

ontario place **revitalization**

MINISTER'S ADVISORY PANEL REPORT

JULY 2012



“ a new focal  
point for our  
province....  
a new attitude  
to our lake-  
fronts....  
a new show-  
case for our  
province  
and people.”

The Honourable John Robarts  
Premier of Ontario  
Ontario Place Countdown Reception and Tour  
Toronto, November 3, 1970





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# letter from the chair



**Dear Minister Chan,**

Thank you for inviting me to chair the Minister's Advisory Panel on Ontario Place Revitalization. This is a critical time for Ontario Place as we determine the best way to transform this cherished landmark.

As chair I welcome the opportunity to present the ideas contained in the panel's report and our recommended new vision for Ontario Place.

In this report we provide a new course of action for Ontario Place — a new direction that will bring Ontario Place into the twenty-first century and over time create a new iconic public park that celebrates its connection to the waterfront of Lake Ontario.

Our work over the past five months has been greatly assisted by previous research and consultations, as well as presentations by stakeholders to the panel. This input has provided us with keen insight into the significant challenges Ontario Place has faced over the years, from declining attendance levels and revenues, to infrastructure repairs, to issues of accessibility.

We also heard directly from the people of Ontario through the many submissions received online and at the panel's public town hall, which included an Ontario-wide webcast. People from across Ontario — Sault Ste. Marie, Gravenhurst, Manatoulin Island, Peterborough, St. Catharines, Ottawa and the Greater Toronto Area — all contributed their boundless ideas.

People care deeply about Ontario Place and would like this landmark destination to be a vibrant hub of activity once again. It is very clear to the panel that there is tremendous potential in Ontario Place to be an exceptional space that better reflects the dynamic province in which we live. With more than 155 acres of land-water lot property, it is an incredible site that commands a majestic view of Lake Ontario and the city of Toronto.

We are seeing remarkable and inspiring projects in Canada and around the world in which cities are revitalizing their parks and waterfronts — examples the panel drew from included Sugar Beach on Toronto's waterfront, Vancouver's Granville Island, Chicago's Millennium Park, and the eco-friendly waterfront community of Barangaroo, Australia. These urban spaces as well as many others have been great sources of inspiration to the panel and practical examples to help us understand the range of costs involved in transforming public spaces.

All of these ideas, insights and areas of expertise have been instrumental in helping us put together our report — and have provided us with an excellent context for our discussions on how best to renew Ontario Place.

What we offer for your consideration is a new model for Ontario Place that is a significant departure from the summer-only amusement park attraction of years past. We propose a new Ontario Place that is open year-round and provides open access to the waterfront — where a significant portion of the site is parkland for individuals and families to gather and enjoy the area's natural surroundings and sweeping views of Lake Ontario.

The new model of Ontario Place also takes into consideration a new set of financial realities and responsibilities. The new Ontario Place must leverage a wide range of public and private partnerships to ensure it is financially sustainable and operates efficiently. A range of revenue streams should be encouraged to fund its development as well as finance its ongoing operations.

We invite you to read the full report and the series of concrete recommendations — 18 in total — as well as the next steps the government must take to ensure the success of the revitalization project. Our aim with this report is to guide government in creating a roadmap for this important revitalization project as well as provide a framework to inspire world-class ideas from Canadian and international organizations on how to use their ingenuity and creativity to revitalize this important waterfront destination.

I would like to conclude by saying on behalf of myself and the panel that it has been an honour to participate in this stage of the Ontario Place revitalization project. We would also like to thank the many presenters, partners, communities and individuals who contributed so generously their expertise and ideas.

We look forward to hearing from you about our report and the recommendations and new vision for Ontario Place contained within.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Tory', written in a cursive style.

**John Tory | Chair of the Ontario Place Revitalization Panel**

# executive summary

**WHEN ONTARIO PLACE FIRST OPENED ITS GATES IN 1971, IT WAS A UNIQUE DESTINATION THAT GENERATED BUZZ AND EXCITEMENT FROM THE PEOPLE OF ONTARIO. IT WAS “A NEW SHOWCASE.... A NEW FOCAL POINT....A NEW ATTITUDE TO OUR LAKEFRONTS.”**

The Honourable John Robarts delivered these words 41 years ago; the Premier’s description still resonates today as inspiration for the work the Minister’s Advisory Panel undertook to inject new vitality and vibrancy into Ontario Place, and in so doing return it to its position as of one of the province’s most compelling and important assets.

The panel came together to provide advice to the Government of Ontario on how best to capitalize on the enormous potential the Ontario Place site still holds. At the same time, we focused our work on ensuring that the project’s next era learns from — and adapts to — four key trends we believe have fundamentally transformed the communities around Ontario Place and the province itself over the last four decades:

1. **Significant redevelopment projects are transforming Toronto’s waterfront.**
2. **Tens of thousands of residents now live in neighbourhoods around Ontario Place.**
3. **The province’s population has grown and become more diverse and older.**
4. **The past few decades have seen an enormous increase in the number of recreational and leisure options available to Ontarians and visitors.**

What we offer in this report is a departure from the Ontario Place of the recent past. We recommend a new course of action that will attract the critical mass of visitors, residents and workers required to turn the site into a cornerstone of the redevelopment of Lake Ontario’s waterfront.

Over the past five months, the panel has worked diligently to prepare a report that lays out a path for the transformation of Ontario Place. Our work has clustered around three sets of activities.

First, we looked at an extensive range of past studies and analyses that provided a framework and a foundation for our discussions. Second, we leveraged the expertise and experience of the panel members to garner additional insights and ideas. Finally, we have had a remarkable opportunity to hear directly from the people of Ontario at a public town hall we held this past June and through dozens of submissions and presentations by stakeholders made directly to the panel itself.

**THIS MUCH IS CLEAR: THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF CREATIVE AND BOLD IDEAS.** People care deeply about the future of Ontario Place — and how this important asset will evolve and be used by generations to come. The challenge is to move beyond their hopes to a concrete set of recommendations that can serve as a roadmap to the revitalization efforts about to be undertaken by this government and a wide range of partners from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

# ONTARIO PLACE NEEDS TO CHANGE

## CREATING A NEW PUBLIC PARK — FOR ALL TO ENJOY

**WE BELIEVE THAT ONTARIO PLACE SHOULD BE A DESTINATION THAT ALL ONTARIANS — AS WELL AS VISITORS FROM ACROSS CANADA AND ABROAD — CAN ENJOY.** It should be an emblematic asset that represents the entire province, from its arts and culture, to its entrepreneurship, to its education, and to its natural beauty.

Since Ontario Place occupies a unique physical location, we recommend using the redevelopment process to open up the city's western waterfront and make it accessible to all every day of the year. Moreover, the majority of the site should be parkland — where people gather any time to enjoy the area's natural surroundings and sweeping views of Lake Ontario and the city.

**A REVITALIZED ONTARIO PLACE SHOULD BE ABOUT A MIX OF PARK SPACES THAT OFFER AREAS FOR REFLECTION AND RELAXATION, AS WELL AS AREAS DESIGNED FOR ACTIVE COMMUNITY PLAY** (think splash pads, skating rinks and sports). Integrated within these green spaces should be smaller pockets that surprise and delight, from gardens to urban plazas, and from public art to interpretative nature paths.

We would also like to see a central gathering area — much like the original Forum — for concerts and theatre performances, local festivals and community fiestas. This venue should be designed to operate throughout the year, and in so doing help liberate Ontario Place from its previous identity as a strictly summer destination.

## LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND DISCOVER ON THE WATERFRONT

**TO BRING A CRITICAL MASS OF PEOPLE AND STREET-LEVEL EXCITEMENT TO THE WATERFRONT, WE BELIEVE THE RENEWED ONTARIO PLACE SHOULD BE DESIGNED AS A MIXED-USE AREA FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY.** This new site layout would include residential buildings — not a wall of high-rises that block access and sightlines to the water, but appropriately-sized buildings that are exceptionally designed and anchored by green building and sustainable architecture principles.

A mix of shops, artist studios and cafés would complement the residences and inject energy into the community, as would a theatre, a hotel or entertainment venue. In order to help draw residents as well as new commuters, we urge Ontario Place to pursue a larger anchor tenant that would add year-round workers and bring business opportunities to the new community. A learning or research facility would bring students while delivering an economic boost to surrounding communities.

## A NEW ERA OF COLLABORATION

These new anchor tenants are catalysts for change, a way to spark new beginnings and add energy, excitement and innovation to the new Ontario Place. They are also an essential part of shifting the way we design, build, fund and operate the site.

