

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 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: Josh Matlow

E-mail: info@votematlow.ca

Phone:

Social Media Handle(s): TW/IG @joshmatlow FB jmatlow

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 have always been motivated by a genuine desire to serve in the community and make a difference in people's lives. Toronto is my hometown. I love this diverse and vibrant city and I'm inspired daily by the people who fill it with creativity, energy and passion. It's been my life's mission to make this city as great as it can be. Through my work with community services, the Toronto District School Board and City Council, I have fought hard to create safe spaces for youth, ensure renters have protections, support seniors who want to age in place and protect Toronto's green spaces.

The role of Mayor provides a platform to address local challenges, improve public services, and promote the well-being of everyone. We have complex challenges and issues that will require innovative solutions to tackle our financial, transportation, housing and public safety concerns. And I am ready to have an opportunity to make a positive impact for the wellbeing of the entire 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)

As St. Paul's School Trustee (2003-2010), I worked on projects that supported students as well as the broader community. I initiated a "Green Grid" project for renewable energy generators (such as solar panels) on school

rooftops, campaigned to keep Toronto's school pools open, advocated for governance and accountability reform, demanded genuine consultation processes for the community and championed initiatives to curb youth violence.

As a community advocate and City Councillor, I have fought for the improvement and expansion of local parks and public space, championed high-quality and affordable housing and childcare, supported tenants who needed a strong voice at City Hall, and made the case for evidence-based transit including relief for the overcrowded subway system.

I've supported local business improvement areas, and value farmers' markets and arts and cultural events as integral to the vitality of our neighbourhoods. Some of the work I'm most proud of includes, a strategic plan to create an Age-Friendly city for Toronto's seniors and developing the Youth Equity Strategy to address youth violence at its roots.

As Mayor, I will bring a strong, independent and facts-based perspective to ensure that Torontonians across every neighbourhood feel represented in the work I do. Torontonians work hard, and I promise to build a city that works for you.

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

I am passionate about making our City safe, livable and affordable. The city is in visible decline due to a decade of poor leadership, which starved City services with artificially low taxes. As a result, many Torontonians find themselves paying a lot more to supplement the services that have been cut. Toronto residents have been priced out of the housing market and need access to truly affordable housing.

I will establish Public Build Toronto, a City agency that will develop housing on City-owned lands. With this agency, we will be able to remove developer margins and build housing at cost on 25 million square feet of public land. The agency will support city staff in directly hiring construction companies and partner with non-profit or co-op builders. It will provide a mix of 6,750 affordable apartments, including 750 affordable units for Torontonians on very low or fixed incomes and 8,250 rent-controlled market apartments. With this mix, the units would not require ongoing government subsidy. Through rents, this self-sustaining model would also provide the City with funds to reinvest in the construction of new housing. To control housing costs I will also crack down on illegal "renovictions," implement rent control on all City-owned properties and make getting around more affordable by restoring reliable service to the TTC.

I'm committed to addressing the root causes of violence, and will establish the Community Health & Safety Fund, \$115 million, to address well-known risk factors for criminal behaviour, including poverty, racism and trauma, which will make the TTC and city safer.

I'm committed to making our roads safer for all users and will double the City's investment in Vision Zero to make it safer for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

And I'm committed to investing in the City's goal of becoming net zero by 2040. The City has a strong plan for achieving this, but no dedicated funding. Climate change is a serious issue that we must address head on. I want Toronto to be a leader in this fight under my time as Mayor.

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 my purpose is to leave my community, city and the planet better than I found it. This is the guiding principle of my career.

The purpose of life and the policies I propose are intertwined in their commitment to create an environment that nurtures the pursuit of truth and enables the well-being of all individuals. By prioritizing education, fostering open dialogue, promoting equal opportunities and addressing systemic inequalities, we can ensure that our neighbours are empowered to embark on their own journeys of self-discovery and contribute meaningfully to the collective pursuit of truth.

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?

