

LONDON PRIMER 2026

A civic primer for London's third century

History • Present • Assets • Challenges • Opportunities • Future •
Leadership • Candidates

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through October 4, 2026

CONTENTS

PART I — THE LONDON WE INHERITED.....	5
PART II — THE LONDON WE LIVE IN.....	80
PART III — THE ASSETS WE HAVE.....	105
PART IV — THE CHALLENGES WE FACE.....	162
PART V — THE OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE US.....	177
PART VI — CHOOSING THE FUTURE.....	193
The London We Could Be.....	193
PART VII — THE LEADERSHIP WE NEED.....	208
The Mayor’s Job Description.....	208
Interviewing the Mayor.....	226
PART VIII — THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR VISIONS.....	241
Mayoral Candidates.....	241
Ward Candidate Guide.....	256
The Final Candidate Test.....	397

A NOTE TO READERS: PURPOSE, SOURCES AND METHOD

This is an independent civic project. It is not produced by, affiliated with or endorsed by the City of London, any candidate or any campaign.

The Primer is intended to inform civic discussion, not to endorse or oppose any candidate. Readers should make their own judgments about candidates, policies and priorities.

Candidate information is time-sensitive. The election material in this edition is current to September 30, 2026 and is based on publicly available material, including candidate websites and platforms, public statements, questionnaires, official records and other identified sources. Campaigns may publish new or revised positions after that date.

Where sufficiently detailed published information could not be found, the Primer says so rather than inferring a candidate's position. The absence of a published position should not be interpreted as support for or opposition to an issue.

Historical, statistical and policy sections draw on public sources.

Dates, geographic boundaries and definitions matter: the City of London, the London Census Metropolitan Area, the health region and the economic region do not describe identical populations, and estimates, forecasts and census counts are not interchangeable.

The candidate sections use a common set of questions wherever possible: What is being promised? What will it cost? Who has the authority to deliver it? What measurable outcome should residents expect? What larger vision of London does it serve? For incumbents, the record in office is also relevant.

Every effort has been made to represent published positions accurately and fairly. Candidates and readers who identify a factual error, a changed position or relevant published material that has been missed are encouraged to bring it forward so that corrections can be made.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This Primer grew from a simple conviction: an election should begin not with the candidates, but with the city they are asking to lead.

I have spent much of my working life in London as a musician, educator, arts leader and community builder. That experience has brought me into contact with people and institutions across the city and has shaped my interest in questions of access, inequality, culture, education, civic identity and the ways communities use their assets.

I have my own views, as every citizen does. This Primer is not an attempt to persuade readers to share them. Its purpose is to assemble context, evidence and questions that may help Londoners reach their own conclusions.

The central question running through the document is larger than any single campaign: What kind of London do we want to become, and how, exactly, are we going to get there?

Clark Bryan

PART I

THE LONDON WE INHERITED

Why History Matters to London's Future

An election normally begins with candidates. A civic conversation should begin somewhere else: with the place those candidates are asking to lead.

London enters its third century in 2026 as a city of more than half a million people, a regional centre for education, health care, commerce, culture and public services. It contains neighbourhoods that were once separate communities, institutions that have existed for more than a century, a population increasingly drawn from around the world and a physical form created by decisions made by generations of people who could not have anticipated the London of today.

None of this appeared at once.

Cities accumulate. A railway changes where industries locate. A university attracts scholars, students and eventually new industries. Immigration transforms neighbourhoods. A flood changes attitudes toward a river. An annexation alters the size of the municipality. New roads and shopping centres change how people move and where they spend money. A scientific discovery can establish an international reputation. Artists can make a city see itself differently. People excluded from established institutions can create organizations of their own.

The London we live in is the result of thousands of such decisions and events. Some created opportunities that still benefit us. Others produced problems later generations have had to address. Many

people who helped build London were celebrated. Others nearly disappeared from its public history.

Understanding that inheritance is essential before asking what London should become.

And London's story does not begin in 1826.

1. Before London: The Land, the River and the Treaties

Human history in this region reaches back thousands of years before the creation of the City of London. Indigenous peoples lived, travelled, hunted, fished, farmed and established communities throughout the lands surrounding the river that runs through present-day London.

The City's current ReconciliAction Plan identifies the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee and Lunaapeewak among the Indigenous peoples connected to the territory. Three distinct First Nations established communities near present-day London: Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Munsee-Delaware Nation and Oneida Nation of the Thames. Their histories are different, and treating them simply as a single Indigenous population obscures important distinctions in language, political tradition, migration and relationship to the land.

The river itself provides an example of how layers of history can become invisible. Indigenous names for it predate the city by centuries. London Public Library's historical record identifies **Askunessippi**, meaning Antlered River, while the City today uses **Deshkan Ziibi**, or Antler River, in Anishinaabemowin and Lunaapeewak contexts. The Haudenosaunee name identified by the City is Kahwy[^]hatati. French traders called the river **La Tranche**. John Graves Simcoe renamed it the **Thames**, reproducing British geography in Upper Canada and helping create the pairing that survives today: London on the Thames.

The British name endured. The earlier names largely disappeared from the everyday vocabulary of non-Indigenous Londoners.

That history is worth considering in a period of reconciliation. Calling the river the Thames is so familiar that it can appear geographically neutral. It is not. It is an inherited colonial name, an homage to another river and another London thousands of kilometres away. Increasing recognition of Deshkan Zibi therefore does more than recover an old name. It reminds Londoners that the river had histories, meanings and relationships before the British settlement existed.

What did the treaties actually mean?

The land on which London developed was not simply vacant territory upon which Europeans decided to build a city. British settlement depended upon agreements through which the Crown asserted that Indigenous lands had been surrendered.

Several treaties and agreements are relevant to the London region. The City's ReconciliAction Plan identifies the much older **Dish with One Spoon** agreement, the 1701 Beaver Hunting Grounds or Nanfan Treaty, the McKee Purchase of 1790, London Township Treaty of 1796, Sombra Township Treaty of 1796, Longwoods Treaty of 1822 and Huron Tract Treaty of 1827 among agreements connected with Southwestern Ontario.

These agreements were not interchangeable. They involved different Indigenous nations, different territories and different terms.

The **London Township Treaty, Treaty No. 6**, provides an important example because the Crown's written text survives. Signed in 1796, it records Chippewa chiefs, warriors and people transferring a tract on the north side of the river to the British Crown. The written treaty describes the river as the “River Thames or River La Tranche” and records an Indigenous name rendered by the British as

“Escunnisepe.” The stated consideration was £1,200 Quebec currency, paid in goods at Montreal prices.

Reading the document today raises questions that a simple land acknowledgement cannot answer. What did British officials believe they were purchasing? How did the Indigenous parties understand the agreement? Did each side share the same conception of permanent land ownership and surrender? What obligations continued after the agreement? What happened when settlement expanded and Indigenous peoples' ability to hunt, fish and move through their traditional territories was restricted?

Those questions become particularly important because treaty relationships did not end when signatures were placed on documents. The City's own reconciliation work describes colonialism, displacement and their continuing effects on Indigenous peoples and commits London to strengthening relations with First Nations and increasing Indigenous participation in municipal decision-making. In 2025, City Council approved a ten-year ReconciliAction Plan containing 155 actions.

It would therefore be too simple to say either that “London honoured its treaties” or that a single treaty document proves that it did not. The more accurate history requires examining individual agreements, the Crown's subsequent conduct, Indigenous understandings of those relationships and the continuing consequences of settlement.

What can be said confidently is that the treaties did not make Indigenous peoples disappear from this territory. The neighbouring First Nations remain political communities today. Indigenous Londoners live within the city. Treaty relationships are therefore not simply historical background to London. They are part of its present.

Reconciliation asks London to understand that distinction.

2. The Capital That Never Was

London's colonial history contains an intriguing false start.

In 1793, Lieutenant-Governor **John Graves Simcoe** visited the Forks of the Thames and considered the location suitable for the capital of Upper Canada. Its inland position appealed partly because Simcoe was concerned about military vulnerability to the United States. The river and surrounding territory seemed to offer the possibility of an important inland administrative centre.

He even supplied the names that would survive: London and the Thames.

But the capital was established at **York**, now Toronto.

The choice was not simply a judgment that one settlement was inherently more promising than another. York possessed a harbour on Lake Ontario and immediate strategic value in the British military and transportation system. The colonial government also had limited resources. London remained an idea on maps and in official planning long before it became a substantial settlement.

That produces one of the more curious facts of London's history: **London was imagined as an important city before there was much of a city here at all.**

Substantial settlement at the Forks came later. In 1826, the site was selected as the administrative and judicial centre of the London District. Government functions created activity. A courthouse and jail established institutional presence. Merchants, tradespeople, professionals and settlers followed.

After the rebellions of 1837–38, London's role grew again when a British military garrison was established. The combination of

government, military presence, commerce and transportation helped turn the settlement into a regional centre.

London became a village, then a town and ultimately a city within approximately three decades. Museum London's historical account describes this remarkably rapid transformation.

The important point is not that London “failed” to become the capital. Toronto's development followed a different geographical, military and political trajectory. What matters for understanding London is that its early growth came from becoming something else: **an administrative and service centre for a much larger region.**

That role has never entirely disappeared. London still provides courts, hospitals, education, professional services, employment, culture and commerce for communities well beyond its municipal boundary.

London did not become the capital of Upper Canada.

It became, in another sense, a capital of Southwestern Ontario.

3. A City Made from Communities

Modern London can look like a single continuous urban area. Historically, it was assembled from places with distinct identities, economies and social compositions.

Understanding those communities helps explain why different parts of London still look and feel different today.

London East

London East was once a municipality in its own right. It was incorporated in 1874 and remained independent until amalgamation

with London in 1885. Railways, oil refining and associated industries turned it into what the City now describes as an **economic engine** for London. Workers lived near factories and supported a busy commercial district along Dundas Street. Immigrants arriving in London frequently settled in the area because employment and relatively affordable housing were nearby.

What we now call Old East Village is therefore not simply an older residential neighbourhood. Its streets preserve part of London's industrial and working-class history. The mixture of modest houses, commercial buildings and surviving industrial structures records the development of a community in which people often lived close to the places where they worked.

The building now known as **Aeolian Hall** belonged to this separate civic world. Built as the municipal hall of London East, it reminds us that Dundas Street east of Adelaide was once the main street of another municipality.

Blackfriars and Petersville

Across the river, **Petersville** also developed as an independent village. The area now known as Blackfriars/Petersville retains a distinct physical character, including modest nineteenth-century houses and the historic Blackfriars Bridge. The City describes the district as having a long tradition of independent identity within London.

Its relationship with the river was both an advantage and a vulnerability. The floodplain provided attractive and fertile land, but residents repeatedly experienced flooding. The neighbourhood therefore tells a different London story from the commercial downtown or industrial east: one about small-scale settlement, the river and eventually the engineering efforts required to protect low-lying communities.

Woodfield

Woodfield developed differently. Early estates attracted affluent Londoners as the city expanded north and east. Large homes appeared alongside more modest middle- and working-class housing. The architectural legacy is unusually rich: Gothic Revival, Italianate, High Victorian Gothic, Second Empire and Queen Anne buildings survive within the neighbourhood.

Woodfield demonstrates that nineteenth-century London was developing not only industrial districts but a prosperous professional and commercial class whose wealth became visible in architecture.

London South and Wortley

South of the river, the communities that developed into **Old South and Wortley Village** followed another pattern. Much of the recognizable streetscape was established before the Second World War. Houses, schools, churches, small businesses and public institutions created a neighbourhood in which daily life could occur at a relatively local scale. The present heritage district contains more than a thousand properties and retains a built form recognizably different from the postwar suburbs that came later.

These distinctions matter. London's neighbourhoods were not simply subdivisions built at different dates. They emerged from different economic functions, settlement patterns, transportation systems and social structures.

Modern London inherited all of them.

4. Railways, Industry and the City of Workers

London's nineteenth-century expansion accelerated dramatically

with transportation.

Railways connected local manufacturers with regional and national markets. Industries clustered around rail corridors. Workers settled nearby. Warehouses, hotels, stores and services followed.

The result was a city whose prosperity depended heavily upon people who made things.

The **McClary Manufacturing Company** became one of London's best-known industrial enterprises. Beginning in metalworking, it expanded into stoves, agricultural equipment, enamelware and other manufactured goods sold far beyond the city. London also developed brewing, food processing, cigar manufacturing, railway shops, metal industries and later a much broader manufacturing base.

Industrial history is important because civic histories can easily become histories of prominent businessmen, politicians and institutions. The factories existed because thousands of people worked in them.

Women worked in London factories as well, although their opportunities and wages differed substantially from those of men. Immigration supplied labour. Families organized their lives around shifts, wages and proximity to employment.

The physical city reflected these realities. In working districts, houses were often modest and lots relatively small. In wealthier areas, larger homes displayed the prosperity created by commerce and industry.

Class became visible in geography.

London's industrial past also complicates the city's contemporary identity. Today London is frequently described through education, health care, government and professional services. Those sectors are indeed important. But for much of its history, London was also a

manufacturing city and a working city.

Remembering that matters when we later examine economic change, employment, inequality and the future of manufacturing.

5. Newcomers: Who Came to London and What Happened to Them?

London has always been a city of migration.

Early colonial settlement brought people from Britain, Ireland, the United States and elsewhere in British North America. Later waves brought newcomers from continental Europe and eventually from virtually every part of the world.

But “immigration” can become an abstraction unless we ask who actually arrived.

Museum London's collections allow us to do that.

Chinese London

Lem Wong came to Canada from China in 1896. Under the federal Chinese Immigration Act, he was required to pay a **\$50 head tax** simply to enter the country. Like many Chinese men whose employment options were restricted by racism, he worked in laundries before eventually opening a café in London in 1914.

Bringing his family to Canada was even more expensive. In 1911, Wong paid a head tax that had risen to **\$500** so his wife, Toye Chin, could join him. Their son Victor came with her.

The family remained in London. A 1961 photograph preserved by Museum London shows Lem and Toye Wong with their eight children. The children attended London schools, went to church and

participated in local sports. Museum London's account describes both their sense of belonging and the racism they encountered.

Other Chinese men operated laundries in London, including Hop Sing's laundry on Clarence Street in the 1920s. Chinese workers often entered laundry, restaurant and domestic work not because those occupations represented some cultural preference but because discriminatory attitudes among employers and trade unions restricted access to other jobs.

This is an important distinction. Immigration history is not simply about where people came from. It is also about the opportunities a society allowed them once they arrived.

Jewish London

Jewish immigrants likewise established businesses, religious institutions and community organizations while encountering antisemitism and legal barriers. Eastern European Jews arriving in Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were often escaping persecution, yet arrival in Canada did not eliminate discrimination.

Their businesses and institutions became part of London's commercial and cultural life, adding another community to a city whose public identity was still overwhelmingly British and Protestant.

European communities

Italian, Greek and other European immigrants established businesses, churches, social organizations and neighbourhood networks. Greek immigrant entrepreneurs, for example, became part of London's restaurant and service economy. Postwar immigration expanded these communities considerably.

These groups did not remain permanently separate from the rest of London. Children attended local schools. Families moved into different neighbourhoods. Businesses became familiar city institutions. Inter-marriage and economic mobility changed settlement patterns.

That is one reason ethnic neighbourhoods can become less visible over time even when the communities themselves remain.

Immigration after the Second World War

The Second World War and its aftermath transformed Canadian immigration. Refugees and displaced people arrived from Europe. Later changes to Canadian immigration policy reduced explicitly racial restrictions and increasingly opened Canada to immigrants from Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

London changed with the country.

Religious institutions became more diverse. New businesses appeared. Schools became more multilingual. Food, festivals and cultural organizations changed the experience of living in the city.

Today's increasingly diverse London is therefore not a departure from London's history.

It is the newest phase of a process that has repeatedly remade the city.

6. Black London: A History Nearly Lost

London's Black history deserves particular attention because so much of it disappeared from conventional accounts of the city.

Black people escaping slavery in the United States settled in London

and the surrounding region during the nineteenth century. They established homes, businesses, churches and community networks. Their presence was not temporary. They were part of London's social and economic life.

Yet racism remained.

Canada could provide refuge from American slavery while still limiting opportunity for Black Canadians. The two facts are not contradictory; they are both part of the historical record.

By the twentieth century, London had become the centre of an important Black Canadian publishing and organizing movement.

James Jenkins and *The Dawn of Tomorrow*

On July 14, 1923, **James Francis Jenkins** founded *The Dawn of Tomorrow* from his home at 95 Glenwood Avenue in London. His wife, Christina, served as advertising manager. The eight-page newspaper was initially weekly and later appeared twice monthly. At its peak during Jenkins's lifetime, circulation reached approximately 4,000 to 5,000 copies.

The newspaper was not simply a London community bulletin. Jenkins used it to report on Black experience across Canada, the United States and the wider world. It challenged racial discrimination while addressing a multiracial readership.

London had therefore become the publishing centre of a significant Black Canadian voice.

Jenkins also helped organize the **Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People**, which sought greater educational, social and economic opportunity for Black Canadians.

Then came October 10, 1927.

A remarkable day at London East's Old City Hall

The League held its **first convention in London** at the Old City Hall on Dundas Street in London East, the building now known as Aeolian Hall.

The original six-page program survives in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library. Its existence allows this event to be established not through civic legend but through documentary evidence.

Several hundred people reportedly attended from London, Toronto, Windsor and the United States. Discussions addressed racial prejudice and unemployment among Black youth. League president J. W. Montgomery spoke about employment opportunities Black Canadians had lost over the preceding decades. Three resolutions were adopted.

But the gathering was not simply a political meeting.

The surviving account describes the hall filling with “**sweet music**”, followed by dancing in which both “old and young” participated.

That small detail makes the history human.

People came together to discuss discrimination and economic exclusion, but they also dressed for an important occasion, listened to music, danced, socialized and imagined something better.

The building still stands.

Thousands of Londoners have passed it without knowing that one of Canada's early Black civil-rights organizations held its first convention there.

That is precisely why recovering local history matters.

It changes what we see when we walk down our own streets.

7. Building a City of Institutions

Alongside industry and immigration, London developed another characteristic that would become central to its identity: an unusual capacity to build enduring institutions.

London General Hospital opened in 1875. Western University was founded in 1878. Medical education became closely connected to clinical practice in the city's hospitals. The London General Training School for Nurses opened in 1883, becoming Canada's third nursing school. Victoria Hospital opened in 1899.

Finance and insurance developed alongside medicine and education. Companies founded in London grew into significant national enterprises.

Later, Fanshawe College added a major institution devoted to applied education, trades, technology, arts and professional training.

These organizations changed London's economy.

A factory employs people while it operates. A university or teaching hospital can do something different: accumulate expertise over generations. Students arrive, some stay, researchers attract other researchers, specialized services develop and new organizations grow around established ones.

London gradually became not merely a manufacturing and administrative centre but a **knowledge centre**.

That transition is crucial to understanding the modern city.

8. When London Changed Medicine

London's medical history deserves more than a list of achievements because it demonstrates that institutions established in the nineteenth century eventually generated discoveries with international consequences.

One connection begins with **Frederick Banting**. Insulin was not discovered in London; Banting's experimental work with Charles Best took place in Toronto. But the idea that led toward the discovery came to Banting while he was living and practising medicine in London in 1920.

Other breakthroughs happened directly here.

In 1945, **Murray Barr** discovered sex chromatin, subsequently known as the Barr body, opening important avenues in human genetics. That same period saw work connected to the development of Canada's first artificial kidney machine.

In 1951, Victoria Hospital became the site of the world's first cancer treatment using Cobalt-60 radiation. The technology transformed radiation oncology and contributed to Canada's international reputation in cancer treatment.

Neurosurgeon **Charles Drake** later became internationally recognized for pioneering surgical approaches to difficult aneurysms.

London Health Sciences Centre now identifies **more than 70 Canadian and world medical firsts** associated with London's medical institutions.

The significance is larger than civic pride.

London's hospitals, university and research institutions demonstrate what can happen when specialized knowledge, clinical practice, education and institutional investment become concentrated in one city over generations.

That is an asset we will return to later in this document.

9. Women in the City's History

London's history also looks different when we ask whose accomplishments were routinely preserved and whose were treated as secondary.

Women worked in factories, schools, hospitals, homes, businesses and voluntary organizations long before they possessed equal political or professional opportunities.

The history of nursing is one example. Women's labour became essential to London's developing hospital system while nursing itself gradually developed into a profession requiring formal education.

Science provides another.

Helen Battle, born in London in 1903, studied zoology at Western and became the university's first Master of Arts graduate in that field. She went on to become the first woman in Canada to earn a PhD in marine biology. Returning to Western, she built a distinguished career in research and teaching, including pioneering work using fish eggs to study the effects of carcinogenic substances on cellular development.

Her career is significant not simply because she was a “first.” It shows women entering institutions that had historically restricted their participation and then changing those institutions through scholarship, teaching and mentorship.

The fuller history of London requires those stories to appear throughout the narrative rather than being relegated to a separate catalogue of notable women.

10. The River, Disaster and the Changing Environment

For much of London's early history, the river was practical infrastructure.

It provided water. Mills used its power. Industry developed along it. People travelled and recreated on it. Wealthy Londoners built estates overlooking it.

It could also be dangerous.

The sinking of the steamer **Victoria** on May 24, 1881 killed 182 people, according to London Public Library's historical account, making it one of the city's most devastating disasters.

Flooding posed a recurring threat, culminating in the catastrophic flood of 1937. Homes were damaged or destroyed and low-lying neighbourhoods were inundated.

The response eventually contributed to new approaches to watershed management, flood control and conservation. Fanshawe Dam and later environmental planning reflected a growing recognition that the river had to be understood as a regional watershed rather than merely a municipal feature.

Industrialization created another problem. By the middle of the twentieth century, sections of the Thames had become polluted and visually degraded. London Public Library records that civic renewal beginning in the 1960s gradually converted river lands into parks, gardens, walking routes and cycling paths. Today much of London's parkland follows the river system.

The history of the river therefore contains several Londons at once: Indigenous homeland and transportation corridor, industrial resource, recreational space, environmental problem, flood hazard

and public landscape.

What London decides the river should become in its third century will add another layer.

11. Expansion, the Automobile and a Different Kind of City

The physical London familiar today is largely a twentieth-century creation.

Early London was compact. People walked. Railways connected the city with other places and streetcars moved people within it. Homes, workplaces and shops were often much closer together than they would become after the Second World War.

Mass automobile ownership changed those relationships.

Families could live farther from employment. New subdivisions expanded outward. Shopping followed residents. Roads became increasingly important municipal infrastructure.

London also expanded through annexation. Communities that had once been outside the city became part of it. Later boundary changes extended London still farther.

The benefits were real. Many families wanted detached homes, yards and quieter residential streets. New suburbs represented prosperity and mobility.

But the physical form created long-term consequences.

Low-density development requires roads, sewers, water lines, emergency services and transit across larger distances. Separating housing from employment and shopping makes walking less practical. Transit becomes more difficult when origins and

destinations are widely dispersed.

The transportation system London debates today was therefore not created only by decisions about buses or roads. It was created by decades of decisions about **where and how the city would grow**.

That distinction will become important when we examine mobility in contemporary London.

12. Downtown and the Meaning of Progress

Downtown was once London's dominant commercial, industrial and service centre. The City's heritage record still describes that historic role.

During the twentieth century, however, ideas about successful cities changed.

Automobiles required roads and parking. Modern retail demanded larger spaces. Suburban shopping centres competed with traditional downtown stores. Older industrial buildings were sometimes regarded as obsolete.

The original McClary industrial complex disappeared. Other buildings were demolished for redevelopment, parking or infrastructure.

These decisions were not necessarily irrational in their own time. City builders believed they were modernizing London.

But they altered the core.

Retail dispersed. Employment patterns changed. Downtown lost some of its dominance. Later generations began spending enormous amounts of money attempting to restore activity, residential population and public life to the centre.

This history offers a useful warning against treating planning choices as temporary.

Buildings can last centuries.

Road patterns can last longer.

A neighbourhood destroyed is difficult to reconstruct.

A transportation system designed around one technology can shape behaviour for generations.

City building is therefore inherently intergenerational. Municipal decisions made today will affect Londoners who have no vote in 2026 because they have not yet been born.

13. The Forest City and the Story London Told About Itself

London eventually acquired one civic identity more successfully than almost any other:

The Forest City.

The exact origin of the nickname has competing explanations, but its endurance is more important than establishing a single origin story. Trees became part of London's public image and residents' understanding of the city's character.

The identity still resonates because it describes something visible.

But it also illustrates how civic identities can outlive the circumstances that created them.

“Forest City” says something about landscape, history and aspiration. It says much less about London's medical research, cultural life, universities, manufacturing, immigration or technology.

That does not make the name obsolete.

It suggests that London's identity has become more complicated than its oldest brand.

The question for the future is not necessarily whether London should stop being the Forest City.

It is what **Forest City should mean now**: tree canopy, climate resilience, biodiversity, river stewardship, parks, environmental responsibility and a commitment to making urban growth compatible with nature.

A historical identity becomes more useful when a new generation gives it contemporary meaning.

14. London as a Test Market

During the twentieth century, London acquired another unusual reputation.

Companies used the city as a **test market**.

Its moderate size, demographic characteristics, transportation connections and proximity to larger Canadian and American markets made it useful for companies wanting to test products and retail ideas before wider launches.

The identity became familiar enough that London artists were satirizing it by the 1960s. Western's research on Greg Curnoe notes the city's reputation as a leading test market.

There is an intriguing contradiction here.

London was sometimes stereotyped as cautious and resistant to change, yet companies were deliberately bringing new things here to

see whether people would accept them.

That contradiction leads into one of the most surprising periods in London's history.

15. The Creative City

London had produced important artists long before the 1960s. Museum London's collection identifies painters including **Paul Peel, Florence Carlyle, Eva Bradshaw, F. M. Bell-Smith and W. L. Judson** among significant figures in the city's earlier artistic history.

But during the late 1950s and 1960s, something unusual happened.

Artists including **Greg Curnoe and Jack Chambers**, along with writers, filmmakers, photographers and experimental musicians, created an artistic environment intensely interested in the local.

Instead of assuming that serious artists needed to leave London for Toronto, Montreal, New York or Europe, they treated London itself as worthy of attention.

Its streets became subjects.

Its people became subjects.

Its industries and ordinary life became subjects.

Museum London describes the period as one of extraordinary “**creative cultural ferment**” involving artists, filmmakers, novelists, poets, musicians and activists.

The movement became known as **London Regionalism**.

“Regional” could sound provincial, but its ambition was almost the reverse. The artists asserted that work could be internationally

meaningful precisely because it emerged from a particular place rather than imitating cultural centres elsewhere.

The rest of Canada noticed.

In 1969, art historian Barry Lord published an article in *Art in America* titled “**What London, Ontario Has That Everywhere Else Needs.**” He described London's artistic production in extraordinarily favourable terms and presented the city as a model from which artists elsewhere could learn.

The movement also had institutional consequences. Museum London connects the Regionalist environment with the development of postsecondary art programs at Western and Fanshawe and with the creation of Canadian Artists' Representation, now CARFAC, which became a national organization advocating for artists.

This is one of the most important episodes in London's civic history because it reverses a familiar question.

London was not asking how it could become more like a larger city.

People elsewhere were asking what they could learn from London.

16. Music, Literature and Experimentation

The same cultural environment extended beyond visual art.

London developed traditions in literature, theatre, classical music, popular music, jazz and experimental performance. James Reaney's work connected literature and theatre with Southwestern Ontario history and place. Guy Lombardo became one of the city's most internationally recognizable musical figures. The Nihilist Spasm Band emerged from London's experimental arts community.

Venues mattered too.

Places where people could perform, exhibit, meet and argue helped create networks between disciplines. Photographers documented artists. Musicians worked with visual artists. Writers participated in the same cultural circles.

This is important because creativity rarely develops in isolation.

A successful cultural city is not simply one containing talented individuals. It contains an **ecosystem** in which people encounter one another, institutions support activity, audiences develop and unconventional work has somewhere to happen.

That history gives important context to London's designation in 2021 as Canada's first UNESCO City of Music.

UNESCO did not suddenly make London a music city.

It recognized a city with a musical and cultural history that had been developing for generations.

17. Progress and Exclusion Could Exist at the Same Time

One danger in writing civic history is creating a story in which society simply becomes more enlightened with every generation.

London's history is less orderly.

Innovation and exclusion frequently existed simultaneously.

A city capable of groundbreaking medical research could still practise racial discrimination.

A city with an internationally admired arts community could remain socially cautious in other respects.

Universities could create opportunities while some groups struggled for recognition.

One revealing example comes from LGBTQ+ history.

Western's Homophile Association emerged around 1970–71 and eventually evolved into HALO, which created a permanent community space in London. Decades of organizing helped establish an increasingly visible LGBTQ+ community.

Yet in 1995, Mayor Dianne Haskett refused to proclaim Gay Pride Weekend. A subsequent human-rights proceeding found the decision discriminatory.

In 1997, Western's Pride Library became an official university research facility and has been described as the first of its kind at a Canadian university.

These developments occurred in the same city within essentially the same historical moment.

That suggests that London's history is not best described by a simple label such as “conservative” or “progressive.”

A more accurate description is that London has often contained **strong established institutions alongside equally strong currents of grassroots organization, experimentation and dissent.**

Change frequently emerged from the relationship, and sometimes the conflict, between the two.

18. What London Preserved and What London Lost

History is visible in what survives.

London retains remarkable nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

neighbourhoods. Woodfield, Blackfriars/Petersville, Old East, Wortley Village and other districts preserve architecture, street patterns and landscapes that allow residents to see earlier versions of the city.

But much has disappeared.

Factories were demolished.

Commercial buildings vanished.

Transportation infrastructure changed.

Communities moved.

Some historic sites survived almost accidentally.

The same is true of memory.

Greg Curnoe remains relatively well known. Helen Battle less so.

Many Londoners know Banting's name but may not know about Murray Barr.

Many have attended concerts at Aeolian Hall without knowing that hundreds of Black Canadians gathered in that building in 1927 to confront racial prejudice and economic exclusion.

The loss of historical memory matters because it changes the way people understand the place where they live.

History can create civic confidence without requiring civic mythology.

London does not need invented greatness.

Its actual history is interesting enough.

19. What Two Hundred Years Tell Us

By the time London reaches its bicentennial in 2026, several patterns are difficult to miss.

London has always served a region larger than itself. Its earliest role as an administrative centre developed into a much broader role in health care, education, commerce, law, culture and professional services.

It has repeatedly demonstrated a capacity for institution building. Hospitals, universities, colleges, businesses, cultural organizations and community networks created in one generation became platforms for achievement in later generations.

It has also repeatedly been remade by newcomers. The languages, religions and countries of origin have changed, but migration itself is not new to London.

Its prosperity was built not only by prominent leaders but by workers, tradespeople, immigrants, women and families whose names seldom appear in conventional histories.

London has generated significant innovation. Medicine provides the clearest evidence, but cultural history provides another. At certain moments London did not merely participate in national developments; it helped lead them.

At the same time, opportunity was never equally distributed. Indigenous peoples experienced displacement and colonialism. Black Londoners organized against racism. Chinese immigrants paid discriminatory head taxes and faced restricted employment. Jewish communities encountered antisemitism. LGBTQ+ Londoners fought for recognition. Women entered institutions that had long limited their opportunities.

These histories do not cancel London's accomplishments.

They make the history more complete.

20. More Capacity Than Confidence

One pattern deserves particular attention because it will recur throughout this project.

London has often had more capacity than confidence.

The evidence is unusually strong.

A city of London's size helped transform cancer treatment.

Its medical institutions accumulated dozens of Canadian and international firsts.

Its artists created a movement important enough that an international art publication asked what other cities could learn from London.

A Black newspaper published from a house on Glenwood Avenue reached readers across Canada.

A national Black advocacy organization held its first convention in London East.

Immigrant families created businesses and communities despite discrimination.

Universities, hospitals, manufacturers, artists and community organizations repeatedly produced work whose importance extended far beyond the municipality.

Yet London has not always incorporated those accomplishments into

a coherent understanding of itself.

That may help explain a persistent civic tension.

London possesses substantial assets but can struggle to articulate what connects them.

It has produced innovation without always building an identity around innovation.

It has generated culture without always regarding culture as fundamental civic infrastructure.

It has attracted students without always retaining them.

It has created internationally important institutions while sometimes telling a surprisingly modest story about itself.

This is not an argument for boosterism.

Confidence without evidence is marketing.

Confidence built on knowledge is different.

21. The City We Inherited

No generation chooses the city it inherits.

Londoners today inherited the river and the consequences of the relationships established around it. We inherited treaty obligations and the unfinished work of reconciliation. We inherited neighbourhoods created by nineteenth-century communities and suburbs created by twentieth-century planning. We inherited hospitals, universities, colleges, parks, roads, sewers, cultural institutions, factories that survived and factories that disappeared.

We inherited extraordinary achievements.

We also inherited inequality, environmental damage, discriminatory systems and planning decisions whose consequences remain with us.

The purpose of studying this history is not to decide whether London should be praised or condemned.

It is to understand how the city became what it is.

That distinction matters because London's future will not be created on an empty map.

The city already contains institutions, knowledge, infrastructure, relationships, cultural traditions and human talent accumulated over generations. It also contains problems with equally deep roots.

The most useful question history leaves us with is therefore not whether London's past was good or bad.

It is this:

What have two hundred years given us to work with?

To answer that, we now have to leave history and examine London as it actually exists in 2026: who lives here, how the city is growing, where prosperity is being created, who is struggling, how people move, what housing costs, what is happening downtown, where London's economic strengths lie and how well its institutions are serving a rapidly changing population.

Only then can we begin to distinguish between the London we inherited and the London we are choosing to build.

PART II

THE LONDON WE LIVE IN

A City Changing Faster Than Its Story

The London we inherited took two centuries to build, but the London we live in is changing remarkably quickly. Population growth, immigration, housing construction, homelessness, postsecondary education, transportation, health care and the economy are all shifting at the same time, sometimes in ways that reinforce one another and sometimes in ways that appear contradictory. It is possible, for example, for London to experience record levels of housing construction while thousands of residents struggle to afford a home. It is possible for the city to possess internationally significant hospitals and medical research while people living only a few kilometres away struggle with addiction, mental illness, food insecurity or access to primary care. Downtown can experience serious office and storefront vacancy while its residential population grows substantially. London can attract tens of thousands of university and college students without knowing with sufficient precision how many of them will still call the city home five or ten years after graduation.

These apparent contradictions are not evidence that the statistics are wrong. They tell us that a city is a complicated organism and that progress in one area does not automatically resolve problems in another. London's housing supply, for instance, cannot be understood independently of population growth, income, immigration, postsecondary enrolment, interest rates and government policy. Transit ridership is affected not only by the quality of bus service but by where people live and work, whether they own cars, the density of neighbourhoods and even federal decisions about international

student visas. Homelessness intersects with housing costs, poverty, mental health, addiction, health care and social supports, many of which are controlled or funded by governments other than the City of London. Understanding the city therefore requires us to resist simple explanations.

That is especially important in an election year. Numbers can create the appearance of certainty while concealing important differences in what is actually being measured. The City of London is not the same geographic entity as the London Census Metropolitan Area.

Middlesex-London health statistics cover a different population again, while the London Economic Region extends farther still. A census count is not the same thing as an annual population estimate, and a municipal planning forecast is not a prediction that a particular number of people will inevitably arrive. Throughout this chapter, dates and geographic boundaries matter because civic decisions should be based on what the evidence actually tells us, rather than on statistics detached from their context.

What emerges from the evidence is a picture of a city undergoing a significant change of scale. London is larger, more diverse and more connected to the world than it was even a generation ago. It possesses substantial institutional, educational, medical, cultural and economic assets, but many of the systems serving the city were designed for a smaller population and a different era. Some are adapting quickly. Others are showing signs of strain. Still others are producing results that do not fit comfortably into either a story of civic success or one of civic decline.

