

1. 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?

It's ironic that architects in Toronto are asking this question. Apart from shortages in skilled labour and construction materials, the increases in regulation, political initiatives, and new make-work policies are driving up construction costs and eroding affordability.

First, streamline the Building Code. If you've been in the profession for a while, you would remember that the Ontario Building Code, forty years ago, was entirely contained in one 8" x 10" binder, about 2-inches thick, which anyone could lift with two fingers. Today, nobody would dare attempt the back-breaking task of physically lifting all volumes of the Building Code. Even in digital format, it must be simplified and condensed.

Second, eliminate the Toronto Green Standard (TGS) which demands additional expenditures in housing development.

Stop the (TGS) separate metering in multi-unit buildings. It does not promote energy conservation or lifestyle changes. Separate meters add additional charges to shelter cost over and above energy use. Delivery charges, regulatory fees, and taxes on these extra costs add over \$50.00 per month to each unit.

Third, eliminate "Net Zero" building "decarbonization" initiatives and the "Zero Emissions Building Framework", which, according to the City, will add as much as 17 percent to construction costs. Air-tight buildings require mechanical ventilation and additional energy use. Building owners can't afford to make essential repairs, let alone "decarbonization" expenditures and higher electricity charges.

Fourth, eliminate LEED building certifications and all the monitoring, auditing, and make-work schemes. Studies show that LEED certifications/investments increase rents (commercial and residential). Occupants cannot afford these extra costs. LEED buildings also have higher vacancy rates. Wonder why?

Finally, if housing is a fundamental right, then let's stick to the fundamentals. Cut out the bells and whistles. We don't need granite counters or porcelain floors. We don't need large lobbies or indoor swimming pools. We don't need smart appliances or more bathrooms. Housing costs reflect the finishes, features, and amenities, which, today, appear to be designed only for the move-up market, not the first-time buyer or the renter. Perhaps the expectations of renters and first-time buyers have increased. However, we must keep in mind that one cannot get a Cadillac at a Chevy price.

2. 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?

Ahh yes, another “climate crisis”. In the 1970s, it was the impending Ice Age. Now, it’s global warming and greenhouse gases.

This, however, is Canada. All winter, we apply corrosive salt on roads, stairs, and walkways – contributing to property damage and repair costs. Some people get heart attacks while shoveling the snow. Others slip and fall on icy paths, breaking bones and being decommissioned from work and household duties. The cold freezes pipes, contributes to spalling bricks, pitted concrete, and inoperable windows. Frostbite, foggy spectacles, dead batteries, and wheels stuck in snow; these are my least favourite things.

Canadians should promote, advance, encourage and accept global warming. Rejoice in the eventual rejuvenation of Axel Heiberg Island, the reforestation of a desolate Arctic, and all the opportunities that will present themselves with the revival of the Arctic Archipelago, and the prospects for human habitation and the unique architectural designs that will enhance new towns in the Arctic.

To the architect, carbon is irrelevant. It is water vapour that has the most impact as a greenhouse gas and as a destructive force in our built environment, affecting building health and human health – contributing to mold, mildew, and the rot of structural members. Has anyone suggested we ban showers? Kettles? Dehumidifiers require more energy consumption. Can’t have those. Ten percent of grid delivered electricity is from fossil fuel.

Energy use in the built environment – if we really cared, all the curtain walls in the towers we are building would be 20-inch insulated solid walls with tiny windows, not floor to ceiling glass. Exterior cladding would be solar panels generating photovoltaic energy. But such buildings would be dark, heavy, and drab. We like our spaces to be light, bright, and open, with million-dollar views.

The customers/buyers have spoken. We’re not interested in reducing carbon emissions. Bring on the glass-walled towers.

3. 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?

Perhaps it’s time for Toronto to have some design competitions to bring fresh ideas and bold creativity to the city. We can stipulate a few specifications such as fire-resistant, maintenance-free, durable materials, and structural designs that can withstand our climate extremes; and leave the rest to the designers/architects.