

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 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:

Candidate's name: Kris Langenfeld
E-mail: Kris@MayorKris.ca
Phone: (647) 281-3343
Social Media Handle(s): @KrisLangenfeld

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 was born in and have lived and/or worked in Toronto for the vast majority of my life; it is home to me; and my desire is to see my home reaching its greatest potential.

In recent decades, I've seen a concerted effort to ignore the cries of the people of our city, and to make it harder for Torontonians to have their voices heard in their government. Our city is more and more led away from democratic principles to be directed in secret by the will of the unelected few, over the objections of the many.

It was only as a result of facing those efforts to curb public participation in their government, after sitting across the table from John Tory and his appointees at the police board, seeing firsthand these schemes being put into motion, millions spent each year paying unaccountable guards to protect the police from the public and intimidate those who sought to voice their object to policies such as carding, unjustified and routine strip searches, and failures of police officers and politicians themselves to follow the law, that I ultimately felt compelled to enter politics to try to oppose the ongoing corruptions of our social values.

I invariably come back to the same truth as I search my soul and seek the Lord's guidance on this problem of our great city which I increasingly fear for: I can't expect someone else to do the hard work if I'm not willing to do it myself, and I do not see anyone else whom I'm led to believe will do as they promise, put the welfare of others ahead of their own, and truly care about their fellow man.

2023 Questionnaire

Toronto Mayoral Candidates

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)

I started my career in accounting and over two decades transitioned from office manager and corporate accountant to financial software trainer and consultant, computer network installer, business systems analyst, and programmer/developer of financial integration and EDI software. I've worked for a wide range of clients including firms that became part of today's Konica Minolta, the Hospital for Sick Children, Credit Suisse First Boston Investment Bankers, the Ontario Nurses Association, Upper Canada College, and what are today's LHINs (Local Health Integration Networks).

Since the mid-2000s, I've worked as a professional carpenter, having originally trained in wood railings and stairs; and I subsequently expanded my experience beyond that specialized fine finish carpentry to most aspects of construction, including having been involved as a crew leader with Habitat for Humanity GTA, aiding in the construction of dozens of homes on multiple projects in Toronto. I'm also a fully licensed truck and bus driver, having driven big-rigs in the eastern U.S. and throughout Southern Ontario & Quebec, operated salters and snow-plows to clear Toronto roadways, and transported kids to/from school and guided various charters around South-Central Ontario in large 72-seater buses. I know well the many challenges and concerns of day-to-day living which the majority in our society face regularly.

In response to routine searching of members of the public instituted by ex-Chief Mark Saunders, I stood as a "self-rep" in our courts to have those warrantless searches declared unconstitutional, and, as a result, despite the lack of formal training, I have a good knowledge of our legal system and laws.

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

Restore the public's ability to be involved in, and have their voices heard by, their government; and establish sufficient transparency and accountability so that the public can begin to once again have some faith in their democracy, and a belief that it represents, or at least considers, the majority's wishes. That process begins with meaningful public consultation in development of a new public participation paradigm.

To actually house the homeless; give them a roof over their head, a place to lock up their stuff without having to drag it around in a cart, and offer some basic safety and predictability about where they will spend tomorrow night; rather than just talking about homelessness, expanding the shelter system that kicks the homeless out onto the streets every morning after breakfast, and then arguing about whether we can afford to hire more security to deal with the homeless riding the TTC, or find funding to keep open enough warming/cooling centres to prevent them from dying in our streets.

Address the mismanagement we currently see in policing, where costs continually increase, efficacy perpetually decreases, accountability appears non-existent, rights violations are routine and on the rise, and where, more and more, citizens report feeling less safe.

Get the TTC functioning the way it should have been, but wasn't, even before covid. Restore the requirement that fares be paid, without uniformed gangs in body armour demanding that the public prove they haven't committed a crime in order to continue on their way; I'll redeploy those existing staff in a plain clothed capacity to both watch for then address fare evasion where they see it, and to respond to problem passenger situations that they identify while travelling the transit system.

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?

I believe that the purpose of life is to follow the teachings of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to glorify God, to try to lead by good example and seek to demonstrate some small semblance of the righteousness of God through his working in us, to share with others the experiences of walking with God, and then to share the life and gospel that gave rise to what is hopefully a good example.

The purpose of the position of elected political official however, is to represent the people and to seek to provide them with good government. The religious life may, and should, guide the person to do the job of Mayor well, to their best ability, with the best intentions of acting with love for the people they represent; but the only form of evangelization that is appropriate in relation to being in office should come from setting the good example and acknowledging the supremacy of God.

I will seek to develop policies and exercise all my duties in consideration of a loving compassion for all Torontonians.

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?

Toronto, provincial, and federal frameworks offer a solid foundation for building an inclusive and equitable society. Where diversity, equity, and inclusion are currently lacking, it is almost invariably a departure from existing requirements rather than the result of some lack in regulation.