Before asking what London could become in its third century, then, we need to understand the London that actually exists at the beginning of it.

How Big Is London?

Even the apparently straightforward question of how many people live in London requires explanation. The 2021 Census counted 422,324 residents within the City of London, an increase of approximately 10 per cent from the 383,822 people counted five years earlier. More recent population estimates are higher, although municipal estimates, Statistics Canada estimates and census counts are produced differently and should not simply be placed beside one another as equivalent measures. What matters most for our purposes is the direction and magnitude of change: London has entered a period of substantial population growth, and virtually every major planning decision now assumes that the city will continue to grow.

The significance of that growth becomes clearer when we look backward. Earlier municipal planning documents projected London's population at only about 419,700 by 2026, a figure the city surpassed years ahead of the assumptions under which much of its infrastructure planning had originally been undertaken. Current planning anticipates a much larger London in the decades ahead. The precise forecast will inevitably change as immigration policy, economic conditions, housing construction and migration patterns change, but the city is nevertheless planning for hundreds of thousands of additional residents over the longer term.

Population growth is therefore much more than a demographic achievement or a convenient measure of civic success. Every additional neighbourhood creates demand for water and sewer capacity, roads, transit, schools, parks, recreation, libraries, fire protection, paramedic services and health care. At the same time, the infrastructure serving older neighbourhoods continues to age and must be repaired or replaced. London consequently has to accommodate the city that is arriving while continuing to maintain the city it has already built.

LONDON BY THE NUMBERS

422,324 — City of London population recorded in the 2021 Census
10% — approximate population growth between the 2016 and 2021 censuses

5,462 — new housing units for which London issued building permits in 2025

11,966 — new housing units counted toward London's federal Housing Accelerator Fund target by August 2026

Those housing numbers also illustrate why population statistics cannot be considered in isolation. London's 2025 total of 5,462 permitted housing units was the highest in the city's history, 48 per cent above the previous year. By July 2026, another 2,320 housing starts had been recorded. London is therefore responding to growth with substantial construction, but permits, starts and completed homes are three different measures, and none tells us whether the homes being created are affordable to the people who need them.

This distinction will recur throughout Part II. A growing city can be prosperous while some residents become poorer. It can build thousands of homes while homelessness increases. It can expand roads while transit struggles to keep pace. It can attract people from around the world while some established institutions remain slow to reflect the diversity of the population they serve. Growth tells us that London is changing. It does not, by itself, tell us whether that change is producing the kind of city Londoners want.

A Much More Diverse London

The transformation of London is not simply numerical. It can be seen in who lives here, the languages spoken in its neighbourhoods, the businesses appearing along commercial streets, the children entering its schools and the communities building new cultural, religious and social institutions. The 2021 Census counted 103,300 immigrants living in London, representing approximately one-quarter of the population living in private households, as well as another 19,220

non-permanent residents. Almost 20,000 of the immigrants counted in that census had arrived between 2016 and 2021 alone.

The same census counted approximately 119,000 Londoners as members of racialized groups, or close to 29 per cent of the population in private households. The largest groups included approximately 27,000 South Asian residents, 22,000 Arab residents, 17,500 Black residents, 12,600 Latin American residents and 12,000 Chinese residents, alongside substantial Southeast Asian, Filipino, West Asian, Korean and other communities. Approximately 11,000 London residents identified as Indigenous. These figures are now five years old and will almost certainly understate the diversity of London in 2026, but they already establish an important fact: cultural diversity is no longer a peripheral characteristic of London. It is one of the defining characteristics of the contemporary city.

This demographic transformation has consequences that reach far beyond multicultural festivals or the availability of different foods. It affects schools, health care, policing, libraries, employment services, housing and the way municipal government communicates with residents. It changes the international networks available to local businesses and introduces new forms of entrepreneurship and cultural expression. It also raises questions about representation and belonging. A city can become diverse demographically much faster than its institutions become representative culturally, and the difference between the two deserves careful attention.

For London, the useful question is therefore no longer whether it is becoming a diverse city. The evidence has already answered that. The more important question is whether London's institutions, leadership structures and understanding of itself are evolving quickly enough to reflect the people who now live here.

Prosperity, Poverty and the Cost of Living

London's economic story is similarly difficult to capture with a single statistic. The city contains prosperous neighbourhoods, major employers, globally connected businesses and households with considerable wealth. At the same time, tens of thousands of residents live with incomes that leave little room for unexpected expenses, and the rapid increase in housing and food costs has made household income increasingly important in determining how people experience the city.

The 2021 Census reported that 13.8 per cent of London residents in private households lived below the after-tax Low Income Measure in 2020. Among children under 18, the figure was 17.4 per cent. The year matters because extraordinary federal income supports during the pandemic affected 2020 incomes, making it an imperfect baseline for understanding poverty today. More recent indicators nevertheless show that financial insecurity remains substantial. Public-health reporting has found high levels of household food insecurity across London and the surrounding region, meaning that a significant number of households do not consistently have enough income to obtain the food they need after paying for housing and other necessities.

Food insecurity is particularly useful as a civic measure because it exposes a common misunderstanding about poverty. Food banks can alleviate immediate hunger, but food insecurity is fundamentally an income problem. A household whose rent consumes half its income does not become financially secure because a charitable organization supplies groceries. The underlying question remains whether income, housing costs and other essential expenses leave enough resources for a household to live with stability and dignity.

Housing data makes the same point from another direction. London's 2026–31 Housing Stability Action Plan reports that approximately 14,720 renter households were spending more than 30 per cent of their pre-tax income on shelter, along with roughly 4,200 owner

households. Across London and Middlesex County, 10.3 per cent of households were identified as being in core housing need. These are not simply housing statistics. They tell us how much room families have left in their budgets for food, transportation, recreation, education, clothing, savings and participation in community life.

This is why the experience of London can differ so dramatically from one household to another. For someone with a secure professional income, the city may offer housing that remains comparatively attainable beside Toronto, short commuting distances, strong cultural and educational institutions and ready access to parks and recreation. For a household earning substantially less, the same city can present a very different calculation in which rent, transportation and food consume most available income. Both experiences are part of the London we live in.

Housing: More Homes, but for Whom?

Housing is perhaps the clearest example of why civic problems become distorted when they are reduced to slogans. London is building housing at historically high levels. In 2025, the City issued permits for 5,462 new homes, 48 per cent more than in 2024 and the largest annual total ever recorded. Total construction value across residential, commercial, industrial and institutional development reached \$2.71 billion. Since 2022, Council has approved development applications representing more than 51,000 potential housing units, while London surpassed its federal Housing Accelerator Fund target ahead of the September 2026 deadline.

Those numbers matter because they challenge the idea that London's housing difficulties can be explained simply by an unwillingness to permit construction. They do not, however, demonstrate that the housing problem has been solved. A building permit is not an occupied home, an occupied home is not necessarily a rental home and a rental home is not necessarily affordable to a household with a

modest income. The City's own development reporting distinguishes among council approvals, permits, housing starts and completed units precisely because each represents a different stage in the process.

Affordability provides the other half of the picture. London's Housing Stability Action Plan reports that the average advertised one-bedroom apartment cost \$1,529 a month in 2025. Under the conventional measure that housing should consume no more than 30 per cent of household income, a household would need to earn approximately \$61,160 annually to afford that rent. Average market rents across London and Middlesex increased 22 per cent between 2022 and 2025. At the same time, London's rental market has recently become less tight overall, illustrating why availability and affordability must be considered separately.

A higher vacancy rate can give middle-income renters more choice and eventually reduce some upward pressure on rents without making an apartment affordable to a person living on minimum wage, social assistance or a modest pension. Likewise, record construction can improve the overall housing market while leaving a shortage of deeply affordable, supportive or accessible homes. Asking whether London is “building enough housing” is therefore only the beginning of the inquiry. A more useful set of questions asks what is being built, where it is located, what it costs, who can afford it and whether the supply being created corresponds to the needs of the population.

The housing debate becomes even more important when we reach its most severe expression: homelessness. London's By-Name List increased from 1,036 people in 2021 to 2,294 by the end of 2025, an increase the City calculates at 124 per cent. The list is not a literal census of every person without housing on a particular night; it records people known to participating services and is best understood as a measure of scale and trend. Even with that qualification, the direction is deeply significant. At the same time that London has been

approving and constructing housing at record levels, the number of people known to the homelessness response system has risen dramatically.

That apparent contradiction tells us something essential about the problem. Housing supply, housing affordability and homelessness overlap, but they are not interchangeable. Homelessness also intersects with poverty, mental health, addiction, disability, family breakdown, domestic violence, health care, social assistance and the availability of supportive housing. Some of these levers are municipal, while others rest largely with Ontario or Canada. London's Housing Stability Action Plan explicitly recognizes those interconnections and calls for coordination across housing, health and social services rather than treating homelessness as a problem one municipal department can solve independently.

This is one of the first places where the contemporary city points us toward a larger lesson. Londoners experience the consequences of government as a whole even though responsibility is divided among governments, departments, agencies and institutions. A person sleeping outside does not experience a municipal housing problem on Monday, a provincial health problem on Tuesday and a federal income-policy problem on Wednesday. The systems meet in a single human life. Effective civic leadership has to understand those connections even when City Hall does not control every lever.

PART III

THE ASSETS WE HAVE

A City with More to Work With Than It Sometimes Realizes

Cities tend to become preoccupied with their problems. This is understandable. Homelessness is visible. Traffic is frustrating. Housing costs affect household budgets. Empty storefronts attract attention. When hospitals, schools, transit systems and social services are under pressure, governments are expected to respond. Much of the public conversation about cities consequently revolves around what is broken, insufficient or becoming worse.

A civic blueprint needs to do something else as well. It must ask what a city already possesses that could be used to build its future. This is not an exercise in boosterism. Every city can assemble a promotional list of attractions, institutions and accomplishments. The more useful exercise is to identify assets that create genuine capacity: people, knowledge, institutions, creativity, infrastructure, natural resources, relationships and organizations that allow a community to accomplish things it otherwise could not.

London enters its third century with an unusually substantial collection of these assets. It has a major research university, a large polytechnic college, teaching hospitals, medical research institutes, school systems, libraries and cultural institutions. It has advanced manufacturing, technology, gaming, finance, food production and health-sector businesses. It has artists, musicians, writers, designers and entrepreneurs. It has established neighbourhoods, extensive parks, a major river system and a significant urban forest. Its increasingly diverse population brings skills, languages, cultural knowledge and international connections. Its location between Toronto and Detroit places it within one of North America's most important economic corridors.

The scale of some of these assets is considerable. Western University and its affiliated institutes attracted more than **\$314 million in research funding in 2024–25**. London's health-care and social-assistance sector employed more than **34,000 people in 2023**, representing 15.7 per cent of the city's workforce. London has more

than **350 technology companies employing nearly 10,000 people**. Before the pandemic, culture was estimated to contribute **\$671 million to London's GDP**, while the live-music sector supported approximately 1,000 workers and thousands of performances each year.

Numbers alone, however, do not create a successful city. The more interesting question is whether London's assets operate as a collection of separate institutions and sectors or as parts of a larger civic ecosystem.

That distinction may be one of the keys to London's future.

1. Human Capital: The People Who Make the City Possible

The most important asset of any city is not a building, institution or industry. It is the capacity of the people who live there.

London has several unusually strong sources of human capital. Western and Fenshaw attract tens of thousands of students. Hospitals recruit physicians, researchers and health professionals. Technology companies require programmers, designers and engineers. Manufacturers require skilled tradespeople, technicians and managers. Schools employ educators and specialists. London's cultural sector attracts performers, artists, writers and creators, while immigration has brought people with professional experience, entrepreneurial ambitions, languages and international relationships from around the world.

Part II identified one of the central questions surrounding this asset: how effectively does London retain the people it educates and attracts? The city has become very good at bringing people here for a purpose. Students arrive to study. Physicians arrive to train. Researchers come for appointments. Newcomers arrive to begin lives in Canada. Employees move to London for particular jobs. The larger civic question is whether enough of them eventually decide that

London is not simply where they studied or worked for a period, but where they want to build a life.

This changes the meaning of talent attraction. A city can recruit a researcher with a laboratory or a worker with a job offer, but retaining that person may depend on much more: housing, schools, neighbourhoods, cultural life, transportation, recreation, belonging and opportunities for a spouse or partner. Quality of place becomes part of economic development because people with choices compare communities as well as salaries.

The same principle applies to young Londoners. A city that invests in children through schools, libraries, recreation, arts programs and postsecondary education is making a long-term investment in human capacity. Whether those young people eventually see London as a place where their ambitions can be realized becomes an important measure of civic success.

Human capital, then, is not merely the number of educated people living in London. It is the accumulated capacity of people to learn, imagine, work, create, collaborate and contribute.

2. Knowledge Capital: A City Built Around Learning

London's educational institutions constitute one of its most obvious competitive advantages, but their collective importance is greater than the sum of their enrolments.

Western University is a major research institution whose work ranges across medicine, science, engineering, business, social science, humanities, music and the arts. In 2024–25, Western itself attracted approximately **\$241 million in research funding**, while affiliated institutes attracted another **\$73 million**, bringing the combined total to approximately **\$314.2 million**. Western's city-wide technology-transfer figures for the same year included **45 invention disclosures, 10 U.S. patents and \$6.7 million in licensing income**.

Those figures represent more than academic activity. Research money employs people, purchases equipment, supports graduate students, attracts specialized talent and creates knowledge that can move into health care, industry, public policy and commercial applications.

Fanshawe contributes a different form of knowledge capacity. Its emphasis on applied learning, industry partnerships and technical education connects education directly to the labour market. Its 95,000-square-foot Innovation Village was specifically designed to bring students, faculty, industry and community partners together around collaborative problem-solving. The facility includes applied research laboratories, multimedia facilities, entrepreneurial support, collaborative spaces and technology for areas such as artificial intelligence, connected buildings and immersive media. Fanshawe identifies sustainability and technology, social and health care, business and information technology, food and creative industries, and community development as five areas around which this work is organized.

London's knowledge infrastructure extends well beyond its two largest postsecondary institutions. School boards educate tens of thousands of children. Hospitals train health professionals. London Public Library provides access to information, technology and lifelong learning. Cultural organizations teach and mentor. Community organizations provide language education, employment preparation and informal learning. Private studios, training organizations and professional associations add another layer.

Taken together, these institutions suggest that London could understand itself not simply as a city containing educational organizations, but as a **learning city**.

That would require a different way of thinking about education. Learning would not end at graduation, nor would it belong

exclusively to schools and universities. It would become part of the city's economic, cultural and social infrastructure.

3. Creativity: The Capacity Behind Innovation

One asset deserves particular attention because it is often categorized incorrectly.

Creativity is frequently treated as belonging to the arts and cultural sector. Economic development, meanwhile, speaks about innovation, research, entrepreneurship and technology. This creates an artificial division between the people who supposedly create and the people who supposedly innovate.

In practice, innovation is an act of creation.

A biomedical researcher has to formulate a question that has not previously been answered. An engineer must imagine a solution that does not yet exist. An entrepreneur identifies a possibility other people have overlooked. A software designer must understand how another person might interact with a system. A surgeon developing a new procedure combines technical expertise with judgement, experimentation and imagination. A game-development studio may bring together programmers, visual artists, composers, writers, animators, psychologists and designers to create a single product.

Technical knowledge makes innovation possible, but knowledge alone does not determine what someone thinks to do with it.

This is why creativity should be understood as a form of civic capital.

London's own institutions increasingly recognize this connection. Fanshawe describes creative problem-solving as central to Innovation Village and identifies “novel and adaptive thinking,” including the ability to discover creative and unconventional relationships among ideas, as one of its skills for the future. Its Innovation Village

deliberately places research laboratories, entrepreneurship, multimedia facilities and collaborative creative spaces together.

Western's research portfolio similarly extends across sciences, medicine, engineering, social sciences, humanities and creative activity. In its own account of research in 2025, Western described its work as simultaneously foundational, applied, innovative and creative.

The implications extend directly to education.

Arts education is sometimes defended principally because participation in music, theatre, visual art or dance is enriching. That argument is important in its own right. Human beings have made art throughout recorded history, and a civilized community does not need to demonstrate that a string quartet increases industrial productivity before deciding that music has value.

There is, however, an additional argument relevant to London's economic ambitions. If the city intends to compete in health innovation, technology, gaming, advanced manufacturing, entrepreneurship and research, it needs people who can do more than reproduce existing knowledge. It needs people who can imagine alternatives, work with ambiguity, experiment, collaborate, revise ideas and create things that did not previously exist.

Arts education is one of the places where these capacities are practised deliberately and repeatedly.

This does not mean that studying music causes someone to become a better scientist or that every child who paints will become an entrepreneur. Such claims would be too simple. Creativity develops through many disciplines and experiences. The stronger point is that an innovation economy depends upon creative capacity, and a city that systematically undervalues opportunities for people to practise creativity risks weakening one of the human capacities upon which

innovation depends.

For London, this creates a potentially powerful connection:

education + research + technology + creativity + collaboration = innovation.

The formula can be applied repeatedly across the city.

In health care, creativity combines with medicine, research, engineering and technology to produce new diagnostic tools, treatments and models of care.

In manufacturing, creativity combines with engineering, materials, automation and skilled trades to improve products and production.

In gaming, creativity combines with programming, visual art, music, storytelling and psychology.

In entrepreneurship, creativity allows someone to see a market, service or solution that does not yet exist.

In community development, creative thinking can generate new responses to social isolation, poverty, food insecurity or barriers to participation.

Creativity is therefore not simply one sector of London's economy.

It is one of the inputs into almost every sector London describes as innovative.

4. Health and Medical Innovation: A Platform Few Cities Possess

London's health sector provides perhaps the clearest opportunity to see what happens when different forms of civic capital intersect.

In 2023, health care and social assistance included approximately **2,050 establishments employing 34,089 people**, or 15.7 per cent of

London's workforce. The City reports more than 100 health-related companies and describes health services as accounting for approximately 10 per cent of the local economy.

Behind those employment numbers is a network that includes London Health Sciences Centre, St. Joseph's Health Care London, Western, the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, hospital research institutes, Lawson, Robarts, research laboratories, health technology businesses and specialized clinical services. London's history of medical innovation, discussed in Part I, means this ecosystem has been developing for generations.

The opportunity lies in the intersections.

A hospital identifies a clinical problem. A researcher investigates it. An engineer develops a device. A designer considers how a patient or clinician will actually use it. A programmer develops the software. A college helps prototype or test the technology. An entrepreneur builds a company. Investors provide capital. Health professionals evaluate the result in practice.

No single institution can easily perform all of those functions.

The innovation occurs between them.

That is why creativity matters here as much as laboratory capacity. The breakthrough begins with someone seeing a possibility that does not yet exist and having access to the knowledge, collaborators, tools and institutional support necessary to test it.

London's health sector therefore represents more than a large source of employment. It provides an existing platform upon which the city can connect research, education, entrepreneurship, design, technology and creativity.

Few mid-sized Canadian cities begin with that combination.

5. Technology, Gaming and the Creative Economy

London's technology sector further weakens the traditional boundary between technology and creativity.

The London Economic Development Corporation reports **more than 350 technology companies employing nearly 10,000 people**, with activity in software, fintech, digital media, e-commerce and gaming. LEDC also emphasizes that technology increasingly operates across other London industries rather than as an isolated sector, supporting health care, manufacturing and agri-food.

Gaming is an especially revealing example. London's internationally successful game-development industry requires sophisticated programming and technical infrastructure, but games are also artistic and cultural products. They require visual design, music, sound, narrative, animation, characterization, psychology and an understanding of human experience.

The same is true of interactive media, film, digital design, architecture and many emerging applications of artificial intelligence. The boundary between the technical and creative economies is increasingly difficult to locate.

That should matter to London.

A city that develops a strong artistic ecosystem is not building something separate from its technology sector. It is also developing designers, composers, storytellers, visual thinkers, performers and creators whose abilities can move across industries.

This is one reason a serious inventory of London's creative assets would be valuable. The city knows a great deal about its industrial lands, major employers and development applications. It should be equally capable of understanding where its creators work, where arts education occurs, what spaces are available for creation and

performance, where creative businesses cluster and what barriers prevent people from participating.

The purpose would not simply be to produce a directory.

It would be to understand an ecosystem.

6. A City of Music, but What Does That Mean?

London's designation in 2021 as Canada's first UNESCO City of Music is one of the city's most internationally recognizable cultural assets. Yet the value of the designation depends on what London chooses to do with it.

The economic foundation existed before UNESCO arrived. Data assembled around the designation estimated that culture contributed approximately **\$671 million to London's GDP in 2019**. London's live-music sector employed approximately **1,000 skilled workers**, while roughly **4,740 live events** took place annually in the pre-pandemic period. Five major music events generated an estimated **\$25.9 million in economic impact** in 2019. These figures are now dated and should not be presented as a current 2026 snapshot, but they demonstrate that music and culture were already significant economic activities before the UNESCO designation.

London's musical infrastructure includes professional and community performers, venues, festivals, schools, private teachers, Western's Don Wright Faculty of Music, Fanshawe's music-industry programs, recording and production expertise, community organizations and a long history of popular, classical and experimental music.

The question is what connects them.

A UNESCO designation can function as a badge attached to tourism marketing, or it can become a framework for cultural development.

The latter possibility is much more ambitious. It would involve music education, artist development, performance spaces, production, technology, festivals, tourism, neighbourhood activity, international exchanges and opportunities for young people to participate regardless of family income.

That last point matters particularly. A city cannot credibly describe creativity as an economic asset while allowing access to creative development to depend primarily upon the ability of families to purchase private lessons, instruments, equipment or specialized training.

If creative capacity matters to London's future, access to creativity becomes part of the discussion.

This is where arts education moves from the margins of economic planning toward its centre. The child learning an instrument, acting in a play, experimenting with digital animation or learning to draw is not necessarily preparing for an arts career. That child is also learning to make choices, tolerate mistakes, revise work, interpret ideas and turn imagination into something tangible.

A City of Music should therefore ask not only how many concerts it presents, but how many people have meaningful opportunities to become creators.

7. The Ability to Make Things

London's future should not be imagined solely as a knowledge or service economy.

The city retains significant manufacturing capacity, including food production, advanced manufacturing, defence-related industries, medical devices, automotive supply chains, environmental technology and other forms of production. The City identifies advanced manufacturing as one of London's major strengths, with

significant companies maintaining Canadian headquarters or operations here. Western's Advanced Manufacturing Park adds research and development capacity intended to connect academic research, manufacturing and commercial innovation.

This matters because manufacturing provides a different form of innovation infrastructure.

An idea that exists in a laboratory or on a computer still has to be built if it is to become a physical product. That requires materials knowledge, industrial design, engineering, tooling, skilled trades, supply chains, quality control and production expertise.

Fanshawe's applied learning and London's manufacturing base therefore complement Western's research capacity in ways that deserve greater attention. A medical discovery, for example, could potentially move from research to design to prototype to manufacture within the same regional ecosystem.

Again, creativity is present at every stage. Industrial design, process improvement and advanced manufacturing all require people capable of seeing alternatives rather than simply repeating established procedures.

London's capacity to **think and make** may be more strategically valuable than either capacity would be independently.

8. Diversity as Civic Capital

Part II described London's growing diversity primarily as a demographic transformation. Viewed as an asset, the same development looks different.

People arriving from other countries bring languages, education, professional experience, family relationships, business connections and knowledge of markets outside Canada. They establish

restaurants, professional practices, shops, technology companies and other businesses. They create cultural and religious organizations and introduce new forms of artistic expression.

The economic value of these relationships is easy to underestimate because it does not appear on a municipal balance sheet.

A London entrepreneur with family and professional connections in India, Colombia, Nigeria, China, Lebanon or Ukraine possesses networks that can connect the city to people and opportunities thousands of kilometres away. International students who remain in London can provide similar connections. Diaspora communities can become bridges for trade, investment, tourism, education and cultural exchange.

Diversity also expands London's creative resources. Different cultural traditions bring different music, literature, food, design, languages, histories and ways of understanding the world. Innovation frequently occurs when ideas that developed separately encounter one another.

The challenge is whether London sees newcomers principally as people who need to integrate into existing systems or also as people capable of changing and enriching those systems.

A diverse city should not simply ask newcomers to find their place in London.

It should ask what London can become because they are here.

9. Social Capital: The City That Government Does Not Run

Some of London's most important institutions do not belong to government.

Charities, nonprofit organizations, neighbourhood associations, service clubs, faith communities, sports organizations, cultural groups, food programs, settlement organizations, social enterprises

and volunteer networks perform enormous amounts of work that rarely appears in conventional descriptions of municipal infrastructure.

They feed people, coach children, organize festivals, welcome newcomers, teach music, provide recreation, operate shelters, preserve heritage, support people with disabilities, plant trees, create community gardens and respond to crises.

This is **social capital**: the relationships, trust, organizations and networks that allow people to accomplish things collectively.

Social capital can be difficult to quantify precisely, but its absence is easy to recognize. A neighbourhood with no organizations, gathering places or networks may contain perfectly adequate houses while still leaving residents isolated from one another.

London's history provides repeated examples of innovation emerging from this community layer rather than from government. Part I showed that artistic movements, civil-rights organizing, LGBTQ+ advocacy and other forms of civic change frequently began with individuals and groups acting before large institutions were ready to respond.

That pattern continues to matter.

Government possesses resources and authority that community organizations generally do not. Community organizations often possess relationships, specialized knowledge, flexibility and trust that government cannot easily reproduce.

The strongest civic systems find ways to connect the two.

10. Natural Capital: The Forest, the River and the Shape of the City

London possesses another category of wealth that conventional

economic accounting often undervalues.

The Thames, or Deshkan Ziibi, is simultaneously an ecological system, a historical landscape, a recreational corridor and one of the city's defining geographic features. London's parks, natural areas, ravines, trails and urban forest create another network extending through neighbourhoods.

The City's Urban Forest Strategy sets a long-term target of **34 per cent tree-canopy coverage by 2065**. London is also Canada's 2026 Forest Capital, giving contemporary meaning to a civic identity that dates back generations.

Trees and parks are sometimes described as amenities, a word that can make them sound optional. In reality they perform work. Trees provide shade, reduce urban heat, store carbon, absorb rainfall, provide habitat and improve streets and neighbourhoods. Natural areas protect biodiversity. Trails create transportation and recreation opportunities. River corridors help manage water while providing public space.

Natural capital also influences whether people want to live in a city.

A London capable of combining urban growth with mature neighbourhoods, accessible green space, a restored river system and extensive tree canopy could offer a quality of place that larger metropolitan areas may struggle to provide.

The river is particularly interesting because it connects so many dimensions of the city. It connects Indigenous history with contemporary reconciliation, ecology with recreation, flood management with climate adaptation, downtown with neighbourhoods and civic identity with physical geography.

London grew around the river while often turning away from it.

Its third century could reconsider that relationship.

11. Location: The Geography London Did Not Have to Create

Some civic assets are built.

Others are inherited.

London's geographic position is one of them.

The city sits between Toronto and Detroit along the Highway 401 corridor, with Highway 402 connecting toward Sarnia and another major border crossing. The surrounding region contains some of Canada's most productive agricultural land. Windsor and the United States lie to the west, Waterloo Region to the northeast and the Greater Toronto Area farther east.

The City describes London's location as placing it within a day's drive of more than **150 million consumers**.

Location does not automatically produce prosperity. Transportation infrastructure, rail connections, border efficiency, industrial land and regional cooperation determine whether geography becomes an economic advantage.

But London does not have to invent its location.

It has to use it.

The same applies to its regional role. London's hospitals already serve Southwestern Ontario. Western and Fanshawe attract students from beyond the city. London provides employment, culture, shopping and specialized services to surrounding communities.

This suggests that London should understand itself in concentric circles: as a municipality, as the principal centre of a larger Southwestern Ontario region, as part of Ontario and Canada and as a

city with international relationships.

Each circle creates different opportunities.

12. Institutional Capital: The Ability to Do Things at Scale

One of London's greatest advantages may be the number of institutions capable of undertaking substantial projects.

Western can conduct research requiring sophisticated laboratories and international partnerships. Fanshawe can train workers and collaborate with industry. Hospitals can conduct clinical research and provide specialized care. School boards can reach tens of thousands of children. Libraries can provide community access across neighbourhoods. The City can build infrastructure. Cultural institutions can produce programming. Economic-development organizations can attract investment. Community organizations can reach populations that larger institutions sometimes struggle to engage.

The City's new 2026–30 Economic Development Strategy recognizes the need for greater coordination among many of these actors. It contains five strategic pillars, 12 initiatives and 29 implementation actions and explicitly identifies collaboration among businesses, institutions, Indigenous partners, economic-development organizations and community organizations as part of implementation.

The important issue is whether coordination becomes another administrative process or produces genuine collaboration.

Institutional capital becomes powerful when organizations can combine their capabilities.

Imagine, for example, a health challenge addressed simultaneously by hospital clinicians, Western researchers, Fanshawe designers and

technologists, a London technology company and patients themselves.

Imagine an arts-education initiative connecting school boards, Western, Fanshawe, professional artists, libraries, cultural organizations and community programs; or an agri-food initiative connecting surrounding farms, food manufacturers, researchers, entrepreneurs, logistics companies and educational institutions.

None of the participating organizations has to surrender its independence.

The value comes from connection.

13. The Asset Hidden Between the Assets

This may be the most important conclusion of Part III.

London's greatest unrealized asset may not be any single institution.

It may be the **space between them**.

Western is an asset.

Fanshawe is an asset.

London's hospitals are assets.

Its technology companies are assets.

Its manufacturers are assets.

Its artists are assets.

Its newcomers are assets.

Its neighbourhoods and community organizations are assets.

Its river, parks and forest are assets.

But the transformative possibilities appear when those assets meet.

Health + research + technology + design + creativity can produce health innovation.

Manufacturing + engineering + skilled trades + creativity can produce new products and processes.

Agriculture + food science + manufacturing + entrepreneurship can produce agri-food innovation.

Music + education + technology + tourism + community participation can turn a UNESCO designation into a genuine creative ecosystem.

Immigration + entrepreneurship + international networks can connect London with markets and ideas around the world.

Parks + river + active transportation + neighbourhoods + climate adaptation can improve both quality of life and environmental resilience.

Education + arts + technology + community organizations can develop young people who are not merely prepared to fill existing jobs, but capable of creating things that do not yet exist.

The point is not to force every institution into partnership with every other institution. Collaboration for its own sake can become another form of bureaucracy. The opportunity is to recognize places where combining existing capacities produces something none of the participants could achieve alone.

This also suggests a different way of thinking about economic development.

Traditionally, cities have competed to attract companies.

That remains important.

But increasingly, a city's competitive advantage may depend upon the **ecosystem** it can offer the people and organizations already there: research, talent, culture, education, creativity, quality of life, capital, infrastructure and relationships.

London possesses many of those ingredients.

The question is whether it recognizes them as parts of the same system.

14. More Capacity Than Confidence?

In Part I we encountered a recurring historical pattern. London has produced remarkable artists, medical discoveries, businesses, institutions and community movements, yet it has sometimes seemed hesitant to construct a larger story about itself.

Part III gives us enough contemporary evidence to revisit that observation.

London has more than 350 technology companies employing nearly 10,000 people. Its health-care and social-assistance sector employs more than 34,000. Western and its affiliated institutes attracted more than \$314 million in research funding in a single year. London possesses internationally recognized medical research, advanced manufacturing, significant food production, major postsecondary institutions and a substantial cultural economy. It is Canada's first UNESCO City of Music and Canada's 2026 Forest Capital. Its population is increasingly connected to the world.

None of these facts proves that London is fulfilling its potential.

That is precisely the point.

An asset is not an outcome.

A university does not automatically create an innovative economy. A hospital does not automatically create a healthy population. A UNESCO designation does not automatically create a flourishing cultural sector. A diverse population does not automatically create an inclusive city. Trees do not automatically create environmental sustainability. A technology sector does not automatically generate broadly shared prosperity.

Assets create possibilities.

Leadership, investment, collaboration and public choices determine what happens to them.

Confidence without evidence is marketing. But confidence built upon an honest understanding of what a city possesses is something different. It allows a community to set ambitions proportionate to its actual capacity.

London does not need to pretend to be Toronto.

Nor does it need to apologize for not being Toronto.

Its scale may offer a different opportunity. London is large enough to sustain research universities, teaching hospitals, specialized industries, professional cultural organizations, international connections and sophisticated public infrastructure, while remaining small enough that many of the people leading those institutions can still know one another and work together.

Whether London actually uses that advantage is another question.

But the advantage exists.

The Assets We Have

The purpose of taking stock is not to congratulate ourselves.

It is to understand what we have available to work with.

London enters its third century with considerable human capital, knowledge capital, creative capital, innovation capacity, social networks, natural resources, physical infrastructure and institutional strength. It has a growing and increasingly international population. It occupies a strategic location within Southwestern Ontario. It has institutions capable of operating at national and international levels and community organizations capable of working at the scale of a neighbourhood or an individual life.

Perhaps most importantly, it has the raw material for something greater than the sum of those assets.

Creativity belongs at the centre of that possibility.

If London wants to become a city known for innovation, it cannot think of creativity as something confined to concert halls, galleries, theatres and festivals. It must cultivate creative capacity in children, students, workers, entrepreneurs, researchers, neighbourhoods and institutions. Arts and culture remain valuable because they enlarge human experience, create beauty, challenge assumptions, preserve memory and help people understand one another. They require no further economic justification.

But they also do something else.

They teach people to create.

And a city hoping to invent its future should take that capacity very seriously.

The evidence from Parts I, II and III now allows us to move to a more difficult stage of the inquiry. We know something about the city London inherited. We have examined the city Londoners live in today. We have identified many of the assets available for its future.

The next question is not what London has.

It is what stands in the way.

Before we can describe **the London we could be**, we have to confront, with the same degree of honesty, **the challenges we face**.

PART IV

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

A City with Assets Is Not Necessarily a City That Uses Them Well

The previous section identified an impressive collection of assets. London has major educational institutions, teaching hospitals, research capacity, technology companies, advanced manufacturing, a significant cultural sector, an increasingly diverse population, strong community organizations, extensive natural assets and a strategic location within Southwestern Ontario. These are not insignificant advantages for a city of London's size, and they provide a substantial foundation upon which its third century might be built.

Possessing assets, however, is not the same thing as converting them into better lives. A university does not automatically produce an innovative economy, just as hospitals do not automatically produce a healthy population. Building more housing does not guarantee that people can afford it. A UNESCO designation does not by itself create a flourishing music ecosystem, nor does the existence of arts organizations guarantee that children throughout the city have meaningful opportunities to develop their creativity. Even a growing population, so frequently celebrated as a measure of civic success, can place increasing pressure on infrastructure and services if the

systems supporting that growth do not develop alongside it.

This is where an honest assessment of London becomes more difficult. It would be relatively easy to compile a list of problems: homelessness, housing affordability, traffic, addiction, downtown vacancy, poverty, crime, infrastructure pressures, climate change and strained public services. Each of these matters, but examining them as separate problems can conceal the relationships among them. A person experiencing homelessness may simultaneously be dealing with poverty, physical or mental illness, addiction, trauma and limited access to primary care. A family struggling with transportation may also face restricted employment choices, high housing costs and fewer opportunities for their children. A university graduate deciding whether to remain in London may be weighing employment prospects, housing, transportation, culture, recreation and the quality of the community in which they hope to build a life.

People experience cities as interconnected systems even when governments administer them through separate departments, ministries, agencies and jurisdictions. London's challenge is therefore larger than solving a collection of individual problems. It is learning to recognize the relationships among them and to organize public action accordingly.

1. Growing into a Larger City

Growth is usually presented as evidence of civic success, and there are good reasons for this. More residents can mean more workers, entrepreneurs, consumers, taxpayers and ideas. New construction generates economic activity, while immigration can increase professional expertise, entrepreneurship, cultural diversity and international connections. A growing city may find it easier to attract investment and support amenities that would be difficult to sustain with a smaller population.

