

JENNIFER KEESMAAT / BIO – NOV 2019

Jennifer Keesmaat is an urban planner passionate about creating places where people flourish. Named one of the “most powerful people in Canada” by Macleans, and one of the “most influential” by Toronto Life, and one of the top *Women of Influence in Canada*, she spent five years as Toronto’s Chief City Planner, where she was celebrated for her forward thinking and collaborative approach to city-building.



A *Distinguished Visitor in Residence Emeritus* at the University of Toronto, Keesmaat continues to share her vision for cities of the future, and her belief in the importance of public sector leadership through a variety of publications including *The Guardian*, *Macleans*, *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and on her podcast, *Invisible City*. Keesmaat is on the Advisory Board of the *Urban Land Institute, Toronto*, and is appointed to the *International Panel of Experts, Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority*.

Over the past fifteen years, as a founding partner of the *Office for Urbanism* and subsequently *Dialog*, Keesmaat worked in municipalities across Canada and around the world on urban design guidelines, official plan reviews and strategies for creating dense, walkable cities. Her planning practice is characterized by an emphasis on collaborations across sectors, and broad engagement with municipal staff, councils, developers, business leaders, NGO’s, and residents associations. Keesmaat has been recognized for her expertise in transit planning, heritage preservation, strategy development, communications, sustainable economic development and the creation of walkable, complete communities.

In 2018, Keesmaat ran for Mayor in the City of Toronto on a progressive, visionary platform that included addressing the housing crisis by building at scale on city owned land and implementing a Rent-to-Own program; neighbourhood-based crime prevention through the development of Community Wellbeing Plans for each neighbourhood in the city; redesigning city streets to prioritize vulnerable users such as children, seniors, pedestrian and cyclists; the development of five Cultural Hubs to instigate renewal outside of the core; and the tearing down of the Gardiner Expressway to build a new walkable, transit-oriented waterfront neighbourhood community.

Today, Keesmaat heads up **The Keesmaat Group**. With her team of city building experts, she provides inspiration through public speaking, and delivers impact through her consulting services pertaining to creating complete, walkable communities. She is currently advancing developments across the GTA.

Keesmaat has a Combined Honours degree in Philosophy and English from the University of Western Ontario, and a Masters in Environmental Studies, Politics and Planning, from York University. As a Registered Professional Planner, her work has been repeatedly recognized by professional associations, including as the recipient of the 2016 President’s Award of Excellence, from the Canadian Institute of Planners; the 2016 Bryden Alumni Award, York University, and the 2017 City Builders Award, from EDIT/the Design Exchange. Jennifer’s TED talks include *Walk to School, Own Your City*, and *Taxes, Democracy and our Shared Interest*.

Her widely acclaimed podcast can be found at invisiblecitypodcast.com. In it, she talks a broad range of future city and technological topics, including: access to food security (*The Cauliflower Crisis*); how to plan for autonomous vehicles (*The Future of the City, The Future of the Car*); and the opportunity of raising kids in dense, urban environments (*Five Kids, One Condo*). Jennifer also brings light to the biggest challenges facing cities in her **Within Reach** podcast, in partnership with Newstalk 1010.