**THIS SHIFT MUST INCLUDE A MOVE AWAY FROM THE IDENTITY OF ONTARIO PLACE AS PRIMARILY A PUBLIC SECTOR ENTITY.** The renewed Ontario Place can only become financially sustainable and operationally efficient by leveraging the investments and expertise of the private sector.

From transit and infrastructure to arts and culture, the elements required to make Ontario Place a success can only come through leveraging a wide range of partnerships and collaborations. We need to encourage a much more diverse revenue stream — which could include everything from living spaces to company offices, to private donations and corporate sponsorships.

**HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT A CASINO SHOULD BE AMONG THE ATTRACTIONS FORMING THE CORE OF THE NEW ONTARIO PLACE.** We believe that Ontario Place should be a destination that celebrates Ontario and its exceptional culture, character and life. We shared this recommendation with the Honourable Michael Chan, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport in early June — a recommendation he has already accepted.

EXECUTIVE

# — AND IT NEEDS TO CHANGE NOW.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR A NEW ONTARIO PLACE

In many of the studies and ideas we heard there were three key principles that rose to the surface — principles that the panel believes are absolutely **CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF A NEW LIVE, WORK, PLAY, DISCOVER AREA AND THE PUBLIC REALM THAT GLUES THE PIECES TOGETHER. THEY ARE: ACCESSIBILITY, INTERACTION AND SUSTAINABILITY.**

**ACCESSIBILITY** includes making Ontario Place barrier-free to people with wheelchairs and strollers, as well as making areas of the park for everyone to enjoy. No one should have to pay admission to take in this extraordinary part of the waterfront. Sightlines to the water should be enhanced and the natural beauty of the waterfront also has to be easy to reach — and access to and from the area must be addressed in a new Ontario Place.

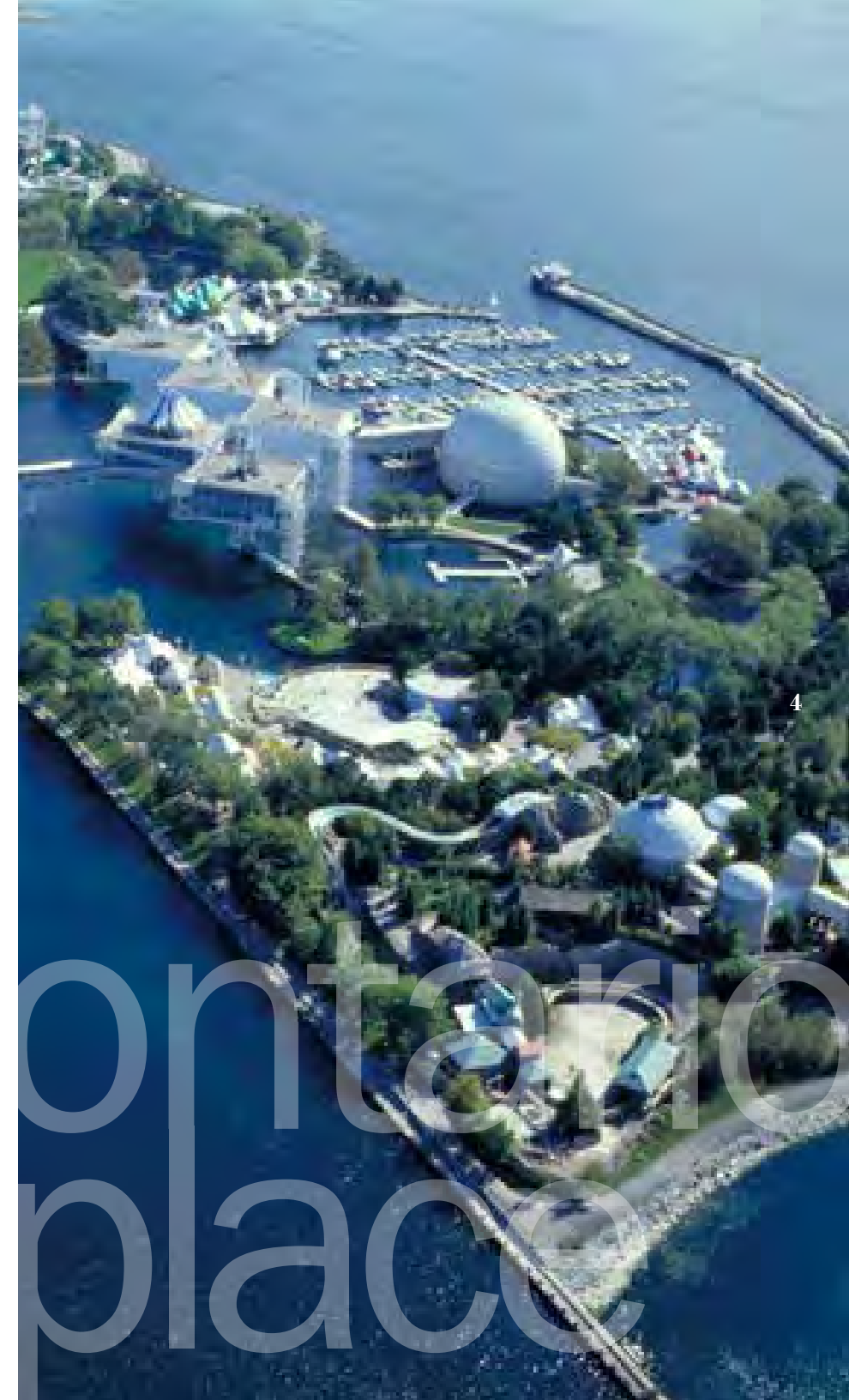
A new Ontario Place should foster **INTERACTION** — with festivals and creative programming throughout the park to draw different audiences and showcase Ontario's arts and culture, leading practices in environmental sustainability and the province's many business innovations.

In all that is designed for Ontario Place, there should be a commitment to excellence and **SUSTAINABILITY**. We say be bold in creating new, urban features and developments but ensure that they complement the natural surroundings. Use sustainable materials and honour connections with the past — including the iconic Cinesphere and pods which we believe should be repurposed in a new Ontario Place.

## WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

**ONTARIO PLACE IS AT A CROSSROADS.** Based on attendance numbers, the site holds far less appeal than it did 25 years ago — and whatever interest remains is dropping fast: three million people visited Ontario Place each summer in the early 1980s and yet only 327,774 people visited Ontario Place in 2010, a drop of 89 per cent. In order to avoid a slide into irrelevance, **ONTARIO PLACE NEEDS TO CHANGE — AND IT NEEDS TO CHANGE NOW.**

Thankfully, through the ideas shared by Ontarians and the insights gathered through our own analysis, the panel believes that a renewed and revitalized Ontario Place is not only possible but imperative — and **WE BELIEVE THE RECOMMENDATIONS LAID OUT IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES WILL PROVIDE THIS GOVERNMENT WITH EVERYTHING IT NEEDS TO BEGIN A REVITALIZATION** destined to transform the Lake Ontario waterfront for decades to come.



# SUMMARY

# 1 time for change

“It should be an exciting place, just as Ontario is an exciting and dynamic province. A place brimming with activity and vitality. It should be cosmopolitan to match the cosmopolitan personality of the people of Ontario.”

The Honourable John Robarts, Premier of Ontario, 1970

**ON MAY 22, 1971, ONTARIO PLACE OPENED ITS DOORS TO ONTARIO.**

In its first year, more than 2.3 million people<sup>1</sup> from across the province and beyond came to experience the cutting-edge architecture, stunning waterfront and multiple entertainment options offered by this new venue on the shores of Lake Ontario.

Ontario Place was a statement of pride for the province and provincial government. It reflected both a desire to showcase the province’s accomplishments and potential, and an understanding that Ontario needed a family-focused entertainment complex situated in the heart of the province’s largest lakefront city.



Archived Ontario Place Photos 1970s.



# WHEN WE LOOK AT ONTARIO PLACE TODAY, 41 YEARS AFTER IT OPENED, THE SITE EXISTS IN A VERY DIFFERENT CONTEXT.



Original Ontario Place Site Model 1970 | Archives of Ontario.