Growth also creates obligations, and those obligations accumulate more quickly than population statistics sometimes suggest. Every new neighbourhood eventually requires roads, water and sewer infrastructure, emergency services, schools, parks, recreation and transportation. More residents create demand for housing, health care and social infrastructure. Population growth changes traffic patterns and school enrolment while increasing use of libraries, community centres, hospitals and other institutions. At the same time, the roads, bridges, pipes and public buildings inherited from earlier generations continue to age and require renewal. London must therefore finance and construct the city that is coming while continuing to maintain the city it already has.

Transportation provides a useful illustration. London's Mobility Master Plan is intended to prepare the city's transportation system for growth through 2050 and, for the first time, plans roads, transit, cycling, walking and pathways as parts of an integrated system rather than as largely separate modes. The City estimates that walking, cycling and transit currently account for approximately 23 per cent of trips, while personal-vehicle drivers account for about 61 per cent. Council's adopted 2050 target would increase the combined walking, cycling and transit share to at least 32.5 per cent and reduce the proportion of driver trips to 52.5 per cent.

These figures matter for reasons extending well beyond transportation. The physical form of a city influences the distances people travel, the cost and viability of public transit, the amount of infrastructure that must be constructed and maintained, the consumption of agricultural and natural land and, ultimately, the cost of municipal services. A neighbourhood built at a density that supports frequent transit creates a different set of long-term possibilities from one in which almost every activity requires a car.

The central challenge, then, is not that London is growing. It is whether housing, transportation, education, health care, social

services and physical infrastructure can adapt quickly enough to a city changing in both size and character. Population growth tells us that more people are choosing London. It does not tell us whether London is becoming more functional, affordable or equitable as a result.

2. The Geography of Opportunity

Londoners do not experience the city equally. Income is one reason, but it is far from the only one. Housing, age, disability, discrimination, family circumstances and access to transportation can all influence the opportunities available to an individual. Geography matters as well because where someone lives helps determine which jobs can be reached conveniently, which schools children attend, which parks and recreational facilities are nearby, how frequently public transportation operates and how much time is required to participate in activities elsewhere in the city.

In a city built extensively around the automobile, these differences can become particularly significant. For someone with a reliable vehicle, a job twelve kilometres from home may represent a relatively easy commute. For someone relying on public transit, the same distance may involve waiting, transfers and substantially more travel time. If employment begins early in the morning or ends late at night, the choices can narrow further. For a parent trying to coordinate employment, school and child care, transportation may determine which jobs are realistically possible rather than simply how convenient the commute will be.

London's Mobility Master Plan recognizes this relationship explicitly. Its 2050 vision calls for viable mobility options for people of different identities, abilities and means, while equity is identified as one of the plan's guiding principles. The City describes transportation not simply as movement but as access to people, places, goods, services, employment and participation in civic life.

This suggests that transportation should be evaluated through a broader lens than the number of buses, roads, sidewalks or cycling lanes London possesses. The more revealing question is how easily a person can participate in the economic, educational, cultural and social life of the city without owning a car. A teenager trying to reach an after-school music program, a worker returning home after a late shift, a senior travelling to a medical appointment and a person with a disability trying to attend a cultural event may all encounter the same city very differently.

Mobility, viewed this way, becomes part of a larger geography of opportunity. Access to employment, education, health care, recreation and culture is influenced not only by whether those opportunities exist somewhere in London, but by whether people can realistically reach them.

3. Reaching People Before They Reach Crisis

Perhaps the clearest evidence for the need to think across systems comes from homelessness and health care. The immediate responsibilities are obvious. Someone without shelter needs a safe place to sleep. A person experiencing a medical emergency requires treatment. Someone in acute crisis may require paramedics, police, emergency health care or other urgent assistance. No serious discussion of prevention should minimize the obligation to respond to those immediate needs.

The difficulty is that emergency systems are among the most expensive places to provide assistance that might, in some circumstances, have been provided earlier and more effectively elsewhere. London's recent evaluation of its Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response provides unusually valuable evidence about this relationship. The evaluation, conducted by Western University's Centre for Research on Health Equity and Social Inclusion, examined not only housing outcomes but the interaction

between homelessness and health services. The City's summary describes highly supportive housing as producing greater stability and reduced reliance on emergency services, while identifying continued system-level challenges and lessons from the coordinated response.

The scale of repeated emergency use revealed by that research is striking. Over the four-year period examined, people experiencing homelessness made tens of thousands of emergency-department visits, while access to regular primary care was substantially lower than among the broader hospital population. A particularly small group of people accounted for an extraordinary number of those visits. The significance of such findings is not that individuals in crisis are somehow using the system improperly. Rather, repeated use of one of the most expensive parts of the health-care system can indicate that needs are not being met adequately somewhere earlier in the chain.

Evidence from supportive housing provides an important counterpoint. London Health Sciences Centre reports that residents of the House of Hope, a partnership with London Cares that combines housing with wraparound supports, experienced an 83 per cent reduction in emergency-department visits and a 61 per cent reduction in hospital stays in the first quarter of 2025. These results do not mean that every person experiencing homelessness has the same needs or that one housing model can solve every situation. Homelessness can involve housing costs, income, physical or mental illness, addiction, disability, family breakdown, trauma and circumstances that differ profoundly from person to person. The evidence does, however, demonstrate why housing and health cannot always be treated as separate policy areas.

London and Middlesex County's 2026–31 Housing Stability Action Plan increasingly reflects this understanding. It emphasizes prevention and diversion as well as emergency response, stronger

pathways into housing and greater coordination among housing, health and social services. More than 500 people participated in its development, including residents, service providers, businesses, people with lived and living experience of homelessness and organizations working with equity-denied populations.

The larger principle extends well beyond homelessness. Food banks must feed people who are hungry today, but their existence should not prevent us from asking why households cannot afford food. Emergency departments must treat people who arrive in crisis, but health systems should still investigate why care was not available or effective earlier. Shelters must provide safety for people who have nowhere to sleep, while governments continue asking what caused them to lose housing in the first place. A humane city has to do both things at once: **treat symptoms urgently while understanding causes relentlessly.**

4. When Interconnected Problems Meet Divided Systems

Modern institutions divide responsibilities for good reasons. Transportation specialists develop expertise in transportation, health professionals deliver health care, school boards operate schools and municipal planners regulate land use. Provincial and federal governments possess powers that municipalities do not, while universities, hospitals and nonprofit organizations operate under their own mandates and governance structures. Specialization makes complex societies possible.

The difficulty arises when the boundaries between institutions do not correspond to the realities of people's lives. Housing affects health, transportation affects employment, income affects nutrition and education affects economic opportunity. Land-use decisions influence whether transit can operate efficiently. Immigration policy can affect postsecondary enrolment, housing demand, public transportation and the labour force simultaneously. Access to arts education

influences who has opportunities to develop creative abilities, while cultural participation can affect belonging and the attractiveness of a city to people deciding whether to remain there.

London's own planning increasingly recognizes these connections. The Housing Stability Action Plan calls for stronger coordination among housing, health and social services, while the Mobility Master Plan integrates forms of transportation that historically tended to be planned separately. This is encouraging, but it also demonstrates the scale of the challenge because many of the institutions affecting London are not controlled by City Hall. Health care and education are primarily provincial responsibilities. Immigration is substantially federal. Housing involves all three levels of government as well as private developers, nonprofit providers and financial institutions. Universities, hospitals and school boards have their own governance structures.

No mayor can simply command these institutions to work together. Effective civic leadership therefore depends increasingly on the ability to operate across boundaries: understanding which institution controls which lever, developing relationships, assembling credible evidence, creating coalitions and persuading organizations with different mandates that their interests sometimes overlap.

There is another form of fragmentation that deserves attention. Sometimes the problem is not that nobody is addressing a need, but that several organizations are doing related work without a sufficiently clear picture of what already exists. In those circumstances, fragmentation can produce duplication rather than gaps.

5. Funding, Partnering or Competing?

London's cultural sector offers an interesting case study in this problem. The London Arts Council performs several functions within

the city's cultural ecosystem. Through its relationship with the City, it administers public investment in artists and arts organizations, while also developing and delivering programs of its own in education, health and community settings. Both activities are consistent with the Arts Council's publicly stated mandate.

There is nothing inherently inappropriate about combining these functions. A cultural agency may identify a gap that no existing organization is equipped to address, and direct programming may sometimes provide the fastest or most equitable way to reach people who are otherwise excluded. At other times, an established community organization may already possess the expertise, relationships, facilities and experience required to do the work. The important question is therefore not whether a public or publicly supported agency should ever deliver programming itself, but how the choice between **funding, partnering, commissioning, coordinating and directly delivering** is made.

This distinction becomes especially important when the same cultural ecosystem contains organizations receiving public funding and an agency capable of creating programming in related areas. Before establishing something new, a funder or public agency should reasonably be expected to understand what already exists, where genuine gaps remain and whether additional investment in existing capacity could accomplish the objective more effectively. Such an approach would not prevent innovation by public agencies. It would make the decision to create a new program more deliberate and transparent.

My own experience at the Aeolian Performing Arts Centre raised this question for me directly. During my years as Executive Director, I was not consulted when the London Arts Council developed its arts-education programming, even though El Sistema Aeolian had been providing free intensive music education to children and youth since 2011. Similarly, to my knowledge, the Aeolian has not been consulted

by the London Music Office concerning music-incubation or artist-career-development initiatives despite the organization's experience with artist residencies, songwriting initiatives and other forms of artist development.

That experience should not be interpreted as evidence that other consultation did not occur, nor does it demonstrate that these programs duplicate Aeolian's work or should not exist. What it does is raise a broader governance question that London should be able to answer: **when publicly supported organizations create new programming, how systematically do they map and consult the expertise already present in the community?**

This is an asset-based approach to public policy. Before creating something new, a public body would identify the need it hopes to address, determine what services already exist, consult organizations and people working in the field and then decide whether direct delivery, partnership, commissioning, coordination or additional investment offers the best route to the desired outcome. Sometimes the conclusion would favour a new public program; sometimes it would favour strengthening an existing organization. The important point is that the decision should follow the mapping of community capacity rather than precede it.

A city that does not understand the capacity of its own community can inadvertently spend public resources recreating what it already has.

6. Who Gets the Opportunity to Create?

The cultural example points toward another challenge that reaches beyond questions of institutional responsibility. If creativity is one of the capacities upon which innovation depends, as argued in Part III, then London should be interested not only in the excellence of its professional artists and creative industries but in how widely

opportunities to develop creativity are distributed.

London possesses substantial arts infrastructure, including university and college programs, professional and community artists, cultural organizations, libraries, festivals, private studios and specialized educational opportunities. The London Arts Council provides arts programming in educational and community settings, while community organizations contribute another layer of access. El Sistema Aeolian, established in 2011, was created specifically to remove financial barriers to intensive music education by providing instruction and access to instruments without charging participating families.

These programs demonstrate that London possesses considerable expertise in arts access, but the existence of individual programs does not necessarily amount to a city-wide strategy. A child whose family can afford an instrument, private lessons, transportation, summer programs and concert tickets encounters a very different creative landscape from a child whose family cannot. Geography can add another barrier if programs are difficult to reach, while disability, language and cultural representation can influence whether a young person sees a particular organization as a place where they belong.

The question is therefore larger than whether London supports culture. It is whether opportunities to become creative are broadly available across income, neighbourhood and circumstance. That question matters for reasons extending beyond the professional arts. Most children who study an instrument, participate in theatre, write stories, paint, dance or experiment with digital media will never make their living as artists, just as most children who play organized sports will never become professional athletes. The public value lies partly in what happens during the activity itself: imagination is exercised, ideas are tested, mistakes are tolerated, work is revised and something is created that did not previously exist.

If London intends to describe itself as an innovative city, access to those experiences deserves to be understood as part of the city's human-development infrastructure. A creative city should certainly celebrate the achievements of its finest artists, but it should also ask how many people are given a genuine opportunity to discover their own capacity to create.

7. Moving Through a City Built for Another Era

London's transportation challenge did not appear suddenly. Much of the contemporary city developed during an era in which the automobile profoundly shaped North American urban planning. Housing, employment and retail spread outward, roads expanded and distances between daily destinations increased. Many neighbourhoods were built at densities that make frequent public transportation more difficult and expensive to provide.

That history cannot simply be reversed, nor would it be realistic to imagine London as a city without cars. Personal vehicles will remain important for many residents and businesses, particularly in a regional centre serving surrounding rural communities. The more useful question is whether driving must remain a prerequisite for convenient participation in much of London's economic and social life.

The Mobility Master Plan represents a significant attempt to reconsider that balance. Approved by Council in July 2025, it is London's first fully integrated mobility plan and considers roads, transit, cycling, walking, rolling, pathways and movement of goods within a single long-term framework. It includes infrastructure recommendations and strategies extending toward 2050.

The difficult part, as with most long-range plans, is implementation. Transportation infrastructure is expensive, construction can disrupt neighbourhoods and businesses, existing streets impose physical

constraints and different groups of residents understandably have different priorities. Major projects may also depend upon provincial or federal funding. The result is a tension familiar throughout municipal government: London must respond to immediate transportation problems while investing in infrastructure whose full benefits may not be visible for decades.

This makes mobility a particularly useful test of long-term civic leadership. A twenty-five-year transportation strategy cannot succeed if every four-year political cycle begins the conversation again. At the same time, a long-range plan should never become immune to evidence, changing technology or changing public needs. Continuity and adaptability have to coexist.

8. Downtown and the Long Road from Planning to Results

Few parts of London have generated as much civic planning as downtown. In 2015, Council adopted *Our Move Forward: London's Downtown Plan*, acknowledging that downtown transformation would take many years and that priorities would have to be selected and funded over successive council terms. Some significant projects did emerge from that period of planning, including Dundas Place and associated infrastructure work. The existence of visible projects matters because it prevents an easy but inaccurate conclusion that London merely writes plans and fails to implement them.

Eleven years later, however, London has adopted another ten-year strategy. *Downtown Reimagined* contains 58 actions and four major initiatives involving governance, public space, a River District intended to strengthen the relationship between downtown and the Thames and further development of London's UNESCO City of Music designation. Implementation is expected to occur through municipal operations, partnerships and future budget decisions.

The arrival of another plan does not demonstrate that its predecessor

failed. Downtown itself has changed dramatically since 2015, not least because the pandemic altered office work, retail patterns and public-space use in ways that few municipal planners could have anticipated. Housing, homelessness, transportation and the commercial economy have changed as well. A responsible city must revise plans when circumstances change.

The more useful question is what London can learn by comparing plans across time. Which commitments were completed, which were modified and which disappeared? Which projects produced measurable results? Which depended upon funding that never materialized? Which assumptions turned out to be wrong? Most importantly, what distinguishes initiatives that survive changes in councils, budgets and economic conditions from those that remain aspirations?

Answering those questions would turn downtown from a perennial civic problem into a case study in how London plans, implements and learns.

9. From Counting Activities to Measuring Change

London certainly does not lack plans. The City maintains strategies covering transportation, housing, climate, economic development, downtown, recreation, neighbourhoods and other areas of municipal life. Nor is it accurate to claim that the City simply adopts plans and never measures progress. Its strategic planning processes increasingly include performance reporting, while the newly adopted Economic Development Strategy is expected to be accompanied by annual reporting beginning in 2027. The new downtown strategy likewise identifies implementation mechanisms while acknowledging that actions requiring additional money or staff will have to return through future planning and budget processes.

The more important issue is what London chooses to measure.

Governments naturally report activities because activities can usually be counted: kilometres of infrastructure constructed, housing units permitted, supportive-housing units opened, trees planted, transit service added or arts programs funded. These measures matter because they demonstrate whether promised work actually occurred.

Yet an activity is not necessarily the outcome for which the activity was undertaken. Housing permits matter because people need homes, but the deeper question is whether more households can find housing they can afford. Supportive-housing units matter because people need places to live, but the outcome is whether residents remain stably housed and experience better health. Transit service matters because buses move people, but the larger question is whether residents can reach employment, education and services conveniently without a car. Arts funding matters because programs require resources, but the broader outcome is whether people who previously lacked creative opportunities gain sustained access to them.

This distinction becomes particularly revealing when activity increases while the underlying problem worsens. The City's previous housing stability plan reported that 95 per cent of its 118 actions were completed, ongoing or in progress, while acknowledging that rising rents, limited affordable housing and homelessness continued to create serious pressures. That does not mean the actions were ineffective; conditions outside municipal control may have overwhelmed improvements that would otherwise have mattered. It does demonstrate why implementation statistics alone cannot tell us whether the condition of the city is improving.

A stronger culture of public measurement would therefore ask two questions together: **Did we do what we promised, and did the condition we were trying to change actually improve?** The first is a measure of institutional performance. The second is a measure of civic outcome.

10. Governing a City When the Levers Are Somewhere Else

Any discussion of London's challenges eventually encounters the limits of municipal jurisdiction. Many of the forces shaping daily life in the city are controlled partly or primarily by other governments. Health care and education are overwhelmingly provincial responsibilities. Immigration policy is substantially federal. Housing depends upon municipal land-use decisions but also provincial legislation, federal programs, interest rates, construction costs, private investment and household income. Intercity rail can affect London's economic competitiveness even though City Hall does not operate the railway.

This creates an understandable temptation for municipal leaders to describe certain problems as outside their jurisdiction. Legally, that may be entirely accurate. From the perspective of residents, however, jurisdictional boundaries do not make the consequences disappear. If thousands of Londoners cannot obtain primary care, they experience that problem in London even though the mayor does not control Ontario's health-care system. If provincial decisions affect arts education or classroom conditions, London's children experience the consequences. If federal immigration policy changes international student enrolment, the effects can appear in Fanshawe's finances, the rental market, transit ridership and the local labour force.

A mayor cannot solve such problems by claiming powers the office does not possess, but neither does effective municipal leadership require remaining silent about them. The alternative is intergovernmental advocacy: identifying the government or institution controlling the relevant lever, assembling credible evidence, developing a realistic intervention, building alliances with other communities where interests coincide and making a persuasive case for action.

The quality of that advocacy matters. A request that simply says

London needs more money is less useful than one capable of explaining the problem, the evidence, the proposed intervention, its cost, London's own contribution, the action required from another government and the outcomes by which success will be judged. In this sense, advocacy is not a substitute for municipal leadership. It is one of its instruments.

11. The Capacity to Imagine a Different City

One of London's challenges is harder to quantify because it concerns institutional culture and civic imagination. Part I described a city that has repeatedly produced artists, medical innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, educators and community movements willing to experiment. Part III demonstrated that considerable creative capacity remains. It would therefore be misleading to characterize London simply as a city resistant to change.

Institutions, however, can become cautious even when the people within them are creative. Some caution is necessary. Governments are responsible for public money, major projects require scrutiny and unconventional ideas can fail. Residents have every right to expect evidence that proposals are realistic and that public resources will be used responsibly. The danger appears when avoiding failure becomes more important than discovering better ways of doing things.

This is another reason creativity belongs near the centre of a civic discussion rather than at its margins. Creativity does not require pursuing every novel proposal. It requires retaining the ability to imagine alternatives, test them, learn from failure and improve them. A creative municipal government should be capable of piloting an idea before committing to it at scale. A creative community organization should be willing to work with partners whose expertise differs from its own. A creative university should connect knowledge across disciplines. A creative business should be capable of recognizing that tomorrow's market may not resemble today's.

The same principle applies to education. If London wants adults capable of creating new businesses, technologies, medical interventions, community solutions and cultural work, young people need opportunities to practise imagination long before they enter the labour market. Arts education is one important environment in which this happens, not because every child should become an artist, but because making art requires choices, experimentation, interpretation, revision and the transformation of an idea into something tangible.

Innovation ultimately requires permission to try. A city that wants innovation must therefore become comfortable not with recklessness, but with disciplined experimentation.

12. The Challenge Beneath the Challenges

Taken individually, London's challenges are substantial. Housing remains unaffordable for many households, homelessness has increased, health and social systems are under pressure, transportation must adapt to a larger city and downtown continues to search for a sustainable role in a changing economy. Infrastructure has to be expanded while existing assets are renewed, and inequalities in income, mobility and access influence how fully different residents can participate in city life.

Taken together, however, these challenges suggest something deeper. London's central difficulty may not be a shortage of assets or even a shortage of effort. It may be the difficulty of connecting resources, institutions and decisions across boundaries that were not designed around the way contemporary urban problems actually behave.

The hospital knows things City Hall does not. Universities possess research capacity that community organizations generally cannot reproduce, while community organizations often possess relationships and trust that large institutions struggle to create.

Businesses understand markets and production. Artists understand creative processes. Residents understand the daily realities of their neighbourhoods. Governments possess authority, taxing capacity and access to other levels of government that none of these groups possesses independently. The opportunity lies not in merging these institutions, but in creating conditions in which their different forms of knowledge and capacity can be brought together when the problem requires them.

That requires a different habit of civic thinking. Before London creates something new, it should understand what already exists. Before public money is spent on an activity, the desired outcome should be clear. When a problem lies outside municipal jurisdiction, the question should shift from whether City Hall controls it to who does, what influence London possesses and what case can be made for action. When the same people repeatedly reach the point of crisis, the response should include both immediate assistance and an investigation of what keeps producing the crisis.

Most importantly, London should resist the assumption that persistent problems necessarily demonstrate a lack of capacity. The previous section showed that the city possesses considerable institutional, intellectual, creative, economic, social and natural resources. The challenge is to connect that capacity with purpose and then measure whether people's lives actually improve.

This brings the argument of the first four parts to an important turning point. We have examined the city London inherited and the city Londoners inhabit today. We have taken stock of the assets available for its future and examined some of the structural obstacles preventing those assets from achieving more.

Only now are we ready to ask the question that gives this project its title:

What is the London we could be?

PART V

THE OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE US

The Space Between the Assets

The previous two sections have produced what may at first seem like contradictory conclusions. London possesses a remarkable collection of assets, yet it also faces serious challenges involving housing, homelessness, mobility, inequality, infrastructure, economic transition and access to opportunity. These conclusions are not contradictory at all. In fact, their coexistence may tell us something important about the city.

London's greatest opportunity may not lie in acquiring more assets. It may lie in creating stronger relationships among the assets it already possesses.

Universities, colleges, hospitals, schools, businesses, artists, cultural organizations, neighbourhood groups, social-service agencies, Indigenous communities, newcomers and governments all contribute different kinds of knowledge and capacity to the city. They do not need to become part of one organization, nor should they. Their independence is often the source of their expertise and creativity. But some of the most promising opportunities for London's third century exist precisely where these institutions and communities intersect.

Health care becomes more innovative when clinicians work with engineers, designers, researchers and technology companies. Education becomes more economically powerful when students can move easily between learning, employment, entrepreneurship and

community life. Housing becomes a health intervention when stable homes reduce repeated encounters with emergency systems. Immigration becomes an economic-development opportunity when newcomers can translate their knowledge, skills and international relationships into businesses and careers. Culture becomes more than entertainment when creative development begins in childhood and contributes to the imaginative capacity of an entire population.

The question, then, is not simply what London should build next. It is what might happen if London became much better at connecting what it already has.

This distinction matters because cities can spend enormous amounts of money creating new programs, institutions and strategies while overlooking capacities that already exist in their communities. An asset-based city begins differently. It maps what is already there, identifies where connections are weak or opportunities are missing and then decides whether the appropriate response is investment, coordination, partnership, advocacy or something genuinely new.

London is already beginning to move in this direction. Its 2026–30 Economic Development Strategy was developed with businesses, postsecondary institutions, Indigenous partners, community organizations and economic-development agencies, and explicitly calls for stronger coordination, talent development, regional collaboration, improved transportation and access. It contains five strategic pillars, twelve initiatives and twenty-nine implementation actions, accompanied by performance measures and annual reporting.

That is encouraging because the opportunity before London is not another collection of unrelated projects. It is the possibility of becoming a city that thinks in systems.

1. Using Growth to Build a Better City

London is going to change physically whether it chooses a coherent vision for that change or not. Population growth will require more housing. New neighbourhoods will be built, existing neighbourhoods will intensify and infrastructure will expand. More people will need to travel between homes, workplaces, schools, hospitals, shops, recreation and cultural activities. Billions of dollars will eventually be spent accommodating that growth.

The opportunity is to make those investments accomplish more than one purpose at a time.

For much of the twentieth century, urban growth in Canadian cities tended to move outward. Housing was separated from employment and retail, distances increased and the automobile became indispensable to everyday life. This pattern provided many families with larger homes and private space, but it also produced long-term costs. Roads and pipes stretched farther, public transit became harder to provide efficiently and residents without cars encountered a city designed largely around people who had them.

London does not need to abandon suburban neighbourhoods or imagine that everyone will suddenly stop driving. The more useful opportunity is to make future growth provide more choices than past growth did.

The City's Mobility Master Plan already anticipates this transition. London currently estimates that walking, cycling and transit account for approximately 23 per cent of trips, while personal-vehicle drivers account for about 61 per cent. The City's adopted 2050 target would increase the combined walking, cycling and transit share to at least 32.5 per cent while reducing personal-vehicle driver trips to 52.5 per cent. Achieving that change will require more than additional buses or cycling lanes. Transportation patterns are influenced by the shape of the city itself. When homes, employment, shops and services are closer together, alternatives to driving become more practical. When

they are separated by long distances, automobile dependence becomes harder to avoid.

Growth therefore provides London with an opportunity to create more complete neighbourhoods in which daily needs can be met more easily, while concentrating greater density in locations capable of supporting frequent transit and existing infrastructure. Done thoughtfully, this need not mean eliminating established neighbourhood character or forcing every part of London into the same urban form. Different parts of the city can remain different while contributing to a more coherent whole.

The principle is relatively simple even if its implementation is not: **growth should not simply make London larger. It should make London work better.**

That means evaluating development not only by the number of units constructed but by the kind of city those units collectively produce. Can people reach daily necessities? Are different kinds and prices of housing available? Can children travel safely through their neighbourhoods? Can transit operate efficiently? Are parks and natural areas accessible? Will the infrastructure being built today remain financially sustainable decades from now?

Those questions transform population growth from something that happens to London into something London can use.

2. Becoming a Learning and Talent City

Few opportunities are as obvious, or as underdeveloped, as London's potential to become a genuine learning city.

Western University and Fanshawe College bring tens of thousands of students into London, while the city's school systems educate another generation of future workers, citizens and creators. Libraries provide learning throughout life. Hospitals teach health professionals while

conducting research. Private educators, cultural organizations and community groups provide learning outside formal institutions. Together, these resources constitute an educational infrastructure that would be difficult for most cities of London's size to reproduce.

Yet the economic value of education depends partly upon what happens after people learn.

A student can spend four years in London, receive an exceptional education and then leave without ever becoming deeply connected to the city. A graduate can possess exactly the expertise a local company requires without knowing that the company exists. A researcher can develop an idea with commercial potential without encountering the entrepreneur capable of bringing it to market. An international student can build friendships and professional relationships in London while facing barriers to remaining and building a career here.

Fanshawe's Innovation Village demonstrates what becomes possible when some of these boundaries are deliberately crossed. Its 95,000 square feet were designed to encourage collaboration among students, faculty, industry and community partners, with creative problem solving and applied innovation embedded in the facility's purpose. The significance of the project is not merely the building itself. It represents an understanding that education becomes more powerful when learners encounter real problems, employers, entrepreneurs and communities while they are still learning.

London could extend that principle across the city.

Imagine a more deliberate network connecting secondary schools, Fanshawe, Western, hospitals, businesses, arts organizations, entrepreneurs, social agencies and community organizations. Students might encounter local employers and civic challenges earlier. Businesses could participate more directly in education and

applied research. Artists and cultural organizations could contribute to creative development. Community organizations could identify problems that students and researchers help investigate.

Entrepreneurship could become a pathway encountered throughout education rather than something discovered only after graduation.

This opportunity also requires better measurement. London regularly celebrates the number of students who come here, and understandably so. A more revealing long-term measure would be how many talented people choose London after they no longer have to be here.

At present, robust public longitudinal information showing how many Western and Fenshaw graduates remain in London one, five or ten years after graduation is difficult to identify. That absence itself suggests an opportunity. If talent retention matters to London's future, the city and its institutions should know much more about who stays, who leaves and why.

The objective should not be to retain every graduate. Young people should be free to pursue opportunities anywhere in the world, and London itself benefits when people arrive here from elsewhere. The objective is to ensure that leaving is not the obvious choice for talented people who might otherwise want to build careers, businesses, families and creative lives here.

A learning city does more than educate people.

It gives them reasons to stay, contribute and continue learning.

3. Making Health an Innovation Platform

London's health sector offers perhaps the clearest example of what can happen when institutional strengths are deliberately connected.

The city already possesses major hospitals, medical education,

university research, engineering, technology companies, advanced manufacturing and a substantial health workforce. These assets are individually important, but their greatest potential may lie in combination.

CSTAR at London Health Sciences Centre provides a tangible example. Its research brings engineers, researchers and clinicians together to develop and test technologies involving minimally invasive surgery, robotics, artificial intelligence, image-guided interventions and simulation. Its researchers currently hold more than \$20 million in peer-reviewed research funding.

What makes this interesting from a civic perspective is not simply the sophistication of the technology. It is the structure of the collaboration. A clinician encounters a problem in patient care. An engineer may understand how a device could address it. A software developer can create the system controlling it. Researchers can test whether it works. Educators can train people to use it. A manufacturer may eventually build it. Entrepreneurs and investors may bring it to market.

Innovation occurs in the connections.

Creativity belongs in this equation as well. It is tempting to describe health innovation primarily in terms of science, technology and engineering, but every invention begins with the ability to imagine something that does not yet exist. Design requires creativity. Problem solving requires creativity. Developing a new medical device, redesigning a patient experience or finding a different way to deliver care requires people capable of questioning assumptions, generating alternatives, experimenting and revising.

This suggests a formula for London's innovation economy:

Health + research + education + technology + manufacturing + creativity = health innovation.

The formula should not be interpreted literally, nor does every project require every component. Its purpose is to illustrate a larger idea. London should look deliberately for places where its strongest assets overlap and then create environments in which people working within them encounter one another.

Health innovation could become one of London's distinctive international strengths precisely because so many of the required ingredients are already here.

The opportunity is not simply to promote London as a health-care centre. It is to make London a place where new approaches to health care are unusually likely to be imagined, developed, tested and brought into use.

4. Making Creativity Part of the City's Infrastructure

If creativity contributes to innovation, then access to creative development becomes more than a cultural question.

London already has an extensive cultural ecosystem. It includes professional and community artists, music organizations, theatres, galleries, festivals, libraries, private studios, Western, Fanshawe, school programs and community organizations. The UNESCO City of Music designation creates another platform from which London can develop its musical identity and international relationships.

The opportunity is not necessarily to create more organizations.

It is first to understand and connect the ones London already has.

The discussion in the previous section about the London Arts Council, the Music Office and community organizations illustrates why this matters. Public agencies can legitimately deliver programming themselves, but direct delivery is only one possible instrument. Funding, convening, commissioning and partnership may sometimes

accomplish more by strengthening expertise that already exists in the community. The appropriate choice can only be made after existing capacity has been identified.

El Sistema Aeolian provides one example of that capacity. Since 2011, it has sought to remove financial barriers to intensive music education by providing children and youth with access to instruction and instruments. Other organizations and educational institutions provide different forms of access. London's challenge is therefore not to behave as though nothing exists, but to ask whether the existing collection of opportunities reaches the population equitably and whether gaps remain.

A city-wide arts-access strategy could begin by mapping those opportunities. Which neighbourhoods have access to music, visual art, theatre, dance, writing and digital creation? Which schools have strong programs? Where are community programs located? Which families face financial barriers? How important is transportation? Which populations are poorly represented? Where are instruments, studios and rehearsal spaces available? What happens to a child who discovers exceptional ability but cannot afford the next stage of development?

Once those questions are answered, London can make better decisions about whether it needs new programming or stronger support for what already exists.

The underlying objective is much larger than producing more professional artists. Most children who study music will not become musicians, just as most children who participate in sports will not become professional athletes. Creative activity provides a place to practise imagination, interpretation, collaboration, experimentation, persistence and revision. Those capacities travel with people into medicine, engineering, business, technology, education and civic life.

For that reason, a city that wants an innovative economy has an interest in developing creative people.

London could therefore set itself a much more ambitious goal than simply supporting a successful arts sector: **every child in London should have a meaningful opportunity to discover and develop creative capacity, regardless of family income or neighbourhood.**

How that goal should be achieved requires further work and partnership with schools, families, cultural organizations and other levels of government. But the aspiration itself would change how London thinks about culture. Arts education would no longer sit at the decorative edge of economic development. It would become part of the human infrastructure upon which an innovative city depends.

5. Moving Upstream

Some of the most compelling research in this project has involved what happens when people reach the expensive end of social problems.

The health and homelessness evidence examined in Part IV demonstrated the extraordinary cost, both human and financial, of repeated crisis. People without stable housing can cycle through emergency departments, shelters, paramedic services, police interactions and other systems designed primarily for urgent intervention. Supportive housing evidence in London suggests that, for at least some people with complex needs, stable housing combined with appropriate supports can dramatically reduce reliance on emergency health care.

London's current housing strategy increasingly recognizes this. Its approach emphasizes prevention, diversion, health integration and coordination rather than treating homelessness solely as a matter of emergency shelter. That change in thinking creates an opportunity that could extend far beyond homelessness.

London could become a city unusually interested in **moving upstream**.

This would not mean abandoning crisis services. Prevention becomes meaningless if someone requiring help tonight is told that society is working on a ten-year strategy. A humane city must maintain emergency responses while simultaneously investigating what causes people to require them.

Food insecurity offers an obvious example. Food banks and meal programs are essential when people cannot afford to eat, but distributing food does not explain why household income is insufficient. Emergency medical treatment is indispensable when someone becomes seriously ill, but the health system should also care about access to primary care, housing, nutrition and other conditions affecting health. Schools must support students who are struggling, but an educational system should also investigate the conditions that caused students to disengage before the problem became acute.

This way of thinking changes the questions government asks. Instead of beginning with the service required at the end of a problem, it traces the path that led there and looks for points where intervention might have changed the outcome.

London has an unusual opportunity to pursue this because many of the institutions required for such work are already present: hospitals, Western, Fanshawe, public health, social agencies, community organizations and municipal services. The city could become a laboratory for testing preventive approaches, measuring outcomes and sharing what works with other communities.

That would require cooperation with Ontario and Canada because many of the relevant policy levers are not municipal. It would also require humility, since not every crisis can be predicted or prevented and social problems rarely have single causes.

Nevertheless, the governing question is worth embedding in London's civic culture:

Why are people arriving at the point of crisis in the first place?

A city that becomes exceptionally good at asking that question may eventually become better at answering it.

6. Turning Diversity into Belonging and Connection

London's population is becoming more diverse, but diversity itself does not automatically produce inclusion, prosperity or belonging. Those outcomes depend upon whether people can participate fully in the economic, cultural and civic life of the community.

The economic opportunity is substantial. Newcomers bring professional expertise, entrepreneurship, languages, cultural knowledge and connections to markets and communities around the world. London's current economic-development strategy explicitly identifies talent attraction and retention, collaboration and international investment as important components of future growth.

A city capable of connecting newcomer talent to employers, entrepreneurship, professional networks and civic institutions gains far more than population. It acquires relationships with the world.

The same principle applies socially. A person can live in London without feeling that London belongs to them. Belonging emerges when people can see themselves in institutions, participate in decisions, build relationships across communities and encounter opportunities to contribute rather than simply receive services.

