issues. The only problems so far are the lack of information leading up to road constructions, temporary bus stops, and the possible changes in routes for certain times of the year. With the labour shortage, the city needs to deal more professional with the transit union so that we do not lose the drivers we desperately need in this city. Investment into more rapid-transit routes instead of LRT lines will save money and allow for more flexible routes.

- b. How often do you use public transit? Bus, C-train, or both?

I use the public transit everyday, both bus and C-train, even during the campaign and I am going to and from school everyday during rush hour. At times, I do carpool with other classmates to get home.

- c. Does our current transit system meet the needs of the city? If not, how specifically would you improve it?

As indicated before, the current transit system is decent, but can be improved on. Another concern many residents have is whether or not a bus/LRT will be on time. We need a better coordination from Calgary Transit, and drivers need to understand that too. With the lack of snow removal last year, the city needs to clear routes that buses travel on to decrease delays. Some of the older buses that are still in operation cannot move uphill due to the lack of snow removal in more local communities.

- d. Are you in favour of the current strategic plan for transit? Why or why not? If not, what changes would you make?

The West LRT development can hopefully move forward as soon as possible. Plans for future development of the North and Southeast LRT should be looked at sooner and move forward sooner than the projected 2020-2024 timelines. A close look at what the current strategy plan envisions is needed in order to say whether or not I am in favour or not, so I do not have any additional comments.

- e. The City's current plan does not envision direct C-Train service to either the airport or Mount Royal College. Would you favour amending the plan to reach these two destinations (both within close distance of planned lines)? Why or why not?

These plans are currently not feasible given that most of our money is going towards other projects. Although planned lines are within close distances of these two main areas, it will be very hard to work out given how Calgary is very spread out. Implementing special lanes for rapid-transit for Mount Royal College and the airport would be a very easy and affordable way for the city to get people to these destinations. LRT lines are static, while rapid transit can be more flexible. If we can do further studies to try and incorporate those locations into the planned LRT lines, then I see no problem doing so and trying to find a workable solution towards this initiative.

- f. Are there other areas of the city that are underserved by transit? How would you address this?

On time service and more recruitment for operators. Buying new buses and LRTs is not a problem, but finding people to service them is, and the city needs to continue its efforts in finding people

to drive our citizens to and from work, school, and other activities. By being professional with unions and settling fair contracts, this will encourage drivers to stay and to put the best effort into their work.

#### **4. Vibrant and sustainable communities**

- a. What will you do to address homelessness and urban poverty in the city? (If you are an incumbent, what have you already specifically done?) If you don't see this as a problem, please explain why.

Homeless and poverty are very big issues that affect Calgarians because they can see it happening. The city needs to work with the local charities, because they are the ones who specialize and know the problems upfront. More spending towards these charities as opposed to government handling these issues would be optimal. As well, many of the people who are homeless do have a job, but not enough saved up for affordable housing. This is where the city can step in and make affordable housing one of its top priorities. Affordable housing units with a low down payment will help those who are homeless or below the poverty line.

- b. What is your stance on arts funding? Do you support the recent recommendations of the Calgary Arts Development Authority?

The arts funding in Calgary is weak, as we have only invested a little over \$3 per capita. In Toronto and Vancouver, the funding is much higher, and their arts scene is vibrant and well known. If we want to encourage the arts, then we need to invest more money, promote more businesses that support local artists, and promote more festivals to get people going. I am a pianist myself, and I understand there is an appreciation for the arts, but no appreciation for funding the arts or recognizing local artists. If all we have are a couple of festivals annually and a few places around Calgary that support artists, then Calgary cannot call itself a world-class city. Raising the spending to match Vancouver's and Toronto's will encourage more development and business in the arts.

- c. What is your stance on the city's curbside recycling plan? Would you extend the plan to include recycling of organics and plastics? Why or why not?

The current curbside recycling program was passed in haste due to how much citizens would have to pay. We need to look at making it free and optimizing the services. This can be achieved by looking at how the \$3.3 billion could be spent from the provincial governments. Instead of making more space for landfills, we need to look at extending the plan to recycle organics and plastics. This should have been done when the curbside recycling program was passed, but City Council has failed to address these crucial environmental needs. We are the last major municipality to pass such recycling program, and that itself is still a weak and unorganized program.

- d. What other environmental initiatives, if any, would you favour?

I would favour taking a stance on finding alternatives to incandescent lightbulbs by being a municipality in Alberta to take action. I also encourage more hybrid-environmentally friendly city vehicles. These vehicles may have a larger initial investment, but the long term economic and environmental benefits heavily outweigh our short-term funding. A move towards banning cosmetic pesticides would also save the environment, make for a healthier Calgary, and would save the city some money.

- e. What will you do to address crime and safety issues in Calgary? (If you are an incumbent, what have you already specifically done?) If you don't see this as a problem, please explain why.

Continuing our current funding and giving the resources needed to our police force is key in addressing crime and safety. The police department knows the ins and outs of the problems, not the city. We need to give them the flexibility and funding needed in order to help stop crime. We need to find the root problems, not just covering the visible problems in our City. As well, homelessness and poverty goes in hand in hand with many crimes, so we need to work on the homeless issue as soon as possible. We will be able to

rejuvenate our downtown core by helping the homeless get off the streets and prevent small crimes.

## 5. Taxes and Revenues

- a. Does the current system of funding municipal government largely through property taxes work well? If not, what changes would you recommend?

Property taxes should be capped if possible, and if not, these hikes should be lower than the inflation trend. Given Calgary's sudden growth, many of our property taxes have risen and will continue to rise. The city needs to address the problem that many families are on fixed incomes, and these incomes do not increase with inflation. A tax bracket system should be studied in order to ease property taxes for some. A tax bracket system based on income will ensure that low-middle class families do not have to deal with sudden increases in taxation on their fixed incomes.

- b. Is there enough money in the system currently to fund your priorities? If not, how will you fund them?

With the \$3.3 billion from the provincial government, Calgary has a lot of new money to spend. The spending should be based on priorities and with as little red tape as possible. We can look for more funding from the provincial government through oil and gas royalties. We could also look at revenue-neutral funding, in where cities will take more tax money than the province. As well, we can also be looking at more options from the federal government in terms of the gasoline tax that they are sharing with municipalities. Smart spending and limiting office budgets will also go a long way in saving taxpayers' money.

## 6. Political reform.

- a. Does the current system of campaign financing work well? If not, what changes would you favour?

I am against the current system because it gives incumbents an unfair advantage over all the other candidates. Campaign finances

should not be allowed to be carried over from previous elections; campaign donations can only start after the nomination day has closed; spending limit of \$100,000 for all candidates; any left over donations must be given back to the city or to a local charity. The candidates must be held accountable to all funds, and all of their expenses and incomes should be recorded regardless of the amount.

- b. In the absence of rules around disbursement of campaign surpluses, what will you do with any leftover funds?

Any leftover funds that I have left will be donated to a local charity. In my case though, I do not see any funds being leftover given I have an extremely small budget to work with.

- c. Are there any other structural reforms you would favour?

The ward system has caused some aldermen to overlook issues that pertain the whole city, and instead concentrate on just their ward. Perhaps a study should look into the ward system, and see if there needs to be aldermen elected that would look at the city at large rather than on a ward by ward basis.

7. **FOR INCUMBENTS ONLY:** What are your three major accomplishments this term? Of what are you most proud?