



## Michael Nicula, Architect, CPA, EMBA

Date: September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Re: In response to your request:

### **“An Open Letter to Toronto's 2014 Mayoral Candidates” from August 6, 2014**

*(My answers after each question)*

#### *Questions*

**1) Toronto is experiencing intensification - most significantly in the downtown core - as a result of provincial and municipal legislation. How should the City respond to this opportunity, in regards to:**

- a) Providing corresponding improvements to urban infrastructure, including parks, cultural and community facilities, and neighbourhood schools?

Part of the Urban Planning function of the City Hall, the City has to define and enforce strict rules in regards to Land Occupancy ratios: certain minimums required for green space square footage per 100k residents, minimum cultural establishment seats, community facilities usage, school seats etc. Urban Development includes much more than that; a viable community needs appropriate public parking space in accordance to the population density – residents and facilities; groceries stores, retail business etc. I am not closely familiar to the actual numbers (although I have the skills to read and understand to get up to speed pretty quick) but my general impression is that the City Hall policies have been ‘relaxed’ in favour of the big builders. There are too many Notices throughout the City informing the residents about the zoning changes. I am not sure that the building permits are granted considering proper Urban Planning practices to ensure sustainable growth. As Mayor, I will make this a priority.

Note: the Charbonneau Commission has discovered irregularities at the City of Montreal pertaining to collusion between builders’ interest groups and City Councilors. I will order a full inquiry and make the results public to ensure transparency and a corruption-free Urban Development process.

- b) Increasing mobility options, specifically access to transit and cycling infrastructure?

There’s not a lot to say about this except the fact that we need more of it. The solutions are pretty straight forward, all we need is 1) an inventory of access points that need to be upgraded and 2) appropriate budgets. I have a separate plan addressing the budgetary issues: <http://www.mayor4.to/city-income-rebate.html>.

Note: One particular issue on this topic: the TTC stops that do not have a refuge. This is particularly problematic for streetcar stops. I am a strong supporter of the Electric Bus / Trolley Bus as a vehicle of choice for the narrow streets (e.g. King, Queen, Dundas, Bathurst etc) where we cannot build dedicated lanes and refuges for streetcar riders. It is much easier to build accessibility points on the sideways, but that only serves Buses. My vision is to keep streetcars on the wide streets where dedicated lanes and refuges make sense, and introduce Trolley Buses or Electric buses to replace streetcars elsewhere.



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### c) Addressing the increasing challenge of affordability and opportunity within our growing city?

Affordable housing is a major challenge for every big City. As an Architect I have studied affordable housing and I believe our City is not spending Housing budgets wisely. The Condo-like buildings that have been made available in the Regent Park area (I used to live there, on Sackville St.) are not 'affordable' given the high cost per sqf which matches the market rates. Affordable housing is something else. Europeans are the most advanced when it comes to innovative ideas and all we need to do for the next decade or so is to learn from their experiences before we can innovate ourselves.

My opinion is that we don't have enough Architects in the City Council. Those people make decisions and have very little idea of what they are dealing with.

Note: Poverty, Social Housing – these are Federal issues that the Federal Government must address. It is grossly unfair for Canada's biggest City to bear the cost of Social Housing from the Local budget. Naturally, people in need of social assistance are drawn to the big cities where opportunity is plentiful, however, they are all Canadians and the entire country should contribute equally. My plan is to get the Federal and Provincial governments more involved. The City can provide administration of these programs, but the higher levels of government must provide the funding.

## 2) What is your vision and specific strategy for implementing that vision regarding the City's role in the promotion of public health with respect to the following:

### a) The health of the natural environment, including air and water quality?

This is a very complex issue and ties into solving other problems such as the affordability and scope of service of the Public Transit system. Drawing more people into using the Public Transit system, replacing the gas engines (trains, Buses) with electric vehicles, encouraging employers to use telecommute – all these factors will reduce pollution and will ensure a better quality of our air and water supply.

Also, as discussed above; maintaining a healthy ratio of green space per 100k residents through policy is something the City can certainly do.

I would add here my two big development plans which will directly impact the natural environment of Toronto especially downtown area:

- Replacing the Gardiner Expressway with a tunnel
- Covering the rail tracks from Bathurst to Sherbourne.
- A contiguous, entertaining Lakefront (relocate Police, Fire and Navy properties, remove the Canada Mal silo and Red Path factory and all other relics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reclaim all that land for waterfront development especially entertainment, tourism, retail, bike paths, parks, recreation.

These two projects alone will create thousands of acres of NEW, PRIME green space in the heart of our City! Not only we would eliminate two major eye sores and obstacles between the City and Lakefront, but we would generate so much green space that tourism, entertainment, quality of life, quality of air and water – will all be significantly improved.

Visit my website for more details about these plans: <http://www.mayor4.to/issues.html>



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- b) The health of citizens, including active transportation (walking and cycling) and access to healthy food options?

City gardening projects, farmers' markets, affordable and wide service public transit, more safe bike lanes – all these projects can contribute to a more active lifestyle and better nutrition for our residents. There is so much to be done! I am all in favour of such projects and as Mayor, Architect, Accountant and Politician I have all the tools I need to advance such agenda.

- c) Integrating public health objectives into infrastructure investments and development approvals?

This is again a topic covered under Urban Planning and Development (Question 1.a). We need to ensure that our residents have enough Health facilities by forcing building developers to contribute to such public projects as part of their building permit fees.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these issues and connect with your organization and extended audience!

Best regards!

Michael Nicula