This is also why reconciliation must not be folded casually into a generic discussion of diversity. The relationship between London and Indigenous peoples arises from a distinct history involving land, treaties, colonialism and continuing relationships with First Nations

and urban Indigenous communities. London's 2025–35 ReconciliAction Plan contains 155 actions and includes commitments involving access to services, Indigenous representation in municipal decision-making, stronger intergovernmental relationships with First Nations and collaboration with Indigenous organizations. The City is developing metrics and performance indicators for implementation.

The opportunity is therefore not to create a civic identity in which differences disappear. It is to create one broad enough for difference to belong within it.

London's third century will be shaped by people whose families have lived here for generations and by people who arrived last month. It will include Indigenous peoples whose relationship with this land precedes the city itself, descendants of earlier waves of immigration and newcomers establishing communities that will eventually become part of London's history.

A successful city does not merely accommodate these populations.

It gives them opportunities to shape what the city becomes.

7. Thinking Beyond the Municipal Boundary

London's municipal boundary is important for taxation, planning, services and democratic representation. It is considerably less useful for understanding the way the city actually functions.

People travel into London for work, education, health care, shopping and culture. London employers recruit from surrounding communities. Hospitals serve patients from across Southwestern Ontario. Western and Fanshawe attract students from far beyond the region. Businesses depend upon transportation networks and supply chains that extend across Ontario, Canada and internationally.

One of the largest industrial investments in Canadian history is now

taking shape immediately south of London. PowerCo's \$7-billion battery-cell facility in St. Thomas is expected to begin initial production in 2027 and employ as many as 3,000 people directly. The implications do not stop at the St. Thomas boundary. Such an investment can create demand for skilled labour, housing, professional services, education, research, transportation and supply-chain businesses throughout the region.

London's opportunity is to ask what role it intends to play in that emerging regional economy.

Western and Fanshawe can contribute research and training. London's manufacturing sector can participate in supply chains. Newcomers can help meet labour needs and create businesses. Housing decisions in one municipality can affect another. Transportation between London and St. Thomas becomes increasingly important. Health care and other regional services will experience additional demand.

These relationships argue for a more mature form of regionalism in which neighbouring municipalities do not simply compete for investment but identify areas where their interests coincide.

The same principle extends farther.

London sits within one of Canada's most important economic corridors, yet the current federal high-speed rail project, *Alto*, is planned between Toronto and Québec City, with stations including Toronto, Peterborough, Ottawa, Montréal, Laval, Trois-Rivières and Québec City. London is not currently part of the project.

That is precisely the kind of issue that illustrates why municipal leadership must sometimes extend beyond municipal jurisdiction. London cannot build a national railway, but it can articulate the economic case for better intercity transportation, work with Windsor, St. Thomas and other Southwestern Ontario communities, build

alliances with business and educational institutions and advocate to provincial and federal governments.

The question should not be whether the mayor possesses legal authority over intercity rail.

The question should be whether London's future would benefit from better connections to the rest of Canada and, if so, what the city intends to do about it.

8. Turning Climate Responsibility into Local Opportunity

Climate change is frequently discussed as a separate environmental issue, but many of the decisions affecting emissions are also decisions about transportation, housing, infrastructure, energy costs and urban form.

London's community greenhouse-gas emissions in 2024 were 22 per cent below 2005 levels. The City's adopted targets call for a 55 per cent reduction by 2030, 65 per cent by 2035, 75 per cent by 2040 and net-zero emissions by 2050. Whether those targets can be achieved will depend partly upon decisions made in sectors that Londoners do not necessarily think of as climate policy.

A home that uses less energy can cost less to operate. A neighbourhood in which some daily trips can be made without a car can reduce both household transportation costs and emissions. Trees provide environmental benefits while also reducing heat and making neighbourhoods more comfortable. Compact development can make infrastructure and transit more efficient. Local energy production and conservation can keep more money within the local economy.

The City's own estimates make the economic dimension striking. Londoners have recently spent approximately \$1.5 billion each year on energy, and the City estimates that each percentage reduction in energy use can keep roughly \$13 million in London.

This means climate policy can be discussed not only in terms of sacrifice or regulatory obligation, but also in terms of efficiency, household affordability, technological innovation and local economic activity.

London's health, engineering, manufacturing, construction and technology sectors create another opportunity. Buildings will need to become more efficient. Transportation systems will change. Energy technologies will evolve. Infrastructure will need to become more resilient to extreme weather. These transitions will require workers, products, businesses, research and innovation.

A city preparing seriously for climate change can therefore also prepare its economy for the work that transition creates.

9. The Opportunity to Become a Model

There is a temptation for cities to measure themselves against places they can never become.

London is not Toronto, nor should it try to be. It does not possess Montréal's scale, Vancouver's geography or Waterloo's particular concentration of technology companies. Attempts to imitate the most visible characteristics of larger or more fashionable cities can distract from the assets that make a place distinctive.

A more useful question is what London can do unusually well because of the particular combination of resources it already possesses.

London is large enough to support universities, hospitals, research, sophisticated businesses, professional culture and substantial public institutions, yet small enough that many of the people leading those institutions can know one another. That scale can be a limitation when competing for global attention, but it can also be an advantage when trying to connect institutions that are more difficult to

coordinate in a metropolis of several million people.

Other regions demonstrate the potential of this approach. Eindhoven's Brainport ecosystem deliberately connects government, business and knowledge institutions around a shared economic agenda. Waterloo similarly benefits from relationships among universities, research, entrepreneurship, established companies and government. Their histories and economies are different from London's, and neither offers a template London can simply import. Their relevance lies in the principle that economic ecosystems become stronger when institutions capable of contributing to one another are deliberately connected rather than left to operate in parallel.

London's model could be broader still.

Its version could connect **learning, creativity, health, innovation and belonging**.

These are not five unrelated ambitions. A learning city develops the people capable of innovation. A creative city develops the imagination necessary to produce something new. A healthy city gives people a stronger foundation from which to participate. An innovative city converts knowledge and creativity into solutions, businesses and social improvements. A city in which people belong gains access to the abilities of people who might otherwise remain excluded from its institutions and opportunities.

The relationships run in every direction.

Arts education can contribute to creativity. Creativity contributes to innovation. Innovation can improve health. Health affects learning. Education affects income and opportunity. Transportation affects access to all of them. Housing stability influences health and educational success. Diversity expands the range of ideas and international relationships available to the city. Belonging influences

whether people choose to contribute their abilities to the community.

Once these relationships become visible, the opportunity before London begins to look less like a list of municipal programs and more like a civic strategy.

10. Connecting the City

London's third century does not need to begin with the assumption that the city is deficient.

There are deficiencies, certainly. Some require urgent attention. But the research throughout this project has revealed something equally important: London already possesses many of the ingredients required for a much more ambitious future.

The opportunity lies between them.

Health + research + technology + manufacturing + creativity can produce health innovation.

Education + employers + entrepreneurship + community can produce talent that remains and builds.

Housing + health + social services can move people from repeated crisis toward stability.

Immigration + entrepreneurship + international networks can connect London more strongly to the world.

Growth + density + mobility + infrastructure can produce a city that becomes more functional as it becomes larger.

Culture + education + community can broaden access to creativity.

London + St. Thomas + Middlesex + neighbouring First Nations + Southwestern Ontario can become more than a collection of adjacent jurisdictions.

None of these relationships will emerge simply because their components happen to occupy the same geographic area. Proximity is not collaboration. Assets become an ecosystem only when people and institutions develop the relationships, structures and shared objectives that allow them to work together.

That may be the most important opportunity of all.

London can become better at knowing itself.

It can map the capacities already present in the community before creating new ones. It can identify gaps without overlooking existing expertise. It can bring institutions together around problems that none can solve alone. It can distinguish between activity and outcomes. It can measure whether people's lives are actually improving. It can advocate beyond its jurisdiction when another government controls the necessary lever. It can experiment, evaluate and change direction when evidence demonstrates that something is not working.

Most importantly, London can decide that its aspirations should not be limited to becoming a somewhat better version of the city it already is.

A city approaching the beginning of its third century has an opportunity to ask a larger question.

Where could London lead?

Perhaps in connecting health research with technology, design and manufacturing. Perhaps in demonstrating how a mid-sized city can give children broad access to creative development. Perhaps in developing new approaches to homelessness and preventive health. Perhaps in building an unusually effective relationship between education and economic life. Perhaps in showing how immigration can strengthen both belonging and international economic

connection. Perhaps in demonstrating how a regional centre can collaborate with surrounding communities without losing its own identity.

Some of these possibilities will prove more achievable than others. Evidence will matter. Resources will matter. Jurisdiction will matter. Choices will have to be made because no city can pursue every ambition equally.

But London should not confuse realism with modesty.

The purpose of understanding the city's history, present condition, assets and challenges was never simply to describe London more accurately. It was to create the foundation from which a choice about the future could be made.

For two hundred years, London has accumulated institutions, knowledge, infrastructure, culture, relationships and human talent. Its third century presents a different task: learning how to connect them.

The question before London is therefore no longer simply what it has, what is wrong or even what opportunities are available.

It is what all of those things could become when organized around a shared civic ambition.

That is where vision begins.

PART VI

CHOOSING THE FUTURE

THE LONDON WE COULD BE

What Does London Want to Be When It Grows Up?

London is two hundred years old.

That is old enough to possess a history, an identity and institutions that have shaped generations of people. It is old enough to have made mistakes, corrected some of them and continued living with the consequences of others. It is old enough to have developed traditions worth preserving and habits worth questioning. It is also young enough, particularly by the standards of many cities around the world, to imagine that much of its most important history has not yet been written.

A bicentennial invites celebration, but celebration alone would be a missed opportunity. Anniversaries allow communities to look backward because the passage of time gives perspective. More importantly, they create a rare moment in which looking forward feels equally natural.

1826–2026: The city we inherited.

2026–2050: The city we choose to build.

The distinction between those two statements is important. We inherit history, geography, infrastructure and institutions, but the future is not inherited in quite the same way. It is shaped by thousands of decisions, some large and some almost invisible, made by governments, institutions, businesses, organizations, neighbourhoods and individuals. Many decisions will respond to circumstances London cannot control. Others will determine whether London merely reacts to change or uses change to move deliberately toward something.

That requires more than a collection of projects.

It requires an idea of the city.

For much of its history, London has accumulated assets without always developing a sufficiently ambitious story about what those assets might accomplish together. It has become an important regional centre for health care and education. It has produced medical discoveries, artists, musicians, writers, entrepreneurs and social innovators. It has built major institutions and an extensive network of community organizations. It has welcomed successive generations of newcomers. It possesses parks, rivers, neighbourhoods, businesses, universities, colleges, hospitals and cultural organizations that would be envied by many cities of comparable size.

The previous sections have also shown that London faces serious challenges. Housing is increasingly difficult for many households to afford. Homelessness has grown. Transportation systems are adapting to a larger city. Infrastructure must expand while existing assets age. Inequality affects people's access to opportunity. Institutions that are individually strong do not always function as a coherent ecosystem.

These realities should not lower London's ambition.

They should give it direction.

A city does not need to solve every problem before it is entitled to imagine a future. In fact, vision is most useful when circumstances are difficult because it helps determine which problems matter most, which investments reinforce one another and what progress is supposed to accomplish.

London's third century should therefore not be organized around becoming *good enough*.

The question should not be whether London compares reasonably well with other Ontario municipalities or whether it can gradually improve a collection of municipal indicators. Those comparisons have value, but they are insufficient as a civic ambition. A city with

London's educational institutions, health research, cultural life, community capacity, economic base and human talent should ask something more demanding of itself.

Where can London lead?

Not where can London declare itself a leader. Leadership cannot be conferred through a slogan, designation or strategic plan. It has to be demonstrated. A city becomes a model when other cities begin studying what it has done, when researchers document its results, when successful ideas are adapted elsewhere and when people choose to come because something happening there cannot easily be found somewhere else.

London should not aspire merely to become a successful mid-sized Canadian city.

It should identify areas in which a mid-sized Canadian city can become a model for the world.

A City Organized Around Human Capacity

The research behind this project repeatedly returned to five ideas:

Learning. Creativity. Health. Innovation. Belonging.

At first they appeared to be separate pillars. The deeper we looked, however, the more artificial those divisions became.

Learning develops human capacity. Creativity expands it. Health protects it. Innovation converts it into new solutions. Belonging ensures that people's abilities have a meaningful opportunity to contribute.

The relationships among them are equally important. A child who develops creative confidence may later become an engineer, entrepreneur, physician, teacher or artist. A newcomer who feels

genuine belonging may establish a business, participate in civic life or connect London to another part of the world. Stable housing can improve health, while better health makes learning and employment easier. Education develops knowledge, but innovation requires people capable of using knowledge in ways that have not been attempted before.

Seen this way, the five pillars become something larger than policy categories. Together they describe a philosophy of city-building centred on the development of human potential.

This would not make economic growth irrelevant. Quite the opposite. Cities with educated, healthy, creative and connected populations are better positioned to create businesses, attract investment, generate knowledge and adapt to technological change. But economic development becomes one consequence of developing human capacity rather than the only reason for doing so.

The ambition might therefore be expressed this way:

By 2040, London will be recognized as one of the world's leading mid-sized cities for learning, creativity, health, innovation and belonging: a city that develops human potential, connects its institutions and communities, experiments boldly, measures what works and shares what it learns with the world.

And perhaps the character of that city can be captured more simply:

Large enough to create global opportunities. Human enough to remain a community.

1. A Learning City

London already educates an extraordinary number of people. The question for its third century is whether it can become a city in which learning itself becomes part of civic identity.

UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities offers a useful starting point because it defines learning much more broadly than schooling. A learning city mobilizes resources across education, families, communities, workplaces and technology, encourages learning throughout life and connects that learning with social inclusion, economic development and sustainability. (uil.unesco.org)

London already possesses many of the institutions required to do this. Western and Fanshawe bring research, professional education, trades, technology and applied learning. School boards reach children and families throughout the city. Libraries provide free access to knowledge and technology. Hospitals educate health professionals. Cultural organizations teach music, theatre, visual art and other creative disciplines. Businesses train employees. Community organizations develop skills, leadership and social connections outside formal educational systems.

The opportunity is to stop seeing these primarily as separate institutions and begin recognizing them as components of a city-wide learning ecosystem.

A London Learning City initiative could create relationships among schools, postsecondary institutions, libraries, employers, cultural organizations and community groups without attempting to place them under a single authority. The objective would be connection rather than control. A secondary student could encounter university research, skilled trades, entrepreneurship and creative careers before making postsecondary decisions. University and college students could work on problems identified by neighbourhoods, businesses and community organizations. Older adults could continue developing skills throughout life. Employers could participate more directly in learning while gaining earlier access to emerging talent.

The city should also become much more interested in what happens after education.

London currently celebrates the presence of Western and Fanshawe, and rightly so, but the deeper civic question is how effectively the city converts students into long-term residents, researchers, workers, entrepreneurs, artists and civic leaders. That requires understanding who remains after graduation, who leaves and why.

A learning city would therefore measure more than enrolment.

It would measure **connection**.

How many students undertake work placements with London employers? How many graduates remain in the region? How many start businesses here? How many participate in community organizations? How easily can people retrain when industries change? How many adults participate in continuing education? Which neighbourhoods have lower access to learning opportunities? How many people feel that education has provided a genuine pathway into the economic and civic life of the city?

Learning would become something London does throughout life rather than something that happens primarily before adulthood.

And if London became exceptionally good at building those connections, other mid-sized cities facing similar talent-retention challenges would have reason to study what happened here.

2. A Creative City

London already calls itself a creative city in various ways. It is a UNESCO City of Music, supports artists and cultural organizations, hosts festivals and possesses a long history of artistic experimentation.

The next step should be considerably more ambitious.

London should become a city that deliberately develops creative people.

UNESCO's Creative Cities Network treats creativity and culture as resources for sustainable urban development rather than merely entertainment. London's own UNESCO designation includes commitments involving music education, talent development, international exchange and engagement with youth and marginalized communities. (unesco.org)

London could build upon that foundation by treating creative development as part of the infrastructure of childhood and lifelong learning.

Imagine a **London Creative Guarantee**.

The principle would be simple: every child in London should have sustained access to a meaningful creative discipline regardless of family income, neighbourhood or circumstance.

That does not mean every child must learn the piano or participate in the same program. Creativity takes many forms: music, theatre, dance, visual art, writing, filmmaking, digital media, design, craft and making. Nor does it mean City Hall should establish an enormous new municipal arts program.

The first step would be the opposite.

London would map what already exists.

Schools, libraries, El Sistema Aeolian, community arts organizations, professional artists, private studios, Western, Fanshawe, cultural institutions and other community organizations already provide substantial creative opportunities. The purpose of mapping would be to understand who is being reached, where opportunities are concentrated, where financial or transportation barriers exist and which children are missing.

Public investment could then fill gaps rather than duplicate existing

expertise.

The objective is not primarily to produce more professional artists. Most children who participate in music, theatre or visual art will eventually work in other fields. The larger value lies in developing imagination, discipline, interpretation, collaboration and the willingness to experiment and revise.

These are creative skills.

They are also innovation skills.

A physician imagining a different treatment pathway, an engineer designing a new product, an entrepreneur recognizing an unmet need and a community organization developing a different response to homelessness are all engaging in creative processes. The contexts differ, but each requires the ability to imagine an alternative to what already exists.

This is why arts education should not be treated as something ornamental that a prosperous city supports after its more serious work has been completed.

Developing creative people **is serious work**.

A London Creative Guarantee could eventually become one of the city's most distinctive contributions to urban policy: a demonstration that a city can treat creative opportunity as a component of human development and innovation rather than as a privilege primarily available to families who can afford it.

If the model worked, London should document it, research it and share it.

That is what leadership would look like.

3. A Healthy City and a Health-Innovation City

London's hospitals and health institutions are among its most visible strengths, but a truly ambitious health vision would begin by recognizing that health care and health are not the same thing.

The World Health Organization's Healthy Cities approach has long argued that health is shaped by the conditions in which people live. Housing, transportation, income, neighbourhoods, social connection, environmental conditions and access to services all influence health, which means decisions made far beyond hospitals and physicians can have health consequences. (who.int)

London could therefore pursue two ambitions simultaneously.

The first would be to become an exceptionally **healthy city**.

The second would be to become an internationally significant **health-innovation city**.

The distinction matters.

A healthy city would ask whether neighbourhoods encourage physical activity, whether residents can obtain appropriate care before reaching an emergency department, whether people have stable housing and whether social isolation, poverty, transportation and food insecurity are contributing to poor health. Municipal government could not control all of these conditions, but it could influence some directly and advocate on others.

The homelessness research examined earlier provides a powerful illustration. When people repeatedly arrive at emergency departments because housing, primary care and social supports are inadequate, the health-care system eventually becomes the expensive destination for problems originating somewhere else. Supportive housing evidence in London suggests that changing conditions outside the hospital can dramatically change what happens inside it.

The guiding principle would be the one developed earlier in this report:

Treat symptoms urgently. Understand causes relentlessly.

London's second health opportunity begins at the opposite end of the spectrum. The city possesses hospitals, medical researchers, Western, Fanshawe, engineering, technology, manufacturing and a substantial health workforce. CSTAR already demonstrates what can happen when clinicians, engineers and researchers collaborate around robotics, artificial intelligence, image-guided intervention and simulation. (lhsc.on.ca)

London should deliberately create more environments in which those intersections occur.

A physician encountering a clinical problem should be able to find an engineer, designer or software developer interested in solving it. A researcher developing an idea should encounter entrepreneurs and manufacturers capable of moving it toward practical application. Students should be able to participate in those processes while they are learning.

The city could eventually become known for connecting two ideas that are too often separated: **preventing poor health and inventing better health care.**

One reduces the number of people who need complex intervention.

The other improves intervention when it becomes necessary.

Together they could give London a distinctive health identity far beyond the presence of excellent hospitals.

4. An Innovation City

Innovation has become one of the most overused words in economic

development. Cities establish innovation districts, innovation funds, innovation offices and innovation strategies, sometimes without defining what innovation is supposed to accomplish.

For London, the definition should remain simple.

Innovation means finding a better way.

Sometimes that produces a commercial technology. Sometimes it creates a new manufacturing process, medical device or business model. At other times it produces a better way to deliver housing, teach children, move people through the city or connect residents with services.

The common requirement is an environment in which ideas can move between people who know different things.

Eindhoven's Brainport region provides an instructive example. Its development model deliberately connects business, government and educational and knowledge institutions around a shared regional agenda. The importance of the model lies less in copying Eindhoven's technology industries than in recognizing that innovation ecosystems require relationships among institutions rather than merely a collection of successful organizations. (brainporteindhoven.com)

London could extend that idea.

Its innovation ecosystem could include:

Government + education + research + business + health + culture + community.

The inclusion of culture and community is important.

Artists and designers contribute creative thinking. Community organizations possess knowledge about populations and problems that universities and governments may not have. People with lived

experience understand systems from perspectives unavailable to those who administer them. Manufacturers know how things can actually be produced. Researchers know how ideas can be tested. Entrepreneurs know how opportunities become enterprises.

Bringing these forms of knowledge together would create possibilities that none can generate independently.

Health + engineering + design could produce medical devices.

Manufacturing + research + creativity could produce new products and processes.

Music + technology could produce digital media, gaming and audio innovation.

Housing + health + community knowledge could produce new approaches to homelessness.

Climate science + engineering + construction could produce more resilient buildings and infrastructure.

Education + arts + technology could produce new models of learning.

This requires a culture capable of experimentation.

Governments have legitimate reasons to be cautious. They are spending public money and must be accountable for it. But innovation becomes impossible if every idea must be proven before anyone is permitted to try it.

London should therefore become unusually good at **disciplined experimentation**.

A promising idea can be piloted at limited scale. Objectives can be defined before the pilot begins. Results can be independently measured. If something works, it can expand. If it fails, the city can determine why and stop doing it.

Failure under those circumstances is not necessarily waste.

Repeating failure without learning is waste.

A city that wants to lead must become comfortable with the difference.

5. A City of Belonging

London's future population will be more diverse than its past.

That statement describes demography. It does not describe belonging.

A city can contain people from many cultures, religions, languages and backgrounds while leaving them socially separated or unequally represented in institutions. Conversely, a city can treat diversity as a source of relationships, knowledge, entrepreneurship and civic renewal.

London should choose the latter.

Belonging should mean more than being welcomed into the city.

It should mean having the opportunity to help shape it.

That requires access to employment, education and cultural life, but it also involves representation, civic participation and the experience of being taken seriously by institutions.

For newcomers, this means moving beyond settlement toward participation. London should want immigrants and refugees not only to establish stable lives but to become entrepreneurs, professionals, artists, volunteers, neighbourhood leaders, educators and elected representatives. International students should encounter the city beyond their campuses. People bringing languages and international relationships should be recognized as potential bridges between London and the world.

The City's current newcomer strategies already recognize attraction, integration and retention as important to London's future. (london.ca)
The opportunity is to make participation a measurable outcome.

Reconciliation requires its own framework because Indigenous peoples are not simply another population arriving in a diverse city. Their relationship with this land predates London itself and is shaped by treaties, colonialism and continuing legal, political and cultural relationships. London's 2025–35 ReconciliAction Plan contains 155 actions involving municipal services, representation, relationships with First Nations and collaboration with Indigenous organizations. (london.ca)

Success should therefore be measured not by the publication of the plan but by whether relationships and outcomes change.

The same principle applies to anti-racism, accessibility and other forms of inclusion. Strategies and advisory structures matter, but ultimately London should ask whether people who historically encountered barriers are participating more fully in the city.

Belonging also has a neighbourhood dimension.

Cities become communities through repeated encounters: in parks, libraries, schools, community centres, shops, cultural organizations, festivals, faith communities, sports and public spaces. A city in which people increasingly live parallel lives without encountering one another can become socially fragmented even while appearing prosperous.

London's public spaces and community institutions therefore perform an important democratic function. They create places where people who did not choose one another nevertheless learn to share a city.

A city of belonging does not require everyone to agree.

It requires people to recognize that the city belongs to all of them.

The Five Pillars Are One System

It would be easy at this point to turn Learning, Creativity, Health, Innovation and Belonging into five municipal departments or five columns in a strategic plan.

That would miss the point.

Their value lies in their relationships.

Imagine a child from a low-income household receiving sustained access to music through a community program. The immediate outcome is creative development. But the child may also gain confidence, mentors, friendships and a stronger relationship with school. Those experiences touch learning, health and belonging.

A second example: an international student at Western developing health technology with an engineering student, a hospital researcher and a London manufacturer. Education becomes innovation, innovation becomes economic development and successful integration may give the student a reason to build a life in London.

A third: a person experiencing chronic homelessness moving into supportive housing. Housing stability affects health. Improved health may reduce emergency-service use. Stable housing can make employment, education and community relationships more possible. A social intervention produces health, economic and civic outcomes simultaneously.

This is how people actually experience cities.

London's future strategy should therefore resist the institutional habit of treating interconnected outcomes as unrelated portfolios.

The question should become:

What combinations of London assets can produce outcomes that none of them could produce alone?

That may be the defining question of the city's third century.

From Vision to Measurement

Vision without measurement eventually becomes branding.

If London wants to claim leadership in learning, creativity, health, innovation and belonging, it should be willing to define what progress means and publish the results.

A London 2040 Civic Scorecard could eventually track a small number of measures across the five pillars.

For Learning, London could examine participation in lifelong learning, connections between education and employment, graduate retention and access to learning across neighbourhoods.

For Creativity, it could measure how many children have sustained access to creative education, whether participation differs by income and geography, the health of the cultural ecosystem and the development of creative industries.

For Health, measures could include access to primary care, preventable emergency-department use, housing stability, active transportation and disparities in health outcomes.

For Innovation, London could track business formation, research commercialization, cross-sector partnerships, patents and intellectual property, social innovation and the number of locally developed approaches adopted elsewhere.

For Belonging, the city could examine newcomer economic participation, representation in civic institutions, accessibility, neighbourhood participation, reconciliation outcomes and residents'

reported sense of belonging.

The precise measures should be developed carefully, and not everything important can be reduced to a number. But measurement forces clarity. If London says it wants every child to have access to creative development, it should eventually know whether every child does. If it says it wants graduates to remain, it should know how many stay. If it says it wants reconciliation, it should identify what changed.

And if London says it intends to lead, one of the most interesting measures may be external.

Is anybody learning from us?

Are other cities visiting London to study a program? Are researchers documenting a London model? Are London's approaches being adapted elsewhere? Are its institutions attracting international partnerships because of something distinctive happening here?

Leadership leaves evidence.

A City That Learns from the World

None of this requires London to believe it possesses all the answers.

Leadership begins with learning.

London should study cities that have accomplished things it wants to accomplish. UNESCO Learning Cities can provide models for lifelong learning. Creative Cities can demonstrate different relationships between culture and development. WHO Healthy Cities can provide evidence about the relationship between urban policy and health. Eindhoven and Waterloo can teach London about innovation ecosystems. Cities around the world can offer lessons in transit, housing, climate adaptation, public space, reconciliation and social inclusion.

The purpose of comparison, however, should not be imitation.

London is not Montréal, Toronto, Glasgow, Eindhoven, Malmö or Waterloo. Its history, geography, economy and institutional landscape are different.

The better question is:

What can London learn from elsewhere that helps it become more distinctly itself?

Eventually the exchange should operate in both directions.

London should import ideas, test them in its own context, improve them and export what works.

A city becomes internationally significant not only through what it attracts but through what it contributes.

1826–2026: The City We Inherited

2026–2050: The City We Choose to Build

London's first two hundred years produced the city described throughout this report.

Its next quarter-century will unfold under very different circumstances. Technology will change how people work and learn. Artificial intelligence will alter professions and industries. Climate change will affect infrastructure, health and migration. Canada's population will continue changing. Health systems will face the pressures of an aging population. Cities will compete internationally for talent, investment and ideas.

London cannot predict those changes precisely.

It can decide what kind of city will confront them.

A learning city can adapt because its people continue developing.

A creative city can imagine alternatives when existing approaches stop working.

A healthy city gives people a stronger foundation from which to participate.

An innovative city can turn knowledge into new solutions.

A city of belonging can draw upon the abilities of its entire population rather than only those who have historically had the easiest access to opportunity.

Together, those qualities create something more resilient than any individual economic strategy.

They create a city capable of learning its way through change.

That may ultimately be the most important meaning of the London we could be.

Not a finished city, not a city without poverty, disagreement, failure or difficult choices, and not a city that declares itself world-class because a branding campaign says so.

But a city ambitious enough to believe it can contribute something important to the world, disciplined enough to measure whether it is succeeding and humble enough to change when the evidence says it is not.

London has spent two hundred years becoming what it is.

Its third century should be about deciding what it can become.

The challenge now is leadership.

If this is the city London wants to build, what should it expect from the people asking to lead it?

PART VII

THE LEADERSHIP WE NEED

THE MAYOR'S JOB DESCRIPTION

Before We Interview the Candidates

Municipal elections tend to begin with candidates.

Who is running? What have they promised? Who has experience? Who communicates well? Which announcements are attracting attention? Which controversies are dominating the campaign?

There is another way to begin.

Before interviewing anyone for an important position, we normally decide what the job requires. We identify the responsibilities, the challenges the successful applicant will inherit and the results we expect that person to achieve. Only then do we consider the applicants.

A mayoral election should work much the same way.

Londoners should first ask what kind of city they want to build and what obstacles stand between the city they have and the city they imagine. Only after answering those questions can they reasonably ask what qualities, knowledge and abilities a mayor will need.

That is why the mayor's job description appears near the end of this report rather than the beginning.

We have already examined the London we inherited and the London we live in. We have considered its assets, its challenges and the opportunities before it. We have imagined a London that could become a leader in learning, creativity, health, innovation and belonging.

Now comes the practical question.

What kind of mayor could help London get there?

The answer begins with understanding what a mayor actually is.

More Than One Vote, Less Than a President

For many years, Ontario municipal politics was frequently explained with a simple observation: the mayor has only one vote.

That description is no longer adequate.

Ontario's *Municipal Act* gives the head of council responsibilities that extend beyond voting. The mayor provides leadership to council, presides over meetings, represents the municipality and acts as its chief executive officer. In that latter role, the legislation specifically identifies responsibilities that include promoting the municipality's purposes, encouraging public involvement and representing and promoting the municipality locally, nationally and internationally.

London is also among the Ontario municipalities operating under the province's strong-mayor framework. Those provisions give the mayor significant additional powers involving the municipal budget, senior administration, organizational structure, committees and certain matters connected with provincial priorities.

The office therefore carries more formal authority than it once did.

But London has not acquired an American-style executive mayor who can simply instruct the city to follow a personal agenda. Fourteen

councillors remain independently elected. Council retains significant legislative authority. Professional administrators operate the municipal corporation and deliver services. Other institutions that profoundly affect London's future, including hospitals, universities, colleges, school boards, businesses and community organizations, are not controlled by City Hall at all.

The modern London mayor therefore occupies an interesting position.

The mayor has enough authority to matter greatly, but not enough authority to accomplish most important things alone.

That makes leadership more important, not less.

The essential question is not simply how much power a mayor possesses. It is whether the mayor knows how to use formal authority, persuasion, relationships, evidence, advocacy and public trust together.

Leading Without Trying to Run Everything

London is a large public corporation responsible for infrastructure and services that affect people's lives every day. Roads, water, sewers, planning, fire protection, parks, recreation, housing initiatives, waste management and numerous other responsibilities require professional expertise.

The mayor should understand that corporation extremely well.

The mayor should not attempt to become its chief administrator.

That distinction matters because political leadership and professional administration serve different purposes. Municipal staff should be expected to provide evidence, technical expertise, professional advice and competent implementation. Council establishes policy and priorities and makes decisions for which elected officials are publicly

accountable.

Strong-mayor powers complicate that relationship because the mayor now possesses greater authority involving senior administration and organizational matters. That makes judgment particularly important.

Possessing a power does not mean that exercising it aggressively is always wise.

An effective mayor must know when to direct, when to persuade, when to negotiate, when to delegate and when to allow someone else to lead. There will be moments requiring confrontation and others requiring compromise. There will be circumstances in which public advocacy is necessary and others in which quiet negotiation produces better results.

The ability to distinguish among those situations is part of the job.

A mayor who attempts to control everything will eventually discover how much of the city lies beyond mayoral control. A mayor who believes the office has little power will fail to use the considerable influence it possesses.

London needs something more sophisticated than either approach.

Giving the City Direction

The first responsibility of leadership is direction.

A mayor should be able to answer a deceptively simple question:

Where are we going?

Not where London will be next year, but what kind of city it is trying to become over ten, twenty or twenty-five years.

Budgets are annual or multi-year. Council terms last four years. Major infrastructure may take a decade or more to plan and construct.

Neighbourhoods develop over generations. Universities, hospitals and industries evolve across much longer periods. Decisions made during one council term can shape London long after the people who made them have left office.

The mayor therefore needs to operate in several time horizons simultaneously.

Immediate problems must be addressed. Budgets must balance. Construction projects must proceed. Residents expect potholes to be repaired and services to function.

At the same time, somebody must keep asking whether today's decisions are moving London toward the city it wants to become.

That is where the vision developed in the previous chapter becomes useful.

If London intends to become a leading city for learning, creativity, health, innovation and belonging, those ideas should influence actual choices. They should affect partnerships, budgets, infrastructure, advocacy and the way the city measures success.

Otherwise vision becomes branding.

A mayor's responsibility is not to invent a new civic identity every four years. It is to help London develop enough agreement about its long-term direction that successive councils can continue building upon work that deserves to survive an election.

That requires ambition.

It also requires continuity.

Turning Vision into Results

London does not suffer from a shortage of plans.

Like most contemporary cities, it produces strategic plans, master plans, transportation plans, housing plans, climate plans, economic-development strategies and other documents describing desired outcomes and proposed actions.

Many are thoughtful and necessary.

The leadership challenge begins after the plan is approved.

What happened?

Which commitments were implemented? Which were delayed? Which produced the intended results? Which assumptions proved incorrect? What changed while implementation was underway? What should be continued, expanded, redesigned or abandoned?

London's current strategic planning and performance systems already provide mechanisms for tracking progress. A mayor should use them relentlessly, not merely to determine whether activities occurred but whether conditions improved.

The distinction between activity and outcome is fundamental.

Issuing housing permits is activity. Increasing the supply of homes people can afford is an outcome.

Operating buses is activity. Enabling people to reach work, education, health care and community life reliably is an outcome.

Funding cultural programming is activity. Increasing meaningful participation in creative life is an outcome.

Opening supportive housing is activity. Helping people remain stably housed is an outcome.

Completing a consultation is activity. Making a better decision because people were heard is an outcome.

Governments naturally count what is easiest to count. Leadership requires asking whether the things being counted tell us what we actually need to know.

A mayor should therefore keep returning to a sequence that is simple to describe and difficult to execute:

Vision → priorities → budget → implementation → measurement → accountability.

Every arrow matters.

Stewarding the City's Money and Its Future

Municipal finance is not an administrative detail of the mayor's job.

It is one of its central responsibilities.

London manages infrastructure with a replacement value measured in tens of billions of dollars. Roads, bridges, water and wastewater systems, buildings, parks and other assets require investment not merely this year but decades into the future. Growth requires new infrastructure at the same time that existing infrastructure continues to age.

The mayor therefore needs considerably more financial sophistication than the ability to argue that taxes are too high or that a particular program deserves more funding.

Public money always involves choices.

Holding taxes down by postponing necessary infrastructure replacement may reduce today's bill while increasing tomorrow's. Borrowing can allow one generation to build infrastructure that will serve several generations, but debt also creates future obligations. Development charges can help finance growth-related infrastructure, but their design affects development economics. Provincial and

federal funding can make projects possible, but temporary grants can also create programs municipalities later struggle to sustain.

None of these questions has a universal ideological answer.

They require judgment.

The mayor should understand operating and capital budgets, reserves, debt, development charges, infrastructure liabilities, service levels and the long-term consequences of financial decisions well enough to explain them honestly to the public.

That includes explaining difficult trade-offs.

