

Interviews

Purves

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It was raining when Martin Schug (intrepid photographer) and I (intrepid reporter) rolled into Cec Purves' campaign office, on time, only to find our interview was now moved to the mayor's office. Parking at a meter outside city hall, which incidentally aren't as expensive as the meters around the University, we hastened to make our appointment with the mayor only slightly late. When we finally got to see the man, after waiting a further fifteen minutes in his expensively decorated but chairless lobby, he was friendly and courteous, though somewhat pressed for time. This was just as well because the meter was running out. Keep in mind while you are reading this interview that when Purves says "you" he usually means "we".

Gateway: What do you consider to be the paramount financial priorities of the City of Edmonton?

Purves: Coming in this 1984, the paramount concern we have is keeping taxes down with no increases and that is something which has to be done.

Gateway: What do you think a University education should include and what do you perceive it do be?

Purves: Having never gone to University - I don't know.

Gateway: OK, then. As a person who has never gone to University, what do you think the University should be striving for in the education of students?

Purves: First-off, you're striving for excellency... I think that there has to be more of a realism about what the real world is about. I would like to see more of the University in the community, working on the basis that you're spending so much time at University - and spending so much time with practical work.

Gateway: U of A students often complain the transit system is inadequate, especially during evening hours. Do you see this as a problem, or is this something we're just going to have to live with?

Purves: We have a 50 million dollar per year debt in our transit system. The question is, to what degree of service do you give? When you're in the position with thousands unemployed, you can't expect them to be paying more because they just don't have the dollars.

Gateway: What about the proposed expansion of the LRT to the University?

Purves: As you know, we have committed the dollars for the extension of the LRT into that area. Nothing is going to happen with the LRT unless we get the money from the provincial government, because we simply don't have the dollars to do it.

Gateway: What do you think about channelling more money into youth related events such as Jazz-City, Summerfest, and the Edmonton Folk Festival?

Purves: This city puts more money into those kinds of things than any other city in Canada. I don't see any expansion of these services because the dollars simply aren't there.

Gateway: Your policy on the river valley development issue is quite different from mayoral candidate Laurence Decore's. Could you explain the difference?

Purves: Yep, quite simply. He believes we should allow higher density in the river valley and I believe there should be none - period. For fifty years now, people have been protecting the river. What would Calgary do today if they could go back 50 years, and not have all this housing, but have park instead? They would have a beautiful city, but they allowed it to go. I've lived in that river valley for most of my life, and my parents still live down there. My good friend (Decore) has suggested that what we are going to do is have a nice blending of higher density and waterways. I don't know what he means, to be quite frank with you. I have enough experience with developers in this city to know that when you open the door for higher density, you say that here is the crack, and all of a sudden it's wide open and who knows what will happen in the future?

The second reason is that if you're going to develop this downtown and continue to develop the heart of the city... the river valley is a natural area for them to have their parking. It (Decore's policy) doesn't make sense to me.

Gateway: Who, if anybody, will lose if Edmonton supports both a revitalized downtown core and the West Edmonton mall project?

Purves: Nobody. What you're talking about is marketplace and marketplace will determine what will happen. The downtown core will only die if the people downtown let it die. What we have to do is get more people living downtown, higher density, and that will happen when the marketplace is right. 65,000 people a day come downtown to work and the merchants have that built in. There isn't a mall around the city that has that sort of built-in market. They've admitted that they haven't done the marketing, and that they haven't worked together as a group.

Gateway: What about the smaller malls?

Purves: Many people don't always want a great big mall, the smaller malls are nice, convenient shopping areas. Interesting thing is that we keep looking at the West-End mall, but every other mall has also expanded - Londonderry, Southgate - and Heritage was just built. You have a huge expansion in that sector of the marketplace - maybe an overexpansion, but the marketplace has to decide that, not the government.



PHOTOS COURTESY THE COMMITTEE TO ELECT JIM WIEBE FOR MAYOR.

Interview
 with
 Cec Purves
 by
 Ken Lenz

Gateway: Will you have to increase taxes even more in 1985 to make up for the tax freeze in 1984?

Purves: With the way the economy is at the present time, no-one knows for sure what the economy will be like in 85-86. If the economy turns around in 1985, as a lot of people are predicting, then we may be in a different position. If it does not change then our people are not going to be in a position to pay any more taxes no matter when. In other words we will have to freeze the level of services that we give... maintain what we think are minimal... I think it's immoral that governments have the right to increase taxes when everyone else has to cut back.

Gateway: What do you have to offer for University students?

Purves: No one in this office offers anything to University students, I don't care who it is. You represent the city as a whole.

Gateway: What do you think the city's relationship to the University is or should be?

Purves: We provide services to the University as we provide services to elsewhere. One area that in my opinion needs to be beefed up is the relationship of the University with the business community. Businesses should have more of an understanding to what the University has to offer - how it can become part of the community itself. People coming through the system can't be isolated with raw research, it has to have an application afterwards. If research worked more closely with business the application of research would be much easier. Then, of course, people going into University would also have a better knowledge of what the marketplace has to offer.