



Colin Craig <ccraig@taxpayer.com>

Don Iveson survey responses

Ryan Kelly <ryan@doniveson.ca>
To: ccraig@taxpayer.com
Cc: Campaign Information <info@doniveson.ca>

Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at 12:45 PM

Hi Colin,

Hope you're having a great day.

Don asked that I send this note on his behalf - I understand today is the deadline for responses to your survey.

Regards,
Ryan

Dear Mr. Craig,

I would like to begin by thanking the Canadian Taxpayers Federation for the opportunity to address these topics and for your work of promoting transparency and responsible stewardship of tax dollars. I appreciate the opportunity to address the issues raised in your survey in long form.

To your first question about posting receipts, I must confess that I am not entirely convinced that it is an effective use of public resources to create an additional bureaucracy dedicated to posting all expense receipts on-line, but I am not entirely opposed to the notion since transparency trumps additional paperwork. However, the City already regularly publishes the nature and content of all elected official expenses and will provide the receipts if requested, which I believe achieves the outcome of transparency while minimizing bureaucracy.

With respect to the second set of questions around defined contribution pensions, members of Council have the option of participating in a modest defined contribution plan as it stands. As for changes to civic employees pension plans, that is a matter for negotiation with labour and it's simply not appropriate governance or labour relations process to prejudice the outcome of any such negotiations in a candidate survey.

On your third question regarding employee salaries, the same point about prejudicing negotiations from the previous paragraph applies. Having said that, it is relevant to note that the Alberta Weekly Earnings Index retreated 2.49% between September of 2015 and September of 2016. Furthermore, the contracted labour settlements have tended to track this index over time, bearing in mind a lag time (owing to the duration of the current contracts). Therefore, I will certainly be looking for labour settlements in the coming years that reflect the restraint we see in the overall labour market. By way of leadership, Council unanimously accepted both an automatic adjustment downward tied to the same Alberta Weekly Earnings Index, as well as a downward market adjustment recommended by our independent council compensation committee.

With respect to your question about a possible relationship between tax rates and the consumer price index, City Council has been quite consistent in our position that the consumer price index consists of a basket of goods that is quite different from that which our municipality purchases. We buy very few big screen TVs and virtually no groceries, but we consume a lot of labour and asphalt, commodities whose prices fluctuate at different rates. That said, in a more stable cost environment with lower labour cost pressure, and with large tax-supported programs like Neighbourhood Renewal reaching full levels of investment in 2018, I do predict tax increases much lower than we have seen over the last decade.

With respect to your fifth question about public art, I support our current policy. I believe investing in public spaces and dedicating a portion of project budgets to public art makes our city more attractive and appealing to residents and businesses. ATB Financial Chief Economist Todd Hirsch [recently remarked on the importance of a thriving arts and culture](#) presence in order for cities to be competitive and attract major global businesses, such as Amazon HQ2. I must

note, given the premise of the question, I am left curious as to what your organization would believe to be an appropriate unemployment rate at which our society ought to begin to value art again?

With respect to your sixth question about service levels and delivery methods, City Council directed administration to begin undertaking a comprehensive program and service level review in the final quarter of 2015. To date, administration has completed three pilot reviews that will inform the process going forward. This review has already improved efficiencies and reduced costs for the City and I anticipate this will continue as more programs and services are scrutinized and improved. Alternate delivery methods are always an option, but the first questions under review are relevance and effectiveness of the program or service itself.

On the seventh topic of proactive disclosure of campaign contributions, we have already done so as of nomination day. We did this in 2013 as well. We will also be releasing an updated list of donors before election day, again as we did in 2013. I think it is important that voters have the right to know who has contributed to my campaign before casting their ballot. [The nomination day list is available online.](#)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to your survey.

Don Iveson

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Ryan Kelly
Campaign Manager

C: [780-236-3627](tel:780-236-3627)