Leadership sometimes means telling residents that something they want is unaffordable. At other times it means explaining why avoiding an investment today may cost considerably more later.

The relevant test is not whether a mayor spends more or less.

It is whether the mayor understands what London is purchasing with public money, what obligations are being created or deferred and whether today's decisions increase or diminish the city's future capacity.

The Power to Convene

Some of the most important things London could accomplish cannot be accomplished by City Hall.

Consider the vision developed in the previous chapter.

A city-wide learning ecosystem would require Western, Fanshawe, school boards, libraries, employers, cultural organizations and community groups.

A Creative Guarantee would require artists, arts organizations, schools, libraries, funders, postsecondary institutions and community

organizations.

A health-innovation ecosystem would involve hospitals, researchers, universities, colleges, manufacturers, technology companies, investors and governments.

Better responses to homelessness require housing, health care, mental-health and addiction services, community organizations and multiple levels of government.

The mayor controls none of these systems completely.

But the mayor can bring people together.

That convening power may be one of the most valuable instruments available to the office.

The mayor can ask questions that individual institutions may have difficulty asking on their own.

Who is already working on this problem?

Who possesses expertise we have overlooked?

Where are organizations duplicating one another?

Where are there gaps?

What could happen if institutions shared information or resources?

Who needs to be in the room who has never been invited before?

The mayor does not need to emerge from every meeting owning another municipal program.

Sometimes the best outcome may be a partnership between institutions that previously worked separately. Sometimes the City should fund something. Sometimes it should coordinate. Sometimes it should remove a barrier. Sometimes it should advocate to another

government.

And sometimes its most useful contribution may simply be getting the right people into the same room and asking the right question.

Knowing Who Controls the Lever

One of the easiest phrases in municipal politics is:

That's not our jurisdiction.

Sometimes it is entirely accurate.

Health care and education are principally provincial responsibilities. Criminal law belongs to the federal government. Immigration involves substantial federal and provincial authority. Income supports, mental-health systems, housing programs, transportation infrastructure and economic development frequently involve multiple governments.

Jurisdiction matters.

Pretending otherwise creates false expectations and allows politicians to promise things they cannot deliver.

But jurisdiction should begin the next question, not end the conversation.

If London is experiencing a problem, the mayor should know who possesses the authority to address it.

Who controls the lever?

Then:

What exactly does London need?

What evidence supports the request?

What would the intervention cost?

What is London prepared to contribute?

Which other municipalities or institutions face the same problem?

Who could become an ally?

Which minister, department or agency needs to act?

What would success look like?

That is intergovernmental leadership.

A mayor cannot order the Ontario government to change health policy or compel Ottawa to fund an infrastructure project. The mayor can build a compelling case, organize allies, negotiate, use municipal associations, work with local MPs and MPPs and, when necessary, make London's case publicly.

Advocacy itself is a mayoral instrument.

The distinction is important. Effective advocacy is not measured by how loudly a mayor criticizes another government. Sometimes public pressure is necessary. Sometimes a private conversation with a minister produces more.

The measure is whether London advances its interests.

A mayor should therefore be evaluated partly on something that receives surprisingly little attention during municipal campaigns:
Can this person build effective relationships with governments led by people with whom they may profoundly disagree?

London's interests will outlast any provincial or federal government.

The mayor has to work with whoever Canadians elect.

Leading a Region, Not an Island

London's municipal boundary is legally important.

It is not the boundary of London's economy, labour market, health system, transportation needs or environmental relationships.

People travel into London for work, health care, education, shopping and culture. Londoners travel elsewhere for employment and recreation. Businesses operate across municipal boundaries. Western and Fanshawe attract people from around the world. Hospitals serve populations far beyond the city. The economic transformation underway around St. Thomas will influence labour, housing, transportation and investment throughout the region.

Neighbouring First Nations have relationships with London that are historical, cultural, economic and political.

The mayor should therefore understand London as several overlapping places.

There is London the municipality.

There is London within Southwestern Ontario.

There is London within Ontario and Canada.

And there is London in the world.

The responsibilities change at each scale, but the city exists within all of them simultaneously.

A regional mayor asks how London and neighbouring communities can strengthen one another rather than assuming every opportunity must be captured inside the municipal boundary.

A national mayor understands London's relationships with Queen's Park and Ottawa.

An internationally minded mayor recognizes that cities increasingly

compete and collaborate across borders for talent, investment, research, tourism, culture and ideas.

Ontario law itself describes the mayor's chief executive responsibilities as including representing and promoting the municipality locally, nationally and internationally.

London should take those words seriously.

Making London Better at Experimenting

A city attempting to lead cannot restrict itself to approaches that have already been proven somewhere else.

Somebody has to try things first.

That does not mean gambling recklessly with public money. It means becoming better at disciplined experimentation.

A promising intervention can be tested at manageable scale. Its objectives can be established in advance. Evidence can be collected. People affected by the experiment can be heard. Costs can be compared with outcomes.

If it works, expand it.

If it partly works, improve it.

If it fails, understand why and stop doing it.

This requires political courage because unsuccessful experiments are easy to attack. Yet a government that never risks a failed pilot may protect itself politically while condemning the city to repeat familiar approaches indefinitely.

The mayor can help create a civic culture in which intelligent experimentation is understood as responsible rather than reckless.

That culture should extend beyond City Hall.

Universities can research pilots. Community organizations can identify problems and test interventions. Businesses can develop technologies. Artists and designers can bring different ways of thinking. People with lived experience can identify assumptions that institutions miss.

London could become a city that is unusually good at learning from what it does.

That would make innovation less a slogan than a habit.

Telling London's Story

Mayors communicate constantly.

They answer reporters, attend announcements, speak at ceremonies, meet residents, represent the city at conferences and interact with other governments.

But communication is more than visibility.

The mayor should be able to tell London's story.

Not a sanitized marketing story in which every indicator is positive and every project transformative. Residents recognize that kind of language immediately.

The more compelling story is honest about both capacity and contradiction.

London is a city with world-class medical research and people without adequate access to primary care.

It is a city with major educational institutions and employers struggling to find particular skills.

It is a UNESCO City of Music in which access to creative opportunity remains uneven.

It is a prosperous city in which people sleep without homes.

It is a rapidly diversifying city still learning what belonging requires.

Those contradictions do not make London's story weaker.

They make the work real.

A mayor should be able to explain where London has come from, what it possesses, where it is falling short and what it is trying to become.

That story needs different versions in different rooms.

At Queen's Park it may become a case for infrastructure investment.

In Ottawa it may become an argument for housing or transportation funding.

With investors it may emphasize talent, research and regional opportunity.

With newcomers it may explain why London can become home.

With students it should answer the question: why should I stay?

With residents it must explain why difficult choices are being made and what those choices are intended to accomplish.

The mayor is not London's salesperson.

The mayor is one of its principal interpreters.

Power Requires Restraint

The expansion of mayoral powers in Ontario makes another quality

increasingly important.

Restraint.

Democratic leadership is not demonstrated simply by using every available power.

Fourteen councillors have also been elected by Londoners. They represent neighbourhoods, perspectives and experiences the mayor may not possess. Disagreement is not evidence that council is dysfunctional. Sometimes disagreement is democracy working as intended.

A strong mayor should be capable of building majorities without treating every issue as a test of loyalty.

The same respect should extend to municipal administration. Professional advice will sometimes be inconvenient. Evidence will sometimes challenge a political promise. Staff should be expected to provide their best professional judgment rather than the answer political leadership wants to hear.

Transparency becomes particularly important when authority is concentrated.

Residents should be able to understand why important decisions were made, who participated, what evidence was considered and how public money is being used.

Ethical leadership also requires remembering whom the mayor represents.

A mayor represents the whole city, not only supporters, donors, particular neighbourhoods or particular industries.

The whole city.

That includes people who voted for someone else, people who did not vote at all, people without political influence and children who cannot yet vote but will inherit the consequences of decisions being made today.

Leaving London More Capable

At the end of four years, residents will naturally ask whether particular promises were fulfilled.

They should ask something larger as well.

Is London more capable than it was four years ago?

Are its institutions better connected?

Does it have stronger relationships with Ontario and Canada?

Is it better at attracting and retaining talent?

Does it understand its own data more clearly?

Can it identify problems earlier?

Has it become better at measuring outcomes rather than activities?

Are community organizations being used as partners rather than afterthoughts?

Can the city experiment intelligently and learn from failure?

Is its infrastructure more sustainable?

Does London have greater confidence about where it is going?

Are more people able to participate in its opportunities?

And has London developed anything that another city might want to learn from?

These questions reach beyond the accomplishment of any single mayor.

That is precisely why they matter.

The strongest political leadership does not make a city permanently dependent upon the person providing it. It strengthens institutions, relationships and civic capacity so that progress can continue after that person leaves.

A successful mayor should therefore leave London not simply better administered, but more capable than it was four years earlier.

More capable of learning.

More capable of creating.

More capable of preventing problems before they become crises.

More capable of innovating.

More capable of belonging to all the people who live here.

More capable of influencing decisions made beyond its borders.

And more capable of imagining what comes next.

That is the job.

The question for anyone asking Londoners to entrust them with it is straightforward:

What evidence do you offer that you are prepared to do it?

THE COUNCILLOR'S JOB DESCRIPTION

Your Ward Elects You. London Becomes Your Responsibility.

London has fourteen wards.

Each elects one councillor. Those councillors arrive at City Hall carrying a particular democratic responsibility: they have been chosen by people living in a defined part of London to represent them.

They should know that part of the city well.

They should understand its neighbourhoods, schools, parks, businesses, transportation patterns and community organizations. They should know where development is occurring and where infrastructure is aging. They should hear from residents who are frustrated with City Hall and from people who rarely contact government at all. They should recognize issues that might remain invisible from outside the ward.

Representation matters because cities are experienced locally.

A transportation plan may be debated city-wide, but a resident experiences it as the bus that does or does not arrive near home. Housing policy becomes the apartment building proposed down the street. Infrastructure planning becomes the road under construction for months. Parks policy becomes the playground a family uses every weekend.

A councillor brings those experiences into municipal government.

But the councillor's responsibility does not stop at the ward boundary.

Every councillor votes on budgets, infrastructure, housing, transportation, planning, climate, policing, recreation, economic development and other decisions affecting people throughout London. A councillor from Ward 1 participates in decisions affecting Ward 14, just as the Ward 14 councillor participates in decisions affecting Ward 1.

Ontario's municipal framework recognizes this dual responsibility. Provincial guidance describes councillors as representatives, policy-makers and stewards. They represent constituents while also developing an understanding of issues affecting the municipality as a whole and making decisions whose consequences may extend far beyond a four-year council term.

That creates the essential democratic tension of the job.

Your ward elects you. London becomes your responsibility.

Representing a Ward Without Governing Only for a Ward

Good ward representation begins with listening.

Residents should be able to

THE JOB INTERVIEW

Start with the Job, Not the Applicants

Elections encourage us to begin with personalities.

Candidates announce. Signs appear. Interviews begin. Platforms are released. Social media fills with promises, criticisms, endorsements and arguments about who is ahead.

Gradually, the election itself can become the subject.

There is another way to approach it.

Imagine that London were hiring someone to lead an important organization. Before interviewing applicants, we would presumably want to know what the organization does, what condition it is in, what opportunities lie before it and what problems the successful candidate will inherit.

We would decide what the job requires.

Then we would interview the applicants.

That is the approach this report has attempted to take.

We began not with candidates but with London.

We examined the city we inherited and the city we live in. We considered the assets London possesses, the challenges it faces and the opportunities before it. We asked what London might become if it connected its institutions, developed human capacity more deliberately and approached its third century with greater ambition.

Only then did we consider leadership.

The previous chapters proposed job descriptions for the mayor and councillors. They asked what knowledge, judgment and abilities those positions require.

Now the applicants can enter the room.

The purpose of the questions that follow is not to produce a score.

There is no answer key.

Reasonable people can hear the same response and reach different conclusions about it. One voter may place greater importance on financial restraint, another on housing, another on infrastructure, another on social wellbeing. Those differences belong in democratic life.

The questions are intended to do something simpler.

They are designed to make candidates show their work.

It is easy to say that one supports innovation, collaboration, affordability, accountability, economic development or better

government. These words have become almost mandatory in political campaigns precisely because few people oppose them.

The more useful question is:

What do you mean, and what evidence do you offer that you can do it?

That is where the interview begins.

Interviewing the Mayor

Understanding the City

Before asking someone how they intend to lead London, we should discover how they understand it.

Every political platform contains an implicit diagnosis. If a candidate believes London's greatest problem is taxation, one kind of platform follows. If the candidate believes it is housing, another follows. If it is economic growth, public safety, transportation, inequality or institutional fragmentation, different priorities emerge.

The diagnosis therefore matters almost as much as the prescription.

A mayor should be able to describe London in a way that recognizes both its strengths and its contradictions. Candidates should understand the institutions, communities and economic forces already shaping the city rather than approaching City Hall as though everything begins with the next election.

1. What do you believe are London's three greatest assets, and what would you do to connect them more effectively?

This asks more than whether a candidate can name Western, Finsbury, London's hospitals or its businesses. It tests whether the

candidate thinks in systems.

London possesses considerable capacity. The deeper question is whether its assets reinforce one another.

2. What do you believe are London's three most serious challenges, and what evidence leads you to that conclusion?

Candidates will inevitably identify problems.

The second half of the question matters more.

What evidence?

Is the diagnosis based on data, direct experience, research, public consultation or assumption?

3. What is one important thing about London that you believe City Hall currently misunderstands or underestimates?

Leadership sometimes begins by seeing something differently.

The answer could involve a problem, an opportunity, a population, an institution or an emerging trend. What matters is whether the candidate can identify something beneath the familiar political conversation and explain why it matters.

4. Where do you believe London is failing to use capacity that already exists in its institutions, businesses or community organizations?

Before creating something new, a mayor should understand what is already here.

This question tests whether candidates know the community beyond City Hall and whether they instinctively think about partnership before duplication.

5. At the end of the next council term, what would have to be different for you to say London had genuinely progressed?

The test is not what would have been announced or how much money would have been spent. What would actually be different?

This begins the shift from activity to outcomes.

Vision and Leadership

Municipal campaigns understandably concentrate on the next four years.

Cities cannot.

Infrastructure, neighbourhoods, economic development, institutions and demographic change operate on much longer timelines. A mayor therefore needs to govern the present while keeping sight of a future that may extend well beyond their term in office.

The next questions test whether candidates possess that longer horizon.

6. What should London become by 2040, and what could begin during the next four years to move it there?

The first part tests imagination.

The second tests whether imagination can become action.

A vision that cannot influence decisions today is merely aspiration.

7. In what area could London realistically become a Canadian or international leader rather than simply following other cities? Why London?

This question deliberately sets a higher standard than improvement.

If a candidate believes London can lead, there should be a reason rooted in assets the city actually possesses.

8. What is one important decision London needs to make now whose benefits may not be fully visible for ten or twenty years?

Political systems reward immediate results.

City-building often does not.

This question tests whether candidates can think beyond a four-year electoral horizon.

9. What should London stop doing, do differently or reconsider in order to create capacity for new priorities?

Every new priority consumes money, time, attention or organizational capacity.

Candidates who promise something new should also be prepared to consider what may no longer deserve the same resources.

10. What would you want another Canadian city to be studying or copying from London by the end of your term?

This is one test of leadership.

If London wants to become a model rather than simply a competent municipality, it should eventually produce ideas worth sharing.

Governing and Getting Things Done

Political campaigns emphasize intentions.

Governing requires execution.

A mayor works through council, municipal administration, other

governments and institutions the mayor does not control. That requires skills that cannot be demonstrated simply by agreeing with popular goals.

The next questions ask candidates to provide evidence from their own experience.

11. Tell us about a significant initiative you have actually led. What was your role, what obstacles arose and what measurable result was achieved?

The word **led** matters.

So does **result**.

Leadership can occur in business, government, community organizations, education, professional life or many other settings. What matters is whether the candidate can demonstrate experience turning an idea into an outcome.

12. Describe a time you changed your position after receiving new evidence or hearing a perspective you had not adequately considered.

Changing one's mind is often treated as political weakness.

It can also demonstrate judgment.

A leader incapable of changing direction when evidence changes is not decisive. The leader is simply inflexible.

13. How would you decide when City Hall should deliver something itself and when it should fund, commission, partner with or support an organization already doing the work?

This question applies across municipal government.

The objective should not be to maximize the number of things City

Hall operates. Nor should government automatically outsource responsibility.

The question is which arrangement is most likely to produce the desired outcome while using public resources well.

14. When a City strategy is behind schedule or failing to produce its intended outcome, what should the mayor do?

London has no shortage of strategies and plans.

This question tests whether the candidate understands implementation, accountability and adaptation.

15. What information should Londoners be able to see publicly in order to judge whether your administration is succeeding?

Accountability requires more than an election every four years.

A candidate promising results should be willing to identify how those results will be measured.

Working Beyond City Hall

Some of London's most important problems cannot be solved by London alone.

That reality should neither become an excuse for municipal inaction nor a justification for pretending the municipality possesses powers it does not have.

A mayor needs to know where authority lies and how influence works.

16. Identify one major London problem for which another level of government controls an essential lever. What exactly would you ask that government to do, what would London contribute and how would you build the case?

This question tests whether the candidate understands jurisdiction in practical rather than rhetorical terms.

Who controls the lever?

Then what?

17. Give an example of an issue on which London should work more closely with St. Thomas, Middlesex County, neighbouring First Nations or other Southwestern Ontario communities. What would cooperation accomplish?

London's economy, labour market, health system, transportation needs and environmental relationships do not end at the municipal boundary.

The mayor should understand the region.

18. Which London institutions or sectors need stronger relationships with one another, and what role should the mayor play in building those relationships?

This is a test of convening.

The mayor does not need to control an institution in order to help create a useful relationship.

19. How would you work effectively with a provincial or federal government whose politics or priorities differ substantially from your own?

London's interests will outlast governments.

A mayor must be able to advocate effectively regardless of which parties hold office in Toronto or Ottawa.

20. How should London's mayor represent and promote the city outside London, including nationally and internationally?

The mayor is not merely the chair of local council.

The office carries a responsibility to represent the city beyond its borders.

What story should the mayor tell about London, and to whom?

Judgment, Money and Democracy

The hardest decisions rarely involve choosing between something obviously good and something obviously bad.

They involve competing goods, limited resources, imperfect evidence and people who will experience the consequences differently.

That is where judgment matters.

21. Name one significant investment London should consider during the next term. How would you determine whether its benefits justify its costs?

Candidates frequently propose investments.

This question asks how they would evaluate one.

22. Residents may simultaneously demand lower taxes and higher service levels. How would you explain the choices London actually faces?

Public finance requires trade-offs.

Leadership includes explaining those trade-offs without pretending they do not exist.

23. Describe a situation in which a mayor should publicly challenge another level of government and one in which private negotiation would be more effective.

Advocacy is a mayoral instrument.

The question is whether a candidate understands how to use it strategically.

24. With the additional powers available to strong mayors, what principles would guide your decision about when to use those powers and when to seek broader council agreement instead?

Legal authority and political wisdom are not always the same thing.

This question tests a candidate's understanding of power, restraint and democratic legitimacy.

25. Tell Londoners about a decision you have made in your professional, civic or personal leadership experience that was difficult, unpopular or unsuccessful. What did you learn from it, and what would you do differently today?

Leadership biographies tend to emphasize successes.

Failures can be more revealing.

The purpose of this question is not to embarrass candidates or reward theatrical confession. It is to discover whether they can examine their own decisions honestly, learn from experience and acknowledge mistakes.

That may tell voters more about future leadership than another promise ever could.

Interviewing the Councillor

The councillor's interview should be different.

Councillors are not applying to become fourteen smaller mayors. They are seeking positions that combine local representation with responsibility for the governance of the entire city.

The questions should therefore return repeatedly to the principle established in the previous chapter:

Your ward elects you. London becomes your responsibility.

1. What is the most important issue facing your ward, and how does it connect with London's broader priorities?

A strong answer should demonstrate knowledge of the ward without treating it as an island.

2. What is one issue facing London as a whole that you believe residents of your ward should care more about, even if its effects are not immediately visible in the neighbourhood?

This tests whether the candidate can lead public understanding rather than merely reflect existing concerns.

3. Describe a situation in which the immediate preference of some residents in your ward might conflict with what you believe is in London's long-term interest. How would you approach that decision?

This is the unavoidable tension of ward representation.

Listening matters.

So does judgment.

4. What experience demonstrates that you can read complex information, ask useful questions and make decisions in areas where you are not already an expert?

Councillors cannot know everything.

They need to know how to learn.

5. A constituent contacts you demanding that a City employee

reverse a decision. How would you determine whether your role is to advocate, help the resident navigate the process, pursue a policy change or stay out of an administrative decision entirely?

This tests whether the candidate understands the boundary between representation and administration.

6. How would you determine whether repeated constituent complaints reveal individual service problems or a larger policy problem that council should address?

Ward work can become an important source of civic intelligence when councillors look for patterns rather than merely forwarding complaints.

7. What should a councillor do when professional staff advice, public opinion in the ward and the councillor's own judgment point in different directions?

There is no formula for this.

That is precisely why the question matters.

8. How would you work with a mayor whose priorities or political style differ substantially from your own?

Councillors need enough independence to scrutinize mayoral leadership and enough maturity to collaborate when collaboration benefits the city.

9. Describe a decision you believe council may need to make during the next term whose benefits could extend beyond the next election, even if the decision is difficult in the short term.

Stewardship requires a longer horizon than four years.

10. At the end of your term, what evidence should residents use to

determine whether you have been an effective councillor?

This returns accountability to the candidate.

What does success mean?

Attendance?

Constituent service?

Infrastructure?

Policy accomplishments?

Financial stewardship?

City-wide outcomes?

The answer reveals what the candidate believes the job actually is.

Listening to the Answers

These questions are not designed to produce identical answers.

They should not.

Democracy involves legitimate disagreement about priorities, spending, taxation, development, transportation, social policy and the proper role of government.

The purpose of the interview is not to eliminate those disagreements.

It is to make them more useful.

A voter listening to candidates can ask several things.

Did the candidate answer the question that was asked?

Did the answer contain evidence?

Did the candidate demonstrate knowledge of London?

Was a proposed solution actually within municipal authority?

If not, did the candidate understand who controls the necessary lever?

Did the candidate acknowledge costs or trade-offs?

Was success defined in measurable terms?

Did the candidate recognize organizations or expertise already present in the community?

Could the candidate explain a disagreement without caricaturing people who hold another view?

Did the candidate demonstrate curiosity?

Could they acknowledge uncertainty?

Did they provide evidence from their own experience when claiming leadership ability?

None of these questions tells a voter what political position to prefer.

They help determine whether a candidate has thought seriously about the work.

No Scorecard Required

It would be tempting to convert these questions into a numerical score.

Five points for vision.

Five for finance.

Five for collaboration.

Add the numbers and declare a winner.

That would misunderstand both leadership and democracy.

Political judgment cannot be reduced so easily.

One voter may hear a candidate's answer about taxation and consider it responsible while another considers it too cautious. One may favour a particular transportation investment while another prefers a different approach. Both may have legitimate reasons.

The purpose of this report is not to make that choice for them.

Its purpose is to make the choice more informed.

The interview therefore belongs to the voter.

Listen.

Compare.

Verify.

Ask follow-up questions.

Look at a candidate's record where one exists.

Distinguish confidence from competence.

Distinguish criticism from an alternative.

Distinguish a promise from a plan.

And distinguish the ability to win an election from the ability to govern after one.

The Voter's Interview

There is one applicant we have not yet questioned.

Ourselves.

It is easy to demand visionary leadership while rewarding only decisions that benefit us immediately. It is easy to complain about municipal spending while opposing every attempt to change service levels. It is easy to demand more housing while resisting development nearby, better transportation while resisting changes to streets or lower taxes while expecting every service to improve.

Cities are built from those contradictions.

Political leaders have responsibilities.

So do citizens.

Before voting, perhaps Londoners should ask themselves five questions.

What kind of London do I want to live in twenty years from now?

The question is not simply what I want fixed next year, but what kind of city I want this to become.

Which problems am I willing to invest in solving rather than merely complain about?

Some problems require money.

Others require change, compromise, patience or a willingness to try something unfamiliar.

Am I willing to support decisions whose benefits may extend beyond my neighbourhood or beyond this council term?

A city cannot function if every neighbourhood evaluates every decision solely by what it receives immediately.

What evidence am I using to judge candidates?

A lawn sign is not evidence.

A viral video is not evidence.

A confident answer is not necessarily evidence.

Neither is political affiliation a substitute for examining the person seeking a municipal office.

What responsibility do I have for the London we could become?

Voting matters enormously.

It is not the only form of citizenship.

Cities are also built by people who volunteer, create organizations, start businesses, mentor young people, participate in neighbourhoods, make art, conduct research, care for others, challenge institutions and occasionally decide that something missing from their community needs to be created.

London's history contains many such people.

Its future will require more.

The Interview Is Ours

An election should not begin with the candidates.

It should begin with the city.

What have we inherited?

What is happening now?

What assets do we possess?

What problems are preventing people from participating fully in London's opportunities?

What could this city become?

What kind of leadership would move it in that direction?

Only then should we ask:

Who is prepared to do the job?

The questions in this chapter will not answer that for us.

They are not supposed to.

They give Londoners a way to conduct the interview.

The decision remains ours.

And after the election, so does the city.

PART VIII

THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR VISIONS

What Are They Actually Promising London?

London voters face an unusually large field in the 2026 mayoral election. Twelve candidates have been certified by the City of London: John Feher, Lawrence-Zachary Howe, Barry Douglas Jacklin, Tariq Khan, Kirsten Krose, Dan Lenart, Bronagh Joyce Morgan, Josh Morgan, Christine Rosehart, Susan Stevenson, Jeff Yam and Mustafa Zeboon.

They do not all have equally developed public platforms. Some have published extensive policy documents and answered detailed questionnaires. Others have provided considerably less material so far. That makes comparison difficult, but it also reveals something

important about municipal elections.

A platform should be more than a collection of aspirations.

It should tell us what a candidate wants to accomplish, how it will be accomplished, what it will cost, who will pay for it and whether the mayor actually has the authority to deliver it.

Those distinctions matter.

A mayor can advocate for better healthcare, for example, but does not run Ontario's healthcare system. A mayor can promote better educational opportunities, but does not control school boards or provincial education policy. A mayor can propose a municipal budget, but cannot simply announce a tax rate and impose it unilaterally.

So perhaps the most useful way to examine London's candidates is not simply to ask:

What are they promising?

We should also ask:

What is the mechanism?

What will it cost?

Who has the authority to do it?

What measurable result should Londoners expect?

What kind of London is each candidate trying to build?

Different Ideas About What City Hall Needs

Among the candidates who have released substantial platforms,

several quite different philosophies of municipal government are emerging.

Josh Morgan: Growth, Investment and Continuity

Incumbent Mayor Josh Morgan's platform emphasizes economic growth, housing development, infrastructure, downtown revitalization, transportation, investment attraction and continued work on homelessness.

His approach generally argues that London's growing population requires corresponding investment in the infrastructure and services necessary to support that growth.

Housing is a significant component. Morgan has supported a target of 50,000 new homes, intensification, office-to-residential conversion, affordable housing and development connected to transportation infrastructure.

He also emphasizes London's economic relationship with Western University and Fanshawe College and the importance of keeping more graduates in the city.

One particularly distinctive element of Morgan's platform is his treatment of arts and culture as economic infrastructure. He has argued that London's UNESCO City of Music designation can be used to expand tourism, festivals, music-sector employment and the creative economy.

That represents a particular philosophy of municipal development: culture is not simply an expenditure. It can also be part of economic development, tourism, downtown revitalization, talent attraction and city identity.

On homelessness, Morgan distinguishes among responsibilities. Municipal government can coordinate outreach, supportive housing

and homelessness programs, while much of mental-health and addiction treatment remains a provincial healthcare responsibility. Police, meanwhile, deal with violence and property crime.

The central questions for Morgan are therefore questions of results.

Are London's existing investments producing measurable improvements? Is growth generating sufficient prosperity to support the services and infrastructure a growing city requires? And where existing strategies have not produced the desired results, what changes are necessary?

Susan Stevenson: Tax Restraint, Accountability and Public Order

Susan Stevenson offers a substantially different emphasis.

Her platform focuses strongly on tax restraint, scrutiny of municipal spending, accountability, public safety, neighbourhood conditions and the performance of organizations receiving City funding.

Her most striking fiscal proposal is to keep municipal property-tax increases below one per cent in 2027 and 2028, with zero as the stated goal, followed by increases at or below inflation in subsequent years.

That deserves careful examination because it illustrates the difference between a target and a financing mechanism.

Municipal costs do not remain static when taxes remain static. Wages, construction, insurance, fuel, equipment, contracts, maintenance and other costs generally change over time.

Stevenson proposes greater line-by-line scrutiny of municipal finances, actual-versus-budget reporting, departmental savings reviews and examination of reserves and contingencies. She has also acknowledged that she has not identified every saving in advance.

That makes the important question less ideological and more mathematical:

What combination of efficiencies, expenditure reductions, assessment growth, reserves or other revenues would be necessary to achieve a zero-to-one-per-cent tax increase, and what would the consequences of those choices be?

Stevenson's homelessness policies also emphasize accountability and neighbourhood impacts. Her proposed Good Neighbour Agreements would establish expectations for City-funded shelters, homelessness programs and housing providers around issues including security, litter, discarded needles, complaints and neighbourhood relationships.

She also emphasizes treatment and recovery, enforcement and greater accountability for organizations receiving public money.

On economic development, Stevenson proposes reducing red tape, supporting small businesses and revitalizing commercial corridors. Her current published platform contains less detail about arts, culture and creative industries as components of London's economic strategy than some other candidates' platforms.

The central question for Stevenson is therefore whether significant tax restraint, additional accountability measures and enhanced attention to neighbourhood safety can be achieved simultaneously without reducing services or postponing necessary investment.

Kirsten Krose: Make Government Perform Better

Kirsten Krose presents another approach.

Her argument is not simply for larger government or smaller government, but for government that performs better.

Her platform emphasizes service standards, measurable results, safety, transportation and respect for taxpayers. She proposes regular reviews of municipal programs and services rather than assuming that programs should continue indefinitely simply because they already exist.

This raises a useful question that should apply to every municipal program:

What result are we purchasing with public money?

On housing, Krose emphasizes an important distinction between approving housing and actually getting housing built. Municipal approvals matter, but so do infrastructure, market conditions and the practical ability to turn approvals into completed homes.

She also distinguishes municipal responsibilities for homelessness from provincial responsibilities for mental-health and addiction treatment.

Krose recognizes arts and creative industries as economic contributors while placing emphasis on demonstrating the public benefit generated by municipal investment.

Her approach might therefore be described as performance-oriented municipal government.

The central question is whether stronger measurement, program review and service standards can generate significant enough improvements and efficiencies to address London's larger fiscal and social challenges.

Bronagh Joyce Morgan: Fix the Machinery

Bronagh Joyce Morgan approaches London's problems from another direction.

Her argument is that some of London's difficulties arise not simply because of inadequate spending or excessive spending, but because the machinery of municipal government itself is unnecessarily complicated.

She proposes reviewing bylaws, regulations, procurement, contracts, institutional silos and other processes that can slow decision-making and make it harder for residents, businesses and organizations to interact with City Hall.

Her platform also emphasizes transparency, public participation and changes to how municipal government conducts its business.

On housing, she stresses affordability rather than simply counting the number of units approved.

On downtown London, she challenges the idea that the city should continually reinforce a narrative of downtown decline. Instead, she emphasizes identifying and building upon the assets that already exist.

Her treatment of arts and culture is particularly explicit. She describes them as economic drivers connected to employment, tourism, downtown activity and community development.

Her central proposition is essentially systemic:

If the machinery itself is not functioning well, how much can London accomplish simply by adding more programs or spending more money?

The corresponding question is whether systemic reform can generate measurable improvements and savings on the scale required to address London's major challenges.

Mustafa Zeboon: Efficiency, Affordability and Recovery

Mustafa Zeboon emphasizes fiscal discipline, infrastructure, small business, housing and a recovery-oriented response to homelessness.

He proposes reviewing spending and municipal operations for inefficiencies and unnecessary costs while reducing taxes where financially possible.

His housing approach includes faster approvals, reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers and encouraging a broader mix of housing, including apartments, townhouses and starter homes.

His homelessness policies emphasize rehabilitation, treatment, mental-health supports, life skills, employment and eventual independence.

As with other candidates promising efficiencies, the important next question concerns scale.

Which expenditures would change, how much would those changes save and what measurable effects would result?

Other Candidates and Emerging Platforms

Other candidates, including John Feher, Lawrence-Zachary Howe and Tariq Khan, have also released substantive ideas.

Feher emphasizes small-business conditions, reducing red tape, downtown safety, transportation and infrastructure.

Khan emphasizes affordability, attainable housing, youth opportunity, transportation and what he describes as practical, costed solutions.

Howe proposes some of the most unconventional structural changes in the race, including a major logistics and transportation strategy intended to create new economic activity and alternative municipal

revenues. He also argues that arts investment should not be a major priority until London's more immediate economic challenges have been addressed.

Other certified candidates have published considerably less detailed policy material so far. As additional platforms emerge, they should be subjected to exactly the same questions.

The point is not to give more established candidates an automatic advantage.

The point is to compare evidence with evidence.

The Tax Question

Tax promises deserve particular scrutiny because municipal taxation is often discussed as though the number itself were the policy.

It isn't.

Taxes pay for things.

Police and fire protection, roads, transit, libraries, recreation, parks, snow removal, infrastructure, housing initiatives and many other municipal responsibilities all cost money.

At the same time, taxpayers have legitimate concerns about affordability and deserve evidence that public money is being used effectively.

That means neither “raise taxes” nor “cut taxes” constitutes a complete municipal policy.

The meaningful questions are:

What services do we expect?

What do those services actually cost?

Where can genuine efficiencies be found?

What services, if any, should change?

What investments could expand London's future tax base?

And:

What happens if municipal revenues do not keep pace with municipal costs?

Fiscal discipline matters.

So does arithmetic.

Can London Grow Its Way Forward?

There is another side to the fiscal equation that receives less attention.

A city can control expenditures.

It can also expand its economic base.

More businesses, more housing, more investment, more residents, more visitors, more successful commercial districts and more employment can increase economic activity and municipal revenues.

That makes economic development more than an abstract aspiration.

It is part of fiscal policy.

London possesses substantial assets: Western University, Fanshawe College, healthcare and medical research, manufacturing, technology, agriculture and food industries, music, arts and culture, a growing immigrant population and a strategic position within Southwestern

Ontario.

The question is how effectively those assets are being connected.

Can graduates build careers here?

Can entrepreneurs afford to start businesses?

Can artists build sustainable careers?

Can young families find housing?

Can newcomers find opportunity?

Can London's cultural institutions contribute more strongly to tourism and economic development?

Can downtown become a place where significantly more people live as well as work and visit?

Can London become known nationally for something beyond being a reasonably affordable city between Toronto and Windsor?

These are economic questions.

They are also questions of identity.

Homelessness: What Can a Mayor Actually Do?

Homelessness may be the issue where political language most easily exceeds municipal authority.

City government unquestionably has responsibilities.

London can influence housing supply. It can fund and coordinate homelessness programs. It can work with shelters and community organizations. It can address public spaces, zoning and supportive housing. It can coordinate outreach and establish expectations for

organizations receiving municipal funding.

But homelessness does not originate entirely at City Hall.

Housing affordability, income, mental healthcare, addiction treatment, disability supports, education, employment and provincial social programs all intersect.

Some of those responsibilities belong primarily to Queen's Park. Others involve Ottawa. Some require healthcare organizations, school systems, community agencies, businesses and charitable organizations.

That does not excuse municipal government from acting.

It means leadership must include collaboration.

