

Solutions For A Growing Calgary
Gaz Qamar Campaign 2021
Candidate for City Council - Ward 1



2021 Municipal Election Policy Platform

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION

You faithfully pay your taxes, struggle to balance your family's monthly finances and follow a strategic plan so your family can prosper today and tomorrow. You expect this same behaviour from the people who run our city. But, are understandably frustrated that you are not seeing it.

Calgary is at a cross-roads, crying out for leadership and accountability and, ***Solutions for a Growing Calgary*** without a constant increase in taxes. It seems City Hall does not realize that the provincial and federal governments also have their hands in our pockets and it is becoming too much.

Typically Council candidates do not come out with detailed policy platforms. *Gaz Qamar* is not your typical candidate. *Gaz* wants you to know who she is and how she thinks. As we have seen at election time politicians have been all things to all people. *Gaz* knows that you will not agree with all her views and she has made it clear that no matter what, your views will always trump hers! In fact, *Gaz* will support a policy that reflects your wishes even if they are different than her own. *Gaz* understands that you are the employer and she is the employee. She also understands that this is a job interview and has provided his biographical information and now she is revealing her policy platform as well.

Gaz Qamar is the only candidate that has conducted a comprehensive survey and is the only candidate with a platform entirely based on your concerns. The policies in this document are a direct result of his 1.5 year long consultation with you.

Gaz's Solutions for a Growing Calgary may not reflect the concerns and desires of all *Calgarians*, but, they do reflect the issues that are of the utmost concern for *Ward 12*.

If you do not see any of your concerns answered in this document, please call *Gaz Qamar* at the campaign office at 403-720-1911 or email her directly at info@electGaz.ca and she will get back to you promptly.

TRANSPORTATION / TRAFFIC / INFRASTRUCTURE - Whether it be \$25 million dollar designer foot bridges to timing of traffic lights etc... your frustrations related to transportation, traffic and infrastructure was heard loud and clear. *Gaz* is still listening and she will continue to do so until the election and after. In the meantime She following are some of his solutions.

Calgarians spend far too much time in traffic and the frustration is growing. Here are some things that *Gaz* will fight for:

Work With Developers - Work with developers to build bridges and exits etc... at the same time or even before a community is developed, not after the fact. These things must be built correctly the first time so that expensive upgrades are not needed.

Green Line, LRT & City Transit – Many of you are a little frustrated that you see large buses at later hours or on *Sundays*. *Gaz*, like you, feels that we need to move towards smaller buses at these times. *Gaz* is for the Green Line. *Gaz* will work with newly elected Council Members to expedite the completion of the LRT. *Gaz* does feel that *Calgary Transit* plays a serious role in our city. This multi-role includes, but, is not limited to the following points:

Access - Transit helps move those who do not own motorized modes of transportation, can't transport themselves or wish to avoid the log jam called rush hour.

Environmental Concerns - There are those in *Calgary* who purposely travel in this public manner to reduce what they feel is their "*carbon foot print*". They also feel that reducing personal motorized modes of transportation will result in cleaner air and reduced noise.

Saves Money - I have spoken to some that have said with the ever increasing price of fuel and Insurance that public transit is giving them a better quality of life. Also, by not having a car they no longer have a regular maintenance cost and have used their saved money for family trips and wants and needs around their household.

Reduce Stress On The Public Purse - Many have communicated that the less cars on the road = less roads and maintenance for both the municipal and provincial levels of government and less of a demand on the taxpayer.

Exits - *Gaz* knows your frustration with *Calgary's* love affair with Full Diamond, Single Point Urban or Semi Clover Leaf turn offs. Like *Gaz* most of us had no idea what these turn offs were called until further research, nor do you care. You just want something that will work and move traffic a little quicker. The *Calgary* engineering department has been a major source of frustration. You do not care if we have Braid, Button Hook, Directional or Weaving exits, you just want an exit that is functional. *Gaz* will work with our Roads Department and other engineering firms to see how we can make things better. We can solve this problem and we can do it with *Calgary* companies!

ACCOUNTABILITY - *Gaz* believes democracy means more than just an election every 4 years. You are the Employer of all who work at City Hall and you are the Share Holder in the Corporation called the *City of Calgary*.

Again, based on your concerns in *Gaz's* survey here are some of her solutions that will help make City Hall more accountable.

Municipal Taxpayer Protection Act – This requires a change to the Municipal Act or an agreement on Council. This Act will cover aspects of governing at City Hall and are as follows:

Taxes Must Be Approved - Council will be only be able to raise taxes without permission according to inflation. If City Council wishes to raise taxes beyond inflation they must ask you on the ballot.

Expenditures Must Be Approved - All major items must be put on the ballot for approval. E.G. The Airport Tunnel was a big issue and required tax dollars and it is expenditures such as this that *Gaz* would like to see on the ballot.

