

Building A Better GTA

A plan for a better GTA

By Jeffery Thai



My name is Jeffery Thai. I'm 16 years old and currently living in Markham. I have lived in the GTA my whole life and believe that it is one of the best places to live in the world. However I believe that we can always strive for better. I am very interested in politics and the issues the GTA faces. I want to pursue a career in urban planning. For this competition I want to come up with realistic solutions to the problems we face. As a young person I care about the future of the GTA. We face many pressing issues like congestion, how to protect the environment, rising crime and planning for population growth, just to name a few. My policies are designed to address these issues and more. They would outline what I would do if I was made "Jr Mayor of the GTA". Many of these policies would need to be funded through finding savings in current government expenditure without cutting vital services and possible tax increases. It would also require cooperation with the Federal and Provincial to get the necessary funding.

Create a Affordable Housing Corporation

I would create a crown corporation that would be owned by the local governments of the GTA. This corporation would identify sites to build affordable housing and

develop them. It would then sell housing units below market value, and have rent controlled apartments for people to rent similar to the Hong Kong Housing Authority or HDB in Singapore. All profits made from the company would be reinvested into it, making it a nonprofit. The company will be run similar to a private corporation and would strive to be independent from political interference. It would be financed by a 1 percent additional property tax surcharge for landlords who own more than 1 rental property.

Order A Public Inquiry into the Eglinton Crosstown Lrt Delays

The construction process of the Eglinton Lrt is an embarrassment. Its opening has been delayed multiple times and won't open until at least 4 years after the original deadline. I would order a public inquiry that would be chaired by a former Judge or civil servant. Expert Witnesses on transit and construction will testify about what can be done to prevent further delays and how to build future transit lines more efficiently and cost effectively. The groups and individuals involved would also have to testify including politicians, representatives from Crosslinx, Metrolinx, the TTC, Bombardier and local residents affected by the construction. Crosslinx should be fined if they have failed to honour the contract signed and the CEO of Metrolinx should be fired if he is found to be incompetent. All proceeds from any fines should go to business owners on Eglinton negatively affected by the construction. Many businesses have closed down and others have had significantly less business due to the delays. Therefore they deserve financial compensation.

Reform Transit Fares Across the GTA

The current fare system from the TTC, YRT and other transit providers is unfair. People pay one fare for the transit route they use. This means that people who take shorter journeys pay the same amount of money as those who take longer ones. For example, A person taking the Steeles Avenue bus from Markham Rd to Finch Station would pay the same amount as a person who would take it from Leslie St to Kennedy Rd. I would charge transit users by distance and the rate per km would be determined by experts. Users will have to tap their Presto Card when they leave instead of boarding the bus. The rate per distance for students, youth and seniors

would be lower like it is now. People who have monthly passes will not pay by distance and continue using the passes as usual. To make this happen I would merge all the transit systems in the GTA into one provider called GTA Transit. Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients can ride GTA Transit for free. There will also be a low income discounted monthly pass for Individuals making less than \$25,000 per year. People with this special pass would pay less than the normal monthly pass.

Greenbelt and Housing Policy

The Greenbelt is meant for natural animal habitats, farmland, wetlands and watersheds. It should not be built on. If I was GTA Mayor I would lobby Doug Ford to change his policy on the Greenbelt. We have a very bad housing crisis. Reforming zoning would help us build more affordable housing, so that young people can continue to live in the communities they grew up in and reduce homelessness. We should develop housing on brownfields, and in underused industrial areas. We should also change municipal zoning laws to increase the density that can be built in certain areas. We should not let NIMBYism stop us from building more housing. Solving the housing crisis requires multiple solutions, not just zoning reform. I would implement a GTA wide rent control policy to limit rent increases to be in line with wages. The maximum percentage increase landlords are allowed to charge per year will be determined by a rent control board that will be made up of representatives of landlords and tenants as well as experts on the rental market and civil servants. I would support the strong mayor powers to get more housing built.

Crime and Public Safety

Crime is rising in the GTA and people do not feel safe anymore. For too long people have tried to find easy, quick ways to reduce crime. According to many studies done the main causes of crime are poverty, substance abuse, and child neglect/abuse. We must do more to prevent crime at its roots. To reduce child abuse I would create a specialized child abuse hotline where children in need can anonymously report the abuse they're suffering and seek help. Adults can also anonymously report child abuse they see happening and police will investigate

these tips. I would also try to convince to require teacher to find time to educate kids Grade 4 and older about child abuse and their rights. To help victims of domestic abuse and their children I would increase funding for organizations To combat helping kids in poverty I would make all community center services free for people under 18 years old. I would increase funding for programs helping at-risk youth, and youth addicted to drugs, and alcohol. To discourage at-risk youth from committing crime I would get former gang members and prisoners to be guest speakers at all GTA schools. To deal with emergency calls/incidents involving people with severe mental health issues, I would get specialized response units to deal with these incidents. They will be made up of trained people to deal with these situations and only one officer accompanying them. This would reduce the workload on Police Officers. I would also try to recruit and hire more officers. Finally speeding, DUI, and bad driving is becoming increasingly prevalent. I would install cameras on busy roads and at intersections to alert police to drivers violating the rules.