

Tish Prouse

Ward 7 Candidate

QUESTION 1: The City of Edmonton should take more action to make municipal land available for low-income affordable housing development (eg. surplus school land).

This is a dual problem that many people are not aware of. Affordable housing initiatives do not improve areas at all, and keep other investors and builders from wanting to work in the same area; they are, however, extremely profitable for the investors/developer, as they keep the revenues, while grant money funds most of their project. At the same time, most landlords, who rent places out, or buy apartment buildings, want to make a profit, or at least be able to cover their expenses, and this means rents are higher than many low-income people can afford credibly. Affordable housing in this town is not a land-use issue, it is a landlord issue, that has virtually been destroyed of all plausibility by the housing regulations that have gone overboard in their mandate, and closed down viable options for low-income people. I would love the opportunity to delve into this further outside of a survey, as this issue has big overlaps with other issues the city sees as incredibly important.

QUESTION 2: There is not enough subsidized housing in some neighbourhoods, and the City must ensure a better distribution in all neighbourhoods throughout Edmonton.

Stop stacking the inner city with these projects, if we want to revitalize these areas, because no one else wants to live or work near these residences! Yes, integration needs to be better handled within our city, but this is not a solution, making an area demographically homogenous on the low end. This philosophy will cost the city much more in lost tax revenue, increased calls on its emergency services (police and EMS), community initiatives to help people who use low-income housing, and alienate the populous from one another.

QUESTION 3: The City should seek to use zoning flexibility (on issues such as required parking spaces) to support the development of more affordable housing initiatives.

If we have zone flexibility, this has to be taken across the board, and we lose our ability to control other types of development. So, though I agree in some instances that regulations for affordable housing ought to have flexibility built into them regarding their location, size, amenities surrounding them, distance to essential services, etc., I'm not sure a zoning flexibility is the best way to make this happen. It sounds like it could create more problems than it would solve.

QUESTION 4: The City should commit funding to extend the Cornerstones Affordable Housing program.

Yes, yes, and a huge YES! Now, this, as well as other programs and review boards, needs to be ratified, but generally, when housing of this nature removes pressure from families to feed themselves and better take care of their member, as well as provides a place for homeless people to use, the city saves oodles of money in other areas. This is a fact that has been well-researched and well-documented in many other urban communities in North America. Our city is definitely stuck in a period of inaction on

this front, and it is greatly impeding the redevelopment of core areas, including my ward. So, I intend to be very vocal and active on this point if I am chosen to represent my ward, because proper handling of affordable housing has great dividends for the increased safety and desirability of the neighbourhoods in my ward.

QUESTION 5: The City should create a comprehensive plan to address the need for thousands of units of affordable housing in a comprehensive and coordinated way that includes attention to schools, public transportation, and community services.

Yes, see answer to the question number 4.

QUESTION 6: The City is doing a good job to end chronic homelessness through the current 10 Year Plan and the work of the Edmonton Homeless Commission.

No. We have good intentions, and there are smart people looking into the best ways to combat this problem, but I believe our starting point - our mission and core values - are not clear in this, and many other areas (I actually think that, between different initiatives, they are at odds, for example between sustainable development and attracting business).

QUESTION 7: The City must be more active in advocating with the provincial and federal governments for more funding and better policies on affordable housing.

Better policies, yes. More funding, I don't know. I know we waste a lot of money on initiatives, programs, and administration for things that just don't work, so throwing more money from another purse into the problem isn't going to make it better. On the other hand, I don't know the type of costs involved. I am sure we have more than enough money to take care of these programs ourselves, and we should also be passing on more infrastructure and emergency service costs onto developers, as part of their community contribution. And, I know the argument that many homeless people come from other areas of the province, and get stuck here, without any recourse for help aside from the municipality, when they ought to be supported from their local jurisdiction, but this just shuffles a factual problem onto a theoretical line of response, which will never benefit the people who are in need of stability in housing and in their families. So, it is really up to us, and us alone, to figure out how to best deal with affordable housing within the context and financial plan of our city.

QUESTION 8: The City must develop better ways to gather views of all residents about housing issues and not depend so significantly on input from community leagues and developers.

Well, frankly, that's what an election is for. But, when less than 30% of the electorate turns out to vote, I don't know how much more pressure one can apply to generate a response, except to go door-to-door and ask, then compile, and respond, which is an insane solution given our population. And, the same with community leagues: they are meant to represent the views of their members. Now, yeah, some people never get heard, but many others don't bother to try, and then are apt to criticize any initiative. So, in the context of affordable housing, well, in all city policy, really, I believe it is up to the councillors to relay regularly to their constituents with meetings, flyers, door-to-door knocking over the entire

length of their candidacy, because they are supposed to express the views of, and communicate the city's plans with, their constituents. I know I plan on doing this, and though it will be quite exhausting at first, definitely the best, and most cost-effective, way of ensuring all residents are included in the solution to fight poverty, poor-quality housing options, and homelessness.

QUESTION 9: Finally, you may provide any additional comments about any other aspects of housing and homelessness.

This is a really difficult with which to deal for me, because, as a landlord, I am caught between two lines of thought: use my rental property as an investment to take care of my family's needs and future, and have high rents, or use my rental property to improve the lives of the less fortunate, and keep rents low. It is the conflict of these two attitudes that results in our city's homelessness and affordable-housing issue as severe as it is, because landlords like myself want to use rental properties to cover their debts, expenses, and to finance a better lifestyle for their families. And, the cost of properties in our city, as well as the financial loans to purchase and operate them, are not at all in line with what they really cost (we have incredibly high real estate values for what we actually own and maintain) and make that figure quite unaffordable in rent for many people. So, this issue in our city needs to be addressed on an administrative level, within a re-structured guideline for landlords, because there is really very little incentive for a landlord to provide good quality housing for people of lower incomes without worrying about the state of their property, the long-term viability of their property, and the impact their tenants have on the surrounding community. I would love to talk more on this issue, as it is a deeply important one for our city in these economically affluent times.