Too often we see accessibility spoken of in terms of sameness and equality rather than in terms of fairness or righteousness. There are circumstances where it is unfair to treat all the same, and where that should not be our goal; it is a problem to expect the 5-year-old to do all the 10-year-old does, and equally unfair to restrict the 10-year-old to doing only what the 5-year-old might be capable of. This kind of skewed thinking is often seen in our city; one example being where Wheel-Trans service seeks to indiscriminately deposit clients at public transit stops; another being the expectation that all routes will be accessible to mobility devices within hours of a major snowfall, when it is not unreasonable that it may take a day or even two to restore everyone's unimpeded movement following major weather events.

This is equally the case for some facing mental challenges; we as a society can often provide better experiences for some, by providing safe housing with support staff which serves them, and all of society, better than if we focus our efforts and resources on making all public spaces supportive for those few.

I will ensure that we effectively address those situations where accessibility is unreasonably impeded, be that due to temporary or long-term barriers; but by resolving problems, not pursuing arbitrary sameness.

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?

The most effective tool the City has for controlling housing affordability is supply; only by increasing the supply of needed homes can we hope that affordability will improve. City Council seems almost surprised that they approve luxury condos, and developers don't construct needed apartment units. I'll require that, with every application for permitting to build luxury condos, the developers also submit a plan to construct rental units during the same time period; and in both cases, condos and apartments, I'll require that they include roughly 5%, about one unit per floor, of deeply affordable, more basic, units.

Regarding homelessness, I'll pursue the seemingly unusual path of housing the homeless. Currently Toronto reports 9,500–11,000 homeless but 8,000–9,000 shelter spaces (incl. hotel rooms we taxpayers now pay full price to rent). Long-term, I'll look to construct rooms, not apartments, but safe, sufficient, livable rooms for the homeless, targeting specific needs like elders, youth, drug-rehab seeking, mental health, etc; but, as a short-term emergency measure, I'll take vacant office building and warehouse space and construct rooms to house the homeless. We know it actually costs us less to house people in subsidized housing than it does to fund shelters; while shelters see them kicked onto the streets after breakfast each morning, which is why we have so many problems like on the TTC, and why the city struggles to find money to fund warming/cooling centres to keep people from dying on our streets.

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?

Most of the untreated, violent, individuals in need of mental health support are within our homeless population; they are the ones who have 'fallen through the cracks' and ended up on our streets.

Through the creation of subsidized housing space for our city's homeless, they'll be able to do the same as most people who have no money and nothing to do, they'll be able to stay home. It is the shelter system, which kicks the homeless out onto the streets every day after breakfast, refusing to allow them to return until dinner time, requiring them to roam our streets, begging, destitute, helpless, fearful and unsure of what they will face that night, which leads to their anxiety and much of the resultant violence.

I'll tailor homeless housing (rooms) towards specific groups' needs. The older generation, primarily homeless due to renovictions & rampant inflation while on a fixed income, has few needs beyond an affordable roof over their head, basic facilities for food preparation & hygiene, and opportunities for social interaction. Youth need the additional supports of education equivalency and employment/skills training plus added security. Those trying to escape addiction dependency need a drug/alcohol free environment, security, and counselling supports as well. Many in immigrant populations require language and culture instruction. While those with mental health issues need access to mental health professionals, but without being locked away, held captive, and subjected to mistreatment which often occurred behind closed doors in times past. Shelter capacity will then be available for those unsuited for housing.

Naturally other levels of government will need to assist with some of the costs, particularly in their area of responsibility for healthcare; while charitable groups can be instrumental in the various supports needed.

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?

A vague conceptual framework around addressing climate concerns in Toronto does exist; unfortunately it was largely created without public consultation, much of it in near secrecy during covid related restrictions on Torontonians movements, and, as a result, that plan has almost no public buy-in, significant entrenched opposition, and is largely focused on purposely making Torontonians' traditional habits of living their lives more complicated and problem-filled in order to try and force capitulation.

Rather than improve transit, their plan has been to make it more difficult to move about in private vehicles. I'll improve transit to make it a more reasonable & desirable option, and I'll restore road use for motorists.

Bike lanes have been used as a tool to create dissention and division and to cause traffic congestion; I'll move bike lanes to residential & side streets wherever feasible so that cyclists have a preferable travel route; one where they aren't constantly breathing exhaust, surrounded by noise, and placed at risk by being put directly next to motor vehicles.

Elsewhere, Europe has been successful in aiding with the financial costs of private household based small-scale solar power generation to supplement large-scale electricity generation; I'll pursue meaningful public consultant to look at options such as those, working to improve our society rather than seeking to make everyone suffer in the name of supporting the schemes of Toronto's unelected bureaucrats.

Steps to support and accelerate the gradual transition from internal combustion engines to electric cars, and the conversion of heating systems from CO² generating fossil fuels to alternatives like heat pumps and other options, will enjoy public consultation to discuss best solutions, including options like reduced-rate financing assistance and regulatory streamlining, as we continue to move forward with ongoing steps like increased availability of electric vehicle charging stations and other options likely to entice residents to pursue greener alternatives.