A credible mayoral platform should therefore distinguish between:

what the City can do,

what the City can fund,

what the City can coordinate,

what the City can advocate for,

and

what another government must actually deliver.

Inequality Does Not Respect Government Departments

This becomes particularly important when we look beyond homelessness itself.

Inequality in housing, education, healthcare and income does not occur in separate compartments.

They interact.

A child growing up without stable housing may struggle at school.

Educational disadvantage can affect future employment and income.

Low income limits housing choices.

Housing instability affects physical and mental health.

Poor health can undermine employment.

Limited access to healthcare can deepen existing disadvantages.

And eventually many of the consequences arrive at the doors of municipal government.

That does not mean City Hall can solve all of these problems.

It means municipal leaders need to understand the ecosystem in which they operate.

The mayor's job is therefore partly one of convening.

A mayor can bring together governments, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, businesses, cultural institutions, social agencies, neighbourhood organizations and residents around common problems.

That kind of leadership cannot be measured simply by counting municipal programs.

Education Is a Municipal Issue — Even When It Isn't

Municipal government does not run Ontario's education system.

But education still matters enormously to London's future.

Western University and Fanshawe College bring tens of thousands of students into London. Schools educate the children who will eventually become the city's workers, entrepreneurs, artists, professionals, volunteers and civic leaders.

A mayor cannot rewrite Ontario's curriculum.

But a mayor can help determine whether London becomes a city where educated young people want to remain.

Are there jobs?

Is there affordable housing?

Can someone start a business?

Is there cultural life?

Is public transportation effective?

Does the city welcome creativity?

Can a musician, engineer, nurse, teacher, researcher, entrepreneur or tradesperson imagine building a life here?

Talent retention is therefore municipal economic policy.

Education and economic development meet at the city limits.

Arts and Culture: Expense or Investment?

The candidates also reveal an important philosophical difference concerning arts and culture.

Are they amenities that governments support when sufficient money remains after more important priorities have been addressed?

Or are they part of the economic and social infrastructure of a

successful city?

London's UNESCO City of Music designation makes this more than a theoretical question.

Music, theatre, festivals, visual arts, heritage and cultural organizations employ people. They attract visitors. They support restaurants and businesses. They animate downtown streets. They influence whether talented people choose to live in a community.

They also contribute something harder to measure but no less important:

They help create identity.

Cities compete for investment.

They also compete for people.

And people increasingly choose communities partly because of what it feels like to live there.

Every candidate should therefore be asked not simply how much they would spend on culture, but:

What role do arts, culture and creativity play in your economic vision for London?

The Authority Test

Perhaps every campaign promise should carry a small label.

MUNICIPAL

The City and Council possess substantial authority to act.

Examples might include municipal zoning, many local roads, parks, libraries and numerous municipal services.

● SHARED

The City can act, but success depends substantially on other governments, agencies or partners.

Housing and homelessness frequently fall into this category.

● PRIMARILY ANOTHER GOVERNMENT

The mayor can advocate, convene and negotiate, but cannot independently deliver the result.

Major healthcare reforms, addiction-treatment capacity, provincial education policy and intercity rail are obvious examples.

This simple test would change the way we evaluate campaign promises.

“I will advocate for expanded addiction treatment” is different from “I will provide expanded addiction treatment.”

“I will propose a municipal budget with a one-per-cent tax increase” is different from implying that a mayor alone determines the final tax rate.

“I will work with provincial and federal partners to improve intercity transportation” is different from promising that City Hall will deliver it.

Language matters because authority matters.

Ten Questions for Every Candidate

Londoners could apply the same test to every mayoral platform:

- 1 What exactly are you proposing?**

- 2 **What will it cost?**
- 3 **How will you pay for it?**
- 4 **What existing spending, if any, will change?**
- 5 **What measurable result should Londoners expect by 2030?**
- 6 **Does the mayor actually have the authority to deliver it?**
- 7 **What requires Council approval?**
- 8 **What requires Queen's Park or Ottawa?**
- 9 **What happens if those partners say no?**
- 10 **What does London look like at the end of your term if your plan succeeds?**

That final question may be the most important.

What Kind of City Are We Trying to Build?

Municipal elections easily become arguments about tax percentages, potholes, policing, parking and individual programs.

All of those things matter.

But leadership also requires imagination.

London has spent much of its history being cautious. Caution can protect institutions and prevent reckless decisions. Fiscal responsibility matters. Governments should scrutinize spending and residents deserve accountability for every public dollar.

But caution alone is not a vision.

A successful city must also ask where its future prosperity will come

from.

Will London attract investment?

Will it build enough housing?

Will small businesses thrive?

Will young people stay?

Will newcomers find opportunity?

Will Western and Fanshawe become even stronger engines of regional development?

Will healthcare, research, technology and manufacturing grow?

Will arts, music and creativity become recognizable parts of London's national identity?

Will downtown recover its role as the civic heart of the city?

Will prosperity reach neighbourhoods and families that have historically been left behind?

And will London confront homelessness only after people have fallen into crisis, or will governments begin addressing the interconnected conditions that help create that crisis?

Those are not questions for one candidate.

They are questions for all twelve.

Because choosing a mayor should involve more than asking who promises the lowest taxes or the quickest solution to the problem dominating today's headlines.

The larger question is:

What kind of London do we want to become?

And then comes the question every platform should be required to answer:

How, exactly, are we going to get there?

LONDON VOTES 2026

Ward Candidate Guide

Wards 4–6

Information current to September 30, 2026

This guide applies the same questions to every candidate:

**Taxes | Growth | Housing | Homelessness | Transit | Arts & Culture |
Environment | City-wide Vision**

Where sufficiently detailed published information cannot be found, the guide says so rather than attempting to infer a candidate's position.

A councillor represents a neighbourhood, but also governs an entire city.

This guide therefore looks beyond local concerns and asks the same questions of every candidate:

**Taxes | Growth | Housing | Homelessness | Transit | Arts & Culture |
Environment | City-wide Vision**

Where a candidate has not published a sufficiently specific position, the guide says so. Absence of a published position should not be interpreted as opposition or support. It means voters need more information.

WARD 1

Hadleigh McAlister

Incumbent Ward 1 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes obtaining investment for Ward 1 and maintaining municipal services. Has supported reconsideration of funding necessary to achieve some of London's environmental objectives.

Key question: How should additional investment in east London be balanced with pressure to restrain property taxes?

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports neighbourhood revitalization and investment, particularly along Hamilton Road and in Old East Village.

His approach generally emphasizes collaboration among residents, businesses, community organizations and City Hall.

HOUSING

Supports housing development and neighbourhood investment. His record includes dealing with deteriorated properties and neighbourhood conditions.

More detail needed: Specific housing targets and policies for the next Council term.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes homelessness and its effects on east-London neighbourhoods as significant municipal issues and supports community partnerships and City involvement.

Key question: What should London change if existing homelessness strategies are not producing sufficient improvement?

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Points to Ward 1 investments in sidewalks, crosswalks, streetlights, traffic safety and other neighbourhood infrastructure.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current arts and cultural economic-development platform found for comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports protection of environmentally significant areas and agricultural lands, community gardens, urban agriculture and increased participation in London's green-bin program.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Continue investing in historically underserved neighbourhoods while using partnerships and municipal resources to improve infrastructure, safety and quality of life.

QUESTIONS FOR McALISTER

What measurable improvements resulted from Ward 1 investments during the current term?

What additional investment does Old East Village require?

What are his three highest city-wide priorities for the next Council?

Roger Caranci

Former London City Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes measurable outcomes, fiscal responsibility and concentration on what he describes as core municipal services.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports neighbourhood revitalization, housing and infrastructure as foundations for economic improvement.

HOUSING

Affordable housing is a major priority.

Caranci points to his involvement with Residenza Affordable Housing and its development of housing for seniors, veterans and lower-income residents.

He emphasizes creating housing while respecting established neighbourhoods.

HOMELESSNESS

Places substantial emphasis on public order, encampments, public drug use and enforcement alongside housing.

Key question: How would enforcement policies connect with housing, mental-health and addiction-treatment strategies?

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Emphasizes roads, infrastructure, snow removal and basic municipal transportation responsibilities.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current arts and culture platform found for comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports environmental investments where outcomes can be demonstrated, including water, sewer, drainage and energy efficiency. Argues that environmental spending should compete transparently with other municipal priorities.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A municipality concentrated on core services, infrastructure, affordable housing, public order and measurable results.

QUESTIONS FOR CARANCI

What falls outside his definition of municipal “basics”?

Which expenditures would receive lower priority?

How would he balance enforcement with the social and health dimensions of homelessness?

WARD 1 AT A GLANCE

McAlister: Incumbency, neighbourhood investment, community partnerships, infrastructure.

Caranci: Core services, affordable housing, public order, measurable results.

CENTRAL WARD 1 QUESTION

How broadly should municipal government define its responsibilities, and where should limited City resources be concentrated?

WARD 2

Four candidates are seeking the Ward 2 seat:

Alexandria Hames | Shawn Lewis | Zack Ramsey | Steve Reed

Alexandria Hames

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed current position found for comparison.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No sufficiently detailed current economic-development platform found.

HOUSING

Affordability has been identified as a concern, but more detailed policy mechanisms are needed.

HOMELESSNESS

Her social-work/community background is relevant to social-policy questions, but a sufficiently detailed current municipal homelessness platform was not found.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

No response was published through the Climate Action London candidate questionnaire reviewed for this guide.

That should not be interpreted as opposition to environmental initiatives.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Published material currently provides less detail than some competing Ward 2 campaigns.

QUESTIONS FOR HAMES

What are her three highest priorities?

What would she change in London's budget?

What specific housing and homelessness policies does she propose?

What does she want London to look like in 2030?

Shawn Lewis

Incumbent Ward 2 Councillor and former Deputy Mayor

TAXES & SPENDING

Defends significant portions of recent municipal spending as necessary responses to inflation and previous underinvestment in policing, housing, infrastructure and municipal systems.

Points to permanent savings and debt-servicing reductions identified during the 2026 budget process.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports infrastructure investment and economic development, including continued investment in east London.

HOUSING

Supports affordable housing and homelessness prevention as legitimate areas for municipal action.

HOMELESSNESS

Draws a clear jurisdictional distinction.

Argues that addiction and mental-health treatment are principally provincial healthcare responsibilities and should not simply be transferred onto London's property-tax base.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Points to significant investment in Ward 2 roads, sewers, sidewalks, traffic calming, parks and community infrastructure.

ARTS & CULTURE

Has participated in Council decisions involving London's cultural sector, but a distinctive current Ward 2 arts platform is not prominent in material reviewed.

ENVIRONMENT

Has published responses on environmental issues and participated in London's existing environmental policy framework.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Experienced municipal management combined with infrastructure investment, intergovernmental advocacy and continued incremental improvement.

QUESTIONS FOR LEWIS

Are investments made during his two terms producing sufficient measurable results?

Which current City strategies should be abandoned or substantially changed?

How should Council balance service investment against demands for lower property-tax increases?

Zack Ramsey

TAXES & SPENDING

Argues that affordability pressures require a different municipal response.

More detailed costing of proposed interventions would strengthen comparison.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Places greater emphasis on affordability and residents' economic security than on a conventional investment-attraction platform.

HOUSING

A major campaign priority.

Ramsey's tenant-organizing work informs his focus on rental conditions, affordability and neglected repairs.

He argues that the housing crisis requires more urgent municipal intervention.

HOMELESSNESS

Treats homelessness as an urgent crisis requiring stronger action.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Supports public services and transportation as components of affordability and accessibility, although additional detailed costing would be useful.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current arts and culture platform found for comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

Has provided responses to environmental election questionnaires and links environmental policy with housing, transportation and urban development.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more interventionist City government focused on affordability, tenants, housing and residents experiencing economic insecurity.

QUESTIONS FOR RAMSEY

Which interventions fall clearly within municipal authority?

What would his housing proposals cost?

Which existing expenditures would change to finance them?

What is his broader economic-development strategy for London?

Steve Reed

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed current published position found for comparison.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

HOUSING

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

HOMELESSNESS

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

No response was published through the Climate Action London questionnaire reviewed for this guide.

That should not be interpreted as opposition to environmental policies.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Insufficient detailed published material was found to characterize Reed's city-wide program responsibly.

QUESTIONS FOR REED

What are his three highest Ward 2 priorities?

What would he change in the municipal budget?

What are his positions on housing, homelessness and transportation?

What is his larger vision for London?

WARD 2 AT A GLANCE

Hames: Affordability, safety and community/social-service experience; more detailed current policy material needed.

Lewis: Experience, infrastructure investment, municipal management and intergovernmental advocacy.

Ramsey: Housing, tenants, affordability and more direct municipal intervention.

Reed: More detailed public policy positions needed for meaningful comparison.

CENTRAL WARD 2 QUESTION

Should the next councillor principally continue and refine the investments of recent Councils, or pursue a substantially different response to affordability, housing and neighbourhood conditions?

WARD 3

Six candidates are seeking the Ward 3 seat:

Peter Cuddy | Ben Durham | Harkirat Kaur | Leroy Osbourne | Riya Philip | Zak Rahim

Ward 3 contains established neighbourhoods but also important city-wide assets, including Fanshawe College, industrial lands and the London International Airport.

That makes this ward particularly important to London's larger growth strategy.

Peter Cuddy

Incumbent Ward 3 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Runs primarily on his Council record. More detail on his fiscal objectives for a second term would help comparison.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports continued development and investment in Ward 3.

Key question: What larger role should the airport, Fanshawe and industrial lands play in London's economic strategy?

HOUSING

Has participated in Council's housing decisions. A more distinctive Ward 3 housing platform for the coming term would assist comparison.

HOMELESSNESS

Has dealt with homelessness and public-safety issues through Council. More detailed second-term proposals would be useful.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Supports infrastructure and transportation improvements affecting Ward 3.

ARTS & CULTURE

No distinctive current arts and culture platform found for comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

No response was published through the Climate Action London questionnaire reviewed.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Continue the work of his first term using Council experience and established relationships.

QUESTIONS FOR CUDDY

What measurable changes occurred in Ward 3 during his first term?

What would he do differently in a second?

What are his three highest city-wide priorities?

Ben Durham

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes fiscal responsibility, transparency and public accountability.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports development but raises concerns about both outward sprawl and excessive concentration of high-rise development.

HOUSING

Supports increased housing while questioning both outward sprawl and what he describes as “tall sprawl.”

Proposes a mandatory registry of vacant commercial properties funded by owners rather than general property taxes.

HOMELESSNESS

Calls for planning around homelessness, including adequate winter shelter capacity.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a major platform component.

Emphasizes traffic design, public transit and active transportation.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive arts and culture proposal found.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban form, active transportation and limiting sprawl intersect with his environmental approach.

CITY-WIDE VISION

More transparent and responsive City government using technology, planning and public accountability.

DISTINCTIVE IDEA

A centralized accountability dashboard and regular public report cards measuring his own performance.

QUESTIONS FOR DURHAM

What would his proposals cost collectively?

How much new housing should London accommodate and where?

Which proposals require provincial authority?

Harkirat Kaur

TAXES & SPENDING

Affordability is a central concern, although more detailed fiscal mechanisms are needed.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No sufficiently detailed economic-development strategy found for comparison.

HOUSING

Affordable living is an identified priority.

HOMELESSNESS

Her frontline support experience informs an emphasis on vulnerable residents, mental health and compassionate services.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

No sufficiently detailed current transportation platform found.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published policy would assist comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more affordable and safe community with stronger public services, informed by frontline community and healthcare experience.

QUESTIONS FOR KAUR

Which specific municipal policies would implement those priorities?

How would additional services be financed?

Which mental-health objectives actually fall within City jurisdiction?

What is her economic-development vision?

Leroy Osbourne

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes accessing provincial and federal programs rather than financing every new initiative through property taxes.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

One of the more explicit Ward 3 economic-development platforms.

Identifies the airport, industrial land and regional transportation connections as major opportunities.

HOUSING

Proposes a four-stage approach:

Prevent housing loss → move people from homelessness into housing → increase rental opportunities → create pathways to ownership.

HOMELESSNESS

Places homelessness within a housing continuum rather than treating it exclusively as a public-order issue.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Proposes smarter traffic signals, improved neighbourhood connections to rapid transit and improvements serving drivers, cyclists and transit users.

ARTS & CULTURE

No major distinctive arts and culture strategy found in material reviewed.

ENVIRONMENT

Transportation and development proposals include active transportation and more efficient infrastructure, although economic development is more prominent in the platform.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Connect Ward 3's housing, transportation, airport and industrial assets to London's broader economic growth.

QUESTIONS FOR OSBOURNE

How much outside-government funding is realistically available?

What happens if provincial or federal funding does not materialize?

How should airport/industrial growth be balanced with neighbourhood and environmental concerns?

Riya Philip

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed current fiscal platform found for comparison.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No sufficiently detailed city-wide economic-development strategy found.

HOUSING

More detailed published policy is needed.

HOMELESSNESS

Her healthcare background provides experience relevant to community well-being, but a detailed municipal homelessness platform was not found.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Roads and infrastructure are identified priorities.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published policy needed.

COMMUNITY & YOUTH

A particularly visible priority.

Philip emphasizes recreation, sports, parks and gathering spaces for children and young people.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A community-health and neighbourhood-oriented approach emphasizing families, youth, infrastructure and quality of life.

QUESTIONS FOR PHILIP

What would she change in the municipal budget?

What housing policies does she support?

How does she envision Ward 3's major economic assets?

What are her city-wide priorities beyond neighbourhood services?

Zak Rahim

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes accountability.

His framework asks:

What does it cost?

Who is responsible?

How will success be measured?

What happens when targets are missed?

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports accommodating growth through more efficient use of existing urban land rather than continued outward expansion.

HOUSING

Supports greater density along existing corridors as a way to expand housing supply while using existing infrastructure more efficiently.

HOMELESSNESS

More detailed published policy is needed for comparison with his positions on planning and fiscal accountability.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Supports active transportation, connected cycling infrastructure and safer routes to schools.

Links density with the viability of better transit.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

One of his more developed areas.

Supports measurable environmental commitments and argues that programs should identify funding, responsibility and outcomes rather than relying on aspirational targets.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A denser and more accountable city where municipal commitments have identified costs, responsible parties and measurable outcomes.

QUESTIONS FOR RAHIM

How would his accountability framework alter actual budget decisions?

How much additional density should Ward 3 accommodate?

Where should that density go?

How would neighbourhood concerns be balanced against London's housing requirements?

WARD 3 AT A GLANCE

Cuddy: Incumbency, experience, public safety and continuity.

Durham: Transparency, transportation, responsive government and planning.

Kaur: Affordability, safety, public services and frontline community experience.

Osbourne: Housing pathways, infrastructure, airport/industrial development and economic growth.

Philip: Families, youth, recreation, infrastructure and community well-being.

Rahim: Accountability, measurable outcomes, density, transportation and efficient urban growth.

CENTRAL WARD 3 QUESTION

How should one of London's most strategically important growth areas balance neighbourhood quality of life with housing, industrial development, transportation and the economic potential of the airport and Fanshawe College?

THE SAME TEST FOR EVERY WARD

These first three wards suggest that Londoners could use a remarkably simple test when evaluating every councillor candidate.

1. TAXES

If you want taxes lower, **what would you spend less on?**

If you want additional services, **how will you pay for them?**

2. GROWTH

Where will London's future prosperity come from?

3. HOUSING

What can City Hall actually do to increase supply and affordability?

4. HOMELESSNESS

What belongs to the City, and what requires Queen's Park, Ottawa or the healthcare system?

5. TRANSPORTATION

How should London move people as the city grows?

6. ARTS & CULTURE

Are culture and creativity municipal amenities, community infrastructure, economic development — or some combination of all three?

7. ENVIRONMENT

What environmental outcomes should London pursue, what will they cost and how will success be measured?

8. CITY-WIDE VISION

This may be the most important question:

What kind of London are you trying to build?

A councillor represents a ward.

But a councillor also governs a city.

Londoners deserve to know how candidates intend to do both.

WARD 4

Ward 4 is an **open seat** because current councillor Susan Stevenson is running for mayor.

Following one withdrawal, nine candidates remain:

Bonnie Baleck | Elivis Birindwa | Tom Cull | Ray Daamen | Mario Jozic | Alan Lieknins | Stephen (Ors) Orser | Randi Prunner | Bob Wright

The newly configured Ward 4 covers parts of northeast London including Carling, much of Stoneybrook and the Huron Heights core.

With nine candidates, it is one of London's largest ward races.

Bonnie Baleck

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

HOUSING

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

HOMELESSNESS

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

ENVIRONMENT

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

CITY-WIDE VISION

There is currently insufficient published material to characterize Baleck's platform responsibly.

QUESTIONS FOR BALECK

What are her three highest priorities?

What would she change in London's budget?

What are her positions on housing, homelessness, transportation and economic development?

What does she want London to look like by 2030?

Elivis Birindwa

TAXES & SPENDING

More detailed fiscal proposals are needed for meaningful comparison.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Has discussed opportunity, community development and neighbourhood improvement, but further detail about the economic mechanisms would help comparison.

HOUSING

Housing and affordability form part of his broader community concerns.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes homelessness as a significant community issue.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

More detailed transportation proposals would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive arts and culture strategy found.

ENVIRONMENT

Responded to environmental election questionnaires, indicating engagement with London's environmental policy debate.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A community-oriented approach emphasizing inclusion, neighbourhood improvement and opportunity.

QUESTIONS FOR BIRINDWA

What are his three highest priorities?

What would they cost?

What would he change in the municipal budget?

What measurable results should voters expect by 2030?

Tom Cull

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes results, collaboration and public accountability rather than presenting tax reduction as the central objective of his campaign.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports community-based development and sees strong neighbourhoods, environmental quality and cultural vitality as components of London's attractiveness.

HOUSING

Supports addressing housing and affordability while considering neighbourhoods and sustainable urban development.

HOMELESSNESS

Treats homelessness as a complex community problem rather than exclusively an enforcement issue.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Supports transportation choices that include transit and active transportation.

ARTS & CULTURE

One of the clearer personal connections to this area in the Ward 4 race.

Cull is a writer, educator and community builder who identifies London's arts community as one of the reasons he chose to make the city his home.

ENVIRONMENT

A particularly developed area.

Cull works in community partnerships with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and has extensive involvement with environmental and watershed issues.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A collaborative city built around strong neighbourhoods, environmental responsibility, culture, community relationships and effective public institutions.

QUESTIONS FOR CULL

How would his priorities affect property taxes?

How would he balance environmental and neighbourhood concerns against London's need for substantially more housing?

What spending would receive lower priority?

Ray Daamen

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed current published position found.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

HOUSING

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

HOMELESSNESS

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

No response was published through the environmental questionnaire reviewed for this guide.

That should not be interpreted as opposition to environmental policies.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Insufficient detailed published material is available for a responsible characterization.

QUESTIONS FOR DAAMEN

What are his three highest priorities?

What would he change in London's budget?

What are his positions on housing and homelessness?

What is his larger vision for London?

Mario Jozic

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes accountability, implementation and measurable outcomes.

His approach generally asks whether municipal programs have clear timelines, responsible departments and demonstrable results.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A business owner and executive with academic training in economics and political theory.

His platform connects business experience, development and neighbourhood investment.

HOUSING

Supports infill and development on vacant or underused urban land while protecting environmentally significant areas and farmland.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes homelessness and community safety as major municipal challenges.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Supports infrastructure keeping pace with development.

ARTS & CULTURE

More detailed policy would be useful for comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

One of his more developed policy areas.

Jozic proposes measurable climate implementation plans, regular public reporting, waste diversion, repair/reuse initiatives and environmentally responsible development.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A growing city in which development, infrastructure and environmental commitments are accompanied by implementation plans and measurable outcomes.

QUESTIONS FOR JOZIC

Which programs would he expand and which would he reduce?

How would his approach affect property taxes?

How should London balance rapid housing growth with neighbourhood and environmental protection?

Alan Lieknins

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed current published position found.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

HOUSING

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

HOMELESSNESS

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

No response was published through the environmental questionnaire reviewed.

CITY-WIDE VISION

More published policy information is required for meaningful comparison.

QUESTIONS FOR LIEKNINS

What are his three highest priorities?

What would he change in the municipal budget?

How would he approach housing, homelessness and transportation?

What is his city-wide vision?

Stephen (Ors) Orser

Former Ward 4 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

More detailed current fiscal proposals would help comparison.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

His published election responses concentrate less on conventional economic-development policy than on public order and homelessness.

HOUSING

Supports moving people experiencing homelessness toward stable housing.

HOMELESSNESS

A dominant campaign theme.

Orser strongly emphasizes ending open drug use and the distribution of drug-use supplies and then moving people experiencing homelessness toward stable housing.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

More detailed current proposals needed.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

No response was published through the environmental questionnaire reviewed.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A city placing substantially greater emphasis on public order, homelessness and visible street conditions.

QUESTIONS FOR ORSER

What treatment and housing mechanisms accompany the enforcement approach?

Which level of government would provide necessary addiction and mental-health treatment?

What would his proposals cost?

What are his economic-development and fiscal priorities beyond homelessness and public order?

Randi Prunner

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes using existing resources and partnerships rather than automatically creating new municipal structures.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

More detailed conventional economic-development policy would assist comparison.

HOUSING

Supports prioritizing reuse of existing and underused buildings before expansion into natural and agricultural lands.

HOMELESSNESS

More detailed policy needed.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

More detailed policy needed.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current strategy found.

ENVIRONMENT

A developed area of her published responses.

Prunner supports reuse of existing buildings, protection of biodiversity and agricultural land, greater organic-waste diversion and stronger use of London's anaerobic-digestion capacity.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Greater use of existing infrastructure and resources, with emphasis on environmental sustainability and practical implementation.

QUESTIONS FOR PRUNNER

How much housing can realistically be produced through adaptive reuse?

How would her environmental objectives interact with London's housing targets?

What are her fiscal and economic-development priorities?

Bob Wright

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes examining whether City commitments are actually matched by adequate resources and measurable action.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports London's relationships with Western, Fanshawe, existing employers and economic-development organizations.

Identifies economic uncertainty involving the United States as both a risk and a potential reason to diversify London's economic relationships.

HOUSING

Recognizes growth and development pressures, although more detailed housing mechanisms would strengthen comparison.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes homelessness as a significant city-wide problem.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Supports municipal infrastructure and transportation planning.

ARTS & CULTURE

More detailed current policy needed.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports retaining London's climate commitments but argues that declaring goals without adequately funding measurement and implementation is insufficient.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A pragmatic approach emphasizing institutional experience, economic partnerships and matching municipal commitments with adequate resources.

QUESTIONS FOR WRIGHT

Which commitments should London fund more substantially?

Where would that money come from?

Which existing expenditures would he reconsider?

WARD 4 AT A GLANCE

Baleck: More published information needed.

Birindwa: Community, inclusion and neighbourhood opportunity.

Cull: Community building, environment, collaboration and culture.

Daamen: More published information needed.

Jozic: Business, development, implementation and measurable outcomes.

Lieknins: More published information needed.

Orser: Homelessness, open drug use and public order.

Prunner: Environmental sustainability, adaptive reuse and practical resource use.

Wright: Experience, economic partnerships, implementation and adequately funding commitments.

CENTRAL WARD 4 QUESTION

In a nine-candidate open race, which priorities should define northeast London's next four years, and which candidate has provided enough detail to show how those priorities would actually be implemented?

WARD 5

Ward 5 is also effectively an open race under London's new boundaries.

Five candidates are seeking the seat:

Simon Sabeesh Karikkassery | Corrine Rahman | Abid Raza | Mary Blake Rose | Charles Spina

Current Ward 7 Councillor Corrine Rahman is seeking election in Ward 5 after the boundary changes placed her home within the new ward.

The ward includes Masonville, Sunningdale, Uplands and western Stoneybrook.

Growth itself is one of the major local issues: new housing has expanded faster than some roads, transit and other infrastructure.

Simon Sabeesh Karikkassery

TAXES & SPENDING

Calls for fiscal discipline, budget transparency and finding operational efficiencies and procurement savings before considering tax increases.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Brings a business, commerce, supply-chain and logistics perspective.

Emphasizes practical management of growth and infrastructure.

HOUSING

Housing policy is less developed than his infrastructure and fiscal positions in material reviewed.

HOMELESSNESS

Supports coordination among governments and frontline agencies, supportive housing, mental-health services and rehabilitation.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Roads and infrastructure are major priorities.

Calls for better-maintained roads, sidewalks, lighting and drainage and faster completion of construction projects.

ARTS & CULTURE

Participates in cultural activities, including traditional music, although a detailed municipal arts strategy is not prominent in the platform.

ENVIRONMENT

Emphasizes clean parks, public spaces and neighbourhood services. Has also responded to environmental election questionnaires.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A fiscally disciplined, service-oriented City Hall emphasizing infrastructure, neighbourhood quality of life and practical problem-solving.

QUESTIONS FOR KARIKKASSERY

How large are the efficiencies he believes can be found?

What tax increase would he consider reasonable if efficiencies do not cover rising costs?

How should Ward 5 accommodate continued housing growth?

Corrine Rahman

Current Ward 7 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Brings an existing Council voting and budget record rather than running solely on a new-candidate platform.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports planned growth, infrastructure and economic development, with experience on Council and previously as a school-board trustee.

HOUSING

Has participated in Council's major housing and planning decisions during the current term.

HOMELESSNESS

Has kept homelessness among her identified Council priorities and supported municipal responses to the crisis.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

The newly drawn Ward 5 presents a particular infrastructure challenge: rapid north-end growth, road construction and areas where transit has lagged behind residential development.

ARTS & CULTURE

More detailed current campaign-specific policy would assist comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

Has responded to environmental questionnaires and has a Council record that

voters can examine.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Experienced municipal governance combined with continuity and adaptation to a newly configured growth ward.

QUESTIONS FOR RAHMAN

Which decisions of the current Council would she change if given another term?

What has Council learned from London's recent tax increases?

How should the City finance the roads, transit and other infrastructure required by north-end growth?

Abid Raza

TAXES & SPENDING

Says Council cannot finance everything simultaneously and would prioritize safety, housing and essential services while delaying or reducing lower-priority spending where necessary.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Brings business experience and emphasizes practical problem-solving and compromise.

HOUSING

Supports supportive housing as part of reducing chronic homelessness.

HOMELESSNESS

A major priority.

Raza explicitly acknowledges the tension between compassion and enforcement. He argues that enforcement alone can move vulnerable people without solving underlying problems and supports supportive housing, mental-health and addiction services, outreach and prevention alongside enforcement where violence, theft or danger occurs.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Identifies transit as an area in which City government has direct capacity to act.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed current position found.

ENVIRONMENT

Did not respond to the environmental questionnaire reviewed for this guide.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A safer city combining essential services, supportive responses to homelessness and pragmatic municipal decision-making.

QUESTIONS FOR RAZA

Which spending does he consider lower priority?

What would his homelessness strategy cost?

Which parts depend on provincial healthcare funding?

Mary Blake Rose

TAXES & SPENDING

Acknowledges that major environmental commitments require funding and argues for prioritizing high-impact measures and pursuing senior-government funding.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Wants London to become a city where graduates and other residents can find jobs and see a future rather than having to leave for opportunity.

HOUSING

Supports housing attainability at multiple income levels, deeply affordable housing and stronger protections for renters.

HOMELESSNESS

Housing affordability and stability form part of her broader fairness agenda.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Treats transportation as an equity issue.

Supports improved public transit and active transportation alongside continued ability to travel by car.

ARTS & CULTURE

A musician herself, Rose comes from an arts background, although her formal campaign vision emphasizes fairness, environment and opportunity more than a separate arts-economic-development strategy.

ENVIRONMENT

A defining platform issue.

Supports intensification rather than outward expansion, protection of natural and agricultural lands, climate action, greener buildings and transportation and implementation of London's climate plan.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Describes the goal as a London that is **fairer, greener and willing to tackle difficult problems rather than retreat from them.**

QUESTIONS FOR ROSE

What would her environmental and social priorities cost?

How would she balance intensification with neighbourhood concerns?

Which investments should take priority when fiscal resources are limited?

Charles Spina

TAXES & SPENDING

A major platform emphasis.

Spina says he will oppose tax increases that do not improve services and calls for stronger fiscal discipline.

He points to London's infrastructure funding gap and recent cumulative tax increases as evidence that budgeting requires reform.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Identifies significant untapped economic potential but argues that growth planning and spending need better coordination.

HOUSING

Calls for improved intensification decisions.

HOMELESSNESS

Calls for homelessness strategies that produce measurable results and greater respect for laws and public spaces.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Supports action on London's Mobility Master Plan and better-maintained, durable roads.

ARTS & CULTURE

His platform identifies London's cultural richness as an existing strength worth protecting.

ENVIRONMENT

Green space is also identified as an existing London strength, although environmental policy is less central than fiscal reform, infrastructure and governance.

CITY-WIDE VISION

“Protect the Good. Pursue Better”: preserve London's existing strengths while reforming budgeting, infrastructure planning, homelessness responses and municipal decision-making.

QUESTIONS FOR SPINA

What specific tax increases would he consider justified?

Which expenditures should be reduced?

What measurable outcomes would determine whether a homelessness strategy is working?

WARD 5 AT A GLANCE

Karikkassery: Fiscal discipline, infrastructure, services and neighbourhood management.

Rahman: Council experience, continuity, housing and managing rapid north-end growth.

Raza: Safety, housing, homelessness and prioritization of essential services.

Rose: Housing, fairness, transit, environmental sustainability and opportunity.

Spina: Fiscal discipline, infrastructure, governance reform and measurable results.

CENTRAL WARD 5 QUESTION

How should London finance the roads, transit, housing and public services required by rapid north-end growth, and how much of that cost should fall on existing taxpayers versus new development?

WARD 6

Four candidates are seeking the Ward 6 seat:

Ian Sterling Leishman | Stephanie Marentette | Naomi Nadea | Sam Trosow

Trosow is the incumbent councillor.

Ward 6 includes established neighbourhoods where intensification, traffic, heritage, transit, housing and neighbourhood character frequently intersect.

Ian Sterling Leishman

TAXES & SPENDING

A major campaign concern.

Leishman argues that recent cumulative City tax increases are unaffordable and calls for more responsible spending and measurable results.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports growth but emphasizes responsible planning, neighbourhood impacts, local businesses and infrastructure.

HOUSING

Supports growth management while protecting neighbourhood character and green spaces.

HOMELESSNESS

More detailed current policy is needed for comparison.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Neighbourhood traffic is a visible campaign issue, particularly in Old North.

ARTS & CULTURE

Shows interest in heritage and London's historic built environment. A broader arts and cultural economic-development strategy is less developed.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports green-space protection and has discussed recycling reform, wildfire-smoke impacts and environmental resilience.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more affordable and accountable city focused on neighbourhood safety, managed growth, infrastructure and responsible spending.

QUESTIONS FOR LEISHMAN

What specific expenditures would he reduce?

What municipal tax increase does he believe is sustainable?

How would spending restraint affect transit, housing and other growing service demands?

Stephanie Marentette

TAXES & SPENDING

Calls for keeping property-tax increases to a minimum, preventing unnecessary taxation and allocating tax dollars fairly.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Growth is central to her platform.

She argues that growth creates investment, jobs and cultural vitality but becomes damaging if infrastructure, housing and public services fail to keep pace.

HOUSING

Supports addressing housing affordability through collaboration with developers, community stakeholders, Council and staff.

HOMELESSNESS

Supports municipal action on homelessness while also working with other governments on mental-health and social-service funding.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

A substantial priority.

Supports properly funding transit, ensuring infrastructure keeps pace with development and addressing congestion and neighbourhood cut-through traffic.

ARTS & CULTURE

Explicitly supports local arts groups, cultural activity and events including the London Film Festival.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports responsible development and maintained public spaces, trails and parks. Environmental policy is incorporated principally through growth and infrastructure planning.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

A distinctive component of her platform.

