

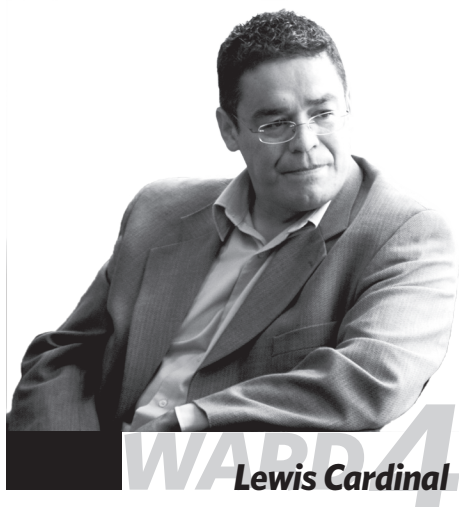
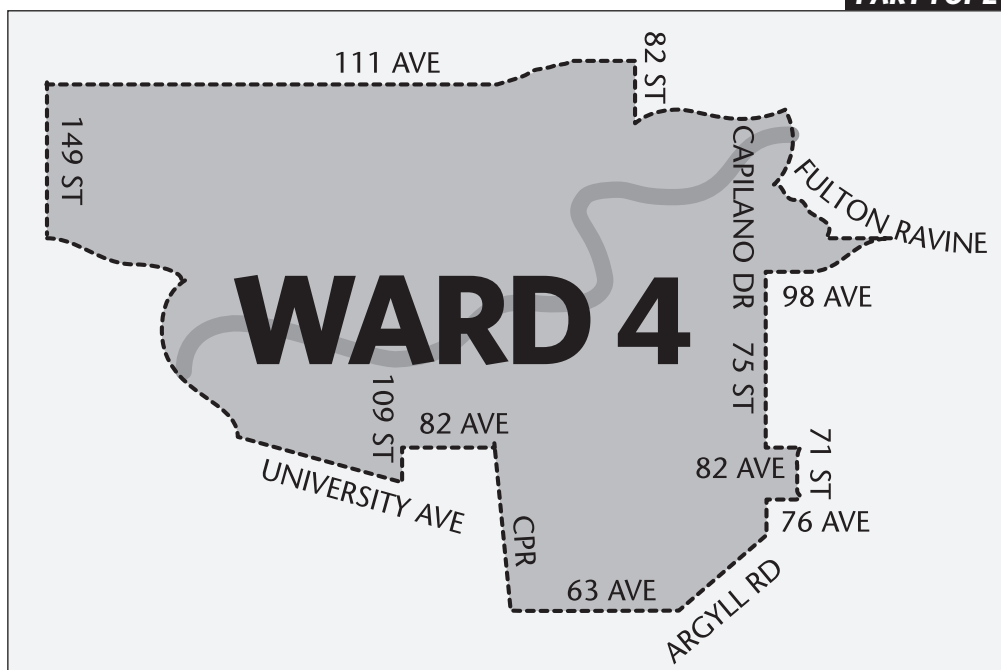
Councillor Forum

PART 1 OF 2

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER, AND AS VOTERS GET READY TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS, THE GATEWAY SITS DOWN WITH SOME OF THE FRONTRUNNERS IN WARDS 4 and 5—where the majority of students live—to find out why each believes they are the candidate you should be voting for.

Today we tackle Ward 4—the U of A's home riding—and by far the most demographically diverse ward in terms of candidates. In addition to the university, Ward 4 encompasses Grant MacEwan College, downtown and Old Strathcona. As such, student issues feature prominently in the platforms of the candidates in the area. Additionally, many of the candidates, including the frontrunners we interviewed, have strong ties to the U of A, in particular.

COMPILED BY BRENDAN COX, JONN KMECH, VICTOR VARGAS, AND TOM WAGNER
PHOTOS BY RUTH MCGAFFIGAN, MIKE OTTO, ALYSSA SHARRIF, AND TARA STIEGLITZ



Lewis Cardinal

Director of the Office of Native Student Services at the U of A from 1999-2005, Lewis Cardinal is well-known throughout the country for his work in addressing Aboriginal issues. His work has earned him audiences with the Dalai Lama, Kofi Annan, and the Queen, among others.

How do you plan on representing students in your ward?

I have a long history of working with postsecondary students, so naturally I have a commitment to them.

What postsecondary issues do you consider to be most pertinent?

The debt load of students is a quite pertinent issue that limits their participation, and I believe that providing affordable housing is primary to supporting the success of students.

What can be done to alleviate housing costs in Edmonton?

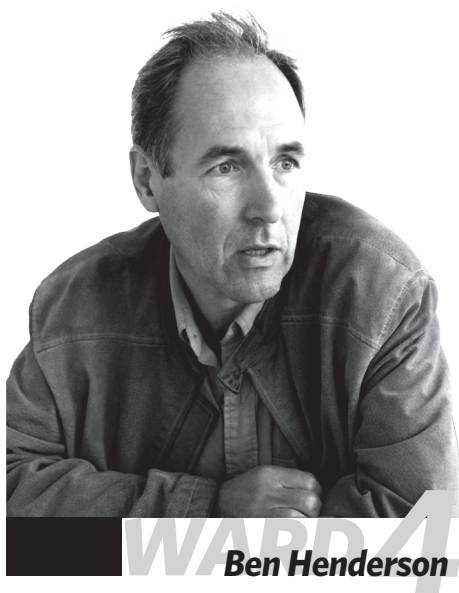
I think we have issues of affordability. My experience with postsecondary students is that they're not too far away from the street, and that has a direct effect on how successful they can be. We need to challenge other levels of government to provide affordable housing

What can be done to make campus more accessible in terms of transportation?

