



Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge
2021 Municipal Election
Arts Survey: Candidate Response

Candidate: Dale Leier

1. What is your vision for the arts sector within the City of Lethbridge?

I envision an arts sector that is driven to meet the needs of the community with programs supported by patrons, supporters and attendees. I get very concerned when governments get involved with social affairs involving freedom of expression due the risks of things such as funding cuts or restrictions on activities they may not agree with. By ensuring an independent and self-funded arts sector we can be assured of independency, vibrancy and relevance in direct response to the interest level. Meanwhile, by keeping taxes lower, this leaves more money in the hands of consumers to choose the art forms and providers they prefer.

2. What do you believe are the benefits of investing in the arts and how do you view the role of City of Lethbridge in arts investment.

The benefits of investing in the arts are very difficult to measure and vary so widely from one person to another as to render a consensus virtually impossible. At this time the City is being challenge to align the needs of the community with regards to essential services such as policing, transportation, affordable housing and homelessness in the face of high property taxes. The idea has been put forward that investing in the arts helps to attract the right kind of people to our community. However, I am not aware of any data correlating funding for the arts with any such anticipated benefits. Therefore, unless a economic return on investment can be calculated, then it may be more appropriate to call this type of support "spending". Taken all together, it would be very difficult to justify additional spending for things like arts until we can get these other necessities under control.

3. Please share your thoughts on public art and its role in our community.

I regret to advise my interest in public art is limited to architecture and it's valuable role in making our community attractive and liveable.

4. Lethbridge City Council has demonstrated their commitment to building a performing arts centre in their recent Capital Improvement Program. Do you support this commitment and if is so what is your proposed strategy for completing the project?

Unfortunately I do not support the construction of a performing arts centre at this time. Once we have more critical issues addressed then certainly we should revisit the issue. However, Lethbridge is still too small to afford subsidizing a combined \$10 million in annual operating losses from both the Yates and a PAC. As an interim measure, it would seem upgrading the Enmax Arena would be a reasonable stop gap.

Note: Many people compare the Lethbridge situation with Medicine Hat while overlooking the fact that city have no aversion to tapping the vast natural gas resources they are sitting on for funding. Meanwhile, Lethbridge seems willing to forgo it's own opportunities in this regard. Decisions, it seems, have consequences.