

Questions for candidates of all parties from a coalition of Residents' Associations in Eglinton-Lawrence

Background:

When the writ dropped, an alliance of Residents' Associations in the eastern half of Eglinton-Lawrence Riding set up a steering committee to arrange an all-candidates' meeting.

That plan did not work out, as the PC candidate never replied to our invitation and the NDP candidate withdrew.

Accordingly, the steering committee drew up a set of questions like those we had hoped to ask candidates from all parties had a community meeting happened.

ARECA is non-partisan and does not endorse any candidate. Below are the answers from Liberal Candidate Gasparro. Should another candidate respond to our request, we will post their answers.

Ontario faces very many issues. We have restricted ourselves here to matters of especial interest to our members, as residents of Toronto. They touch our city's efficient operation, prosperity, and quality of life:

1. Governance and civic life
2. Sustainability amidst climate change
3. Social health
4. Transportation
5. Housing and general affordability
6. Education and culture

QUESTIONS

1. Governance

a. How to pay for what you promise:

At every election, candidates promise to pay for good things to do. But they seldom tell us how they intend to pay for them: to tax, borrow, or cut and if so, what?

Question: So how do you propose to find the means to fund your party's promises?

I believe that responsible governance means charting a clear plan for the future. The Ontario Liberal Party believes in consulting experts, engaging with communities, and ensuring every dollar is used effectively to improve the lives of Ontarians.

We will prioritize smart investments in education, healthcare, affordability, and housing—sectors that drive long-term economic growth and reduce costs over time. We will also ensure that those who have benefited the most—large corporations and the ultra-wealthy—pay their fair share by closing tax loopholes and eliminating wasteful government spending.

Unlike the current government, which has relied on reckless cuts and costly privatization schemes, we will take a balanced approach: maintaining essential services while making strategic choices that benefit all residents, not just the well-connected. Every commitment we make is grounded in a responsible fiscal plan—ensuring we deliver results without saddling future generations with unnecessary debt.

Here are the things we will NOT do in order to help fund our commitments. We will NOT:

Spend \$116 Billion dollars on a tunnel under the 401

Borrow \$3 Billion to send you a \$200 bribe I mean cheque only to have to pay it back

Spend \$7 Billion per year in order to subsidize the largest corporations energy bills while our home energy bills have gone up 25% since Doug Ford took office

Spend \$3 Billion on an Ontario Infrastructure Bank that hasn't built a single project

Doug Ford's priorities are not our priorities.

b. Residents' disempowerment:

Preamble: In recent years, here in Toronto, we residents' associations are finding it ever harder to push back against developers. Provincial laws have undermined our access to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT). Meanwhile, MZOs (Ministerial Zoning Orders) often up-end Toronto's planning. And, with Midtown in Focus, the Ministry of Housing gutted a plan we residents spent years helping to design - a plan for a complete community that accommodated higher density.

Question: What would your party propose to assure that residents have some say in planning?

Residents deserve a real say in how their communities grow and evolve, not to be sidelined by a government that prioritizes developer interests over the people who live here. The Ford government has eliminated public input at the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT), overusing Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZOs), and overriding years of community-led planning, like Midtown in Focus. That needs to change.

An Ontario Liberal government will restore balance by reforming the OLT so that it no longer acts as a rubber stamp for developers and instead prioritizes community-driven planning. We will ensure that MZOs are used only in exceptional circumstances—not as a tool to bypass public consultation.

Our focus is on building complete communities. That means planning for transit, schools, parks, and essential services alongside new housing. We will work with municipalities and residents to ensure growth is responsible, sustainable, and respects the character of the neighborhoods—because planning should be done *with* communities, not *to* them

c. Charter city:

Preamble: As Canada's largest city, Toronto finds it hard to fund transit, roads, social housing, and other daily services. Granting **charter city** status would help the city to serve its citizens better. Toronto City Council recently approved the creation of a **Charter City Task Force**.

Question: Would your government give cities the authority to create their own sales tax or revenue tools other than the property tax, so as to keep pace with local needs, especially if, like Toronto, they have grown fast?

An Ontario Liberal Government would focus on strengthening the partnership between the province and municipalities to ensure stable, predictable funding that meets Toronto's needs.

Rather than continuing to download responsibilities without support, an Ontario Liberal government would work collaboratively with Toronto to ensure they have the funding they need in order to deliver critical services to our community. We believe in a funding model that ensures the city has the resources it needs while maintaining a strong, united province where we tackle challenges together.

2. Sustainability and Climate Change:

Preamble: The warming climate poses ever greater threats to the health and safety of Toronto and other cities and towns, and to all Ontarians.

a. Flooding:

Question: How will Ontario help cities adapt to the massive rainstorms of the sort we have recently suffered?

The increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, like the massive rainstorms we've seen, demand urgent action. Ontario must take a leadership role in helping cities adapt by investing in modern, climate-resilient infrastructure.

A Liberal government will work with municipalities to upgrade stormwater management systems, expand green infrastructure like permeable surfaces and urban wetlands, and protect natural floodplains. We will also ensure that development is climate-conscious, preventing sprawl that worsens flooding risks.

Additionally, we will restore evidence-based decision-making in climate policy, reversing the Ford government's cuts to environmental protections and conservation authorities. By strengthening partnerships with local governments and investing in sustainable solutions, we can make Ontario's cities more resilient to climate change while protecting communities from future disasters.

b. Dangerous heat:

Question: How will Ontario help big cities like Toronto to mitigate ever hotter summers and to prevent "urban heat island" effects?

With climate change driving hotter summers, Ontario must take action to help cities like Toronto mitigate extreme heat and protect residents—especially vulnerable populations like seniors and low-income communities.

A Liberal government will prioritize investments in green infrastructure to combat the urban heat island effect. This includes expanding Toronto's tree canopy, increasing funding for street trees and urban forests, and supporting green roofs, cool roofing initiatives, and permeable surfaces that help reduce heat retention. We will also work with municipalities to create more shaded public spaces, promote reflective and heat-resistant building materials, and ensure access to cooling centers during extreme heat events.

Additionally, we will restore funding to conservation authorities and environmental programs that the Ford government has cut, ensuring cities have the resources to build climate-resilient

infrastructure. By making smart, sustainable investments, we can help keep Toronto and other Ontario cities cooler, healthier, and more livable in the face of rising temperatures.

It was an Ontario Liberal Government that eliminated coal fired power plants from our electricity grid and decarbonized our electricity grid. That decision helped reduce childhood asthma by 70%. Doug Ford has reversed that. While the rest of the world tries to decarbonize he is doing the opposite. We would stop the recarbonizing of our electricity grid.

3. Social Health

Preamble: In our public places, we Torontonians are seeing more and more homelessness and more suffering by fellow Torontonians whose lives are in painful disarray.

a. Deaths from drugs

Deaths from drugs, fentanyl especially, are at a critical level.

Question: What can Ontario do to help solve this problem?

We need a compassionate, evidence-based approach that treats addiction as a health issue—not a crime.

We are still reviewing the government's omnibus legislation on supervised consumption sites, but it is clear it does nothing to create new support for our loved ones who are struggling.

Doug Ford has systematically cut services for those in need: dismantling the Opioid Emergency Task Force, and cutting funding by \$350 million.

We will improve access to treatment and recovery services, including mental health and addiction supports, so that those struggling can get the help they need when they need it.

Additionally, we will work with municipalities and frontline organizations to expand access to naloxone, increase funding for outreach and supportive housing, and address the root causes of addiction—such as poverty, trauma, and lack of mental health care.

The Ford government has ignored this crisis for too long. It's time for real leadership that prioritizes saving lives and supporting communities.

b. Homelessness and destitution

Question: How can the Province help find housing for the homeless and serve their complex needs?

The homelessness crisis is an absolute tragedy. It is heartbreaking to see what people are going through—especially in freezing temperatures. Doug Ford just thinks he can make homelessness illegal, but he has failed to build the homes or provide the health care that people need. People are suffering because Doug Ford puts himself and his rich friends first.

The solution to homelessness is to build more homes, not make poverty illegal. That's why a Liberal government will take real action by building more affordable housing and doubling ODSP to ensure that vulnerable Ontarians have the income support they need to stay housed.

We will also double the current stock of supportive housing units with wraparound services such as mental health care, addiction treatment, and employment support. To help renters, we will introduce fair, phased-in rent control to prevent sudden rent hikes and establish the Rental Emergency Support for Tenants (REST) Fund to help vulnerable renters avoid eviction during financial emergencies.

Additionally, we will restore provincial funding for deeply affordable and transitional housing—funding that Doug Ford has cut—and work with municipalities, non-profits, and co-ops to increase the supply of non-market and community housing, not just luxury condos.

Solving homelessness requires both urgent action and long-term solutions. The Ontario Liberals will ensure every Ontarian has access to stable, affordable housing and the supports they need to thrive.

c. Medical services

Preamble: Hospitals are understaffed, the ER is slow and often overwhelmed. Many Ontarians lack a primary care physician.

Question: What can the Province do to support and retain nurses and family doctors in the public system?