Proposes clearer service standards so residents receive acknowledgement and updates after reporting issues involving garbage, dangerous trees, flooding, snow removal and other municipal services.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A growing but better-managed London combining economic investment, infrastructure, improved municipal customer service, collaboration and fiscal restraint.

QUESTIONS FOR MARENTETTE

How low can tax increases realistically remain while transit and infrastructure investment increase?

What service standards would she establish and what would implementation cost?

How would she measure whether “responsible development” is succeeding?

Naomi Nadea

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes accountability and practical use of municipal resources, although more detailed fiscal targets would help comparison.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A developed theme.

Nadea emphasizes skills-based employment, entrepreneurship and better integration of newcomers into London's workforce and civic life.

She argues that economic opportunity should not depend exclusively on formal academic credentials.

HOUSING

Recognizes housing as part of affordability and successful community integration.

HOMELESSNESS

Public safety and support services are major concerns.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

More detailed current policy would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

Supports cultural events, neighbourhood activities and opportunities for newcomers and established residents to interact.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published policy would assist comparison.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

A particularly distinctive priority.

Nadea emphasizes civic participation, volunteerism, youth programs and helping newcomers become workers, entrepreneurs and community leaders.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A safer and more economically inclusive London where newcomers, working families and businesses can succeed and participate fully in civic life.

QUESTIONS FOR NADEA

What specific municipal programs would advance skills-based employment?

Which public-safety interventions fall within City authority?

What would her priorities cost?

What are her positions on taxes and transit?

Sam Trosow

Incumbent Ward 6 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Has an existing Council budget and voting record that voters can examine.

His campaign emphasizes willingness to make difficult choices rather than offering a simple tax target.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supports development but argues that Council has placed too much emphasis on

numerical housing-approval targets without adequately considering infrastructure and environmental sustainability.

HOUSING

Supports additional housing while arguing that planning decisions must consider infrastructure, traffic, natural heritage and agricultural land.

HOMELESSNESS

Lists stabilizing London's homelessness-response initiatives among his priorities for another term.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Improving public transit and neighbourhood traffic safety are explicit re-election priorities.

ARTS & CULTURE

One of his clearly stated priorities.

Trosow explicitly pledges to continue promoting **music, culture and the arts**.

ENVIRONMENT

A substantial component of his platform.

Calls for stronger emissions reduction, implementation and funding of transportation mode-shift objectives, natural-heritage protection, improved waste reduction and stronger consideration of cumulative environmental impacts in development.

GOVERNANCE

Supports greater civic engagement and has emphasized public participation during his first term.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A city balancing housing growth with environmental and infrastructure sustainability while strengthening transit, culture, civic engagement and neighbourhood quality of life.

QUESTIONS FOR TROSOW

Which decisions of the current Council would he change in retrospect?

How would he finance improved transit and environmental commitments?

How much housing growth can London accommodate while meeting the planning constraints he identifies?

WARD 6 AT A GLANCE

Leishman: Affordability, spending restraint, neighbourhood safety and managed growth.

Marentette: Responsible development, municipal service standards, transit, collaboration and reasonable taxes.

Nadea: Public safety, newcomer integration, employment opportunity and community participation.

Trosow: Transit, environment, housing-growth management, homelessness stabilization, arts and civic engagement.

CENTRAL WARD 6 QUESTION

How should London accommodate substantial population and housing growth while protecting established neighbourhoods, improving transit and infrastructure, controlling taxes and preserving environmental assets?

WHAT WARDS 4–6 ADD TO THE LARGER PICTURE

These three races reinforce an important point from the Mayoral Primer.

There is no single argument taking place in London's 2026 election.

Candidates are asking fundamentally different questions.

Some ask:

How can City Hall spend less?

Others ask:

How can City Hall perform better?

Some emphasize:

How do we accommodate growth?

Others:

How do we prevent growth from undermining neighbourhoods and the environment?

Some see homelessness principally through housing, healthcare and social supports.

Others emphasize public order and enforcement.

Some regard transit, environmental policy, arts and culture as investments in London's future.

Others give greater priority to roads, core services, affordability or fiscal restraint.

Those differences matter.

But every candidate should still face the same test:

What are you proposing?

What will it cost?

Who has the authority to do it?

How will we know whether it worked?

And:

What kind of London are you trying to build?

WARD 7

Ward 7 is an open and highly competitive race with eight active candidates:

Kamrul Ahsan | German Gutierrez | Sam Hajar | Waseem Kazzah | Bensy Mathew | Dan Meinen | Djuma Moïse Sharifu | Jonathan Sher

Praveen Varkey withdrew before the final certified list.

Ward 7 encompasses rapidly growing northwest London. That makes the

relationship among development, roads, transit, housing and community infrastructure particularly important.

Kamrul Ahsan

TAXES & SPENDING

Ahsan emphasizes studying London's budget, examining numbers before making commitments and holding municipal spending accountable for results.

GROWTH

Growth management is a central theme. His campaign argues that Ward 7 is being built now and that infrastructure and planning decisions made during the next term will have long-term consequences.

HOUSING

Supports additional housing while connecting new development to infrastructure capacity and municipal planning.

HOMELESSNESS

Calls for measurable results rather than simply measuring spending or activity.

TRANSIT

Transportation infrastructure is particularly important within his approach to northwest growth.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive arts and culture platform found for comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

Connects development with infrastructure and environmental planning, with additional detailed targets useful for comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more data-driven municipal government that examines costs, infrastructure requirements and measurable results before making major decisions.

QUESTIONS FOR AHSAN

Which City expenditures would he change?

What infrastructure should Ward 7 receive first?

How should London finance infrastructure required by rapid growth?

German Gutierrez

TAXES & SPENDING

Lists finding ways to lower property taxes as a campaign priority.

More detail is needed on the spending or revenue changes that would make lower taxes possible.

GROWTH

Supports local business promotion, employment creation and greater economic opportunity.

HOUSING

Affordable housing initiatives are an explicit priority.

HOMELESSNESS

Emphasizes reducing the risk of homelessness through community services and mental-health supports.

TRANSIT

Calls for better transit and safer roads.

ARTS & CULTURE

Gutierrez brings substantial cultural-sector experience, including involvement with Museum London, London Public Library and arts and cultural organizations.

His campaign emphasizes culture, inclusion and community building.

ENVIRONMENT

His civic experience includes ReForest London and environmental stewardship.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A collaborative, inclusive city that combines economic opportunity, cultural development, social support and community participation.

QUESTIONS FOR GUTIERREZ

How would he lower property taxes while improving services?

What specific spending would change?

How would his extensive community-board experience translate into measurable Council outcomes?

Sam Hajar

TAXES & SPENDING

Promises to seek efficiencies and keep increases in check.

His approach is informed by more than 25 years working inside City Hall and accounting studies at Western.

GROWTH

A major focus.

Hajar argues that London should become one of Ontario's easiest cities in which to start, operate and expand a business.

He emphasizes reducing City Hall red tape and improving the Business Hub.

HOUSING

Calls for more housing, with affordable housing given priority.

Argues that lengthy municipal approvals add directly to housing costs and should be shortened.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes the need for affordable housing and community supports, although his most detailed published proposals concentrate on housing supply and municipal processes.

TRANSIT

One of his strongest Ward 7 priorities.

Supports widening Wonderland Road and argues that rapid transit should be reconsidered for northwest London.

ARTS & CULTURE

Supports additional neighbourhood amenities, including a second library and a dedicated community centre.

A broader arts-industry strategy is less developed.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed current environmental policy would assist comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A faster and more efficient City Hall combined with business growth, housing construction and major infrastructure investment in northwest London.

QUESTIONS FOR HAJAR

Which specific efficiencies would materially reduce spending?

What would northwest rapid transit cost?

How much senior-government funding would be required?

Waseem Kazzah

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes responsible growth and practical municipal investment.

More detailed fiscal costing would assist comparison.

GROWTH

Argues that population growth should be accompanied by genuine investment in infrastructure and community services.

HOUSING

Supports housing that is realistic, sustainable and affordable.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes affordability and housing insecurity as interconnected issues, with more detailed municipal mechanisms useful for comparison.

TRANSIT

Roads and transit are explicit components of his growth-management approach.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive cultural platform found for comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports sustainable development, although additional measurable environmental commitments would improve comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Growth that is planned rather than simply accommodated, with infrastructure, housing and services keeping pace with population.

QUESTIONS FOR KAZZAH

What investments should come first?

How would they be financed?

What should London stop or defer doing to accommodate new growth-related spending?

Bensy Mathew

TAXES & SPENDING

Affordability and the pressures facing taxpayers and families are significant campaign themes.

More detailed budget proposals would assist comparison.

GROWTH

Argues that rapid Ward 7 growth has created pressure on roads, schools, transit and community services.

HOUSING

Housing affordability is a central concern, particularly the difficulty tenants face moving into home ownership.

HOMELESSNESS

Emphasizes treatment, mental-health care, rehabilitation and recovery alongside enforcement against trafficking and criminal activity.

He also connects recovery with employment, skills training and reintegration.

TRANSIT

Identifies traffic congestion and public transportation as major Ward 7 concerns.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive policy found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published policy would assist comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A family- and neighbourhood-oriented approach combining affordability, safety, recovery and infrastructure planning.

QUESTIONS FOR MATHEW

Which parts of his treatment and recovery agenda are municipal responsibilities?

What should Queen's Park fund?

How would additional Ward 7 infrastructure be financed?

Dan Meinen

TAXES & SPENDING

One of Meinen's four principal priorities is careful and transparent use of tax

dollars.

His formulation is notable:

Spending well isn't necessarily the same thing as spending less.

GROWTH

Calls for “smart growth” along the Hyde Park corridor.

His central argument is that infrastructure should be built in conjunction with, rather than after, major development.

HOUSING

Supports housing growth but connects it directly with infrastructure capacity.

HOMELESSNESS

Another of his four major priorities.

Meinen argues that City Hall should measure outcomes rather than simply reporting effort or expenditures.

TRANSIT

Proposes a commuter park-and-ride network for northwest London rather than another BRT leg.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive cultural policy found.

ENVIRONMENT

Infrastructure-first growth and transportation planning intersect with environmental questions, although more detailed policy would assist comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A results-focused municipal government emphasizing transparent spending, infrastructure-led growth and measurable outcomes.

QUESTIONS FOR MEINEN

What evidence favours park-and-ride over rapid transit for northwest London?

What homelessness outcomes should Council measure?

Which City expenditures currently provide insufficient value?

Djuma Moïse Sharifu

TAXES & SPENDING

Supports accountable government and investment in strong public services.

More detailed fiscal costing would assist comparison.

GROWTH

A significant platform area.

Sharifu argues that London's population growth should produce economic opportunities for existing residents.

Supports small business, entrepreneurship and stronger connections among employers, Western and Fanshawe.

HOUSING

Supports growth matched by housing and community infrastructure.

HOMELESSNESS

Brings direct community experience helping people experiencing homelessness connect with shelters, employment and other supports.

TRANSIT

Calls for improved traffic flow, public transit, road planning, active transportation and regional connections.

ARTS & CULTURE

Supports downtown events, entertainment and community activity as part of revitalization.

Also supports libraries and community facilities.

ENVIRONMENT

Growth-management and active-transportation proposals have environmental implications, although a more comprehensive environmental platform would assist comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Use London's growth to expand opportunity while strengthening public services, small business, transportation and community participation.

QUESTIONS FOR SHARIFU

Which growth-related investments should have priority?

How would additional services be financed?

What measurable outcome would demonstrate that growth is benefiting existing residents?

Jonathan Sher

TAXES & SPENDING

Sher emphasizes informed decision-making and accountability, drawing on extensive knowledge of municipal affairs.

More detailed fiscal targets would assist comparison.

GROWTH

Supports planning growth in partnership with residents rather than treating consultation as an afterthought.

HOUSING

Housing and neighbourhood planning are significant municipal issues in rapidly growing northwest London. More detailed quantified proposals would improve comparison.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes homelessness as a city-wide issue requiring municipal action and collaboration with other governments.

TRANSIT

Transportation and northwest growth are significant Ward 7 concerns, with more detailed implementation proposals useful for comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

Sher's broader community approach recognizes civic institutions and neighbourhood quality of life, although a distinctive arts-economic-development platform is less prominent.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed current environmental policy would assist comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A partnership model in which an informed councillor combines knowledge of City Hall with sustained resident involvement.

QUESTIONS FOR SHER

What are his three highest spending priorities?

What would he change in the existing City budget?

Which Ward 7 infrastructure project should be completed first?

WARD 7 AT A GLANCE

Ahsan: Data, accountability, infrastructure and planned growth.

Gutierrez: Inclusion, affordable housing, culture, local business and community supports.

Hajar: City Hall experience, red-tape reduction, housing, roads and rapid transit.

Kazzah: Planned growth, housing and infrastructure.

Mathew: Affordability, family concerns, recovery, safety and infrastructure.

Meinen: Fiscal transparency, infrastructure-first growth, transportation and measurable outcomes.

Sharifu: Economic opportunity, public services, transportation and community development.

Sher: Municipal knowledge, resident partnership and accountable representation.

CENTRAL WARD 7 QUESTION

How can northwest London accommodate rapid growth without allowing roads, transit, housing and community infrastructure to perpetually fall behind it?

WARD 8

Three candidates are seeking the Ward 8 seat:

Osam Ali | Steve Lehman | Coralia Tudor

Lehman is the incumbent and is currently serving his second term.

Osam Ali

TAXES & SPENDING

More detailed published fiscal policy is needed for comparison.

GROWTH

Supports improving City performance and economic opportunity, with additional specific proposals needed.

HOUSING

More detailed published policy needed.

HOMELESSNESS

More detailed published policy needed.

TRANSIT

More detailed published policy needed.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive policy found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published policy needed.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Ali entered the race late in the nomination period, and less detailed publicly available policy material was found than for his two opponents.

That should not be interpreted as absence of positions. It means voters need more information.

QUESTIONS FOR ALI

What are his three highest priorities?

What would he change in London's budget?

What are his positions on housing, homelessness and transit?

What does he want London to look like in 2030?

Steve Lehman

Incumbent Ward 8 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Fiscal restraint is a major campaign theme.

Lehman argues that tax dollars should concentrate on core services and that programs producing insufficient value should be scaled back.

His stated objective is to keep property-tax increases closer to inflation.

GROWTH

Supports removing unnecessary regulatory barriers to housing and business development.

HOUSING

A particularly important part of his Council record as Chair of Planning and Environment Committee.

Supports faster approvals and reducing unnecessary review requirements.

Points to London's Housing Accelerator Fund performance and federal funding received for housing-related initiatives and infrastructure.

HOMELESSNESS

Has participated in Council decisions on homelessness and supportive housing, although his campaign emphasis is more heavily concentrated on housing supply, safety and municipal spending.

TRANSIT

Serves on the London Transit Commission.

Supports reliable transportation while emphasizing fiscal scrutiny of major investments.

ARTS & CULTURE

No distinctive arts and culture strategy is prominent in his current campaign material.

ENVIRONMENT

As Planning and Environment Committee chair, his Council record includes environmental and land-use decisions.

His campaign places greater emphasis on housing approvals, growth and fiscal restraint.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A fiscally restrained municipal government focused on core services, housing construction, infrastructure, public safety and reducing regulatory delays.

QUESTIONS FOR LEHMAN

Which City programs should be reduced or eliminated?

Can taxes be held close to inflation while maintaining infrastructure and service levels?

What measurable improvements resulted from his two terms?

Coralia Tudor

TAXES & SPENDING

Fiscal responsibility is one of her principal campaign themes.

Tudor says property-tax dollars should be used responsibly and effectively and wants to reduce the burden on vulnerable residents including seniors and people with low incomes.

GROWTH

Supports continued development while preserving neighbourhood integrity where possible.

HOUSING

Plans to work with developers to create affordable and attainable housing.

Also emphasizes holding developers accountable for proposed developments.

HOMELESSNESS

Proposes what she describes as a rehabilitation-style shelter developed with community partners.

Also identifies drug use and crime as issues requiring action.

TRANSIT

More detailed transportation policy would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive arts and culture policy found.

ENVIRONMENT

Tudor has published relatively detailed environmental responses.

Her proposals include heat-relief centres, tree planting, water conservation, protections for workers during severe air-quality events and using zoning and bylaws to reduce exposure to pollution.

GOVERNANCE

Proposes regular town halls, ward meetings and a monthly newsletter to improve

transparency.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A community-oriented municipal government combining fiscal responsibility, affordable housing, neighbourhood protection, rehabilitation and more direct public engagement.

QUESTIONS FOR TUDOR

How would property-tax relief for vulnerable residents be financed?

What would a rehabilitation-style shelter cost and who would operate it?

Which parts of addiction treatment fall within municipal authority?

WARD 8 AT A GLANCE

Ali: More detailed public policy information needed.

Lehman: Incumbency, fiscal restraint, housing approvals, core services and infrastructure.

Tudor: Fiscal responsibility, housing, neighbourhood protection, rehabilitation and community engagement.

CENTRAL WARD 8 QUESTION

How should London balance faster housing development and fiscal restraint with the protection of established neighbourhoods and continued investment in municipal services?

WARD 9

Six candidates are seeking the Ward 9 seat:

Tammy Abi-Khalil | Anna Hopkins | Dino Jose | Matt Millar | Luke Thomas | Veronica Warner

Ward 9 includes communities such as Byron, Lambeth, Riverbend and Talbot Village.

The ward makes one of London's central growth debates unusually visible: how should the city add housing and population while protecting established neighbourhoods, farmland, natural areas and community identity?

Tammy Abi-Khalil

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes practical solutions and affordability, with more detailed fiscal targets needed for comparison.

GROWTH

Supports development that respects existing communities and responds to residents.

HOUSING

Recognizes housing and affordability as significant concerns.

More detailed targets and mechanisms would assist comparison.

HOMELESSNESS

Her professional and volunteer background includes work with seniors, children with special needs and families experiencing difficult circumstances.

Her campaign emphasizes bringing people together around practical community solutions.

TRANSIT

Transportation and growth are important Ward 9 issues, with additional detailed policy useful.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive cultural strategy found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published policy needed for comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Community-centred representation grounded in listening, service and practical problem-solving.

QUESTIONS FOR ABI-KHALIL

What are her three highest policy priorities?

What would she change in London's budget?

Where should additional Ward 9 housing be built?

What is her city-wide economic vision?

Anna Hopkins

Incumbent Ward 9 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Brings three terms of Council budget decisions and an extensive voting record that can be assessed directly.

GROWTH

Supports growth while emphasizing neighbourhood planning, infrastructure and community consultation.

HOUSING

Has participated extensively in London's housing and planning decisions.

Her challenge as incumbent is to explain how future growth should differ from development already approved during her Council tenure.

HOMELESSNESS

Has participated in Council's city-wide homelessness decisions and emphasizes collaboration with other governments and community organizations.

TRANSIT

Transportation, road capacity and connectivity have been significant issues throughout her representation of southwest London.

ARTS & CULTURE

Supports community institutions and quality-of-life investments, although arts and culture are not the defining focus of her campaign.

ENVIRONMENT

A significant part of her record.

Hopkins serves with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and has been involved in environmental and land-use issues.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Experienced, full-time representation emphasizing neighbourhood consultation, managed growth, environmental stewardship and continuity.

QUESTIONS FOR HOPKINS

After three terms, which outcomes demonstrate that existing approaches are working?

What should London do differently during a fourth term?

Has infrastructure kept pace with southwest London's growth?

Dino Jose

TAXES & SPENDING

“Taxpayers First” is a headline campaign theme.

Emphasizes accountable City Hall and practical use of municipal resources.

GROWTH

Supports sustainable growth and collaboration among residents, businesses and community organizations.

HOUSING

Recognizes affordability and sustainable development as important Ward 9 concerns.

HOMELESSNESS

His background as a registered social worker informs his approach to vulnerable residents and community services.

TRANSIT

“Smarter Transportation” is one of his principal campaign themes.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive cultural platform found.

ENVIRONMENT

Sustainable growth is part of his overall framing, although more detailed environmental commitments would improve comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

An accessible and accountable City Hall emphasizing taxpayers, public safety, transportation and stronger communities.

QUESTIONS FOR JOSE

What does “Taxpayers First” mean for actual budget decisions?

Which expenditures would change?

What specifically constitutes smarter transportation?

Where should Ward 9 accommodate additional housing?

Matt Millar

TAXES & SPENDING

A highly developed part of his campaign.

Millar emphasizes property-tax accountability and has developed a framework intended to track the tax rate affecting an unchanged home rather than relying solely on the overall municipal levy.

GROWTH

Supports growth but is skeptical of regulatory expansion and argues City Hall should regularly examine whether rules remain justified.

HOUSING

Supports additional housing while emphasizing property rights, affordability and regulatory reform.

HOMELESSNESS

Distinguishes between social/health needs and criminal activity and emphasizes clearly identifying what City Council can actually control.

TRANSIT

Questions large expenditures that do not demonstrate sufficient value and applies a cost-benefit framework to transportation decisions.

ARTS & CULTURE

No major distinctive cultural-development strategy found.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports evaluating environmental measures on costs, measurable benefits and municipal authority.

GOVERNANCE

A defining theme.

For new regulations, Millar proposes asking whether they prevent a specific harm, whether costs are justified and whether the regulatory burden is growing unnecessarily.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more limited, transparent and accountable municipal government that subjects spending and regulation to explicit tests of cost, benefit and authority.

QUESTIONS FOR MILLAR

Which existing City regulations should be repealed?

Which services would receive less funding?

How would a more limited municipal role address problems such as housing and homelessness that cross jurisdictions?

Luke Thomas

TAXES & SPENDING

Promises to keep property taxes low and concentrate on reliable basic municipal services.

Opposes what he characterizes as wasteful spending and specifically opposes BRT.

GROWTH

His slogan is:

Smarter Growth. Stronger Community.

Supports development but opposes ultra-high-density projects in Byron and Lambeth, arguing that very high density should instead be directed toward London's core.

HOUSING

Supports housing growth while placing significant emphasis on protecting the character of Byron and Lambeth.

HOMELESSNESS

Calls for action on addiction and mental-health issues combined with stronger enforcement of bylaws.

TRANSIT

Opposes BRT and emphasizes efficient basic transportation services.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive cultural strategy found.

ENVIRONMENT

A prominent campaign theme.

Supports protecting parks and farmland, improving the Thames River and increasing London's tree canopy.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Lower taxes, core municipal services, neighbourhood protection, environmental conservation and directing major density toward the urban core rather than established southwest communities.

QUESTIONS FOR THOMAS

How would London accommodate its housing requirements if density is restricted in parts of Ward 9?

Which expenditures does he consider wasteful?

What transportation investments would replace BRT?

Veronica Warner

TAXES & SPENDING

More detailed fiscal costing would assist comparison.

GROWTH

Supports business opportunity, post-secondary institutions and programs intended to retain graduates and skilled workers in London.

HOUSING

More detailed published housing policy needed.

HOMELESSNESS

Places substantial emphasis on downtown conditions, public order and visible disorder.

More detail is needed on housing, healthcare and treatment components.

TRANSIT

More detailed published transportation policy would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive policy found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published environmental policy needed.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A city that retains talent, supports business and restores downtown conditions sufficiently to make London attractive to residents and newcomers.

QUESTIONS FOR WARNER

What specific policies would improve downtown conditions?

How would they be financed?

What role should housing, healthcare and treatment play alongside enforcement?

What policies would retain more Western and Fanshawe graduates?

WARD 9 AT A GLANCE

Abi-Khalil: Community service, listening and practical neighbourhood problem-solving.

Hopkins: Incumbency, managed growth, consultation and environmental stewardship.

Jose: Taxpayer accountability, safety, transportation and community development.

Millar: Fiscal and regulatory restraint, transparency and clearly defined municipal authority.

Thomas: Lower taxes, neighbourhood protection, environmental conservation and opposition to BRT.

Warner: Business opportunity, talent retention, downtown improvement and public order.

CENTRAL WARD 9 QUESTION

Where should London accommodate future housing and population growth, and how should that growth be balanced against neighbourhood character, farmland, natural areas, infrastructure capacity and affordability?

WHAT WARDS 7–9 ADD TO THE LARGER PICTURE

These three wards reveal another important tension in London's election.

In Ward 7, the central challenge is **growth that has arrived faster than some of the infrastructure needed to support it.**

In Ward 8, the debate includes **fiscal restraint, housing approvals and the future of established neighbourhoods.**

In Ward 9, the argument becomes particularly sharp: **where should London grow?**

That question matters far beyond Ward 9.

If London needs tens of thousands of additional homes, they have to go somewhere.

The choices include some combination of:

building outward,

building upward,

adding density along major corridors,

adding gentle density within established neighbourhoods,

redeveloping commercial and underused land,

and converting buildings that no longer serve their original purpose.

Every choice has consequences.

Building outward requires additional roads, pipes, transit and other infrastructure and consumes more land.

Building upward can change neighbourhoods and generate resistance from existing residents.

Restricting development can protect existing character but may constrain housing supply.

Growth therefore cannot be discussed independently of taxation.

Someone has to pay for the infrastructure that growth requires.

That leads back to one of the central questions running through this entire Primer:

Are we simply trying to keep London's costs down, or are we deciding what kind of city London should become and then determining how to build and pay for it?

Those are not necessarily opposing objectives.

But they are not the same question.

WARD 10

Five candidates are seeking the Ward 10 seat:

Juman Al-Jumaili | Steven Edwards | Alexander Moore | Paul Van Meerbergen | Lois Margaret Ward

Incumbent Paul Van Meerbergen is seeking another term. He is currently serving his fifth term on Council.

Ward 10 includes established neighbourhoods where questions of intensification, infrastructure, housing and neighbourhood character intersect.

Juman Al-Jumaili

TAXES & SPENDING

Fiscal responsibility is one of Al-Jumaili's four stated campaign priorities.

She argues that every City dollar should deliver value and emphasizes considering both immediate needs and long-term consequences rather than treating fiscal responsibility simply as spending less.

GROWTH

Supports planning infrastructure for continued community growth.

Her campaign emphasizes evidence-based decision-making rather than a detailed sector-by-sector economic-development strategy.

HOUSING

Her professional background supporting vulnerable populations informs her approach to community needs, although a more detailed housing platform would assist comparison.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes the effects of municipal decisions on vulnerable populations.

More detailed proposals distinguishing housing, healthcare, treatment and municipal responsibilities would improve comparison.

TRANSIT

“Safe & Connected Infrastructure” is a campaign priority.

She emphasizes roads, sidewalks, accessibility and connectivity.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive arts and culture platform found.

ENVIRONMENT

Infrastructure planning and protection of parks and community spaces feature in her campaign. More detailed environmental targets would assist comparison.

GOVERNANCE

Meaningful public consultation is her top stated priority.

She argues that residents should participate while decisions are being developed rather than simply being informed afterward.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more consultative and evidence-based City government emphasizing fiscal responsibility, infrastructure, community spaces and transparent decision-making.

QUESTIONS FOR AL-JUMAILI

What would she change in London's current budget?

Which City services require greater investment?

What are her specific positions on housing and homelessness?

How would consultation change actual Council decisions?

Steven Edwards

TAXES & SPENDING

More detailed published fiscal policy is needed for comparison.

GROWTH

More detailed published economic-development policy is needed.

HOUSING

More detailed published policy needed.

HOMELESSNESS

More detailed published policy needed.

TRANSIT

More detailed published policy needed.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive position found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published policy needed.

CITY-WIDE VISION

At the time of this review, there was insufficient detailed and readily verifiable public platform material to characterize Edwards's city-wide approach responsibly.

QUESTIONS FOR EDWARDS

What are his three highest priorities?

What would he change in London's budget?

What are his positions on housing, homelessness and transportation?

What does he want London to look like at the end of the next Council term?

Alexander Moore

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes accountability, collaboration and careful decision-making rather than presenting a councillor as capable of acting unilaterally.

GROWTH

Moore explicitly argues that London must navigate significant population growth collaboratively.

HOUSING

Supports coordinated approaches linking housing with healthcare and recovery.

Also opposes major post-approval changes to developments after neighbourhoods and Council have considered the original proposal.

HOMELESSNESS

Views housing, healthcare, mental health, addiction and recovery as interconnected rather than isolated municipal problems.

TRANSIT

Supports infrastructure and community connectivity, with additional specific transportation proposals useful for comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive cultural-development platform found.

ENVIRONMENT

Has published comparatively specific ideas about waste reduction.

Supports expanding reuse and repair, increased waste diversion, purchasing longer-lasting repairable City equipment and continued use of green-bin and recycling programs.

GOVERNANCE

A particularly strong theme.

Moore stresses that one councillor has one vote and must collaborate with the rest of Council.

He proposes regular ward updates, town halls, openness about major votes and reliable follow-up with residents.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Collaborative municipal leadership combining resident accountability, coordinated social policy, responsible growth and practical environmental initiatives.

QUESTIONS FOR MOORE

What would he change in London's budget?

What specific housing policies would he prioritize?

How would his coordinated health/housing approach divide responsibility among London, Ontario and community agencies?

Paul Van Meerbergen

Incumbent Ward 10 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Fiscal restraint has long been an important part of Van Meerbergen's approach to Council.

As a five-term incumbent, voters have an extensive voting record through which to evaluate his positions on taxes, budgets and municipal spending.

GROWTH

Supports economic development while generally favouring scrutiny of municipal costs and regulation.

HOUSING

Has participated in multiple Council terms of planning and housing decisions.

As a long-serving incumbent, the relevant question is not simply what he proposes but what outcomes have resulted from policies he supported.

HOMELESSNESS

Has participated in Council's city-wide homelessness decisions. A more distinctive current-term proposal would assist comparison.

TRANSIT

Has historically scrutinized the costs of major transportation investments.

ARTS & CULTURE

No distinctive current arts and cultural economic-development strategy is prominent in the material reviewed.

ENVIRONMENT

Currently represents London on the Lake Huron Water Supply System and serves as alternate on the Elgin Area Primary Water Supply System. He also serves with the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Experienced municipal governance with substantial emphasis on fiscal scrutiny and the traditional responsibilities of local government.

QUESTIONS FOR VAN MEERBERGEN

After five terms, what three measurable accomplishments best demonstrate his approach works?

What does London need to do differently?

Which current City expenditures should be reduced?

What is his long-term vision for a rapidly growing London?

Lois Margaret Ward

TAXES & SPENDING

Ward emphasizes accountability and affordability.

More detailed costing of her priorities would assist comparison.

GROWTH

Supports community and economic development while emphasizing the needs of existing residents.

HOUSING

Housing affordability is among the concerns reflected in her campaign.

HOMELESSNESS

Recognizes homelessness and affordability as significant city issues, with more detailed proposals needed on the division between municipal and provincial responsibility.

TRANSIT

Transportation and neighbourhood accessibility are relevant campaign concerns.

ARTS & CULTURE

More detailed distinctive policy needed.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed published environmental policy would assist comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A resident-focused approach emphasizing affordability, neighbourhood concerns and accountable representation.

QUESTIONS FOR WARD

What would she change in London's budget?

What specific housing measures does she support?

Which services would receive greater or lesser investment?

What is her economic-development vision for London?

WARD 10 AT A GLANCE

Al-Jumaili: Consultation, fiscal responsibility, infrastructure and community spaces.

Edwards: More detailed public policy information needed.

Moore: Collaboration, accountability, coordinated housing/social policy and practical environmental action.

Van Meerbergen: Long Council experience, fiscal scrutiny and established municipal governance.

Ward: Affordability, neighbourhood representation and accountability.

CENTRAL WARD 10 QUESTION

How should an established part of London accommodate growth and new housing while maintaining infrastructure, neighbourhood quality and affordability for existing residents?

WARD 11

Three candidates are seeking the Ward 11 seat:

Denise Brown | Skylar Franke | Harinder Kumar

Incumbent Skylar Franke is seeking a second term.

Ward 11 includes Old South and surrounding established neighbourhoods.

Questions of intensification, transit, homelessness, public space, infrastructure and neighbourhood character feature prominently.

Denise Brown

TAXES & SPENDING

More detailed current fiscal policy would assist comparison.

GROWTH

Brown brings previous municipal political experience and familiarity with City government.

A more detailed current growth strategy is needed for comparison.

HOUSING

More detailed current published housing policy needed.

HOMELESSNESS

More detailed current policy needed to distinguish her approach from the other Ward 11 candidates.

TRANSIT

More detailed current transportation proposals would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive current cultural platform found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed current policy needed.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Brown brings previous civic experience, but voters would benefit from a more detailed current platform explaining what she would do differently on today's major municipal issues.

QUESTIONS FOR BROWN

What are her three highest priorities for this Council term?

What would she change in London's budget?

What lessons from her previous municipal experience would she apply differently today?

What is her vision for London in 2030?

Skylar Franke

Incumbent Ward 11 Councillor

TAXES & SPENDING

Franke has an existing first-term Council voting record on budgets and municipal investment.

Her campaign emphasizes continued investment in infrastructure, housing and transit rather than a broad program of municipal retrenchment.

GROWTH

Supports accommodating growth through infrastructure, housing and transportation planning.

HOUSING

Affordable housing is one of four stated priorities for the next term.

She supports projects, partnerships and zoning changes intended to create more attainable housing.

HOMELESSNESS

Another of her four stated priorities.

Franke calls specifically for winter homelessness planning to begin much earlier rather than relying on last-minute arrangements as cold weather approaches.

TRANSIT

Expanded transit service is a major campaign commitment.

She supports additional routes, frequency and connections as London grows.

ARTS & CULTURE

Her broader approach supports community institutions and public spaces, although arts and culture are not among the four headline priorities of her current campaign.

ENVIRONMENT

A particularly developed area of her professional background.

Before Council, Franke spent more than eight years working in London's environmental sector, including leadership at the London Environmental Network

and work with ReForest London.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Her fourth principal priority is advancing roads, underpasses, parks and community spaces as London grows.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A growing city that invests in transit, attainable housing, infrastructure and environmental sustainability while planning social responses earlier and more systematically.

QUESTIONS FOR FRANKE

What measurable outcomes from her first term demonstrate success?

How much would expanded transit service cost?

Which existing expenditures would change to finance additional investment?

What should London stop doing or do differently?

Harinder Kumar

TAXES & SPENDING

Responsible spending is one of Kumar's principal themes.

He emphasizes practical action and measurable municipal services.

GROWTH

Supports reliable infrastructure and neighbourhood investment as foundations for growth.

HOUSING

Housing and homelessness form one of his four central campaign commitments.

Supports pathways from encampments into stable housing with appropriate supports.

HOMELESSNESS

A particularly detailed area of his platform.

Kumar supports operating standards and 24/7 accountability at supportive-housing facilities as well as reliable responses to neighbourhood concerns.

He combines outreach and access to treatment with enforcement of public-safety rules around harmful public drug use.

TRANSIT

Focuses strongly on roads, crossings, traffic bottlenecks and infrastructure.

Wharncliffe Road is specifically identified as an area requiring evidence-based improvements and clear construction timelines.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive cultural-development platform found.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed environmental policy would assist comparison.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Another of his four major commitments.

Supports sustainable funding for frontline emergency services, coordination among responders and attention to property crime and response times.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A community-first approach emphasizing housing pathways, public-space safety, reliable infrastructure, emergency services and responsible spending.

QUESTIONS FOR KUMAR

What would his proposed supportive-housing standards cost?

Which aspects of treatment are municipal and which provincial?

What spending changes would accompany increased investment in emergency services and infrastructure?

WARD 11 AT A GLANCE

Brown: Previous civic experience; more detailed current policy positions needed.

Franke: Incumbency, transit, affordable housing, environmental sustainability and planned homelessness response.

Kumar: Housing pathways, public-space safety, infrastructure, emergency services and responsible spending.

