

GREAT Ward 9 NEIGHBOURHOODS

GIAN-CARLO CARRA

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It is with wistfulness, but also clear conviction and fierce pride, that I announce my decision not to seek a fifth term as Ward 9's City Councillor this October. While this may not come as a surprise, I have some reflections I'd like to share.

When I was first elected in 2010, Calgary was a different city in a very different world. My central political mission, Great Neighborhoods, sought to transform how our city grows, with the East Calgary neighbourhoods and working landscapes of Ward 9 serving as laboratories for that change. What was once considered a fringe idea is now central to City policy, and a growing market share of our development industry is rising to meet the surging demand for urban lifestyles in a city whose population has explosively grown through both economic highs and lows.

Over the past fifteen years, we have settled the question of whether growth can 'pay for itself.' We've learned that the best city-building happens through collaboration between public and private investment. I am fiercely proud of the historic investments made in Ward 9 over the course of my tenure - from transit, active modes, Main Streets, and industrial sector mobility improvements, to parks, playgrounds, recreation facilities, cultural institutions, non-market housing, and other critical infrastructure. I would confidently put Ward 9's record of investment during my time in office alongside that of any Councillor in Calgary's history.

But I have also been changed by public service and my mission has grown. What began as a focus on the physical aspects of city-building - considerations of place - quickly deepened into a focus on the people those places are meant to serve, especially those facing injustices that undermine the success of Canada's remarkable project of pluralism. I led Calgary's efforts on gender equity and inclusion, social procurement, and the protection and expansion of funding for Family and Community Support Services. As Chair of Community Development, we led the nation in banning conversion therapy and launched a historic public inquiry into systemic racism - work that led to the City of Calgary's commitments to Anti-Racism. I have been profoundly shaped by our national commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and have firmly supported the City's response to the municipal Calls to Action. I remain personally committed to the ongoing work these calls demand of each of us.

The past fifteen years have not been an easy ride. I guided Ward 9 - arguably Calgary's most flood-impacted ward - through one of the most significant natural disasters in our city's history. In the years since, as Chair of Emergency Management, I've worked with the City and the Province to strengthen our flood resilience and advance proactive measures to address the growing drought risks driven by climate change.

I sat in the Emergency Operations Centre as we planned how to keep government functioning and support our businesses, social sectors, and Calgarians through the unprecedented disruption of the pandemic. Since 2016, I've had the honour of shaping Calgary's nation-building relationship with our Canadian Armed Forces - work that now feels especially urgent given the current state of global affairs. Through the Friends of HMCS Calgary Committee and as the inaugural Chair of Calgary Salutes, we've built lasting ties that strengthen both our civic pride and our national contribution.

As this term comes to a close, I find myself deeply frustrated. The critical regional planning work I've nurtured across three provincial governments, building collaboration with neighbouring municipalities to ensure long-term, sustainable growth, has recently been wiped out by a cynical stroke of a UCP pen. Its loss is a stark reminder of the fragility of progress, and how vital the spirit of cooperation is to the health of our democracy.

I was elected during Mayor Nenshi's era of 'Politics in Full Sentences.' Since then, I've witnessed the local manifestation of a global descent into the politics of anger, fear, and division. I see the disinformation-driven referendum on the 2026 Winter Olympics as the dividing line between those two political eras. I will forever regard the loss of the Olympic bid - our chance to make a generational reinvestment in one of Calgary's core strengths and showcase our city on the world stage - as the greatest disappointment of my political career.

I believe the project of Western democracy is under profound threat - undermined by external forces and overwhelmed by internal problems that our institutions seem unable to respond to. I've watched Calgary's summers poisoned by weeks of wildfire smoke, while many leaders continue to deny or ignore the existence of climate change. I witnessed social media emerge as a powerful tool for democratic engagement, only to abandon it as it devolved into a platform exploited by foreign adversaries and non-state actors to destabilize trust in our institutions and fracture our shared sense of reality.

I am stunned that the failed experiment of trickle-down economics still endures, even as unprecedented wealth disparity continues to grow unchecked. While more Calgarians struggle to meet their basic needs, and more people facing mental health and addiction challenges are left unhoused and desperate, we also watch helplessly as war and the slaughter of innocent lives continue in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

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If I've learned anything in my fifteen years in politics, it's what my colleague Jasmine Mian expressed a couple months ago as the core reason behind her decision to step away after just one term of service: it's far easier to tear things down than to build them up; simple falsehoods spread far more easily than complex truths; and, increasingly, more and more of our elected officials are focused on playing internal political games rather than engaging in the demanding, often unglamorous work of real-world governance.

The municipal election this October will be one of the most consequential in Calgary's history. Our city needs a Mayor and Council who will rise above politics for politics sake. We need governors who are focused on solving the real challenges and seizing the extraordinary opportunities before us. Calgary needs adults in the room - and we need them working together.

That's why, despite the gravity of this moment, I feel confident stepping away. I believe Calgary has a strong choice this October. Brian Thiessen and his team at the Calgary Party understand what's at stake. They offer a clear, values-driven vision for our city, the experience to lead effectively, and a strong, capable team ready to govern. I trust their commitment to Calgary and their ability to build a city that inspires confidence in our best future.

So, what's next for me? I love Calgary. And I love Canada. My wife and I choose to live and raise our son here, despite opportunities in other places. I am, and will always be, a city-builder, both by profession and by passion. It has been the honour of my lifetime to help shape Calgary during such a pivotal period in its history. I can't imagine my next chapter will stray far from the mission that has driven my past 25 years of service. I will spend my final six months in office burning the last of my political capital driving toward a Calgary Party and Brian Thiessen victory in October, and dragging as many remaining open files across the finish line as possible.

Thank you to all my colleagues in elected office who have remained committed to genuine leadership and good governance. Thank you to the members of City Administration who have championed and delivered meaningful change in how we regulate, plan, and collaborate for a better Calgary. Thank you to the builders of our city who have pushed, sometimes uncomfortably and often at significant cost, for improved outcomes in our built environment, in economic opportunity, and in social equity. Thank you to the community members who have supported my leadership - at the ballot box, as campaign volunteers, and with financial contributions. And to the constituents who've kept me focused on the issues that matter most through countless conversations - at events, on the phone, in the dog park, on the street, at the checkout line, on the disc golf course, on the sidelines, and everywhere in between - these daily touchpoints are what, more than anything else, define what it means to serve effectively. Thank you to the remarkable individuals who have stepped up to join me for a term of service on my team at City Hall - who have exhausted themselves, made a difference, and have moved (and will move) on to bigger and better things. And finally, thank you to my family, who, despite the brutally long hours and the ever-increasing potential of unpredictable encounters that accompany public life, gave me the support and permission to share our lives openly in pursuit of a better future for the city we love.



Gian-Carlo Carrà
City Councillor, Ward 9