Visitors embraced the vision, and attendance averaged more than three million every summer into the early 1980s. For a seasonal attraction, this was a significant accomplishment. Visitors came to enjoy the marina, grab a bite at the restaurants, have a drink on the outdoor patios and take in a show at the Forum. People came to celebrate Ontario's past achievements and marvel at the iconic architecture and technology of tomorrow. This included five pavilions suspended as pods over Lake Ontario, and the Cine-sphere, which boasted the world's first permanent IMAX® theatre and featured made-in-Canada technology.

When we look at Ontario Place today, forty one years after it opened, the site exists in a very different context as a result of four key trends. First, significant redevelopment projects are transforming Toronto's waterfront, changing the look, feel and function of the surrounding area. Second, tens of thousands of residents are now living in neighbourhoods close to Ontario Place. Third, due to demographic shifts, the province's population has grown and become more diverse and older. Finally, the past few decades have seen recreation options multiply – and leisure patterns dramatically change as a result.

## 4 KEY TRENDS

- 1 **The WATERFRONT is CHANGING** due to significant redevelopment projects.
- 2 **Tens of thousands of residents now live in NEIGHBOURHOODS** around Ontario Place.
- 3 **Ontario's population has GROWN** and has become more **DIVERSE** and **OLDER**.
- 4 **There are more recreational and leisure OPTIONS** today.

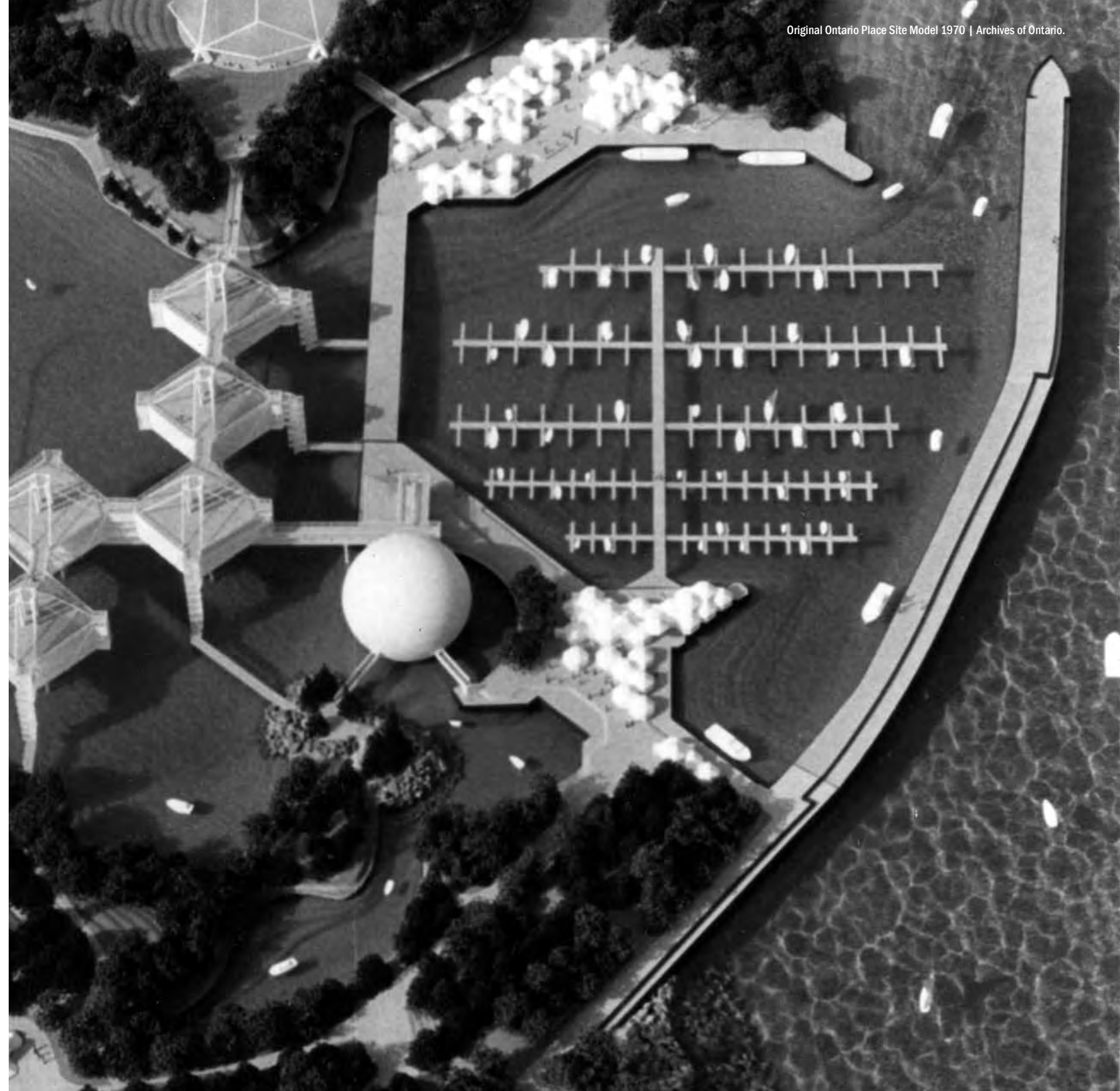
# 3,300,000

NUMBER of VISITORS to Ontario Place  
annually in the early 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

# 327,774

NUMBER of VISITORS to Ontario Place in 2010.<sup>3</sup>

7 Taken together, these trends underscore the need to transform Ontario Place to accommodate its new reality in an ever-changing city. Ontario's current fiscal environment suggests that whatever transformation occurs will only be successful and sustainable if it leverages the **EXPERTISE, INSIGHT AND CAPITAL OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR THROUGH NEW AND INNOVATIVE MODELS OF COLLABORATION.**





A rediscovered waterfront

# reconnect

8

**IN 1971, TORONTO'S WATERFRONT WAS LARGELY DISCONNECTED FROM THE CITY THAT SURROUNDED IT.** Although vacant shoreline abounded — especially after the city shifted its industrial port area to an outer harbour — residents struggled to find ways to connect with the water in a meaningful way. By showcasing the waterfront in a new and innovative way, Ontario Place reminded residents and visitors that Toronto is a lakefront city.

Since that time, the waterfront has changed dramatically. To the west, broad swathes of parkland lead the way into the city, while in the east, new life is being breathed into the portlands through urban beaches, parks, corporate headquarters and college campuses. Toronto is working to combine urbanization, community and natural beauty in new and compelling ways — part of a global trend that includes projects

that embrace this same philosophy, ranging from Vancouver's Granville Island and Chicago's Millennium Park, to Louisville's Waterfront Park and New York's Governors Island and the High Line.

**ONTARIO PLACE REMINDED RESIDENTS AND VISITORS THAT TORONTO IS A LAKEFRONT CITY.**

## New neighbours — and new visitors

**WHEN ONTARIO PLACE OPENED IN 1971 RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS EXISTED ONLY ON THE EXTREME EAST AND WEST ENDS OF THE TORONTO LAKEFRONT.** Toronto's central waterfront at this time was dotted with empty factories and warehouses — as a result of industries following residents who were steadily moving to cheaper land in the suburbs.

Since the 1970s, major efforts have been made to revitalize areas along the waterfront and repurpose abandoned buildings. The conversion of Queen's Quay Terminal to a condominium and mall complex in 1983<sup>4</sup> and Harbourfront Centre in 1991<sup>5</sup> have helped to redefine the landscape of Toronto's lakefront.

Today, the area has changed significantly. Growing communities house thousands of new residents, in place of former industrial and commercial lands. The Liberty Village and Niagara communities have increased their population by more than 50 per cent since 2006<sup>6</sup> and over 155 per cent since 1996.<sup>7</sup>

While the population in the immediate area has grown, the availability of leisure and recreation space has not kept pace with demand. This suggests a transformed Ontario Place will be well positioned to serve a dual purpose of attracting residents from across the province as well as visitors from a wide range of proximate downtown Toronto neighbourhoods — areas that were less populated when Ontario Place first opened its doors.