CENTRAL WARD 11 QUESTION

How should London balance intensification and investment in transit and housing with neighbourhood concerns about infrastructure, public spaces, homelessness and safety?

WARD 12

Three candidates are seeking the Ward 12 seat:

Alexander Main | Elizabeth Pelosa | Ribal Zebian

Incumbent Elizabeth Pelosa is seeking a third term.

Ward 12 includes substantial portions of south London, including White Oaks and surrounding neighbourhoods, and combines established communities with continuing development and major transportation corridors.

Alexander Main

TAXES & SPENDING

More detailed fiscal policy is needed for comparison.

GROWTH

Main is a local business owner and has previously run for mayor.

More detailed current economic-development policy would assist comparison.

HOUSING

More detailed published housing policy needed.

HOMELESSNESS

More detailed published policy needed.

TRANSIT

Main has identified e-scooters among issues he wants addressed.

A broader transportation strategy would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive cultural policy found.

ENVIRONMENT

Flooding is among the issues he has identified.

Main did not submit a response to the Climate Action London Ward 12 questionnaire reviewed for this guide. That should not be interpreted as opposition to its environmental proposals.

CITY-WIDE VISION

More detailed current platform information is required to compare his city-wide approach fully with his opponents.

QUESTIONS FOR MAIN

What are his three highest priorities?

What would he change in London's budget?

What are his positions on housing and homelessness?

How would he address flooding and infrastructure resilience?

Elizabeth Pelosa

Incumbent Ward 12 Councillor and 2022–26 Budget Chair

TAXES & SPENDING

Peloza brings an unusually direct fiscal record to this election because she served as Council's Budget Chair during the 2022–26 term.

That gives voters the opportunity to examine not simply campaign statements but the budgets she helped steer through Council.

GROWTH

Supports accommodating more development within London's existing urban area rather than relying primarily on outward expansion.

She supports brownfield redevelopment and argues that infill can strengthen the tax base while reducing infrastructure costs associated with sprawl.

HOUSING

Housing has been a significant part of her Council work.

Supports infill and redevelopment as mechanisms for increasing housing supply.

HOMELESSNESS

Has participated directly in Council's homelessness and housing decisions during two terms.

A key question is whether existing strategies have produced sufficient measurable outcomes and what she would change in a third term.

TRANSIT

A comprehensive public and active transportation network is a longstanding priority.

ARTS & CULTURE

Peloza has professional training in Arts Administration–Cultural Management and Collections Conservation and Management.

Her Council profile emphasizes community spaces alongside transportation and environmental priorities.

ENVIRONMENT

One of her most developed areas.

Supports restoring funding to London's Climate Change Reserve Fund, protecting

agricultural land, maintaining the Urban Growth Boundary and meeting or exceeding London's infill targets.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more compact city using infill, redevelopment, public and active transportation and environmental planning to accommodate growth while limiting outward sprawl.

QUESTIONS FOR PELOZA

As Budget Chair, which spending decisions produced the strongest measurable returns?

Which did not?

What would she change about London's homelessness strategy?

How would she balance additional municipal investment with taxpayer affordability?

Ribal Zebian

TAXES & SPENDING

More detailed fiscal costing would improve comparison.

GROWTH

Zebian's engineering background informs a campaign focused in part on practical implementation and development.

HOUSING

One of the more developed parts of his platform.

His campaign includes specific proposals concerning housing units rather than discussing affordability only in general terms.

HOMELESSNESS

Has published positions on homelessness and connects the issue with housing supply and practical municipal responses.

TRANSIT

More detailed transportation policy would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed distinctive arts and culture platform found.

ENVIRONMENT

Zebian participated in environmental candidate questionnaires, providing voters with material beyond his principal campaign themes.

CITY-WIDE VISION

An engineering- and implementation-oriented approach emphasizing housing and practical solutions to municipal problems.

QUESTIONS FOR ZEBIAN

How much would his housing proposals cost?

What land and approvals would be required?

Which components of his homelessness strategy fall within municipal authority?

What would he change in London's existing budget to finance his priorities?

WARD 12 AT A GLANCE

Main: Local-business background, flooding and local issues; more detailed city-wide policy needed.

Peloza: Incumbency, budget experience, infill, transit, housing and environmental sustainability.

Zebian: Engineering perspective, housing proposals and practical implementation.

CENTRAL WARD 12 QUESTION

How should south London accommodate additional housing and economic development while managing transportation, infrastructure, flooding, environmental protection and taxpayer affordability?

WHAT WARDS 10–12 ADD TO THE LARGER PICTURE

These wards introduce another important dimension to the election:

What does experience actually tell us?

Ward 10 has a five-term incumbent.

Ward 11 has a first-term incumbent.

Ward 12 has a two-term incumbent who has also served as Budget Chair.

That means voters can ask incumbents questions challengers cannot answer:

What did you vote for?

What did it cost?

What actually happened?

Which policies worked?

Which did not?

What did you learn?

And perhaps most importantly:

What would you do differently?

Experience can provide knowledge, relationships and an understanding of how municipal government works.

But experience also creates a record.

That record should be examined.

At the same time, challengers face a different test.

It is relatively easy to say City Hall should be more efficient, more accountable, more responsive or more affordable.

The harder questions are:

What specifically would you change?

What would you stop doing?

What would you spend more on?

What would you spend less on?

And:

Can Council actually do what you are promising?

THE VALUE OF A COUNCIL RECORD

This suggests another useful principle for evaluating councillor candidates.

For a challenger:

PROMISE → COST → AUTHORITY → OUTCOME → VISION

For an incumbent, we can add something at the beginning:

RECORD → PROMISE → COST → AUTHORITY → OUTCOME → VISION

That additional word matters.

An incumbent should not be evaluated only on what they promise to do during the next four years.

Voters already have evidence.

Council votes.

Budgets.

Planning decisions.

Transit decisions.

Housing decisions.

Infrastructure projects.

Tax increases.

Service changes.

Successful initiatives.

Unsuccessful initiatives.

The same principle applies without assuming that longevity itself is either an advantage or a disadvantage.

The question is simpler:

What did you do with the authority voters already gave you?

That may be one of the most useful questions in the entire election.

WARD 13

Seven candidates are seeking the Ward 13 seat:

Schelley Bisson | Tony Biviano | Andrew Joseph Crook | Stephen D’Amelio | David Ferreira | Nicholas Saika-Voivod | Jari Spence

Incumbent David Ferreira is seeking a second term.

Ward 13 includes the heart of London. The condition of downtown is therefore not simply a neighbourhood issue. Housing, homelessness, public safety, business vitality, arts and culture, tourism, transit and London's civic identity converge here.

Schelley Bisson

TAXES & SPENDING

Bisson emphasizes accountability and measurable results. More detailed costing across his full platform would assist comparison.

GROWTH

His campaign focuses substantially on the downtown and the need to return vacant and underused property to productive use.

HOUSING

Supports examining downtown vacancy and ownership and proposes stronger coordination between housing and support systems.

HOMELESSNESS

Treats homelessness as a pathway issue involving stabilization, treatment, mental-health support, supportive housing, daily structure and eventual long-term housing.

TRANSIT

More detailed transportation policy would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

Downtown vitality is a significant theme, although a more detailed cultural-sector strategy would improve comparison.

ENVIRONMENT

Bisson did not respond to the Climate Action London questionnaire reviewed for this guide. That should not be interpreted as opposition to environmental policies.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A downtown-focused approach emphasizing accountability, housing pathways and practical solutions to persistent core-area problems.

QUESTIONS FOR BISSON

What would his proposals cost?

Which existing City programs would change?

How would downtown property owners be held accountable within existing municipal authority?

What measurable outcomes would demonstrate downtown improvement?

Tony Biviano

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed published position found for comparison.

GROWTH

No sufficiently detailed published economic-development platform found.

HOUSING

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

HOMELESSNESS

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

TRANSIT

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Action London reported that it could not locate contact information for Biviano for its questionnaire.

That provides no basis for inferring his environmental positions.

CITY-WIDE VISION

At the time of this review, insufficient detailed and verifiable public policy material was available to characterize Biviano's platform responsibly.

QUESTIONS FOR BIVIANO

What are his three highest priorities?

What would he change in London's budget?

What is his plan for downtown?

What are his positions on housing and homelessness?

What kind of London does he want to help build?

Andrew Joseph Crook

TAXES & SPENDING

Supports competitive taxation and emphasizes measurable costs, timelines and

outcomes for municipal initiatives.

GROWTH

Identifies London's location, industrial capacity, Western, Fanshawe and its technology and creative sectors as economic advantages.

Supports faster approvals and a municipal culture more welcoming to investment.

HOUSING

Supports additional downtown housing and office-to-residential conversion.

HOMELESSNESS

Draws distinctions among homelessness, health needs and criminal behaviour.

He assigns emergency shelter, supportive housing, public-space management and coordination primarily to the City, violence and serious disorder to police, and mental-health treatment, detox and addiction care principally to the Province.

TRANSIT

Treats reliable infrastructure and transportation as components of economic competitiveness.

ARTS & CULTURE

Identifies London's creative economy as an economic asset and sees downtown activity as important to attracting residents, students, visitors and businesses.

ENVIRONMENT

Has participated in environmental questionnaires. His broader approach emphasizes measurable outcomes and municipal authority.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more implementation-focused City Hall emphasizing economic competitiveness, downtown recovery, housing, clear jurisdiction and measurable government performance.

QUESTIONS FOR CROOK

Which municipal expenditures would he reduce?

How would competitive taxes be maintained while investing in downtown recovery?

What specific benchmarks should London use to judge the Downtown Plan?

Stephen D'Amelio

TAXES & SPENDING

Emphasizes pursuing provincial, federal and corporate investment rather than placing every additional cost on municipal taxpayers.

GROWTH

One of his most developed policy areas.

Supports faster permitting, a single point of entry for businesses, helping existing London companies expand and strengthening employment pathways among employers, Western and Fanshawe.

Also supports co-operatives, employee ownership and business-succession models intended to retain local wealth.

HOUSING

Supports adaptive reuse and office-to-residential conversions where buildings are suitable.

HOMELESSNESS

Supports London's Whole of Community Response while arguing that success should be measured by the number of people who become and remain housed rather than simply by programs funded.

Also distinguishes homelessness and health needs from violence, property crime and public disorder.

TRANSIT

Treats transportation as economic infrastructure and supports stronger connectivity.

ARTS & CULTURE

A particularly developed part of his platform.

D'Amelio argues that arts, culture, festivals, nightlife, sports, tourism and London's UNESCO City of Music designation should be treated as economic-development tools.

He supports maintaining and modernizing existing cultural infrastructure before committing to major new facilities.

ENVIRONMENT

More detailed environmental policy would assist comparison.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A downtown and city-wide growth strategy connecting business, talent retention, housing, culture, tourism and implementation accountability.

QUESTIONS FOR D'AMELIO

Which Downtown Plan actions should receive funding first?

What would his economic-development proposals cost municipally?

How should Council measure the economic return from cultural investment?

David Ferreira

Incumbent Ward 13 Councillor

RECORD

Ferreira is completing his first term on Council.

He serves on the Community and Protective Services Committee and Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee and has appointments involving the Downtown BIA, Covent Garden Market and RBC Place.

His Council record therefore provides evidence that can be evaluated alongside his new campaign commitments.

TAXES & SPENDING

Argues that London can pursue social goals while remaining financially

responsible and emphasizes research, practical implementation and measurable outcomes.

GROWTH

His new platform treats downtown as both a neighbourhood and an economic engine for the entire city.

He argues that downtown cannot remain dependent primarily on office workers and should evolve into a mixed-use community where people live, work, shop and participate in cultural and civic life.

HOUSING

One of his more developed policy areas.

Supports market rental, affordable housing, rent-geared-to-income housing, co-operatives, supportive housing, student housing, seniors housing, family-sized housing, non-profit housing and ownership opportunities.

Also emphasizes protecting existing affordable rental housing and tenants from displacement.

HOMELESSNESS

Frames his approach as combining public safety with human dignity.

Supports safer and cleaner public spaces while improving support for people in crisis and establishing clearer accountability for outcomes.

TRANSIT

Supports safer transit areas and improved mobility as part of a functioning downtown.

ARTS & CULTURE

Treats culture, entertainment and public spaces as important components of downtown's evolution into a complete neighbourhood and destination.

ENVIRONMENT

His City Council profile identifies environmental and watershed protection among his priorities. His Council record can be assessed against London's environmental decisions during the term.

GOVERNANCE

His new platform places substantial emphasis on transparency, explaining how decisions were made, identifying who influenced them and raising accountability standards for Council and City-funded organizations.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more residential, mixed-use and active downtown combined with housing diversity, neighbourhood participation, transparent government and an approach to public safety that also addresses people in crisis.

QUESTIONS FOR FERREIRA

What measurable improvements in Ward 13 resulted from his first term?

Which current downtown strategies have not worked?

What would he stop doing or substantially change?

How much would his expanded housing and downtown agenda cost?

Nicholas Saika-Voivod

TAXES & SPENDING

Calls for deeper affordability without additional tax increases.

That creates an important financing question because several other elements of his platform would require significant public or partnered investment.

GROWTH

Supports downtown revitalization, innovation and faster implementation of new approaches rather than extended planning processes.

HOUSING

Housing is central to his platform.

His “Basic Housing” proposal would use federal and provincial development funding to convert or use commercial spaces to create hundreds of transitional housing units.

He also supports co-operative, non-profit and other alternative housing models.

HOMELESSNESS

One of his most detailed areas.

Proposes combining transitional housing with centralized support for workers, food services, volunteers, reporting and training.

Also supports expanded detox and recovery capacity and greater investment in advanced treatment research.

TRANSIT

More detailed transportation policy would assist comparison.

ARTS & CULTURE

Supports a safer and more active downtown, nightlife and public-space activity, although a broader cultural-infrastructure strategy is less developed.

ENVIRONMENT

Identifies reconciliation with the environment as part of his broader philosophy, but more detailed municipal environmental policy would assist comparison.

GOVERNANCE

Proposes greater transparency in procurement, a whistleblower policy, a lobbyist registry and improved information about corporate landlords.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more experimental and interventionist approach centred on rapid housing responses, downtown safety, treatment, transparency and implementing new solutions more quickly.

QUESTIONS FOR SAIKA-VOIVOD

How would hundreds of transitional units be financed?

Would suitable commercial buildings be available?

What authority would the City have over his proposed treatment initiatives?

How could these investments occur without additional property-tax revenue?

Jari Spence

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed published position found for comparison.

GROWTH

No sufficiently detailed current economic-development platform found.

HOUSING

More detailed published policy needed.

HOMELESSNESS

More detailed published policy needed.

TRANSIT

More detailed published policy needed.

ARTS & CULTURE

More detailed published policy needed.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Action London reported that it could not locate contact information for Spence for its questionnaire. No conclusion about Spence's environmental position can therefore be drawn from non-participation.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Insufficient detailed publicly accessible policy material was found to characterize Spence's platform responsibly.

QUESTIONS FOR SPENCE

What are the three highest priorities?

What should London do differently downtown?

What would change in the municipal budget?

What are Spence's positions on housing, homelessness, culture and transportation?

WARD 13 AT A GLANCE

Bisson: Downtown accountability, housing pathways and practical core-area interventions.

Biviano: More detailed public policy information needed.

Crook: Economic competitiveness, downtown implementation, housing and jurisdictional clarity.

D'Amelio: Business growth, downtown revitalization, talent retention, culture and tourism as economic development.

Ferreira: Incumbency, housing diversity, downtown evolution, neighbourhood participation and transparent government.

Saika-Voivod: Transitional housing, treatment, downtown intervention and governance reform.

Spence: More detailed public policy information needed.

CENTRAL WARD 13 QUESTION

How does London transform its downtown from a collection of problems requiring continual intervention into a neighbourhood and economic, cultural and civic centre where substantially more people want to live, work, invest and spend time?

WARD 14

Four candidates are seeking the Ward 14 seat:

Ubaid Bhatti | Jason King | Sarah Lehman | Gurinder Pal Singh

This is an open race. Incumbent Steven Hillier is not seeking re-election.

The new Ward 14 combines growing residential neighbourhoods with industrial and employment lands, including areas south of Highway 401.

That creates an unusually direct connection among housing growth, industrial development, transportation, transit, infrastructure and London's tax base.

Ubaid Bhatti

TAXES & SPENDING

No sufficiently detailed published position found for comparison.

GROWTH

No sufficiently detailed published economic-development platform found.

HOUSING

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

HOMELESSNESS

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

TRANSIT

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

ARTS & CULTURE

No sufficiently detailed published position found.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Action London reported that it could not find contact information for Bhatti for its candidate questionnaire.

That provides no basis for inferring his environmental position.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Insufficient detailed and verifiable public policy material was available at the time of this review to characterize Bhatti's platform responsibly.

QUESTIONS FOR BHATTI

What are his three highest priorities?

What would he change in London's budget?

What does he propose for Ward 14's transportation and growth pressures?

What is his vision for London as a whole?

Jason King

TAXES & SPENDING

One of King's defining themes.

He advocates fiscal responsibility, lower residential tax pressure and services that produce measurable results.

His longer-term objective is to move toward zero residential tax increases, partly by expanding London's industrial and commercial tax base.

GROWTH

A highly developed part of his Ward 14 campaign.

King argues that industrial development south and southeast of the city can generate employment and additional non-residential tax revenue.

His “Summerside Plan” links neighbourhood amenities with a larger industrial-development strategy.

HOUSING

Supports growth but argues that complete communities require more than residential subdivisions.

HOMELESSNESS

Public safety and affordability are campaign concerns, although his most distinctive Ward 14 proposals concentrate on economic development, infrastructure and taxation.

TRANSIT

Proposes a different transit model involving localized routes feeding transit hubs and express connections among hubs.

For Ward 14 specifically, he proposes a transit station near Summerside and shuttle connections to industrial employment.

He is skeptical that BRT will produce its promised efficiencies.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Calls for Bradley Avenue and portions of Commissioners Road to be expanded and identifies transportation infrastructure as important to attracting industrial employers.

ARTS & CULTURE

His neighbourhood plan includes entertainment and community amenities, although a broader city-wide cultural-development strategy is less prominent.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports protecting Ward 14 natural areas including Westminster Ponds, Pond Mills and Meadowlily.

CITY-WIDE VISION

Use industrial and commercial growth to strengthen London's fiscal position, reduce pressure on residential taxpayers and turn rapidly growing neighbourhoods into more complete communities.

QUESTIONS FOR KING

How much industrial assessment would be required to materially reduce residential tax increases?

What would his road and transit proposals cost?

What municipal spending would he reduce while pursuing zero tax increases?

How does his proposed transit model compare in cost and capacity with the existing network?

Sarah Lehman

TAXES & SPENDING

Supports reviewing City spending for effectiveness and fairness while arguing that

growth should pay an appropriate share of growth-related infrastructure costs.

GROWTH

A particularly developed area.

Lehman emphasizes small businesses, entrepreneurship, workforce development and stronger connections among employers, Western and Fanshawe.

She argues that attracting and retaining talent also depends on housing affordability, transportation and inclusion.

HOUSING

Supports affordable housing, office-to-residential conversions, infill, mixed-use development and “gentle density” such as townhouses, mid-rise buildings and apartments.

HOMELESSNESS

Distinguishes safety and enforcement from housing, mental-health, outreach and community services and argues that both dimensions require attention.

TRANSIT

One of her strongest Ward 14 priorities.

Supports more frequent and reliable service to employment areas, particularly during early mornings, evenings and weekends for shift workers.

Specifically identifies inadequate transit to Innovation Park.

Also supports stronger intercity bus, passenger rail and airport connections.

ARTS & CULTURE

A particularly explicit policy area.

Lehman describes arts, culture and creative industries as both community infrastructure and economic development.

Supports transparent funding for cultural organizations, artists, festivals and venues and argues that investment should produce measurable public and economic benefits.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports integrating climate considerations into transportation, development, infrastructure and budgeting.

Favors infill and mixed-use growth over continued outward expansion and links environmental planning with tree canopy, biodiversity, stormwater, flooding and transportation emissions.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A more connected and complete city combining employment, affordable housing, transportation, cultural development, environmental sustainability and infrastructure planning.

QUESTIONS FOR LEHMAN

What additional spending would her priorities require?

Which existing expenditures would receive less priority?

How much development should Ward 14 absorb?

How should London balance industrial growth with environmental protection and nearby residential communities?

Gurinder Pal Singh

TAXES & SPENDING

Supports what he describes as fair and predictable property taxes while protecting core services such as snow removal, waste collection and road maintenance.

He also makes an unusual personal pledge to donate 20% of his Council salary to Ward 14 initiatives.

GROWTH

Supports more balanced local development so Ward 14 residents have better access to shops and everyday services without lengthy car trips.

Recognizes the newly expanded ward's industrial areas as part of its future.

HOUSING

His published campaign material places greater emphasis on neighbourhood

infrastructure and services than on a detailed housing strategy.

HOMELESSNESS

No sufficiently detailed distinctive policy found for comparison.

TRANSIT

A major campaign priority.

Supports more frequent and connected transit throughout Ward 14, particularly areas of Summerside currently lacking convenient service.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Proposes a community centre, improved park lighting, parks and bicycle trails.

Also advocates for additional school capacity, although school construction and operation are principally school-board and provincial responsibilities rather than municipal ones.

ARTS & CULTURE

His community work emphasizes multiculturalism and cultural participation, although a broader municipal arts-industry strategy is less developed.

ENVIRONMENT

Supports parks, bicycle trails, cleaner air and reducing congestion associated with construction and transportation.

Singh did not respond to the Climate Action London questionnaire reviewed for this guide, so his broader environmental positions should not be inferred from that survey.

CITY-WIDE VISION

A community-first model emphasizing representation, neighbourhood amenities, transit, predictable taxation, multicultural inclusion and services closer to where residents live.

QUESTIONS FOR SINGH

How much can a personal salary contribution realistically finance toward a community centre or transit expansion?

What would those projects cost in full?

Which priorities fall within municipal authority and which require other governments or agencies?

How would predictable taxes be maintained while expanding services?

WARD 14 AT A GLANCE

Bhatti: More detailed public policy information needed.

King: Fiscal restraint, industrial growth, transportation infrastructure and complete-community development.

Lehman: Economic opportunity, housing, transit, culture, environmental sustainability and complete communities.

Singh: Community representation, neighbourhood services, transit, parks and predictable taxes.

CENTRAL WARD 14 QUESTION

Can southeast London's residential and industrial growth be used to build complete communities, create jobs and expand London's tax base while ensuring transportation, transit, environmental protection and public services keep pace?

WHAT WARDS 13–14 ADD TO THE LARGER PICTURE

These final two wards bring us back to two questions that run through the entire election.

Ward 13 asks:

What do we do with the city we already have?

Ward 14 asks:

How do we build the city that is coming?

One contains London's historic and civic core.

The other contains some of London's most important opportunities for residential, industrial and employment growth.

Yet their futures are connected.

A successful industrial strategy can expand London's tax base.

A stronger tax base can help finance infrastructure and services.

A successful downtown can attract businesses, visitors, students, artists, entrepreneurs and investment.

Housing affects both.

Transportation connects both.

Culture and quality of life influence whether people choose to remain here.

And homelessness, healthcare, affordability and inequality affect the entire city regardless of ward boundaries.

ONE CITY, FOURTEEN WARDS

That may be the most important conclusion from examining every ward.

Londoners elect fourteen councillors.

But we do not elect fourteen separate municipal governments.

The councillor elected in Ward 14 will vote on downtown investments.

The Ward 13 councillor will vote on infrastructure serving industrial development in southeast London.

The Ward 7 councillor will vote on environmental policies affecting Ward 9.

The Ward 3 councillor will help determine transit funding affecting Ward 6.

The Ward 1 councillor will vote on a city budget affecting everyone.

That is why a ward candidate should be asked about more than the ward.

Fixing potholes matters.

Answering constituents matters.

Understanding neighbourhoods matters.

But governing matters too.

Every councillor should therefore be able to answer two questions:

What will you do for your ward?

And:

What kind of London are you trying to help build?

THE FINAL CANDIDATE TEST

After examining all fourteen wards, the framework becomes:

FOR A CHALLENGER

PROMISE → COST → AUTHORITY → OUTCOME → VISION

What are you promising?

What will it cost?

Who has the authority to deliver it?

How will we know whether it worked?

What larger vision of London does it serve?

FOR AN INCUMBENT

RECORD → PROMISE → COST → AUTHORITY → OUTCOME → VISION

What did you do with the authority voters already gave you?

What are you promising now?

What will it cost?

Who has the authority to deliver it?

What measurable result should voters expect?

The final question is larger than any individual promise:

What kind of city are you trying to build?

Perhaps those questions are more useful than any campaign slogan.

Because on October 26, Londoners are not simply electing a mayor and fourteen ward representatives.

We are choosing the fifteen people who will govern one city.

ADDENDUM — OCTOBER 5, 2026

New Platform Information, New Questions and Ideas from the Community

Why This Addendum?

The London Election Primer was released on September 30, 2026. It was never intended to freeze a living campaign in time. Candidates have continued to publish and clarify policies, debates and interviews have added detail, and Londoners responding to the Primer have raised questions that deserve a place in the conversation.

Rather than continually rewriting the original analysis, this dated addendum records significant developments since publication and adds several ideas that emerged from public response. The original Primer remains a snapshot of the campaign as it stood on September 30; this section brings the conversation forward to October 4.

I. What Has Changed Since September 30?

London still has twelve certified candidates for mayor: John Feher, Lawrence-Zachary Howe, Barry Douglas Jacklin, Tariq Khan, Kirsten Krose, Dan Lenart, Bronagh Joyce Morgan, Josh Morgan, Christine Rosehart, Susan Stevenson, Jeff Yam and Mustafa Zeboon. Some campaigns have added substantial policy detail since the Primer was released; others have not published enough new material to require a material change to the September 30 assessment.

Susan Stevenson

Stevenson has added the most substantial new material. Her campaign now provides more detailed proposals on taxation,

business services, transportation and BRT oversight, homelessness-service accountability and City Hall governance.

Her tax proposal calls for property-tax increases below one per cent in each of the first two years, with zero as the goal, followed by increases at or below inflation. Her governance proposals include quarterly financial scrutiny, an independent municipal Auditor General, a confidential fraud-and-waste hotline, a public register of significant delegated decisions and a pledge not to use the strong-mayor veto during the budget process.

Those commitments make the mechanism question more important, not less. What combination of efficiencies, service changes, new revenues, deferrals or reductions would be required to achieve the tax target while maintaining the services Londoners expect?

Stevenson has also proposed enforceable Good Neighbour Agreements for City-funded homelessness and housing providers and continues to emphasize stronger enforcement and cleaner public spaces. Londoners are entitled to expect safe, usable streets, parks and business districts. But enforcement alone cannot answer a basic question: where do people go when appropriate shelter, housing or treatment is not available?

Josh Morgan

Morgan's current platform is now detailed enough to make several commitments especially clear: property-tax increases in the three-per-cent range over the next four years; expansion of the micro-modular shelter with senior-government support; more housing in multiple forms; an enhanced response to open drug use combining outreach, enforcement and treatment pathways; special constables on transit and in public spaces; and public reporting on safety, street conditions and homelessness outcomes.

As the incumbent, Morgan faces a different test from challengers. His platform can be assessed against both future promises and the record

of the current term. The relevant question is not only what was funded or announced, but what measurable conditions improved.

Kirsten Krose

Krose has released a more developed platform organized around safety, reliable municipal services, mobility and accountability. Particularly relevant to the Primer is her proposed standard test for major municipal investments:

- Is it municipal?
- What problem does it solve?
- How will we know if it worked?
- What is the full cost to taxpayers?

She also proposes a Housing and Homelessness Work Plan, program-review cycles and clearer public performance reporting. Whatever voters conclude about her candidacy, this framework reinforces a central principle of the Primer: promises should come with mechanisms and measures.

Bronagh Joyce Morgan

Bronagh Joyce Morgan continues to centre her campaign on reforming how City Hall itself works: bylaws, contracts, budgets, meetings and administration. Her homelessness proposals emphasize reducing administrative overhead in service contracts, creating fairer long-term arrangements and publicly measuring what works. Her campaign therefore raises a useful question: how much of London's difficulty comes from insufficient resources, and how much from the way existing resources and systems are organized?

Mustafa Zeboon

Zeboon has published a broader plan covering housing approvals, homelessness and recovery, walkability and infrastructure, transit, taxation and local business. His homelessness section explicitly says the goal should not be simply to move people from one location to

another, but to build recovery-focused partnerships involving the City, health care, community organizations and the Province.

Other Mayoral Candidates

John Feher and Lawrence-Zachary Howe continue to publish developed proposals, but I have not identified a post-September-30 change substantial enough to require a correction to the original Primer. At the time of this update, I have also not found sufficient new detailed policy material from Barry Douglas Jacklin, Tariq Khan, Dan Lenart, Christine Rosehart or Jeff Yam to justify materially changing their September 30 assessments. This is not an endorsement or criticism; it simply reflects the amount of new public material available for review.

II. Homelessness, Enforcement and the Charter

The election discussion about homelessness deserves a clarification because the public debate can make the issue sound much simpler than it is.

Municipalities can regulate public property. London can address dangerous locations, obstruction, garbage, fires and other legitimate safety concerns. But municipal bylaws remain subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In *Regional Municipality of Waterloo v. Persons Unknown* (2023), the Ontario Superior Court found that, where the number of people experiencing homelessness exceeded the number of genuinely accessible shelter spaces, applying a bylaw to prevent encampment residents from erecting temporary shelter violated section 7 rights to life, liberty and security of the person. The court did not create an unrestricted right to camp anywhere. It held the bylaw inoperative in those particular circumstances and to that extent.

London's own Community Encampment Plan is grounded in a human-rights-based approach and expressly recognizes the relevance of the Charter. That means a campaign promise to enforce bylaws or

remove encampments must be accompanied by a second question: what accessible alternative will exist for the person being displaced?

Homelessness is also a symptom of larger pressures. Housing costs, poverty, mental health, addiction and trauma are part of the picture, but so are inequities in health care, education, income security and access to opportunity. Not every person experiencing homelessness follows the same path. The larger point is that social-system failures eventually become visible somewhere. Increasingly, some of them are visible on our streets.

Moving a person is not the same as housing one. Moving an encampment is not the same as ending homelessness.

III. What Londoners Added to the Conversation

The response to the Primer has produced something more interesting than candidate debate alone. Readers have begun asking larger questions about London's history, identity, beauty, accountability and sense of place.

Rediscovering London's Heart

One response asked whether the story of London should be told more fully through an Indigenous lens. It should. The place now called London did not begin with the colonial city. Indigenous Nations lived in relationship with this territory and its river long before London was founded, and Indigenous communities continue to shape the region today.

The river is central to that story. The Anishinaabeg and Lūnaapéewak call it Deshkan Zibi, the Antler River; the Haudenosaunee use the name Kahwy[^]hatati. The City's own ReconciliAction material describes the river as part of a much older history of kinship, stewardship and reciprocal relationship with the land.

That suggests a different way of imagining London. Perhaps the city is not simply a municipality through which a river happens to flow. London is one community along a river connecting peoples,

ecosystems and communities upstream and downstream. With that understanding comes not only opportunity, but responsibility.

From Downtown Revitalization to Cultural Renewal

For decades London has talked about revitalizing downtown. The language itself may be too narrow. Economic development, vacancy rates, safety, parking and investment all matter, but a city centre is more than a commercial district.

A more ambitious question is: how does London rediscover its heart?

Memorable cities create places where history, architecture, water, culture, food, public life, art and belonging converge. London already possesses many of those ingredients: Deshkan Ziibi and the Forks, Indigenous and Black histories, successive immigrant communities, Old East Village, Victorian architecture, music, theatre, visual art, literature, museums, markets, parks, Western, Fanshawe and distinctive neighbourhoods. The challenge is connecting those assets into a stronger sense of place.

Beauty Is Infrastructure Too

Another response raised a deceptively simple question: what if beauty were treated as part of city-building?

Municipal government measures taxes, traffic, permits, roads and housing units. It should. But architecture, trees, flowers, public art, murals, lighting, shopfronts, markets, patios, alleyways, street music and human-scale public spaces also influence whether people walk somewhere, linger there, meet one another, open businesses, visit and ultimately care about the place.

Beauty is not a substitute for housing, safety or infrastructure. It is part of the environment in which community and economic life happen. A city cannot manufacture character through a branding campaign. Character accumulates through thousands of decisions about what a community preserves, creates and values.

IV. From Election Primer to Civic Accountability

Several readers independently asked why this kind of scrutiny should happen only during an election. That may be one of the most useful ideas to emerge from the project.

A Promise-to-Result Ledger

Imagine a permanent public record for every major municipal initiative. It would identify:

- The promise: what was supposed to happen.
- The authority: who actually had the power and responsibility to deliver it.
- The cost: what was estimated, approved and ultimately spent.
- The measure: what observable outcome would count as success.
- The deadline: when residents should expect the result.
- The result: what actually happened.

If the initiative did not work, the record should also show what changed: was it redesigned, expanded, ended or simply carried forward?

A Taxpayer Impact Statement

Major decisions could include a standardized statement showing capital cost, continuing operating cost, debt implications, expected lifespan, future maintenance, displaced priorities and the effect on taxpayers. The question should not be only what something costs this year, but what obligation is being created for the future.

An Evidence Gap Register

London could also identify programs and policies for which the City cannot yet demonstrate whether the intended outcome is occurring. Saying “we do not yet know whether this is working” is not an admission of failure. It is a starting point for evidence-based government.

The Authority Test

Every major campaign promise should identify where authority actually lies: with the mayor, Council, civic administration, an

independent body, Queen's Park, Ottawa or several of them working together. This is particularly important in homelessness, housing, mental health, addiction, health care, education and social inequality, where municipalities often confront the local consequences of systems they do not fully control.

V. Two Questions for London

The community response to the Primer suggests that two questions sit underneath almost everything else.

What kind of city do we want London to become?

How will we know whether government is actually getting us there?

We need both.

Vision without accountability can become rhetoric. Accountability without vision can become administration.

A successful city needs imagination and evidence, history and possibility, fiscal responsibility and beauty, economic development and culture, safe public spaces and compassion for people who have nowhere else to live.

It needs to understand its colonial history while recognizing that London's story began long before London existed. It needs to see Deshkan Zibi not simply as water flowing through the city but as part of a living cultural and ecological system connecting London to communities upstream and downstream.

Most importantly, it needs citizens who understand enough about their government to distinguish between a compelling promise and a workable plan.

The Primer began with an election. The response suggests that the conversation may be larger than an election.

Who should lead London for the next four years?

And what would it take for all of us to understand, imagine and build a better London?

Sources for This Addendum

- Candidate roster: City of London, “List of Candidates.”
- Candidate updates: official campaign websites of Susan Stevenson, Josh Morgan, Kirsten Krose, Bronagh Joyce Morgan and Mustafa Zeboon, reviewed October 4, 2026.
- Homelessness and Charter: Regional Municipality of Waterloo v. Persons Unknown and to be Ascertained, 2023 ONSC 670; City of London, Community Encampment Plan and City of London Encampment Response.
- Indigenous history and river names: City of London, 2025–2035 ReconciliAction Plan; City of London, Paddling in London.

Information in this addendum was reviewed through October 4, 2026. The election campaign remains active and candidate platforms may continue to change before voting day.

Web Sources

- [City of London — Certified candidates](#)
- [Susan Stevenson — campaign platform](#)
- [Josh Morgan — campaign platform](#)
- [Kirsten Krose — campaign platform](#)
- [Bronagh Joyce Morgan — campaign plan](#)
- [Mustafa Zeboon — campaign plan](#)
- [City of London — Encampment response](#)
- [Waterloo encampment decision — 2023 ONSC 670](#)
- [City of London — 2025–2035 ReconciliAction Plan](#)
- [City of London — Paddling in London](#)