

Robert Fraser

Councillor Candidate in the City of Aurora, Ward 6
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: Solving the affordable housing challenge in the GTA is a complex issue. Toronto, as Canada's largest and most diverse city, is a major magnet for people to live and business to locate. It is also one of the top destinations for new immigrants to Canada. This demand spills into the commuter Regions surrounding Toronto – York, Peel and Durham—driving up prices and thus reducing affordability in those communities as well.

This demand also continues to put pressure on environmentally sensitive/greenspaces within the GTA, for example the Oak Ridges Moraine. The environment is suffering from encroachments/development and people are suffering an affordability crisis. If my children wanted to move out and live within my Town of Aurora, they couldn't afford to.

I believe the best way to tackle the affordability crisis is to use the Co-Op model combined with creative, architecturally harmonious intensification. Within these new dwellings, some folks will be paying market rates while others will have subsidies based on income. And by using creative intensification, we could accommodate more people on existing developed land thus arresting our consumption of green spaces.

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: All new builds—residential, commercial or industrial—should be built to the most efficient standards and those

standards should flow uniformly across all levels – Federal, Provincial and Municipal. Renovations/additions or any change to an existing structure requiring a Building Permit should also adhere to these most efficient standards. Carbon neutral is the goal here.

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: All great civic spaces start with great design. They are in harmony with the surrounding environment, are functional, engineered for a long life cycle and attract people to use them. I believe much of our challenges here lie not in the design but in the build quality of the end product and ‘Lowest Bid’ mentality that drives the bulk of public built infrastructure. The greatest design, poorly built, serves no one. On the aspect of maintenance, that should be part of the design process and costed out to make sure jurisdictions aren’t building structures they can’t afford to maintain over their lifecycle.