

2023 Questionnaire

Toronto Mayoral Candidates

The Catholic Church considers that elected democratic office is a position of immense responsibility, to be held in high trust and exercised with great humility, wisdom, and respect, in the interest of the common good. Our leaders are meant to help gather us in a spirit of mutual cooperation and support, setting for us an example of listening and collaboration as together all citizens seek common ground for authentic growth as human beings. This applies fully to municipal offices, including that of Mayor. Cities are homes to the majority of citizens, and are often the first recourse of new citizens for safety, housing, and well-being.

The 10 open-ended questions below are meant to allow you to share, in your own words, your plans for working toward the true welfare of all Torontonians.

Please start by confirming your name and preferred contact information:

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YOUR VISION FOR SERVICE AS MAYOR

Your Political Vocation

Q. 1. What draws you to the vocation of service as Mayor of Toronto, a city of nearly 3 million people?

I am attracted to the position of mayor because of the positive influence a good leader can have. Good leaders in other cities have been part of transformations that have created healthier, more beautiful, more environmentally integrated cities and I would love to have that positive influence on our city.

Q. 2. What experience do you have that qualifies you to serve as Mayor? (Please feel free to point to an online or attached CV if desired)

Each voter knows for themselves what they believe are the most important qualifications for a mayor. I believe the most important qualifications are an ability to communicate, an open mind, an interest in the common good, a vision for something better, and a willingness to make mistakes, be corrected, and move forward from them in a better direction. I have shown my ability to communicate through my participation in debates during the last two mayoral elections, my public speaking everywhere from

churches to university panels, my interviews with the media (on everything from clean water at Ontario Place to vaccine mandates at the city) and my writing. I have developed an open mind through years of both Christian and non-denominational spiritual practices that have shown me humility and the dangers of making assumptions. My desire for the common good has been demonstrated by my choice of career (environmental conservation and urban transportation) and my volunteer work in the community (I advocated successfully for more green space, express transit and safer street design). I have a vision for something better that I have been writing about and speaking about for years, that interested people can find through my Substack newsletter: <https://sarahclimenhaga.substack.com>. And as for my willingness to make mistakes, be corrected and move forward, that has come through my spiritual development as well - only if I am willing to be responsible for what I am doing, and recognize that I neither know everything nor do everything perfectly, can I be open to trying new things, and correct my mistakes. For more information on me go to my website: <https://votesarah.ca/meet-sarah/> and email me at info@votesarah.ca.

Q.3. What are the most important things you hope to accomplish as Mayor?

I would like to bring freedom of movement to this city by doing away with mandatory fares on our TTC, and making our streets safe for all users. I would like to integrate the city with our natural environment so that every governmental action is done with our surroundings, not to them. And I would like to remove burdensome regulations and by-laws and allow residents more freedom to live, work and play in this city in the ways they want without needing approval for activities that are life enhancing.

Life & Human Dignity

Q.4. Catholics believe that we are all lost children of God, and that the purpose of this life is to find our way home to God – most importantly, by ensuring that our neighbours are enabled and encouraged to search for truth as well. What is your understanding of the purpose of life, and how does that inform your proposed policies?

Who can know the purpose of life but God? My understanding is that we are here simply to be here - and that the best way to live is to be awake and aware of the miracle that each moment brings. I believe the thoughts in our mind that bring despair, anger or shame are an impediment to our experience of the miracle of creation. It informs my policies in that I aim to remain connected to something greater than this rational world of words and inferences. My proposed policies are all about creating freedom for each of us to live in the beautiful and healthy ways that our hearts show us when we are not living in fear or anger. I believe finding our way home simply means opening our eyes to what is truly around us rather than being swept away by our mental judgements. To me, God is a word for the immensity of the present moment, and the truth that can only be found there, not in our minds.

Q.5. Many Torontonians are rightly concerned with making diversity, equity, and inclusion a reality within our city. True efforts in such direction will not neglect those challenged by mental or physical disabilities. What is your plan for making Toronto truly accessible to all?

No leader can on their own make Toronto truly accessible to all. This is a job for each one of us. The job of the mayor is to make sure that no barriers are placed by government in front of others. Examples of governmental barriers include the construction of roads that are for high speed cars and don't allow children, those with physical disabilities or the elderly to walk or wheelchair safely down the street. Governmental barriers also include rules that don't allow people to create housing or start a business to support themselves. And governmental barriers include any action by government that is taken without speaking directly to the people who will be affected by that action. Including disadvantaged and traditionally excluded groups in discussions on policies that affect them is the best way to ensure we are a more accessible and inclusive city.

Q.6. Prominent current issues facing Toronto include homelessness and access to affordable housing. What can or should the City of Toronto do about housing? Are there others – other levels of government, charitable agencies, for example – that might be supported, called upon, and encouraged to help in such work? How should any such organizations cooperate?

There are roles for all of us in creating housing, and it is up to each of us to figure out how to cooperate - the government can not force cooperation on people. The government's role is to remove the many restrictions it places on the creation of housing, and the government's role is to price land and services according to their actual cost, so that wasteful uses of land - like single family homes, swimming pools, parking lots - are replaced by green space (paid for by the government as well as individuals) and housing (paid for by those who want it). I believe the elimination of bureaucratic controls and the proper pricing of land and services will result in more and better housing options. To read about my stance on housing please look at the following two essays:

<https://sarahclimenhaga.substack.com/p/if-you-build-it-they-can-come> and
<https://sarahclimenhaga.substack.com/p/housing-the-unhoused>

Q.7. The news suggests that anxiety and mental health are also among the important issues facing Toronto – incidents, including violent attacks, on the TTC, for example. What can or should the City of Toronto do about to address mental health and safety on the sidewalk? Are there others – other levels of government, charitable agencies, for example – that might be supported, called upon, and encouraged to help in such work?