**WHILE THE POPULATION IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA HAS GROWN, THE AVAILABILITY OF LEISURE AND RECREATION SPACE HAS NOT KEPT PACE WITH DEMAND.**





## An evolving visitor base

**TODAY, THE MEDIAN AGE IN ONTARIO IS 41 AND THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PROVINCE HAVE SHIFTED.**<sup>8</sup> For example, when we talk about family we're no longer referring to just parents with young children. As well, the same generation that brought their kids to Ontario Place in the 1970s is approaching retirement and thinking carefully about how to enjoy their retirement years. In its 2009 study on Global Tourism Opportunities<sup>9</sup> Deloitte Consulting identified the aging population as an important growth market. In 1971 seniors represented eight per cent of Ontario's population. Today, the Ontario senior population stands at more than 14 per cent<sup>10</sup> and it is projected that **THIS DECADE WILL BE THE FIRST TIME THAT THERE ARE MORE SENIORS THAN CHILDREN.**<sup>11</sup>

**27** Years old was the **MEDIAN AGE** in Ontario in 1971.

**41** Years old is the **MEDIAN AGE** in Ontario today.

**14**% **SENIOR** population in Ontario today and growing.

Ontario has also become increasingly diverse and multicultural. In Ontario, **IMMIGRANTS NOW MAKE UP NEARLY A THIRD OF THE POPULATION** and this proportion is expected to continue growing.<sup>12</sup> The proportion of visible minorities is projected to double by 2031 in almost all Ontario cities.<sup>13</sup> A revitalized Ontario Place has the potential to attract a wider and more diverse group of people with a new era of experiences — offering an equally compelling leisure experience for all.

In its early years, Ontario Place was primarily a site enjoyed by Ontario's young people. A 1978 survey of visitor trends revealed that almost half of the attendees were between 13 and 24, and nearly 85 per cent of the visitors were under 40.<sup>14</sup> While a quarter of the visitors

attended as a family, more than double that number attended as part of a group of friends.

Appealing to a younger demographic in 1971 made sense — the median age of Ontario residents was 27.<sup>15</sup> Beginning in its second decade, Ontario Place introduced a number of new features designed to attract more families, including the Bumper Boats in 1980, massive reconstruction of the west island and Wilderness Adventure Ride in 1984 and a water park in the 1990s. Despite a redirected marketing approach towards families, visitor levels never approached the levels the site enjoyed in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>16</sup>

A new Ontario Place has the opportunity to tap into and engage a more diverse visitor base.



## An increasingly competitive leisure landscape

WHEN IT OPENED, ONTARIO PLACE WAS A UNIQUE ENTERTAINMENT VENUE THAT STOOD ALONE AS A MAJOR DRAW FOR VISITORS AND RESIDENTS ALIKE. From its waterfront location to its entertainment variety, Ontario Place was able to leverage its uniqueness and its provincial identity to generate enormous visitor interest.

All of that began to change in 1981, when Canada's Wonderland opened<sup>17</sup> and in 1986 Wild Water Kingdom launched its own version of a water-based theme park.<sup>18</sup> Both are focused on the same visitors that Ontario Place targeted and continue to attract large numbers of these visitors. Canada's Wonderland hosts nearly three million<sup>19</sup> visitors each year — more than five

times the average annual attendance for Ontario Place over the past six years, and more than ten times the 2010 count.<sup>20</sup>

Ontario Place can no longer rely on its historical distinction as the province's first landmark entertainment destination. What we can do is offer something different by **LEVERAGING THE SITE'S UNIQUE LOCATION AND BECOMING A REVITALIZED DESTINATION FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF VISITORS.**

CANADA'S WONDERLAND attracted

# 10 x

MORE VISITORS than Ontario Place in 2010.<sup>21</sup>



## New realities, new opportunities

**AS WE REFLECT ON HOW TORONTO AND ONTARIO HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE 1970s, WE ARE ALSO MINDFUL OF HOW THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT HAS CHANGED.** Today, it is clear that

successfully revitalizing a provincial asset like Ontario Place requires the creation of new partnerships with the private sector. These partnerships will not only open Ontario Place to new expertise and new investments, but also ensure that taxpayer dollars remain devoted to the highest-priority public services.

As Don Drummond, Chair of the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, recently wrote in his February 2012 report: "Service delivery should be moved as close and convenient as possible to the

clients. It need not always be solely in the public domain."<sup>22</sup> Given the current fiscal reality of the province, it is imperative that these words be considered as we move forward towards a new Ontario Place.

There is no doubt that Ontario Place has enjoyed a long legacy as one of our province's flagship destinations; however, as visitation has declined over the past three decades, the result has been a steady decline in energy, enthusiasm, interest and — perhaps most importantly — investments and revenues. We believe this is happening because the site is not relevant today.

In addition to dwindling attendance, areas of Ontario Place are starting to show signs of age and are in need of major maintenance and restoration.

If the site had remained open as it currently exists, it would have required an estimated \$100 million in funding over the next five years and several hundred million more in infrastructure replacement funding over a 20 year period to bring the site up to a state of good repair.<sup>23</sup>



**Service delivery should be moved as close and convenient as possible to the clients. It need not always be solely in the public domain.”**

The Drummond Report | Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services. 2012.

Considerable analysis has already been undertaken to identify the challenges and opportunities that Ontario Place faces, and our work has greatly benefited from the insights and wisdom of those who came before. “Ontario Place has a role to play as a unique Ontario asset, and we believe that a revitalized park will significantly boost tourism in Ontario” — a conclusion shared by a 2010 tourism report, “Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism.”<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, we are convinced that a redevelopment of Ontario Place has the potential to act as an important economic engine for both Toronto and the province. Early estimates suggest that a new Ontario Place could generate hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect economic benefits and tax revenues, as well as create thousands of new jobs.



# A NEW PUBLIC BACKYARD FOR ALL ONTARIANS.

## The time for action

**THIS IS THE RIGHT TIME TO REIMAGINE THE POTENTIAL FOR ONTARIO PLACE.** We are seeing changes along Toronto’s waterfront, new neighbourhoods emerging, a population that has increased and become more diverse and, more than ever, Ontarians and visitors have an abundance of leisure alternatives to choose from. **ONTARIO PLACE REQUIRES A NEW PURPOSE AND VISION TO REFLECT TODAY’S WORLD** as well as capture the legacy of Ontario Place as “a new showcase for our province and people.... a new focal point for our province.... a place which demonstrates a new attitude to our lakefronts.”<sup>25</sup>



**ONTARIO PLACE MUST BE MORE THAN JUST AN AMUSEMENT PARK.** A new Ontario Place is about reconnecting Ontarians to Toronto and to the waterfront of their capital city, giving them access to enjoy the natural and cultural beauty of a province unlike any other.

**IT'S ABOUT SHOWCASING ONTARIO'S RICH CULTURE, INNOVATIVE DESIGN, GREEN TECHNOLOGY, ARTS AND NATURAL BEAUTY** — as part of a new community in which residents can live, work, play and discover businesses can grow and made-in-Ontario ideas can flourish.

**IT'S ABOUT GIVING ALL ONTARIANS A NEW PUBLIC BACKYARD TO EXPLORE.** Creating a new public realm that should be used by many, not just a few, with significant quantities of high-quality open parkland where people can gather any time of the day and at any point of the year to enjoy the area's natural surroundings.

**IT'S A NEW ONTARIO PLACE;  
A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN LIVE,  
WORK, PLAY AND DISCOVER ON  
THE WATER'S EDGE.**



**A NEW PUBLIC  
REALM THAT SHOULD  
BE USED BY MANY  
NOT JUST A FEW.**

# 2 a place to connect

LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND DISCOVER AT THE WATER'S EDGE

LIVE. WORK. PLAY. DISCOVER.



The following sections outline the kind of features and amenities that a revitalized Ontario Place could include. These facilities are designed to accomplish **THREE DISTINCT BUT INTERRELATED GOALS.**



**ONE WAY TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO ONTARIO PLACE IS TO CREATE NEW AND EXCITING REASONS FOR PEOPLE TO VISIT.**

Historically, Ontario Place only attracted visitors in the summer months and was only able to keep visitors on the site for a few hours.

For the site to achieve its full potential, it must become a compelling and frequent destination for a broader audience and also offer a broader range of activities. To achieve this, the site needs to be transformed into a place where people come to **LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND DISCOVER ALL YEAR LONG.**

Ontario Place needs to **ATTRACT A CRITICAL MASS IN ORDER TO BECOME VIBRANT AND VITAL.** This can only happen if Ontario Place has a strong set of anchor tenants that help define the area as a hub of activity, and establish the site as a new waterfront community.

- 1** They will serve as a cornerstone of the site's physical redevelopment and provide an invaluable **VISUAL IDENTITY REFLECTIVE OF ONTARIO'S RICH CULTURE.**
- 2** They will serve as **MAGNETS FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE** needed for a new Ontario Place to become a true community – not just an attraction.
- 3** They will help **GENERATE REVENUE** that the Ontario Place redevelopment will require.

