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Peel 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: We have unfortunately had all levels of government resting on their laurels for far too long, shrugging off what has been a crisis building for over a decade into something which is now an truly intersectional and intergenerational disaster. The housing crisis is not just regional, but national, compounded by the high number of individuals who are working from home and working remotely from farther and farther locales. Telecommuting is a great option for many reasons, but one with unanticipated consequences. As all types of housing have failed to be built, we see more and more people picking up their lives and giving up on cities within the GTA, including Mississauga, seeing a net population decline for the first time in it's history. Despite all the amenities and opportunity in the region, the lack of housing means nothing else matters for a growing number of people, especially students, families and newcomers. We now need an array of policies as vast and comprehensive as the problem which now consumes us.

We need more of both at and below-market rate, social housing, and all shapes and sizes but especially missing middle housing. For this, many organizations and planning experts have shared best practices on actions that can be taken, such as ending exclusionary zoning, removing parking minimums, removing set-back and staggered height requirements and reducing taxes and DCs on the most needed housing, such as rentals and below-market rate units. I support all these measures as well as those which will help reduce speculation and which exacerbate the lack of supply and affordable units. I believe we need a land-banking, land-transfer, vacant home and AirBnB taxes to get units built, available and for their intended purpose, with additional incentives for developers who provide more rental and affordable units, such as bonusing and partnership projects on government-owned land. I believe we need to heavily regulate REITs, impose rent control and ensure tenant rights are clearly communicated and protected, as there are far too many disturbing stories of renters rights being violated in their

living, payment or eviction conditions. Our local and regional official plans should also ensure housing is being built, at scale, and built where people need it most. We must reject sprawl outwards into farmland and hold our Urban Boundaries such that we mature and develop these necessary complete community policies within our existing cities, right now. Finally, I believe we need every parcel of land and zone of air rights owned by government to be rapidly utilized for affordable housing at scale, including cooperatives and especially in MTSAs – of which more can be designated. To make these tax and incentive measures possible, as well as build the affordable housing we so desperately need, alignment is crucial at the Provincial and Federal level, in addition to necessary updates and revenue tools granted to municipalities under the Municipal Act.

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: We need to be targeted and focused for the greatest impact in emissions reductions, as fast as possible. First, we need to shift away from car dependency with urgency and this will require a not-so-complex but sizable investment in completing our walking networks, building protected cycling networks and scaling our transit systems, with dedicated ROW wherever possible. For transit, we need to invest most in buses (frequency) but also systems which are clean (maintenance), reliable (monitoring/repair) and accessible (low fare and fare-free) with world-class stations, routes and integration into mixed-use developments. Second, we need to transform our existing building stock and all future builds to use far less energy with Green Building Standards, modelled on the most efficient building envelopes in the country. The Transform TO and Tower Renewal Program are areas for inspiration, and other examples abound which will be necessary to work towards net-zero and carbon-negative building footprints. The Third action is tied directly to the second - we need to "electrify everything" - meaning remove fossil fuel dependency from our energy grid (mainly fossil gas in Ontario) in both current and future stock. Electrification can be assured in new developments via the mentioned new Green Building Standards. In existing developments, we must pursue gas line phase-outs with renewable energy and electric appliances incentives and discounts. District heating and cooling systems in our business districts will contribute a great deal to this shift as well. The existing Climate Change Action Plan notes that among total ("Community") emissions from 2015 indeed it is buildings (52%) and transportation (32%) sectors that are the largest sources of emissions.

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: We need to involve the community in consultation, design, monitoring, repair and commitment to keep these spaces in the eyes, ears and minds of elected officials in perpetuity. We need more than just major investment in beautiful and sustainable public spaces (that we need much more of, too) but a nurtured community capacity in how these spaces are made and thus cared for. When spaces are designed far from the public eye, without input, or crucially, without an understanding of the public need (for all ages, all abilities, all seasons) then we lose the key audience from the start - the user. For our spaces to be fundamentally sustainable they need to have stewards who can provide stewardship, just like any healthy environment. A level of co-dependency, where the space, such as a public square, park or community garden, enhances the lived experience of the users, who in turn "make it their own" to not just take care of it, but improve upon it, over time. The city can and must facilitate this, with more opportunities for community tree plantings, locally-led and designed art, park improvements and year-round programming that evolves to what residents demand. This "messiness" means a more intimate local government, one which not only hears the public need but in turn is an expert in nurturing the public good. Such government then has social license to raise more revenue for such public spaces, which will be necessary and reap dividends.

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