

Mike Russnak Ward 12 Responses

PACE Arts Vote 2017 Questionnaire

As in previous municipal elections in Edmonton, the Professional Arts Coalition of Edmonton (PACE) is conducting the ArtsVote 2017 campaign. This means we are doing our best to ensure that support for Arts and Culture in Edmonton is a feature of public discussion during this campaign.

To that end, we are asking all candidates in the municipal election to respond to this short questionnaire and to send your responses to admin@pacedmonton.com. We will post your responses on the PACE website as they are received.

1. Do you feel the city does enough to encourage and support an active arts sector?

Overall, yes I do.

2. What would you change in the city's current approach?

I'm unclear on the City's current approach. If you are asking me if I support funding for projects like the Talus Dome constructed by Los Angeles artists— absolutely not. That money should have gone to local artists. We should support local artists through installation of their pieces in our public spaces.

3. Do you support the city's purchase and display of public art through the Percent for Art program (this provides 1% of the construction budget of publicly accessible buildings in Edmonton to buying public art)? If not, please explain why not.

Yes, if it's restricted to 1% of the budget amount and the single largest purchase is restricted to 25% of the total available budget for that project.

4. Appropriate facilities to support Edmonton's arts and culture industries are critical to our city's growth and development in this area. The creation of specific districts to support certain kinds of Arts, such as music districts, has been adopted in some cities to foster growth of cultural industries. How would you propose supporting the creation of dedicated arts districts?

I love the Whyte Avenue Art Walk and the vibrancy that it brings to the area. The Gallery Walks are outstanding and really help to market the 124 Street Gallery District. On the music side it's really a challenge, Strathcona is a natural with Blues on Whyte, the Yardbird Suite, Cook County, New City Legion and others. The concern I have is taking away business from the Downtown area and WEM which all have great venues. Churches and local halls have also played a vital role in offering venues for local choirs.

5. In the province's current economic situation, the city's resources are stretched. In this climate, how important is it for the city to financially support new arts facilities and activities?

In my view, Edmonton already has a thriving arts scene, with many venues. At this point, I don't believe the City needs to invest in more dedicated spaces for the arts.

6. Beyond the scope of the questions above, do you have other thoughts as to how you would continue to enhance arts and culture in our city?

We need a few more areas where we can setup Art Walks during the summer months. Closing a few city streets and allowing this to happen isn't a big issue – Halifax and Austin already do this.

7. What would you advocate to ensure that training in Fine Arts – music, dance, theatre, visual arts – is an integral part of the education of young Edmontonians?

Between music, art and drama programs in schools, plus Edmonton's many non-profit groups and foundations for arts, there are many programs available for all ages. The biggest challenge I see is finding information on all of these programs in one place. I would advocate for a website to aggregate all of this information in one place to make it easier for Edmontonians to find the program that is right for them and their families.

8. What do you think it would take to make Edmonton a world class city?

I don't like the term world class city. It creates an environment where we make choices based on what we want the rest of Canada and the world to think of us, rather than making decisions based on what is best for Edmontonians. Furthermore, the statement says that we aren't enough; we aren't as good as these other, unnamed places. I disagree. Let's be proud of Edmonton. Let's embrace our city and do better for each other and ourselves.

9. What role do you see local Arts playing in helping to make Edmonton a world class city?

As above, I put little emphasis on what the rest of the world thinks of us. I'd rather focus on the teaching of the arts to all; from young to old. To give all people the opportunity to express themselves in a creative way and to share their art with our city.

10. The city of Edmonton has upported such international sporting events as Festival International des Sports Extremes (FISE), ITU World Triathlon and the Tour of Alberta to place Edmonton on the national and world stage. Would you favour similarly supporting, pursuing and creating major national and international Arts showcases that would put Edmonton on the world stage as a centre of Arts and Culture?

Absolutely. We could also look at expanding some of Edmonton's marquee events, including the Edmonton International Fringe Festival, Edmonton International Street Performers Festival and Edmonton Folk Music Festival.