**ONTARIO PLACE WILL THRIVE AS A WATERFRONT DESTINATION, PROVIDING A PLACE FOR INDIVIDUALS TO LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND DISCOVER ALONG THE WATER'S EDGE.**



Mountain Dwellings, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK | Photo by Ulrik Jantzen and Jens Lindhe.

## Welcoming new residents to the water's edge

**VISITORS PROVIDE ENERGY AND ACTIVITY, BUT RESIDENTS FORM THE FOUNDATION OF ANY COMMUNITY.** Given its unique waterfront location, part of the new Ontario Place could be home to one of Toronto's most beautiful and unique residential areas that would offer around-the-clock energy Ontario Place requires to become a year-round destination. The new residential area and the **RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS ON THE SITE WOULD BE COMMITTED TO DESIGN EXCELLENCE, SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES AND SIZED APPROPRIATELY.**

It's important to emphasize that with space **DEVOTED TO A PUBLIC PARK**, any **NEW HOUSING** would only occupy a

small segment of the vast 155 acre combination land-water lot property — in fact, we recommend that **ONLY 10 TO 15 PER CENT** of the entire property be used for residences.

## A UNIQUE + SPECIAL PLACE BY THE WATER.

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Darwin Waterfront, AUSTRALIA | Photo by HASSELL.

## REVENUE FROM RESIDENTIAL SALES COULD BE REINVESTED INTO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SITE'S PUBLIC PARK.

**IN ORDER TO SERVE ONTARIO PLACE'S FOUNDATIONAL PURPOSE, A HEIGHT-APPROPRIATE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:**

**| DESIGN EXCELLENCE.** The development must be architecturally bold and compelling, and showcase the kind of design excellence that must be found throughout the entire Ontario Place site.

**| SUSTAINABLE PLANNING PRINCIPLES.** Design and construction must follow sustainable building standards (for example, LEED and BOMA BEST certifications), in order to ensure that the ecological footprint of the site is as modest as possible.

**| INTEGRATION WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.** The project can only succeed if it protects the integrity of the natural space and is consistent with the single most important principle – the preservation and enhancement of public access to the water's edge.

**THERE ARE SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF WATERFRONT LIVING THAT THE PANEL REVIEWED AS IT PREPARED THIS REPORT.** The Selkirk Waterfront Community<sup>1</sup> in Victoria, British Columbia is an award-winning testament to conservation in its use of site materials and remnants as elements of its overall design.

The Darwin Waterfront is a thriving community in Australia that has won awards for excellence in architecture and landscaping.<sup>2</sup> And in Sydney, Australia, a complete transformation is underway to create the revitalized community of Barangaroo, comprised of a mix of commercial, residential and civic buildings with a focus on being carbon neutral, water positive, and zero waste.<sup>3</sup>

Given the current fiscal climate, we need to find ways to fund the transformation of Ontario Place – and preliminary estimates suggest that revenue from a mixed-use development could be significant.<sup>4</sup> The revenue generated from residential sales could be reinvested into the reconstruction and enhancement of the site's public park – the dominant feature we believe must form the heart of the new Ontario Place. This capital would offset some of the costs of revitalizing existing site infrastructure, adding new public amenities and creating a new urban park.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

The new Ontario Place must be committed to **DESIGN EXCELLENCE** in building, landscape and planning, as well as to creative **SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES** – this means ensuring a small ecological footprint in all that is developed.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

Any new development must respect and enhance the **NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE SURROUNDINGS** by improving and protecting sightlines to the water, creating **EASY PUBLIC ACCESS** to the waterfront .



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Beyond its value as a **RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY**, we believe that Ontario Place could also support a **HOTEL AND RESORT** that would bring thousands of visitors to the site for specific, multi-day visits — enhanced by unique views of the city, access to the water, and the massive urban park surrounding its location.<sup>5</sup> As in any new development on the site, a hotel or resort must ensure that easy public access to the water's edge is preserved. If a hotel or resort could be designed with key sustainability principles in mind — such as a reliance on renewable energy and the use of repurposed or reclaimed building materials — it would embody Ontario's commitment to the green economy. In doing so, the hotel or resort could become its own point of interest.

Combining an urban hotel with a unique reclaimed public space has been explored in other jurisdictions; however, it would be a new approach for Toronto, one that holds enormous potential based on the experience of other major global cities in Canada and abroad.

Both Vancouver's Granville Island Hotel and New York City's The Standard at the High Line are highly successful projects that leverage and enhance the success of their surrounding public spaces. Granville Island has a three-storey boutique hotel with just over 80 rooms with a view of False Creek and Vancouver. The Standard sits atop the High Line near where 14th Street meets the Hudson River.

**WHAT HOTELS AND HOUSING HAVE IN COMMON IS A COMMITMENT TO DENSITY.** They bring hundreds of people together in close proximity, the kind of traffic that will animate the site; they support professional and personal interactions and make neighbourhoods dynamic and diverse — these qualities are essential to the success of the new Ontario Place.

## WE DO NOT RECOMMEND...

**X A Wall of High-Rise Buildings** | We recommend residential buildings that are committed to design excellence, sustainability principles and sized appropriately. We are recommending against a wall of high-rise buildings that prevents views of the waterfront and disconnects Ontario Place from the rest of the city.

10 to 15 per cent of the 155 acre property could be for residential development. Ideally the potential location of a new residential development would be the west island (as illustrated in the sample map below).



## RECOMMENDATION 3

Ontario Place should use a small portion of its 155 land-water lot property (10 TO 15 PER CENT) for RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT with buildings that demonstrate design excellence, sustainability principles and are sized appropriately. Ontario Place should also consider the FEASIBILITY OF A HOTEL OR RESORT.

# work.



## Supporting local businesses and creating jobs

Urban neighbourhoods succeed when they have the commercial and social infrastructure that brings people out of their homes and into the streets, shops, galleries and restaurants.

**ONTARIO PLACE NEEDS TO ATTRACT RETAIL TENANTS THAT WOULD SERVE BOTH VISITORS AND RESIDENTS.** The area would be an ideal site for innovative and attractive retail spaces, performance venues, markets, art exhibitions and festivals — the kind of mix that embodies the best of Ontario’s economy and people.

A mix of shops and artist studios, restaurants and patios at the base of **HEIGHT-APPROPRIATE, SUSTAINABLE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS** and throughout the

park will animate the site and embody the new character of Ontario Place. Creative and flexible cultural programming throughout the park will bring new excitement to the area — something we explore further in the next section on designing a new public realm.

The new Ontario Place would also be an ideal location for **A MAJOR CORPORATE OR INSTITUTIONAL ANCHOR TENANT** that will attract related firms and catalyze additional opportunities, all while adding the energy that accompanies year-round workers. A good example of this concept in action is the MaRS Discovery District innovation centre with the Ontario Institute

# “My new Ontario Place brings local businesses back to urban communities.”

Public Town Hall Participant

for Cancer Research serving as a vital anchor. A similar process is already beginning around Corus Quay, the new headquarters for Corus Entertainment that was recently built as the anchor project in the revitalization of Toronto’s eastern waterfront.

**A REVITALIZED ONTARIO PLACE SHOULD BE THE HOME TO ENTREPRENEURS FROM ALL SECTORS AND INDUSTRIES.** Moreover, the redevelopment process will itself create a burst of enormous economic activity.

Chicago’s Millennium Park is an excellent example of the potential economic impact of reimagined spaces. The \$490 million spent to create Millennium Park created 7,000 direct and indirect construction jobs, along with 7,000 induced jobs. The five million annual visitors to the park account for \$1.4 billion of direct spending and \$78 million in tax revenue.<sup>6</sup>

## “Why not a year-round destination... like an indoor farmer’s and artisan market?”

Public Email Comment



The River Walk, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS | Photo by Drew Kolb / CC BY-NC 2.0.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

Ontario Place must be a place for people TO WORK — not just visit or live. From corporate headquarters to cafés and shops, the redevelopment should include SPACE FOR COMMERCE AND BUSINESS.



Molson Amphitheatre, TORONTO | Photo by Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation.



Cisco Ottawa Bluesfest, OTTAWA | Photo by Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation.

### Exploring Ontario’s new backyard

From Millennium Park in Chicago to Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, **GREAT CITIES ARE DEFINED BY INNOVATIVE PARKS THAT COMBINE NATURAL BEAUTY WITH A DISTINCTLY URBAN MIX OF ATTRACTIONS** – from educational museums to inspiring galleries, and from lively sports stadiums to amazing amusement features.