We need bus routes and transit systems that work. The expansion of the LRT is something that I support, but that is more long-term. Now we have the U-Pass, which is a good thing, but its success is affected by the fact that we don't have enough buses, especially during the peak service hours.

Write a haiku on why you are the right candidate to represent student interests.

In the time of change
Brings us all to work in peace
I hope to see you



Ben Henderson

Politics runs in the family for Ben Henderson, who is making his third run for City Council. Henderson's wife Laurie Blakeman is the MLA (LIB) for Edmonton-Centre. Henderson has a long-standing theatre background in the Festival City, having served as artistic director for Theatre Network and Nexus Theatre over the years.

How do you plan on representing students in your ward?

I think there is a number of things that are really quite important right now for students. I think public transit is one of them, and that's something I've been a big proponent of for many years. I think we need to really recommit in this city—a real focus to public transit as opposed to continually falling behind in the city. I mean for me, I bike; I don't even bring a car up here anymore, and I think it's in part because we have made some of the right choices. We've said we can't deal with traffic on a campus like this, and therefore we've created disincentives for people doing that. But if we are going to do those disincentives, we have to make sure there's really good service in other ways that actually works for people.

The other issue that I'm hearing is becoming a real crunch for students, which has always been a problem but it obviously has become substantially worse than last year, is the availability of housing and the availability to sort of live cheaply. One of the things that upsets me about where we got ourselves for students is that it has become so expensive to go to school now that you're almost forced into a situation where[...]you are forced into [having] some kind of income. And that seems to really undermine what university should be about when you have to focus that way. And I'm really [...]quite offended about how much it costs to go to school now. And if [there's] something on the municipal level we can do about [it], around the questions of housing, we should do that.

What postsecondary issues do you consider to be the most pertinent?

Two things, I guess, from a postsecondary point of view: it's partly about making it easy and pos-

sible to go to school; about being welcoming. It's about integrating our educational institutions into the culture of the city and vice-versa, and finding ways in which those things can go together.

I think there are some issues around how we plan our postsecondary institutions—this has created clashes with communities and neighbourhoods that are maybe less critical to the student body but are of real interest [to how] the city grows and changes and how the university fits into the city.

Some of the issues with this campus [are] with Garneau and the pressures that have been put on to do substantial rebuilding there and take down what is becoming, sadly, a unique neighborhood in the city, in terms of some of the houses that have been built there and when they were built. I think there are some things about how we can integrate into the University communities that we can do a lot better, and I think that the only way we can do that is by having a really good conversation between the City and the University.

What can be done to alleviate housing costs in Edmonton?

I think there are a number of things. The easiest one to have done in the short term, to deal with a very short-term problem unfortunately, has been taken off the table by the provincial government—because the easiest solution would have been rent controls. The City does not have the power to do that; that's something we have to battle out with the Province, but I think we should keep on arguing for it. And I don't think I would ever argue for rent controls as a long-term solution, but I think we got ourselves into a very severe short-term crunch.

I think there is, perhaps, a little bit that can be done by loosening up the regulations around secondary suites. But I'm not convinced that it's going to be as much of the magic-wand solution people think. I think the major reason for looking at that is not because we are going to see new suites come on the table, but because we can take a lot of the unofficial suites and make sure they are safe for people and make sure they work. I don't know if a lot of people will add stuff, but at least we can

make sure what is on the market and available to people is safe.

It's not that rental accommodation isn't being built in the city: all of these condos that are going up are being bought for investment and then being rented. But we are not talking about the \$500-600 a week suite—we are talking about something significantly more expensive than that. So there is that real lack of lower-costs rental units in the city. And in the long term, we are not going to solve that problem until we get more of that stuff on the market, and no one is building it right now, so we have to find some incentives to get it built.

What can be done to make campus more accessible in terms of transportation?

Well I think what we need is a better transportation system all over. I mean, I think what we've done is make it more expensive and less usable. I think it's about making our transportation system so it actually [is] moving faster than getting in your car. I think that means a commitment towards LRT; I think that means a commitment to bus-driver transit, which is a cheaper way of getting to a kind of LRT-like service.

But I think it's also about looking at our regular routes and seeing if they are really serving people, and I think that has an awful lot to do with how we schedule as well. So when a bus is coming every half-hour, are people actually getting on that? Will people see it as a useful enough service that they can make it work? Are they going to take a bus in the beginning of the day if they are scared that, if they work late, or stay on campus late, or if their hours don't match, they aren't going to be able to get a bus home?

There are a lot of things that are going to take money—no question about it—but I'd rather spend it there than on widening roads, which are not really going to solve our problems.

Write a haiku on why you are the right candidate to represent student interests.

When once a student
One is always a student
Never to forget

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