Again through open and consequential public consultation, apropos given that strengthened democracy with increased public voice are the cornerstone of my objectives in government and my reason for entering politics, we'll look at technologies, techniques, and materials to improve building construction in order to reduce the carbon footprint of both the manufacture and lifecycle of new development.

Where the TransformTO Short-term Implementation Plan 2022–2025 states “More information is needed to understand what kinds of materials and construction techniques should be used for Toronto. The City will study the impacts and set embodied carbon limits for building materials and construction practices in new buildings.” I'll focus on addressing the challenges with public transparency instead of focusing on making announcements that City Council has endorsed staff's plan (which has no details or real plan).

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?

As stated, bike lanes belong elsewhere from the major arterial roads. Similarly, sidewalks are for pedestrians, not (generally) overflow for restaurants or retailers.

To restore transit, I'll take what the Toronto Star reported on April 18th, were 172 buses, 44 streetcars, and 13 subway trains which are currently sitting parked due to a lack of drivers, and I'll reassign some of the 356 supervisors listed on the 2022 Ontario Sunshine List, and I'll get the TTC back to being focused on moving paying customers around our city. Meanwhile, I'll solve the problems, which were apparently created in the Andy Byford days, with the GPS and technology on the vehicles so that centralized operational oversight, with a mix of AI added, can get the system functioning more effectively, which riders know all too well isn't now the case and wasn't particularly the case previously, with all those supervisors.

I'll take the Transit Fare Enforcement, that currently roam our system in groups, corralling the public and demanding that they prove they haven't committed the crime of fare evasion, and I'll switch them over to plain clothed enforcement. Where they see someone fail to pay, they can act; but they'll need reasonable suspicion that someone didn't pay before they interact with the public in an official capacity. Meanwhile, we'll return to the days of drivers and station fare collectors requiring passengers to pay their fare or leave the vehicle/property; the issue has been that operators have occasionally faced violence in response to fare enforcement; drivers will now know when those plain clothed fare enforcement officers are on the vehicle, and the drivers will be able to feel safe knowing they have backup should they need it. Quickly enough, those habitual fare evaders will learn that plain clothed backup is potentially present when fares are demanded, and soon enough we'll return to a function system where people pay for what they use. All transit use will require payment, with means based discounted transit provided to those who need it.

I support subways over streetcars/LRT where ridership justifies it, and buses, which are quickly adaptable to circumstances, where it doesn't. Eglinton Crosstown shows us that LRT is always twice the headache and substantially more cost than is claimed during the tendering process; and the Line 3 Scarborough RT reminds us that, although LRT is ½ the price of subways, it's ⅓ the lifespan (30-odd years versus 100); and, it turns out it we have winter and it snows in Toronto, so having a system that doesn't run down the middle of the street actually makes it more effective and reliable, as well as cheaper.

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?

Housing the homeless will greatly reduce the amount of minor, homeless related, crime that police and TTC currently spend much time dealing with. Incorporating mental health support into appropriate sections of the housing model will greatly reduce the problems that we today see resulting from a lack of timely and consistent mental health treatment.

Prioritizing social program funding will help to restore opportunities for youth to be involved in constructive activities with positive role models in place of the current situation which sees young people left roaming the streets, looking for things to do, and often getting drawn into drugs, crime, and gang activity. This is another area with great potential for communities and charities to get involved in providing positive experiences and leadership for the next generation.

I will also make changes to Toronto's policing. Currently police are responsible for answering the 9-1-1 system; and just like, to a hammer everything looks like a nail, so too, to police everything looks like something a police officer should respond to. I'll civilianize the 9-1-1 system, probably under the City's communications department, and civilians will decide what the appropriate response is; mental health, paramedics, street nurses, by-law enforcement, police, etc. Further, only 1/3rd of charges now laid by Toronto Police result in convictions; 2/3rds are withdrawn or dismissed; this past March we saw Toronto's largest ever drug bust, \$61M in drugs, cash, & weapons, fall apart before trial with over 180 charges stayed; and in Feb 2021 CBC headlines read "Charges stayed in one of Ontario's largest Mob busts after alleged illegal conduct by investigators"; I'll see that legal assistance is included in police dispatch to help guide officers to 'dot all their "i"s and cross all their "t"s' in order to prevent these types of mistakes.

Those steps will combine to free up significant officer time; and that will make it possible to have officers return to the policing that society has always expected police to do effectively, addressing problems like traffic related crimes that don't fall into the two areas where cameras have taken the place of police officers and revenue generation has replaced law enforcement, red-light and speed cameras. It should also enable police to respond to emergency calls within their target timelines rather than the current reality where average police response times are three to eleven times the target (the target is 6 minute high-priority response; in 2022, Toronto Police average response ranged from 17½ to 92 minutes for high-priority calls — currently it's almost two hours to over five hours for low-priority calls, when the target is one hour).

The reality is that, arguably correctly, people that break the law assume that Toronto won't bother to respond and won't get there in time to do anything even where law enforcement does choose to respond. A return to effective policing will not only address crime but deter it as well.