The new Ontario Place should be no different. These types of developments help generate revenue to offset ongoing capital improvements and operating costs for the site’s many varied public spaces.

While research shows that there is not a market need for another dedicated amusement park facility in the area, there is a gap for facilities that operate year-round. There are many examples of innovative year-round entertainment or amusement activities that could potentially be part of the new Ontario Place. Examples include year-round water resorts such as: the iconic Tropical Islands Resort, an indoor tropical resort and water park built inside a former airport hangar, located in Brandenburg, Germany; and the City Museum in St. Louis, Missouri, known for its surrealistic playful architecture.



**“Arts and culture, music and performance, food and drink. These are things I want to experience at my new Ontario Place.”**

Public Town Hall Online Participant





# 4 in 10

Canadian tourists attend musical, theatre or literary festivals.<sup>10</sup>

**MUSIC SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE A DEFINING ELEMENT OF THE SITE AND ITS ATTRACTIONS** — as it has been for the last 41 years. When Ontario Place opened its doors in 1971 one of the most popular original destinations was the Forum — an outdoor concert venue which offered both free and paid concerts.<sup>8</sup> Today, the Amphitheatre at Ontario Place continues to attract tens of thousands of visitors a year, with over thirty events scheduled for 2012.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the popularity of both venues, neither was designed nor supported to attract audiences outside of the park’s core May to September season.

Approximately four in 10 Canadian tourists attend musical, theatre or literary festivals,<sup>10</sup> so a strong market

exists to expand on the current offering of concerts. A new Ontario Place could have a pavilion that operates year-round — a central gathering space like the original Forum for concerts, theatre performances, local festivals and community fiestas.

Any facility designed or repurposed from the existing site must take into consideration all seasons as well as a range of cultural programs and activities.



UBC Robson Square Skating Rink, VANCOUVER | Photo by T. Chang / CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.



The Forum in 1970s, ONTARIO PLACE, TORONTO | Photo by Ontario Place Archives.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

Ontario Place should have a venue — **LIKE THE ORIGINAL FORUM** — for a range of cultural activities, from concerts and theatre, to performances, festivals and community events. The new venue should be designed to operate year-round.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

Ontario Place should look at a range of **ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES** to infuse the community with vibrancy — and generate revenue to offset the operating costs of the new public space.

# discover.



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## Growing made-in-Ontario ideas

Students add a vibrant pulse to any site. They guarantee a customer base for potential businesses, and they **DRAW VISITORS TO SEE THEIR INNOVATIVE RESEARCH DISCOVERIES** and many achievements and talents.

**ONTARIO HAS ONE OF THE MOST EDUCATED, HIGHLY-MOTIVATED AND INNOVATIVE WORKFORCES IN THE WORLD.** While Ontario Place would be an ideal setting for a corporate anchor, it would also be an exceptional home for an educational or research institution — the kind of organization able to serve both as an economic engine to the local community, and a catalyst for the vibrancy that accompanies any student environment. Greater investment in educational institutions is a

a social and economic investment in the province's future.

Several academic institutions have embraced the waterfront as they seek to expand their traditional campus footprint. Close to home, George Brown College has a new campus opening this fall on Toronto's eastern waterfront with an innovative health sciences education learning centre set against an inspiring view of Lake Ontario.

South of the border, Cornell University is establishing a state-of-the-art applied sciences research campus on Roosevelt Island, between the New York City boroughs of Manhattan and Queens — hundreds of miles from its “home” campus in Ithaca. In announcing the venture, Mayor Michael Bloomberg noted that the campus would bolster job creation in the city and may generate 600 spin-off companies and \$23 billion in economic activity over the next three decades.<sup>7</sup>

# GREATER INVESTMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IS A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INVESTMENT IN THE PROVINCE'S FUTURE.

**ONTARIO PLACE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE A LEADER IN PROMOTING INNOVATION AND RESEARCH.** The site would lend itself to a permanent exposition of emerging technologies and prototypes from Ontario's colleges, universities and industries. There are innovation parks sprouting up around the globe; from Innovation Park at Penn State to McMaster Innovation Park in Hamilton, these spaces help to transfer knowledge from institutions to the marketplace and stimulate the economy. They foster growth and can offer a place for the public to discover and interact with the products of tomorrow.

“Let's have a residency program at Ontario Place to learn about people and things happening from other parts of Ontario.”

Public Town Hall Participant

## RECOMMENDATION 7

Ontario Place should position itself as an ideal site for a **RESEARCH OR EDUCATION CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE** and work diligently to secure an institutional anchor tenant with international repute.

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An aerial view of the proposed NYC Tech Campus on Roosevelt Island | Photo illustration by Cornell.



# A PLACE TO DISCOVER + INTERACT WITH THE PRODUCTS OF TOMORROW.

**THE COMBINATION OF LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND DISCOVER WILL BRING A NEW LEVEL OF ENERGY TO THE WATERFRONT AREA.**

**Imagine** a new waterfront community where you can...



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The right mix of these elements could transform Toronto’s waterfront into a burgeoning hub of activity — a unique pulse point in the city that is a home to residents, an interesting place to work and draws visitors year-round.

**WE DO NOT RECOMMEND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CASINO AT ONTARIO PLACE**, a recommendation that has been accepted by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport this June. We believe that Ontario Place should be a destination that celebrates Ontario and its exceptional culture, character and life.

With the multiple layers of uses and structures proposed in our report, **VISITORS AND RESIDENTS ALIKE WILL FIND A VERY DIFFERENT SITE** — one that responds to their changing demands and desire to reconnect with Lake Ontario in new and exciting ways.

**WE DO NOT RECOMMEND...**  
**X Casino** | We are recommending against the development of a casino at Ontario Place — a recommendation that has been accepted by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Ontario Place should be a destination that celebrates Ontario and its exceptional culture, character and life.



**THROUGHOUT THE 1970s, ONTARIO PLACE WAS A PROUD SHOWCASE FOR THE PROVINCE AND A TRUE FLAGSHIP DESTINATION FOR ONTARIANS.** Attendance was strong, people were interested and excited, and most of the park’s features – in particular, the Forum music venue, and the Cinesphere and IMAX® theatre – were being used to capacity. The 1979 season, for example, welcomed approximately 3,300,000 visitors to Ontario Place.<sup>1</sup> Ontarians returned to “see, experience and feel the Ontario personality”<sup>2</sup> that the park was designed to evoke.

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One of our main goals for revitalization is to once again connect Ontario Place with all Ontarians. Regardless of what new development may be added to the site, **ONTARIO PLACE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AN ASSET THAT BELONGS TO ALL.**

**WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT A LARGE PORTION OF A NEW ONTARIO PLACE SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO PUBLIC SPACE. AND A NEW ONTARIO PLACE SHOULD BE A YEAR-ROUND DESTINATION WHERE EVERYONE CAN FIND SOMETHING TO DO.**



“I remember the whole extended family (uncles, cousins, etcetera) going to Ontario Place and there were activities for everybody from 8 to 80. We need this kind of thing right now.”

Public Town Hall Online Participant

To ensure that the fundamental “public” character of a new Ontario Place is honoured and maintained, the panel’s discussions centred on three core principles: Accessibility, Interaction and Sustainability. These principles will help protect and strengthen this public identity and lead to the creation of an inclusive and impressive public presence at the heart of Ontario Place.

1. **Accessibility**
2. **Interaction**
3. **Sustainability**

### 1 | **Accessibility: Opening the park to its full potential**

**ACCESSIBILITY IS A FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT TO ANY SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC SPACE.** It is a key part of the plans to revitalize Toronto’s eastern and central waterfront and connect the lake to the surrounding communities. And it is a key theme that runs through many of the previous studies of Ontario Place and the ideas submitted by stakeholders and community members. Accordingly, accessibility has been a guiding principle for the panel as it reflected on the revitalization of the site.

In the Ontario Place context, accessibility means many different things, including:

| **PHYSICAL ACCESS** — ensures that all members of the public have the ability to move freely and easily throughout the site and to the edge of the lake itself;

| **ALL SEASON ACCESS** — entices visitors and residents to access the site year-round;

| **DEMOGRAPHIC ACCESS** — creates amenities and attractions that appeal to Ontarians and visitors of all ages and heritages; and

| **NATURAL ACCESS** — enhances the urban character of Toronto through the natural beauty of open green space.