Under Doug Ford's watch, our emergency rooms are closing, in Eglinton-Lawrence alone, over 19,000 people are without a family doctor, and wait times have ballooned. Ontario's public healthcare system should be the envy of the world, but instead, Doug Ford is dismantling it piece by piece to benefit for-profit healthcare companies. The result is that Ontarians are suffering, and our healthcare workers are stretched too thin.

Ontario Liberals have a plan to restore trust in our healthcare system and ensure that every person in Ontario has access to a family doctor within four years. We will do this by addressing both the supply and retention of healthcare professionals.

Our plan includes creating two new medical schools and expanding capacities in existing ones, effectively doubling the number of medical school spots and residency positions. This will increase the number of new family doctors and specialists entering the system, helping to fill the 2.5 million gaps we currently face.

We will also accelerate the integration of internationally trained doctors into the Ontario healthcare system, matching the successful models in provinces like Alberta and British Columbia, and helping to address the severe shortage of medical professionals.

At the same time, we will implement policies to retain doctors and nurses by improving working conditions. This includes team-based care with evening and weekend support, integrated home care for seniors, and accessible mental health services for children, youth, and teenagers. We will also improve the working conditions for nurses by investing in better staffing ratios, competitive wages, and additional resources to prevent burnout.

Under the Ford Government the average family doctor now has 18 hours a week of paper work. To tackle that administrative burden on healthcare professionals, among other changes we will eliminate outdated systems like fax machines, enhance virtual care, introduce centralized referral systems with patient portals, and implement interoperable electronic medical records—ensuring that doctors spend less time filling out paperwork.

Healthcare is a public good and should remain that way. Under the Ontario Liberals, we will rebuild our healthcare system from the ground up, restoring confidence and ensuring that everyone in Ontario has access to timely, high-quality care.

4. Transportation

a. The big picture:

Preamble: The Greater Golden Horseshoe now has 8 million residents, more come yearly, and sprawl keeps sprawling, making transportation ever slower.

Question: What long-run strategy should Ontario adopt to keep us moving well?

Ontario needs a government committed to making real infrastructure investments across various modalities to address the growing transportation challenges. With the Greater Golden Horseshoe experiencing rapid growth and increased sprawl, transportation has become more difficult, and gridlock is worsening in our cities. Federal and provincial investment is essential to build better public transit faster, including rail, LRT, and subways where appropriate. Exploring a

mix of funding sources—provincial, municipal, and federal—as well as innovative financing mechanisms is key.

Unfortunately, Doug Ford's focus on unrealistic plans, like building a tunnel under the 401, has stalled progress. The downtown subway relief line is barely underway, the Eglinton LRT has no end date in sight, and the Gardiner is essentially a parking lot. A Liberal government will take a strategic, long-term approach to transportation, prioritizing real solutions to reduce congestion, expand transit, and improve mobility for all.

b. Urban congestion:

Question: Would you back congestion pricing for Toronto?

Traffic congestion in Toronto is a growing challenge that affects all of us and our overall quality of life in our city. There is a need for real solutions to ease gridlock, improve transit, and make it easier for people to get around.

At this time, there has been no final decision made regarding congestion pricing. While it is one potential tool to address gridlock, any decision needs to be carefully considered as part of a broader transportation plan that includes input from residents, businesses, and transportation experts. It's crucial that we ensure the policy is fair and effective, and that it does not place undue burdens on those who rely on their vehicles, particularly essential workers or low-income residents who may have fewer alternatives.

Before making any decisions, we need to ensure that any policy would be fair, effective, and not place an undue burden on those who rely on their vehicles, including seniors, essential workers and low-income residents.

The Ontario Liberal commitment remains connecting our city with better public transit, expanding smart traffic management systems, and investing in sustainable transportation so that people have better alternatives to driving. We will work closely with municipalities to explore all options that can effectively reduce congestion and keep Toronto moving.

c. Cycling safety

Question: Would you support a cycling network to separate cyclists from motor vehicles?

Toronto has a cycling network in place, and the City continues to expand and improve it. Decisions about where bike lanes are needed should be based on comprehensive local studies and community input, led by the City of Toronto.

While the province has a role in supporting municipalities with infrastructure funding, decisions about bike lane placement and network expansion are best made at the local level. A Liberal government would work collaboratively with cities to ensure they have the resources they need to improve road safety for all users—cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers alike—while respecting municipal decision-making.

5. Housing and general affordability

Preamble: Just as Ontario tries to speed up housing, with the condo market collapsing construction may slow or cease. Meanwhile rents and prices are so high that many Ontarians are house-poor and stressed. And much new housing takes the form of extremely high towers, densely clustered, filled with cramped apartments, no model for good living.

a. New housing

Question: What should the Province do to accelerate construction of new housing that is built in the right places, with a good mix of dwelling types?

