

Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA) Questionnaire

Reponses by Mayoral Candidate Sarah Climenhaga

1. Traffic Congestion: What plans and actions would you take to improve the current traffic grid?

Toronto's road network is not big enough to accommodate the growing population if they travel by car. The only way to increase road capacity would be to expand into private housing or private business areas, eliminate sidewalks or green space, and none of these are options I believe enhance life in this city. Car traffic simply expands to whatever road lanes there are, and congestion is an automatic result of growth. Cities around the world have congestion and I don't believe we will be able to solve car congestion through increasing road capacity.

There is however a way to move far more people in Toronto. That way is to ensure transit lanes free of car traffic, since transit vehicles have a large capacity. It is also to design streets so they are safe for those on bikes, in wheelchairs or on foot. When our city has streets that include express transit lanes, wide sidewalks and roadways that are safe for bicycles, scooters and cars, we will be able to allow the movement of far more employees and customers on the existing road network.

2. King Street: What are your views on continuing or changing the current King Street corridor concept?

I believe the king street corridor concept is a good one, yet it could be improved and I am open to learning about the best ways to maintain vibrant street environments that allow excellent access to business. Having express transit corridors moves far more people. Rather than increasing car traffic, I support looking at the big ways that government is negatively impacting businesses. I believe restaurants are unfairly penalized with permits, fees and regulations that create an environment that is hostile to business. I support express transit lanes and improving safety for non motorized traffic, and I believe that business should be involved in the design of transportation changes from the beginning so that expertise of local business owners is included in meaningful ways.

3. Major Street Construction Projects: What are your views on preventing these disasters in the future and your decision on reimbursing businesses for financial losses?

Toronto's budget is such that it should avoid costly megaprojects that shut major corridors for months on end. When it comes to street improvements, I believe Toronto's government should be undertaking projects that can be done at low cost and in short timelines. Rather than expensive transit mega-projects, I favour projects like the King Street pilot - done with the input of local businesses - that are cheap, quick to implement, and easy to modify as necessary. During unavoidable construction projects (like urgent repairs), it is reasonable to drop taxes to businesses that suffer due to loss of access due to those projects. In the case of construction

associated with housing projects that closes road or pedestrian access, it seems reasonable to expect development companies to contribute to offsetting costs of affected local businesses.

4. CafeTO: what are your views on continuing support for CafeTo? What are your views on the fee increases?

My view is that there should be zero fees for CafeTo, permanently. Street cafes enhance the vibrancy of our city, and they increase safety for residents by encouraging a lively and friendly street environment. They provide employment for local residents. Street patios should be incentivized, not penalized by fees. I would like to expand programs like Cafe TO and I am open to other ideas from the business community of how to make this program better.

5. Property Tax: What are your views on ensuring these gaps are corrected to benefit small business owners?

I share your concerns. I am interested in ensuring tax policy benefits small and independent business owners.

6. Municipal Accommodations Tax (MAT): What are your views on directing 100 per cent of the MAT towards the tourism economy?

I favour complete transparency in taxation and accountability. Everyone who is taxed should be able to know exactly how that tax is spent, and to have a say in it as well. I support reducing taxes to the bare minimum, and instituting user fees instead, which taxpayers can choose to pay according to what they use. I disagree with MAT being used for general city revenue, and believe it should be reduced to the bare minimum of what is required to pay for the city services that are provided to the places where MAT is applied. If there is a desire by the community affected by MAT to have taxes that pay for tourism marketing I am supportive of that.

I recently received a request for support from Restaurant Canada. In the pledge to them I elaborated slightly on my philosophy when it comes to the City of Toronto's relationship with the restaurant industry. It is included on the next page fyi.

I PLEDGE TO SUPPORT THE VIBRANCY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF TORONTO'S RESTAURANTS BY:

-  Supporting economic recovery for our restaurants
-  Promoting Toronto's restaurants and neighbourhoods
-  Committing not to add cost or red tape to the opening or operation of a restaurant
-  Being consultative and working collaboratively to improve how the city works with restaurants
-  Improving public safety to keep restaurants safe for workers and guests

I believe the government should work with the restaurant industry to remove all but the most essential regulations and inspections, and to remove most fees as well. The government's job should be to allow restaurants to thrive, rather than to restrict them and tax them unfairly. The economic benefits of a healthy restaurant sector far outweigh any losses that the government would incur by cutting unfair fees on restaurateurs. I am committed to public safety, and I am also opposed to the types of involuntary business closures and restrictions that were imposed on restaurant owners by the government in 2020 and 2021 and would not support any such future mandatory closures. Thank you to all of you in the restaurant industry who make our communities better with your hard work.



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