**PHYSICAL ACCESS** will be accomplished by creating a site that is both easy to navigate and barrier-free. Whether by bike, on foot or public transportation, **ONTARIO PLACE NEEDS TO WORK WITH MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL PARTNERS TO IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL ACCESS** to and from the site. In addition, more than 1.8 million Ontarians live with disabilities, representing 15.5 per cent of the population<sup>3</sup> or about one in seven Ontarians. **MANY OLDER PARTS OF ONTARIO PLACE ARE DIFFICULT TO GET TO FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**, those with limited mobility or families with strollers. This is unacceptable for a site that will represent Ontario and embody openness. As a result, the panel is committed to ensuring that the **NEW ONTARIO PLACE IS A LEADER IN BARRIER-FREE RECREATION.**



**ALL SEASON ACCESS** will come by transforming Ontario Place into a site that can be enjoyed in different and exciting ways **THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.** Ontarians and their visiting friends and relatives should be able to visit the site each season and take in the picturesque landscape and beautiful views. All season access is also important for the future of Ontario Place. We believe that in order for the site to become self-sustaining, there need to be **ACTIVITIES OR SOURCES OF REVENUE THROUGH THE FALL, WINTER, SPRING AND SUMMER MONTHS.** To achieve this vibrancy on the site and make the site an integral part of the city, we must focus on providing a site where people are living, working, playing and discovering throughout the year.



**DEMOGRAPHIC ACCESS** is about designing and building a space **WHERE VISITORS OF ALL AGES AND HERITAGES CAN FIND SOMETHING OF INTEREST.** Ideally, the public component of Ontario Place will have something for everyone to enjoy — **FROM OPEN SPACES TO URBAN PLAZAS, FROM WILD GARDENS TO SPORTS FIELDS, FROM FOOD CARTS TO SIT-DOWN BISTROS.** **IMAGINE A NEW ONTARIO PLACE AS THE PROVINCE’S COLLECTIVE “BACKYARD,”** a gathering and celebration space where many of the best leisure activities take place. The key is to create a space that is inviting and makes people excited to explore again and again.



**NATURAL ACCESS** will be inescapably provided by the site’s unique location and the **INTERSECTION OF WATER AND LAND.** By prioritizing the natural landscape, the public character of Ontario Place will be matched with its environmental character to create a stunning space unlike any other in the province. The new Ontario Place will make nature **MORE ACCESSIBLE TO A LARGER CROWD** — and with Ontario having the lowest visits per capita among the provinces to national parks, the province needs to make this kind of new park space available to the urban population.<sup>4</sup>

# ACCESSIBILITY

# OPEN DOOR. OPEN SPACE. OPEN YEAR- ROUND. THIS IS THE NEW ONTARIO PLACE.

These four components of access are all indispensable — but so too is ensuring that cost does not prevent residents from visiting the public core of Ontario Place. **THROUGHOUT MOST OF ITS 41-YEAR HISTORY, ONTARIO PLACE HAS CHARGED AN ADMISSION FEE** for visitors to gain access to the site. The panel believes that this practice has to change — **VISITORS MUST HAVE FREE ACCESS TO THE WATERFRONT.**

By making the waterfront accessible, the site can become a lasting and open link between land, water and sky that will welcome **ONTARIANS AND VISITORS ALIKE TO RECONNECT WITH THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE PROVINCE.**



## RECOMMENDATION 8

Ontario Place and its waterfront must be **ACCESSIBLE — AN OPEN DOOR — AND COMPLETELY BARRIER-FREE TO ALL WHO VISIT.**

## RECOMMENDATION 9

Ontario Place needs to be **OPEN YEAR-ROUND**, offering compelling activities to draw a **RANGE OF AUDIENCES THROUGHOUT THE DIFFERENT SEASONS.**



## 2 | Interaction: Creating fixed and flexible features to bring people together

**WE BELIEVE THAT ONTARIO PLACE SHOULD BE A PLACE THAT ENGAGES AND INSPIRES ALL WHO VISIT.** Whether through iconic architecture, unique restaurants, brilliant sculptures, or a majestic boardwalk, **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE SITE IS MEANINGFUL, COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE AND CONNECTS WITH PEOPLE.** Some features and assets should be designed to endure for generations, becoming fixtures in the landscape and symbols of Ontario. But other features **NEED TO BE FLEXIBLE AND HAVE THE ABILITY TO CHANGE WITH THE SEASONS AND OVER TIME,** to respond to different audiences and different interests. These features should be able to be modified as insights and information are gathered from park visitors. This adaptability

will allow the site to stay relevant to a wider audience and will allow Ontario Place to explore different uses over time.

Features alone do not breathe life into a site — **CREATIVE PROGRAMMING IS CRITICAL TO BRINGING NEW EXCITEMENT TO THE AREA AND CREATING A LASTING IMPRESSION** — much like programming did during the site’s first decade. Ontario Place has many examples to draw inspiration from, such as: New York’s High Line, a public park built on an elevated freight rail line that invites artists to display their art and engage with the design and architecture of the area; and Vancouver’s Granville Island with its mix of festivals, street performers, musical shows and art exhibits throughout the year.



# A PLACE THAT ENGAGES + INSPIRES ALL WHO VISIT. FROM BUSINESSES, RESIDENTS, TOURISTS, ARTISTS, SCIENTISTS, EDUCATORS + MORE.

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Why not bring some Science Centre, some Biosphere and some ROM into it? Have more fun, interactive exhibits, displays and more...”

Public Email Comment

**CREATIVE PROGRAMMING IS A WAY TO SHOWCASE ONTARIO AND ENGAGE WITH BUSINESSES, FOOD ARTISANS, ARTISTS, MUSICIANS, EDUCATORS, ARCHITECTS, SCIENTISTS AND RESIDENTS.** Programming adds an important and essential dimension to the public realm by transforming a place into an experience that enriches those who visit. This could include educational exhibits and workshops, featuring anything from the art of constructing native birch bark canoes, like those still made at Fort William Historical Park, to the art of hand blown glass making, which can be found in many artist shops throughout the Golden Horseshoe region.

A new Ontario Place could tap into the incredible **PROGRAMMING EXPERTISE OF ONTARIO'S LEADING CULTURAL AND SCIENCE ORGANIZATIONS** — a notion we explore further in the next section of the report on exploring potential partnerships — and showcase the province's cultural excellence in a central gathering space, from

concerts in the park to dance performances and family festivals for younger audiences. Granville Island, for example, hosts a number of festivals over the summer; their All Over the Map cultural festival showcases dance and music groups from across the province.

**DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY IS EQUALLY VITAL TO MODERNIZING ONTARIO PLACE.** We feel that a renewed Ontario Place should explore methods of weaving leading-edge digital elements into the site. This will ensure that “self-service” programming features, such as interactive maps and smartphone applications, can both help Ontario Place stay fresh and relevant to new generations of tech-savvy visitors and assist in building an important online community that promotes and shares experiences with others.

## RECOMMENDATION 10

Ontario Place needs to be **FLEXIBLE** and better able to **ADAPT TO CHANGING TIMES**. It can do this through creative programming that engages with visitors in fresh, new ways; and new technologies that create connections with a tech-savvy generation of visitors.



### 3 | Sustainability: Our green future; our connections to the past

**THIS REVITALIZATION PROJECT IS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A SPACE THAT WILL BE USED BY GENERATIONS** and contribute to the social fabric of the province and the city. The revitalized site should provide a unique mix of elements, be a leader in environmental sustainability, and include innovative design elements that respect and celebrate the natural beauty of the landscape.

In order to highlight the natural beauty of the site, the revitalization should incorporate leading practices in **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**. These practices can take many forms: ensuring materials used in construction take into account long-term sustainability,

ensuring the prudent use of natural resources, protecting the existing natural elements of the site, supporting the use of sustainable methods of transportation, and ensuring that any development takes into account the highest design standards in energy efficiency and durability (for example, LEED and BOMA BEST certifications).

**NEW DESIGN ELEMENTS RECOGNIZE AND INCORPORATE ELEMENTS OF THE EXISTING NATURAL GEOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE.**

**RECOMMENDATION 11**  
**Ontario Place must demonstrate leadership in ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY and DESIGN EXCELLENCE.**

The public realm aspect of the site should also incorporate innovative and new design elements, while respecting and celebrating the history of the site. The most iconic symbol of Ontario Place is the Cinesphere, designed by renowned Canadian architect Eberhard Zeidler. **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ONTARIO PLACE EMBRACE AND HONOUR THE HISTORY OF THE SITE ITSELF AND ITS VISIONARY LEGACY**, which is why the panel is recommending that future designs for the site explore ways to **FEASIBLY INCLUDE THE CINESPHERE AND PODS.**

#### RECOMMENDATION 12

Ontario Place should respect and celebrate the **NATURAL LANDSCAPE** as well as the **HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS** with the site.