In order to make Toronto truly accessible to all, a comprehensive plan is critical. As Mayor, I will ensure that we do an audit of all our public spaces, publicly-owned buildings, and facilities to identify barriers and modify accordingly. Inclusive infrastructure is essential for all Torontonians, and that requires policies on all new developments to prioritize accessibility. Developers will be encouraged to incorporate universal design features in new housing projects and provide incentives for retrofitting existing housing to improve accessibility. And I will engage with advocacy groups and people who identify as mentally or physically disabled so that they are contributing at the beginning of City initiatives.

It is important to note that safety and accessibility should be at the core of how we design our city, as the vast majority of journeys around our City start on foot or with wheels. According to Toronto Police Services, 198 vulnerable road users have been killed on our roads since the first full year of Vision Zero's implementation in 2017. I will ensure interventions that provide the most impact in improving safety and accessibility are designed to improve comfort and safety for all users.

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?

Toronto is facing a homelessness crisis, with over 10,000 people living in city shelters or on city streets today. That the crisis has been allowed to become so severe is unconscionable, and we need to take urgent action to address it now. City Council has finally voted to declare homelessness an emergency, but much remains to be done to address it. I am among the only Mayoral Candidates with a comprehensive, evidence-based, and fully costed plan to address homelessness in our city. One of the necessary first steps in addressing shelter capacity is preventing the inflows of individuals into homelessness in the first place.

There are thousands of Torontonians living in precarious, unstable, housing – many of whom are facing rents that they simply cannot afford. Homelessness in our City has been on the rise, and every day people face evictions and forms of housing loss because they cannot afford to maintain their housing. To address this, I have committed to providing 2,000 new rental supplements (\$30 million total) to enable people in housing insecurity to maintain their housing. I also plan to expand qualifying criteria for the City's housing programs, enabling more people who are homeless to transition to full-time, stable housing.

I know that the chronic lack of affordable housing, including rental housing, is one of the most significant issues facing Toronto right now. I know that the city's most vulnerable: racialized communities, newcomers, youth, low-income people, and those with disabilities are the most impacted by the affordability crisis in our city.

Not only am I among the only candidates with a comprehensive plan to address this, I am the only Mayoral candidate with a fully costed plan on how to pay for it. A key plank of my plan expands access to affordable rentals will be through the establishment of Public Build Toronto, a city-owned agency that will develop housing on City-owned lands. My policy contrasts with the City's current HousingNow program, which over the last four years has failed to produce any affordable rental housing, as it overly relies on providing incentives to private sector developers. We cannot rely exclusively on private sector financing to solve our housing crisis: rather, we need robust public investment.

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 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?

I recognize that many Torontonians are currently facing serious mental health crises, and that we must act with urgency to address these issues. The causes of mental health issues are complex, though I recognize that the current issues around lack of affordability, poverty, systemic discrimination, and homelessness strongly contribute to them. A complex interconnection of factors are at play, which means we need robust evidence-based and human-centered approaches.

We need holistic systems to support vulnerable citizens. I am committed to investing in city services, services working at an arm's-length and a social safety net to ensure people have access to services when they need them. My plan focuses on improving capacity in our shelter system, expanding mental health and addiction counseling, providing more safe spaces for at-risk youth, and expanding services for unhoused residents.

Collectively, I want to build a more robust set of city services so that people have access to adequate support when they need it. While there is no single solution to addressing the mental health crisis, there are some common sense approaches we must follow. This includes recognizing the role that systemic discrimination, poverty and oppression has played in contributing to these crises; recognizing that for too long, governments have implemented austerity, leading to starved social services and weak social protection; recognizing that police should be the last, not the first, solution for those in crisis; investing in an approach that sends community crisis teams, trained in de-escalation, to support those in crises; and investing in our social safety net and quality of services, so that people have access to supports when they need them.

We can do better by building a City where people are treated compassionately and where we prioritize human well-being.

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?

Toronto has an ambitious, fact-based strategy – TransformTO Net Zero Strategy – to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 2040, but it has no dedicated funding. The City’s 2023 operating budget only has \$17.7 million for Environment and Climate / and the Capital Plan has \$265 million for the next eight years (\$33 million per year). We cannot let this deeply important action-oriented strategy sit on the shelf. As extreme weather events become more severe and common, the emotional and mental effects of our climate crisis are increasing – [especially for young people](#). Two thirds (66%) of young Canadians aged 16-25 feel “afraid” of the climate crisis, and half (48%) of them are “very or extremely” worried that climate change threatens people and the planet.