Doug Ford's Conservatives have shown they aren't serious about addressing Ontario's housing crisis. Instead of building the homes the province needs, they've prioritized the interests of well-connected insiders while leaving ordinary Ontarians behind. Under Ford's leadership, housing starts have dropped by 15% in 2024, and his government slashed funding for municipalities attempting to build affordable housing. Rather than using \$189 million for an early election, he could have invested that money into building affordable homes and helping those experiencing homelessness.

Ontario Liberals have always been committed to building a stronger, more sustainable housing market. We will accelerate the construction of new housing in the right places by eliminating the provincial Land Transfer Tax for first-time homebuyers, seniors downsizing, and non-profit home builders, saving families and seniors an average of \$13,500. We will also scrap Development Charges on new middle-class housing, which can add up to \$170,000 per home, and replace them with the Better Communities Fund to promote smart, sustainable growth.

Additionally, we will tackle the need for supportive housing by doubling the current stock of supportive units as soon as possible, which will add over 60,000 new units with wraparound services for vulnerable Ontarians. To support students, we will launch Ontario's first-ever Post-Secondary Housing Strategy, ensuring accommodation for all first-year students through capital grants and low-cost financing to post-secondary institutions. This strategy will also work with CMHC to develop easily replicable student housing designs and require municipalities to consider student housing needs in their planning.

A real housing plan isn't just about building high-rise towers; it's about ensuring that the homes we build are affordable and accessible for everyone. We need to build more homes of all types and make affordability a priority for all Ontarians.

b. Rising rents

Question: What should the province do to lower the-cost of rent?

Ontario is facing a rental crisis, with skyrocketing prices forcing people into financial stress. Doug Ford's Conservatives have refused to act, siding with landlords and developers while renters struggle.

One of the very first things this Conservative government did when they took office was approve the highest rent increase in almost a decade under the guise of a 'cap,' while also removing rent control protections that safeguarded Ontario families from being priced out of their own home.

Ontario Liberals will take real action to make renting more affordable by:

- Introducing fair, phased-in rent control, ensuring that tenants are protected from sudden, massive rent hikes.
- Resolving Landlord-Tenant Board disputes within two months, so renters aren't stuck in limbo when facing unfair evictions or landlord neglect.
- Establishing the Rental Emergency Support for Tenants (REST) Fund to help vulnerable renters avoid eviction during financial emergencies.
- Expanding student housing options under the Post-Secondary Housing Strategy, ensuring that purpose-built student housing is prioritized so students aren't forced into overpriced, unregulated rental markets.

Doug Ford chose his billion-dollar 'boozedoggle' over nearly 8,000 new affordable housing units for Ontario families. It's time to put people first and make renting fair and affordable again.

c. Alternative housing

Question: What should the Province do to encourage alternative forms of housing, co-ops and shared accommodation? And how can it stimulate and fund non-market affordable housing?

Affordable housing isn't just about condos and towers—it's about giving people more choices that meet their needs. Ford's government has ignored co-ops, shared housing, and non-market housing, leaving Ontarians with fewer options and higher costs.

Ontario Liberals will:

- Expand funding for co-op housing and non-profit housing developments, ensuring stable, affordable alternatives to private rentals.
- Support innovative housing models, including co-housing, secondary suites, and community land trusts, to provide more affordable, community-driven housing solutions.

- Double the current stock of supportive housing units to ensure that vulnerable Ontarians, including seniors and those experiencing homelessness, have stable homes with wraparound support services.
- Require municipalities to incorporate student housing needs into their planning policies so students have access to affordable options instead of being forced into expensive rentals.

Affordable, alternative housing should be a priority, not an afterthought. We will ensure that all Ontarians have access to safe, stable, and diverse housing options

d. Midrise construction

Midrise buildings offer an effective solution to Ontario's housing crisis, instead of the extreme density the Ford Government is promoting that is destroying communities in Eglinton-Lawrence. An Ontario Liberal Government would allow gentle increases in density development which will also preserve a neighbourhoods character. These buildings are cost-effective to construct and make better use of underutilized land, which can lead to more affordable housing options.

Ontario Liberals will prioritize midrise development along transit corridors and areas with good public transportation access. By streamlining zoning laws and incentivizing municipalities, we'll ensure that new developments are affordable, accessible, and reduce sprawl. This approach will create vibrant, mixed-use communities, integrating affordable housing and fostering economic opportunities while respecting the environment.

Question: How can the Province support ample midrise construction across Toronto to pivot from its current 50-storey template?