First, we need to be honest that fear of crime is more harmful to our city than crime itself. To read more about my perspective on this please go here:

<https://sarahclimenhaga.substack.com/p/fear-of-crime-doesnt-pay>. As for addressing mental health and addiction, each individual has a different set of circumstances and needs. Everyone from the family of those struggling with mental health, to neighbours, to nonprofits and churches has a role and this

should absolutely be encouraged by government. The government's role is primarily to ensure the environments that people live in are health promoting. That means having ample green spaces, public spaces, community centres and programs, and the type of policing that is based on conflict avoidance, emergency response and crime solving rather than the prevention of crime. The prevention of crime is the job of our entire city, it is not something that government can do on its own,

Care for the Environment

Q.8. The City of Toronto has long been engaged with care for the environment. Yet it can do more, particularly as awareness grows of the urgent nature of climate crises. Catholic teaching recognizes that what happens with the environment affects every aspect of our lives, everywhere on the planet. Pope Francis, like many faith leaders before him, has called on us to “work together” to ensure God’s creation is protected for future generations. How do you intend to promote collaborative and effective approaches to municipal climate change commitments, such as the TransformTO Net Zero strategy, to ensure care for the environment is consistently and urgently prioritized?

First, I believe we need to focus on actual on the ground environmental problems that residents can rally behind. Dire warnings about climate change or mass global extinctions are topics that are either too frightening or too far in the future, or too political, to encourage people to act in meaningful ways. Yet if we focus on protecting our lake, our parks, our ravines, forests and rivers, we will be able to engage people in ways that they can see the results of themselves.

Second, I believe government needs to stop telling residents to change and instead model change themselves. Only when government actions are in complete alignment with maintaining a healthy environment can we tell our residents what to do (“let he who is without sin cast the first stone” John 8). The same goes for each of us when we try to tell our neighbours what to do. Our city government regularly impacts the environment negatively through dumping of sewage, cutting down trees, paving over land, trucking waste, or contributing to waste and energy use through the purchase of everything from new computers to new cars and mechanical equipment. If the city government stopped its own harmful activities, we would serve as a model for our residents.

Finally, our city can protect our environment by pricing our services according to their true costs. It should be more expensive and more difficult to do things that harm our environment than it is to do things that help it. This means changing water pricing, energy pricing, land use taxation and waste pricing.

An Economy to Serve People

Q.9. Among the greatest challenges faced by Toronto is affordable, accessible, and timely public transportation, particularly as an alternative to the use of personal vehicles. Vehicle congestion aggravates not only health concerns, but difficulties faced by Torontonians in maintaining dignified and

fulfilling work. What are your plans for effectively addressing this problem? What approach would you take to expanding public transit, improved access for pedestrians and cyclists, and rejuvenation of infrastructure to make it easier for people in Toronto to access all the opportunities Toronto has to offer?

As particular examples:

- *How do you propose to address highway congestion, including for example on the 401, 427, Gardiner, and DVP highways?*
- *In view of its success, do you support rapid expansion of the King Street Pilot Project to other streetcar lines?*
- *Do you support expansion of the streetcar system?*
- *Do you support expansion of the bike lanes system?*
- *Do you support installation of overhead electrical charging for the electric buses the TTC proposes to buy?*

I propose addressing highway congestion by ensuring we have rapid, reliable public transit and safe infrastructure for human powered transportation. I am open to a degree of tolling/road pricing only in areas where there are also free options (ie, one express lane of the highway could be tolled but not all of them). The government cannot solve congestion since congestion is an automatic result when you have too many people using cars for existing infrastructure. It naturally arises when a lot of people want to go to the same place. But what the government can do is offer alternatives so that if people don't want to sit stuck in their cars, they have good, safe and reliable alternatives.

I support express transit lanes, like the King Street pilot, on every major transit route in this city, and I believe they can be implemented at low cost (unlike the massive, costly and delay-ridden Eglinton LRT project) as long as there is political will and community buy-in. I also support expansion of transit service to meet demand. Please read my essay on express transit for more information:

<https://sarahclimenhaga.substack.com/p/getting-out-of-our-own-way>

I support making every major corridor safe for not only cyclists, but also pedestrians, scooters, and those in mobility assisting devices like wheelchairs. I would like to move beyond mere bike lanes. In some places, bike lane corridors make sense (eg on large roads that primarily function as travel corridors). In other places, like busy streets with lots of business and residential activity, fast moving traffic of any kind may not be the best goal, in which case having entire street lanes that don't include cars but instead include all human powered transit would be a better option. For lanes that are intended for through movement, in busy residential areas I would favour a design that only allowed speeds of 15-20 km, which would increase the safety of those not in motorized vehicles.

I don't have a position on the installation of electrical charging.

Order & Public Safety

Q.10. As noted above, anxiety and mental health issues arising from the pandemic seem to be the cause of an alarming number of violent assaults in Toronto, including on the TTC, with many people - including those suffering mental illness - becoming victims. Street racing remains a hazardous and potentially lethal pastime among young Torontonians. What steps would you take to both reduce the threat of these and other hazards, and to address their underlying causes?

Street racing is simply not possible if we design our roads to prevent it. Long straightaways will allow people to street race. Having various types of designs that narrow roadways, bend them, have obstructions in appropriate places etc will take away the ability of people to street race. Tending to the social conditions that would have young people seeking dangerous activities like street racing rather than finding less destructive ways of experiencing challenges and thrills is important. By expanding ample opportunities in nature, carpentry or other trades, athletics, music, spiritual or intellectual endeavours, we can ensure that youth find better ways of navigating their transition to adulthood.