Term Limits – *Gaz* believes in Term Limits and is the only candidate in Ward 1 that does. Term limits will not only encourage politicians to work harder to achieve the objectives they ran on to get elected, but, it will also allow a changing of the guard and bring new ideas on a

regular interval at City Hall. *Gaz* is committed and very serious about this policy.

Two Terms Only – *Gaz* is committed to only serving two terms and then She will step down as the *Councillor* in *Ward 1* after serving her second term. *Gaz* will aggressively work toward seeing the *Municipal Act* amended to ensure term limits become the norm for politicians at the municipal level.

Councillors & Mayor Must Serve Full Terms - *Gaz* is also committed to representing his constituents for the full mandate she was elected. No Councillor or the Mayor will be allowed to seek another level of government while in office at City Hall. The voters trust that the position will be respected. *Gaz* will not seek a nomination or another level of office that will conflict with his term of service and will push for changes to the *Municipal Act* to change this as well.

Council Oversight – Council needs to demand that administration produces a Quarterly Variance Analysis to keep them abreast of the execution of the budget.

Councillor Pledge – *Gaz* has already proven She will listen to you at the doors, with the survey and has answered every legitimate inquiry throughout this campaign. However, *Gaz* is pledging that She will do the following if she is hired as your employee: *Gaz* will personally return all calls to the City Hall office for his Ward. *Gaz* will personally return all e-mails to the City Hall office for his Ward. *Gaz* will not vote on major issues without consulting the ward. *Gaz* will have monthly meetings in the ward to gauge your views. *Gaz* will door-knock the doors of his constituents throughout the term and not just at election time.

TRANSPARENCY – We continue to see companies getting contracts without bids and denials from *Councillors*. We need to change the environment at City Hall and *Gaz* feels that the following policies are a step in the right direction:

All Contracts Must Be Bid On – If there is public money involved, then we need to get value for dollar and the process must be open to all *Calgarians*.

Calgary Companies To Be Favoured – Although, the process will be open and transparent, if bids are similar in nature, the victor of the bid will be the *Calgary* company.

Contracts Will Be Published – Any contracts over \$25,000 will be available for review on the city website.

Reduction of In-Camera meetings – In-Camera is a tricky legal term meaning “in private”. We need to be able to monitor what is going on as taxpayers.

Clear Reporting – *Calgary* is far from being broke. *Calgary* has amassed large amounts in reserve funds and surpluses that they have been subsequently using for political legacies. For example the 2020 annual report shows the following: **Reserves** \$2,743,827,000 and the **Accumulated Surplus** is \$21,817,531,000. A more detailed explanation on how to read Municipal Finances can be found on this audio interview <https://omny.fm/shows/danielle-smith/calgarys-annual-report-for-2019>

COST CONTROL

Organizational Review – Conducting a detailed review of all departments and expenditures to eliminate waste, duplication, and unnecessary red tape. This should be done at least at the end or beginning of every election cycle as there are always new ways to do things more effectively and inexpensively.

Outsourcing – Studies throughout any modern democracy have shown that when jobs are outsourced to the private sector they are done much more quickly and much less expensive. We need to look at this for many of the jobs currently managed by the *City of Calgary*.

Zero-Based Budgeting – This budgeting reviews every department function in a comprehensive manner and all expenditures must be approved, rather than only increases. *Zero-Based Budgeting* requires the budget request be justified in complete detail by each division manager starting from the zero-base. The current use of the so called Zero Base Review has been a smoke screen to hide the true costs of services at City Hall. *Gaz* proposes a Zero Based Budget. This would allow a complete review of services on a yearly basis and any surplus resulting from savings (after a portion is being placed into reserves for contingencies) be returned to taxpayers immediately in the following year. See <http://www.tSheipsa.org/articles/City-Budgets.pdf>

Elimination of the Art Budget - *Gaz* will push for an elimination of the Art budget which is 1% of the total 4 Billion budget.

Tenders & Public Bids – *Gaz* will ensure that contracts are no longer in the hands of one company and that all tender, and bids are available on the city website along with the rationale for awarding the contract.

Eliminate Sole sourced Contracting – We need competitive bids.

Consolidate the Pensions – City Council should not have two pensions.

Public / Private Task Force - We need to look at outsourcing and other means to reduce expenditures at City Hall and Public / Private Partnerships are a good option to review. These partnerships describe a government service or private business venture which is funded and operated through a partnership of government and one or more private sector companies. These partnerships are sometimes referred to as *PPP, P3* etc... at other levels of government. By creating a task force made up of *Councillors*, bureaucrats and the private sector. We can find ***Solutions for a Growing Calgary*** .

JOBS / ECONOMY & SUSTAINABILITY - Unfortunately, many who have served on City Council have no business experience, have never created jobs and seem to focus on philosophy rather than real life experience. *Gaz* has been an owner of several successful businesses in *Calgary*. *Gaz* has employed our mothers, fathers, daughters and sons for years. *Gaz* has heard your concerns and the following are some of his solutions:

Reduce Red Tape – *Gaz* has always said what many entrepreneurs do “*government seems to cut red tape length wise, rather than in half*” The small business sector is important to *Calgary* and we need to make it easier for them to succeed. *Gaz* will create a *Cut Red Tape*

Committee with input from Ward 1.

