

# Holo Devnani

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York Region

*The following answers were provided by the candidate in response to [a letter sent by the Toronto Society of Architects on September 20, 2022](#) outlining three questions related to issues of the built environment. Answers have been copied and pasted into this page for clarity and ease of access, but all answers are verbatim and no changes or edits have been made.*

**Q1: Housing is a fundamental human right, and yet an increasing number of residents across the Greater Toronto Area are struggling to pay rent or find an affordable place to live. What policies and actions do you believe need to be implemented to address this crisis?**

**A:** Before we try to find a solution to a problem, we have to understand what caused the problem. House prices are not high across only GTA but across Canada and the world.

I can argue that if workers get high wages, the affordability issue would not arise. But that is a big discussion in itself. Let us leave aside for the moment.

House prices are affected by monetary policy, fiscal policy, supply demand etc.

This is more like a federal /provincial issue. It is a very hot issue being debated at federal/provincial levels, particularly at the election time.

When house prices were going high, our politicians were not paying attention to the matter. If you recall what the Mayor of Toronto and Premier of Ontario said – we should not interfere with the market. I was just shaking my head.

Ever wondered why they said so? Think about this. Land transfer tax is levied as a percentage of the price of the house. So is the real estate commission. Remember multiple bids on the same property. Draw your own conclusions.

I watch economics, geo-political situations around the world. We may be heading for interesting times in real estate prices too.

The Bottom line is that politicians should be well versed in economic terms to understand what is going on with

the economy to be able to make good decisions for the good of the public.

To be honest, as a mayor, I do not think I have much influence in the housing policies.

Having said that, let me add this – a developer wanted to build a condo, 30 stories high, on a vacant lot in front of my condo. I had no issue with that.

I read in the paper that even the Fire department objected to this. Their argument - they do not have means to rescue people on the 30th floor in case of a fire. This does not make sense to me. If they need resources they should be proactive and ask. In other cities, we have 100 stories high buildings. How do they handle that?

What would I do at Richmond Hill level? I am not sure what loops a developer has to go through to get a development approved. I see many developers end up at OMB. That costs money to the city and developers. I am sure developers are passing that cost to buyers of the property. I will try to expedite the process of approval.

Fire department is a responsibility of the York region.

As a Mayor I would be proactive. We have to anticipate high rises if we are going to have affordable housing.

**Q2: The design, construction and operation of our built environment accounts for nearly 40% of energy related carbon emissions, contributing to the ongoing climate crisis affecting us today. What do you believe needs to be prioritised to reduce carbon emissions within the built environment?**

**A:** This is about Build. I am not an architecture or civil engineer and so did google “Build Environment “. I found an interesting site- EPA of USA. Did some reading; but would not claim to be an expert.

As a matter of fact, I would expect you to come forward and advise me on the issue.

I may add that Climate Change is not an only mayoral issue. It should not be just a “build environment” issue, but any day issue.

Most people will take a car to buy a carton of milk. I walk about 2-3 KM one way for grocery shopping. So I am reducing my carbon foot.

**Q3: In towns and cities, so much of life happens in the shared public spaces—in our parks, libraries and streets. How can we ensure these civic spaces achieve design excellence in their initial conception and construction, and that they are properly maintained so they may continue to serve future generations?**

**A:** I live in a condo behind a small public park. Sadly it is not as busy as I would think, particularly in spring and fall. I wish more people were taking advantage of the facility.

In my thinking, the initial design/build would be by architects/civil engineers. I would expect them to design structures that last long with the latest material available.

I look at the park and am shocked to see that the grounds are being maintained properly; the benches are in a terrible shape. So it looks like ground people do the grounds and they do not even look around to report any other deficiency.

I have worked in systems design and I will use my expertise in this area.