We need smart growth. Ontario Liberals will promote midrise development by cutting red tape and offering incentives to build along major transit corridors and commercial streets. We will scrap Development Charges to make it more viable and affordable to build. Encourage transit-oriented communities, work with municipalities to promote new housing that includes parks, schools, and local services. We will push for a mix of housing options, including family-sized units, so that midrise buildings offer practical living spaces rather than just micro-condos.

The Ford government has catered to big developers without thinking about livability. We will build complete communities that work for everyone, not just luxury condo buyers.

6. Education and culture

Preamble: Education is a social good, a device for social mobility, a school for good citizenship. Colleges and universities are direly stressed by caps on foreign students, Provincial freezes to their tuition fixed at 2018 levels despite sizeable inflation in costs, and the lowest per-capita provincial funding. Our public schools are badly in need of upgrade.

a. Post-secondary education

Preamble: A well-educated population keeps Toronto/Ontario productive and economically competitive. Ontario has the lowest per-capita provincial funding for post-graduate education.

Question: Would you support an increase in provincial funding to our colleges and universities?

Ontario is the economic engine of Canada, yet it ranks dead last in the country for funding universities and colleges. Under Doug Ford's leadership, it's no surprise that 10 out of 23 public universities in the province are reporting deficits. York University just announced it cannot afford to run 18 degree programs, and Queens University is on the brink of bankruptcy. This is a direct result of the government's neglect of post-secondary education.

Ontario needs a renewed focus on becoming a global leader in higher education and training. We must invest in our institutions and ensure that anyone who meets the academic requirements has the opportunity to attend. A strong economic future for Ontario begins with creating an educated workforce, but the current situation, where Ontario is last in Canada for post-secondary funding, forces colleges and universities to rely heavily on skyrocketing international student fees to survive. This is unsustainable and inequitable.

Ford has abandoned Ontario's students and post-secondary institutions, but a Liberal government will restore funding and rebuild trust in the system. The new plan will focus on increasing contributions to colleges' and universities' operating budgets, which currently sit at just 30%—the worst in the country. We will also eliminate interest on OSAP loans and delay repayment until graduates earn at least \$50,000 annually, making higher education more affordable. By capping international student enrollment at 10% annually, we aim to reduce the overreliance on international tuition and ensure fair access for domestic students. The public college-private partnership model, which has led to exploitative, low-quality education for many students, will also be phased out.

Additionally, we will launch Ontario's first-ever Post-Secondary Housing Strategy, which guarantees first-year student accommodation, works with CMHC to develop replicable student housing designs, and requires municipalities to account for student housing needs in their planning.

Bonnie Crombie and the Ontario Liberals are committed to placing education at the center of Ontario's economic future. Without a well-educated workforce, Ontario's economy will continue to falter under Ford's neglect.

b. Failing infrastructure in public schools

Question: How will the province address the deterioration in physical plant of many of our schools, especially older ones. For example, soaring temperatures which now occur in May and June sap the health and performance of both students and teachers.

If elected to government, Ontario's Liberals will place education at the heart of our economic plan because we know that without high-quality education, our economy will falter. Without growth, we cannot hire more family doctors, build essential infrastructure like roads and bridges, fix our schools, or lower class sizes. Education is an economic policy, and we cannot compete with the world without it.

This means we must address the crisis in our schools, where the repair backlog has ballooned to \$16 billion. Schools need modern technology, functioning infrastructure, and safe, comfortable learning environments. We cannot allow our students and teachers to suffer from leaking roofs, broken washrooms, or inadequate air conditioning during heatwaves. Addressing this issue will be a top priority for Ontario's Liberals.

Under Doug Ford, Ontario's schools have been left to deteriorate because of deliberate underfunding. Class sizes are growing, teachers are quitting, and parents are losing trust in the system. Rather than investing in education, Ford has spent years fighting with teachers and cutting funding, all while enriching his wealthy insiders.

Ontario Liberals will fix the situation by investing in school infrastructure, focusing on upgrading HVAC systems, installing cooling measures, and repairing aging schools that suffer from extreme temperatures. We will reduce class sizes and hire more teachers to ensure students get the one-on-one support they need instead of being squeezed into overcrowded classrooms. We will fully fund school bus transportation, reversing Ford's cuts that have left many parents scrambling for alternatives. Restoring respect and stability in education will be key, and that means working with teachers, not against them, to improve learning conditions and outcomes.

It was the Ontario Liberals who rebuilt the education system after the last PC government, introducing Full-Day Kindergarten, smaller class sizes, and better pay for teachers. We will do it again because every child in Ontario deserves access to a safe, well-funded, and world-class education.