Work With Industry Groups – We need to find a balance in the building and developing community and must work hand-in-hand with groups like *BILD*, *Canadian Federation of Independent Business*, *Chamber of Commerce*, *Canadian Taxpayer's Federation Common Sense Calgary*, *Save Calgary* and the *Progressive Group for Independent Business*.

Calgary Economic Development (CED) – Council must make better use of the *Calgary Economic Development* to develop policy which puts small business and mid sized business at the centre of our development strategy. Further the *CED* must be more accountable and transparent in their business practices since they are funded by taxpayers and business while they promote *Calgary* to the external world.

TAXATION / A MORE BUSINESS FRIENDLY COUNCIL - *Gaz* knows that taxes can in the interim be reduced and if taxes ever do rise in must only be according to inflation. If they do you will have a say see *Gaz's Municipal Taxpayer Protection Act*.

Residential Property Taxes – Your taxes have went up on your home dramatically over the past decade. Reforming the property tax system is critical and tax decreases are indeed possible. The current broken model has pitted homeowners and businesses and suburbs against the city centre. The current Market Value Assessment process is flawed and at the request of the Minister of Municipal Affairs a report was prepared and submitted. This report can be seen at <http://www.tSheipsa.org/articles/Alberta-Property-Tax-Review-August-2020.pdf>

Seniors Tax Break - *Gaz* will work with the Province to remove the Education portion on residential property taxes for Seniors 65 and over. This will allow Seniors to stay in their homes. These people have already paid for two generations of students.

Non Residential Property Taxes – We need a complete review of the non residential tax burden. *Gaz* is the only candidate that has talked to companies that have left Calgary and the common refrain is that the non residential property taxes are out of control. Our local pubs are spending \$10,000 - \$30,000 per month in Non Residential property taxes alone before they even meet payroll. Whether it is paid directly or through their rent they pay both of these taxes and consumers end up stuck paying these taxes through increased prices on services and products.

Oppose New Taxes - Although you may not have heard of this in the media but our current City Councillor Ward Sutherland (who supports Sonya Sharp) voted to explore the following taxes: Alcoholic Beverage Tax, Entertainment Tax, Amusement Tax, Motor Vehicle Ownership Tax, Municipal Income Tax, Fuel Tax, Land Transfer Tax, Insurance Tax, Sales Tax, Tourist Tax, Home Business Tax, Bill Board Tax and many more. Evan even said on a recent debate that She is in favour of increased taxes.

CRIME & THE CALGARY POLICE SERVICE

Budget Support – *Gaz* like any conservative is in full support of ensuring the *Calgary Police Service* has all that they need to fight crime in our ever changing society. *Gaz* believes in providing a stable and steady budget. *Gaz* does NOT support Defunding the Police like some of her opponents.

Deployment Audit – By conducting a *Deployment Audit* this will allow us to determine how much time officers are spending behind a desk doing paper work and how much time they are spending out on the front lines fighting crime. If we need more secretaries to help in paper work, then we will hire more secretaries. *Gaz* supports the *Calgary Police Service* and feels sincerely this will allow them to do the job they signed up for.

Ticket Writing – *Gaz* believes *By Law Officers* should be writing tickets for speeding etc... This will free up our *Calgary Police Service* away from this task and have their highly skilled training put to good use. We need our officers combating actual crime in all areas of our *Calgary*, including our *C-Train* stations. If we want people to take public transit we need to create an environment where they feel safe to do so. Again, this will also need a change from the provincial level of government.

Intergovernmental Co-Operation - *Gaz* will advocate legislation and work with the provincial and federal levels of government to get tough on crime. With *Gaz's* ideas we can free up our *Police Service* to address the issues of gangs, graffiti, domestic violence, drugs, vandalism and other crimes that are ever increasing in *Calgary*.

OTHER ISSUES - There were many issues that we heard about and here is a few more:

Snow Clearing – We need to improve how we clear snow in *Calgary* and not just continually rely on *Chinooks*. Here are some suggestions made by you at the door that *Gaz* will push for: A re-evaluation of what *Roads Calgary* defines as “*passable*” when it comes to snow clearing. Look at Outsourcing of snow clearing to the private sector. Possible rotation of parking on alternate nights to one side of the street to allow snow clearing on the other side. Allow the use for citizens who have access to snow clearing equipment to help on a volunteer basis if they so choose.

Aging Urban Forest – We need to remove the dying trees and replace the ones that have been removed.

EMS – I oppose the current structure that the province has in relation to EMS and their centralization. We need a *Calgary* focus which will improve response times for our citizens.

Fire Fighters – I support the hour shifts that the *Calgary Fire Fighters* have requested over the new format *Nenshi* and crew have forced upon them. Our front line needs to be respected and cared for. *Gaz* believes the Fire Fighters know better what works for them and *Gaz* will push to restore removed funding from our department.