

Unionville All Candidates Meeting – GENERAL ISSUES QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATES QUESTIONS:

1. Name: **John Cabrelli**

2. Do you think good traffic management should be in place before you approve further development in places like Markham Centre? What do you propose to do to address traffic issues in the Town?

Clearly, traffic is a serious issue for all residents, and there's no doubt that smart traffic management will continue to be essential for Markham. Let's give credit to Councillor Dan Horchik for introducing a motion that was passed by Council to do exactly that – to put traffic solutions in place before approving new development. And we need more than band-aid solutions. We need innovative ideas that will enhance traffic flow while protecting the quality of life in Ward 3. This means considering options such as synchronizing traffic lights to increase flow on major routes during rush hours. It means looking at the option of widening regional roads where appropriate. It also means looking at related issues such as transit.

3. What are you going to do to get better direct north–south transit connections between Markham and Toronto to help relieve traffic congestion? Would you encourage more emphasis on expanding existing north-south TTC connections into Markham on routes such as Kennedy, McCowan and Warden?

Transit is unquestionably part of the equation of handling congestion. Transit is also a shared responsibility, so I will put the priority on working with the Region and Regional Councillors to sort out how best to make this happen. Just adding TTC buses may not create the results we want. In York Region and specifically Markham, we need to improve GO Transit services, YRT routes, and VIVA.

4. The Pickering Airport issue has been hanging over the heads of homeowners in Markham for almost 40 years now, and no one knows if it is coming or not. With modern day concerns for property values, quality of life and the environment, and, given the experience of Mirabel, where do you stand on the Pickering Airport?

I understand the GTAA has acknowledged some of Markham's concerns about the airport at whatever point it may be built. More importantly, this is an issue of appropriate land use. It was the federal government that wanted the lands set aside four decades ago – the same federal government that now wants to have a protected "food belt" in Ontario. Well, here is a perfect opportunity for a creative alternative. Instead of building an airport that we're not sure is needed – and certainly not wanted by the communities that are even closer to it – perhaps we should be going to the federal government and petitioning the land to be reclaimed for farm use.

5. What is your vision for cycling paths and sidewalks throughout the Town, especially along the major roadways, so to encourage less car dependency as a means of transportation?

It is important to recognize that roads are designed for cars, and thus are fundamentally unsafe for bicycles – not to mention pedestrians. It's also true that people are still very attached to their cars. Additional bike routes may not make a significant difference in the number of people who do or do not drive to work, but they are a major issue of safety. I've stated that safety is number one on my list of community priorities, and that I'll work to protect and enhance the paths and parks we have here in Ward 3 so they can be enjoyed by all. Here again, Markham has an opportunity to show leadership. Thinking

ahead, let's consider having dedicated bike paths, separate from roads and sidewalks. A dedicated path would be needed on only one side of a route instead of two, and would ensure that everyone is safe – kids riding to school, adults out for exercise, people who walk, and drivers. Again, it's a question of coming up with creative ideas and then working with all stakeholders to refine those ideas and put them into action.

6. With important departments for the pertinent health care needs of our residents moving away from our local Markham Stouffville Hospital, to other hospitals, such as Newmarket, and, while we must deal with a new tax on the table from the Region to pay for our local hospital with reduced services for our health care needs, what do you propose to do for our local hospital?

When it comes to healthcare services, specialized care is often better care, so generally it makes sense to segment the care around the region. With respect to where the money will come from to expand Markham Stouffville Hospital, I strongly believe that the dollars the provincial government is already collecting from us as a healthcare tax should be coming back to our community to help improve our hospital. We will have to work with Markham Council and the Region to explore funding options. For the record, I have helped raise tens of thousands of dollars for the hospital over the years, and I know that the community can be very generous.

7. Virtually every municipality in Ontario, except Markham, has passed a resolution requesting that the Province of Ontario enact ANTI-SLAPP legislation to protect people or groups (such as ratepayers) who speak out on an issue of public interest from strategic lawsuits. Where do you stand on this issue?

I agree that groups should not be muzzled or intimidated from speaking out on public issues, and I will support a move to instigate anti-SLAPP laws in Ontario

8. York Region is now more than an incredible one billion dollars in debt, much of it incurred as a result of the region's habit of borrowing heavily to send new pipes and roads marching out in advance of the region's infamous old-fashioned sprawl. Today, York Region now has the highest per capita debt in the whole GTA. What would you do to change this?

York Region's debt has accrued over time in part because of our tremendous growth. With guidelines on increased density vs. sprawl, the development trend is starting to tip back in favour of balanced growth within existing infrastructure boundaries. As well, increased growth will add tax revenues that will mitigate some of that debt, although it will take time to have an effect. In the short-term, we need to work with the Region and Regional Councillors to develop budgets that always include reduction of current debt. I'd also like to investigate whether the Province can help us with that debt load.

Thank you!
John Cabrelli

cabrelli@rogers.com
905-513-7798