

ICC Survey – Alnoor Kassam Answers (candidate for Mayor)

1. YES

The affordable housing crisis can only be solved by putting more units of housing on the market. The easiest thing we can do to create more rental stock is to legalize secondary suites. This will add thousands of new rental units to the market without costing the city a cent.

Although the current Mayor took the affordable housing strings off the money the province has given Calgary, I would commit to spend 60 million a year from this money on affordable housing. While this would give the city enough money for roughly 3,000 units of affordable housing, I would work with developers to leverage it into at least 6,000 new units. While the City would not own all these units, this would give us badly needed affordable housing units.

I would also lobby the provincial government for inclusionary zoning, giving the City of Calgary the ability to set mandatory affordable housing targets for new developments.

2. YES

I am committed to the principles of the GO Plan. I would zone high density office and residential transit oriented development in order to create multiple cores. Given the massive sprawl that we've seen in Calgary in recent years, this is the only responsible course of action to take.

The City currently spends 60% of its infrastructure budget on roads and 40% on transit. As mayor, I would shift this ratio around and spend 60% on transit and 40% on roads. This would allow us to build the West LRT within three years and the South-East LRT within ten years, to support the Seton Employment Centre. Under my funding formula, we could also upgrade the existing line to 4 car trains by the end of 2010. This will ease the congestion problems that currently plague the C-Train a full 15 years ahead of the current plan.

The GO Plan also calls for regional employment areas. It is unfortunate that under Bronconnier they have developed as big box malls.

3. NO

While there are some problems with Market Value Assessment, it would be rash to completely change the system. That's not to say it can't be improved. I would

implement a Seniors Tax Deferral program, similar to the ones that have been successfully implemented in other Canadian cities. This would allow low income seniors to defer their property taxes up against the value of their house, allowing them to keep the homes they have lived in their entire lives.

I am also against the proposal for six new taxes Bronconnier asked the province for in March. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation estimates that these taxes would cost the average Calgary family \$911 a year, and it would tax everything from housing sales, to car registration, to Calgary Flames tickets. With an influx of money from the provincial and federal governments this is a blatant tax grab and unnecessary.

I am opposed to the \$96 a year recycling levy scheduled to be implemented in 2009. This will mean a 1% property tax increase for a house in Mount Royal but a 30% property tax increase for a house in Greenwood. This is unfair to low income Calgarians and must be stopped.

4. YES

On many important environmental issues, Calgary is years behind the rest of Canada. When we finally get curbside recycling, it will have been over 20 years after both Edmonton and Toronto. Similarly, we are now the largest city in Canada without a ban on unnecessary pesticides. My first environmental policy as Mayor would be to ban the use of unnecessary pesticides in Calgary. Pesticides harm our children, harm our pets, and harm our wildlife – over 125 cities in Canada have banned harmful pesticides, it's time for Calgary to join them.

We must think of the environment in all decisions. By employing smart growth strategies and building new communities at a minimum density of 12 units per acre, we can curb Calgary's out of control sprawl. By investing in transit, we can get cars off the roads, cutting down on emissions. By spending money on hockey arenas and cycling trails, we'll promote an active lifestyle. If cycling trails were better lit, separated from pedestrian trails, and a bike station with bike lockers and showers was built downtown, many Calgarians would take the opportunity to bicycle into work.

This spring, ENMAX quietly went ahead with plans to build a coal power plant and City Council did not lift a finger to stop them. This, after the current mayor promised to engage Calgarians on the future of ENMAX. As Mayor, I would require that ENMAX would preferentially buy zero carbon emission electricity.

It's time to Go Green!

5. YES

Unlike federal or provincial politics, there are virtually no rules to ensure that municipal politics is run in a fair and transparent fashion. Once elected, I would bring a transparency and accountability bylaw before council in an effort to clean up politics.

Under this bylaw, elected officials and members of Calgary's public commissions will need to register any property they own in a Real Estate Registry, in order to ensure that no one is in conflict of interest. A Municipal Ethics Commissioner would advise elected officials on these and other ethical issues. An ethics commissioner was proposed at the last council meeting and only Mayor Bronconnier and Alderman Burrows voted against it. It is unfortunate that the current Mayor does not see this as a priority.

An office of the Municipal Auditor General will be established. The Auditor General would submit conflict of interest reports and conduct audits to ensure programs deliver value for money, meet environmental and safety standards, and follow a fair tendering process.

I would bring in campaign finance laws to ensure that elections are open and that money isn't an obstacle to qualified individuals seeking elected office. A spending limit of 1\$ per enumerated voter will be imposed on all candidates during municipal election campaigns. To prevent undue influence, corporate and union donations to campaigns will be banned, and personal donations will be capped at \$5,000. All candidates must submit audited financial statements and war chests will not be allowed to be carried over from one campaign to the next.

It's time to clean up Calgary politics!