

Canadian Taxpayer's Federation Survey

Question 1

Council members are currently required to disclose their ownership in businesses and property within Winnipeg. Would you support expanding disclosure for council members to include ownership of all businesses or property worldwide?

Answer: **Yes**

Comment: As part of my pledge of restoring integrity in both elections and City Hall, I am committed to modernizing the Conflict of Interest Rules so that the reporting of financial relationships and holdings are worldwide and not just limited to our province's borders. In addition, I am also committed to creating a mandatory registry of the financial interests of the Mayor, Councillors and their immediate family members, including their assets, liabilities and real estate holdings.

Question 2

Would you support the creation of an informal freedom of information council committee to hear appeals from the public when the administration has refused to release city records?

Answer: **Yes**

Comment: Yes. One of my proposals has been to have the city post expenses and transactions online, so that the public can see just what is being spent on what. Transparency is key to any functioning democracy and the recent real estate audits demonstrate the need for such transparency. A significant component of restoring integrity back at City Hall involves reforming our elections financing rules to ensure that no individual can have undue influence. This is why I have taken the step of posting my campaign donors online to prove to Winnipeggers that I am serious about my commitments of having a more transparent City Hall.

Question 3

Property taxes have been increasing faster than inflation and wage growth. Would you table or support a bylaw capping property tax increases at inflation?

Answer: Yes. I have released two documents about improving the City's fiscal balance. In it I state that raising property taxes should only be done as a last resort, and that any increase would not exceed the yearly rate of inflation.

Question 4

Roads have been neglected as millions have been spent on nice to have projects (eg. Stadium, new museum, etc.) Would you support a four-year freeze on new spending for non-essential projects (eg. Art gallery expansion) so that road repair becomes a priority?

Answer: I think the City should be able to walk and chew gum at the same time.

Comment: We do need an emphasis on core infrastructure, and on September 14th I announced my plan to start closing the gap on our infrastructure deficit with a fully-funded \$250-million strategy to prevent and patch potholes and fix our worst streets. By using 12-million from a Land Value Tax I have proposed on surface parking lots blighting our downtown, we can finance an affordable 30-year bond at 2.7%, when infrastructure can return 16%. We would also fund preventive maintenance like much better snow clearing, and rapid-response pothole crews. Some “nice to have” projects could be delayed, but an out-freeze is not the way to achieve that.

Question 5

The city has been raising taxes while putting more money into its pension plans; which allow for city staff to retire in their early 50s. Meanwhile most taxpayers don't have a workplace pension. To be fair to taxpayers, would you start putting new employees in a less costly plan?

Answer: The city has only recently raised property taxes after more than a decade of tax freezes – though revenue continued to rise during that time. Kicking away the ladder for younger workers does not address the lack of workplace pensions in the private sector. However, I have called for a city-wide program review in order to find efficiencies, and I pledged that non-unionized middle and upper management making over \$80,000 a year would face a salary rollback of 5%. Any changes to pension plans need are a matter for negotiation.

Question 6

Do you support using managed competition (having both public and private sector employees bid for existing services) and gainsharing (sharing savings with employees that bring forward cost saving ideas) to reduce costs?

Answer: When it comes to contracting, many of my recommendations have been based on the critical need for transparency, accountability and planning. The power of public auditors (and transparency) can be restricted by a lack of authority to see a private company's books. Given the current dismal state of audits at City Hall, this inability to see transactions is just one major shortcoming for “managed competition”.

There are a whole series of reported reasons for cost overruns on projects: poor planning, poor workmanship, quite aside from issues of favoritism to political donors. Too many projects in Winnipeg are done poorly the first time, and then have to be repaired at full cost. We are paying for things twice: once to get it wrong, and once to get it right.

We need to “measure twice and cut once” - plan properly, and get it right the first time. We also need openness and transparency in bidding. I have proposed annual disclosure of the political donations of everyone who does business with the city, and establishing Integrity Certification that would prohibit companies who fail it from bidding on contracts.

I support gainsharing, and proposed it in my Fiscal Plan, Part 1.