I will introduce a corporate parking lot levy to invest \$200-million annually in our TransformTO strategy and accelerate Toronto’s progress towards meeting our promised goals. Toronto has a target of zero carbon emissions by 2040 and TransformTO outlines concrete steps to get there. For instance, the city’s largest green-house gas emitter is buildings, which account for 58% of emissions. We will work with the City’s environmental experts on how best to cost-effectively invest the \$200 million annually to:

- **Build** smarter by mandating all new large residential and commercial construction runs off electric energy by 2028.
- **Retrofit** existing buildings in Toronto, including switching buildings from fossil fuels to electric energy, which has the ability to run on renewable energy and expanding the highrise “Tower Renewal” program to encourage physical retrofits.
- **Move** forward with a TTC ridership growth strategy that includes improved service and lower fares; build more pedestrian-friendly communities; and connect Toronto’s bike lanes to make a true city-wide network.
- **Electrify** the City’s vehicle fleet, including TTC buses; require all taxis and ridesharing vehicles be electric by 2030; mandate electric charging stations in all new housing developments and install them on public land, including schools and libraries.

I started my career as co-director of Earthroots, a Toronto-based environmental non-governmental organization, where I championed efforts to achieve protection legislation for the Oak Ridges Moraine and Ontario’s Greenbelt. As Mayor, I will continue to champion efforts to protect our environment for future generations.

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 Mayor, I will commit to investments that will reduce car dependency in our city. Enhancing public transit is one of the most valuable ways we can promote healthy and safe travel for Torontonians, while also reducing emissions. I will immediately reverse the recent cuts to our TTC services. The TTC cuts impact service levels on a total of 39 transit routes across the city. Of those 28 routes, 26 have at least a 10 per cent increase in wait times to travel through or connect with underserved communities.

In an effort to advance alternatives to driving in our car-dependent communities, I announced my [Scarborough Moves Plan](#). A \$1.2-billion commitment to connect a network of public transit routes and cycling and walking trails that will shorten commute times and improve quality of life. Of my eight commitments to improve the gridlock commuters in Scarborough are faced with, I will be creating a new Scarborough Rapid Busway and adding a new network of cycling and walking corridors and trails to the proposed [16-kilometer meadowway](#).

My [new direction for housing](#), works to create more liveable neighbourhoods. With changes to Section 37, I will be combining Provincially mandated 4 per cent Community Benefit Charges and Development Charges with allocations from [City Works Fund](#) and [Community Health and Safety Fund](#) to intentionally design complete communities that require less reliance on car travel.

And I will double the City's investment in Vision Zero, to redesign the city's most dangerous intersections and streets so that people feel more comfortable travelling by foot, mobility aid or bicycle.

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?

It's important to evaluate and improve road infrastructure in areas prone to street racing – implement traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, etc., and ensure proper lighting and signage to enhance safety and visibility.

I am strongly supportive of improving the traffic calming processes in the City of Toronto, and have led the charge on implementing them in Toronto-St-Paul as a City Councillor. Back in 2014, I played a leadership role in the reduction of neighbourhood speed limits to 30km/h along with Toronto and East York Community councils. This was a significant success, as the following years saw a 28 per cent decrease in collisions and a 70 per cent reduction in the severity of injuries. I am also committed to working collaboratively with the Community Councils in the future on ways to improve the processes through which decisions around speed reductions get made in our neighborhoods.

I will also support outreach programs that provide counselling, mentorship and support to young individuals involved in street racing, and collaborate with community leaders to identify early signs of risk factors and implement intervention strategies. In my YouthStart plan, I have allocated funding to support our youth in recreation activities and mentorship programs.

By implementing these measures, the City of Toronto can work towards reducing the threat of street racing and addressing its underlying causes, creating a safer environment for its residents and especially its younger population.