We also recommend that all new design elements recognize and incorporate elements of the existing natural geography and landscape. Opportunities to **ENHANCE SIGHTLINES** to the water should be part of the future master plan for a new Ontario Place.

**RECOMMENDATION 13**  
**FUTURE DESIGNS** for Ontario Place should explore ways to feasibly include the **ICONIC CINESPHERE AND PODS.**

“

As a child, I remember how modern it was to see the Cinesphere. It's truly a symbol of innovation at that time. It is a public icon.”

Public Email Comment

## The cost of investing in public space

**JUST AS THERE IS A RANGE OF KEY PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING A PUBLIC PARKLAND PROJECT, SO TOO IS THERE A RANGE OF COSTS INVOLVED IN BUILDING THE PARKLAND.**

With the help of preliminary analysis from Infrastructure Ontario and Bay AECOM, we gained a better understanding of the civil infrastructure costs involved — anywhere from \$30 million to \$50 million.<sup>5</sup> These estimates include demolition, site preparation and removal of existing services, such as, sanitary sewer, electrical, existing pathways; the amount, however, does not include costs associated with potential soil remediation.

We were also able to study a wide range of urban park projects that offered valuable insights into the kind of projects that could be appropriate for Ontario Place — and the corresponding costs that would ensue. We specifically looked at projects across three distinct price points.

At the lower-cost end of public realm development is **DON RIVER PARK**, an 18 acre park being developed on an abandoned post-industrial site.<sup>6</sup> It is being converted into a versatile park with sightlines of the Toronto skyline. The 8.9 acre ‘dry’ half of the park varies topography and woodland plants to create flexible spaces,



Waterfront Renewal: Don River Park, TORONTO | Photo by Waterfront Toronto

including a sledding hill, soccer field, lookout point, and a small amphitheatre. The ‘wet’ half is an urban prairie setting featuring meadows for ecological diversity. The cost of this multi-purpose park is estimated at \$1 million per acre.<sup>7</sup>

In the middle of the cost range is Canada’s **SUGAR BEACH**, a two acre waterfront park that has transformed and revitalized a former industrial area.<sup>8</sup> The park features a sandy beach with chairs and brightly coloured umbrellas, a promenade, rock outcroppings, grass mounds, a splash pad, mature maple trees and a plaza for public performances. It is part of Waterfront Toronto’s LEED for Neighbourhood Development GOLD plan for East Bayfront, and designed around a number of sustainability goals and principles.

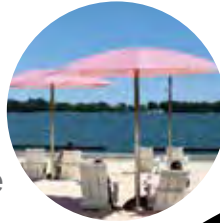
\* Development costs in millions of dollars.

**\$1<sup>M</sup>\***  
per acre

**DON RIVER PARK - TORONTO**  
An 18 acre park on an abandoned post-industrial site.



**\$7<sup>M</sup>\***  
per acre



**SUGAR BEACH - TORONTO**  
A 2 acre waterfront park that has transformed and revitalized a former industrial area.

**\$20<sup>M</sup>\***  
per acre



**MILLENNIUM PARK - CHICAGO**  
A nearly 25 acre site that was formerly a dilapidated ground-level parking lot and rail yard.

Park designers incorporated recycled content in construction materials, easy access to public transportation and storage for bicycles. Canada's Sugar Beach was developed at a cost of just over \$7 million per acre and now offers the community an active and vibrant social gathering space.<sup>9</sup>

At the higher-cost end is Chicago's **MILLENNIUM PARK**, a nearly 25 acre site just off the shores of Lake Michigan. Conceived as a transformative project to showcase Chicago's culture, it converted a former dilapidated ground-level parking lot and rail yard into one of the world's largest "green roofs" covering two multi-level parking lots (hosting a total of 4,000 cars) and a commuter rail line. This unique

waterfront destination averages nearly five million visitors a year who come to enjoy the unique urban park and some of its main attractions including: the Jay Pritzker Pavilion — home to the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra and Music Festival; the Cloud Gate sculpture or "The Bean" as it has been nicknamed; and the Crown Fountain which showcases the faces of Chicagoans as water flows down 50-foot glass block towers.<sup>10</sup>

While the final project total was \$490 million (approximately \$20 million per acre)<sup>11</sup> — half of which was raised through individual donors and corporate sponsorship<sup>12</sup> — Millennium Park plays a significant role in generating revenue for the City of Chicago. An economic impact study released in 2011 estimates the economic impact on the City

of Chicago as \$2.45 billion from new construction near the park; over 14,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs created by new construction in the area<sup>13</sup> and \$1.29 billion in tourism dollars.<sup>14</sup>

As a sizeable land-water lot property of 155 acres (approximately 70 of which are land and the remainder water lots) the costs to revitalize Ontario Place are substantial. But so too is its potential.

In the previous sections, we have shown the exciting, new direction Ontario Place can take. Now we look at how to advance this new direction — by building a new network of partnerships. In the following section, we examine ways to increase the potential for ongoing programming, as well as innovative partnerships to finance the development of a large public space that is open and accessible to all Ontarians.

**THIS IS A NEW ERA OF COLLABORATION.** Around the world, governments are experimenting with new ways of getting more done by working with partners — partners from civil society, from other levels of government and from the private sector.

In Ontario, that determination to work differently can be seen most recently in the 2012 Budget, where the government committed to identifying more effective and efficient delivery mechanisms — **INCLUDING FORGING PARTNERSHIPS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF COLLABORATORS** — in order to get the best and most cost-effective results for taxpayers.

Not only does this shift in thinking create opportunities to engage with a host of partners, it also mirrors the view of Ontarians across the province.<sup>1</sup>



**THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO FORGING PARTNERSHIPS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF COLLABORATORS.**

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THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT IS EXPLORING NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO DELIVER SERVICES MORE EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY BY ANOTHER ENTITY, SUCH AS NOT-FOR-PROFIT OR PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION IDENTIFIES FOUR BROAD PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES we believe will help the new Ontario Place achieve its full potential — partnerships that include: identifying synergies with key City of Toronto assets; attracting and leveraging legacy investments by individuals and corporate sponsors; cross-promoting and leveraging the expertise of Ontario’s arts, cultural and sporting institutions; and exploring new physical connection points for public transportation.

How well Ontario Place identifies and capitalizes on these potential partnerships — and many others — will determine its ultimate success. The examples we offer below should be seen as the start of a long list of collaborations — collaborations that must become the priority of everyone responsible for taking the site to its next level.

# 4 BROAD PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- 1 Identifying synergies with key CITY OF TORONTO ASSETS.
- 2 Attracting LEGACY INVESTMENTS by individuals and corporate sponsors.
- 3 Leveraging the expertise of ONTARIO’S ARTS, CULTURAL AND SPORTING INSTITUTIONS.
- 4 Exploring new physical connection points for PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.



## Broadening the campus: Partnering with Exhibition Place

ACROSS THE STREET FROM ONTARIO PLACE IS EXHIBITION PLACE, one of Canada's largest entertainment venues. For over a century, Exhibition Place has offered residents and visitors unique access to sports, educational, recreational and cultural uses.

A year-round entertainment venue across 192 acres, Exhibition Place is home to a wide array of popular events and attractions including the BMO field, the CNE and the Ricoh Coliseum.<sup>2</sup> This impressive array of assets is reflected in its attendance numbers: nearly 5.3 million people a year pass through its gates.<sup>3</sup>

ONTARIO PLACE AND EXHIBITION PLACE ARE TWO PARALLEL SITES THAT RESPECTIVELY SERVE AS LANDMARK ATTRACTIONS FOR THE PROVINCE AND THE CITY. Despite these similarities, the two sites operate independently of one another. To capitalize on the potential synergies that may arise, Ontario Place and Exhibition Place need to increase their joint master planning and partnership efforts.

To the panel, the lack of connection and coordination between the two entities is a missed opportunity. When considered together, the two sites represent a large piece of land located on the shores of Lake Ontario just minutes from downtown Toronto.

**THE LACK OF CONNECTION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN THE TWO ENTITIES IS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY.**



Given the sheer size of the two sites together — and the unprecedented joint redevelopment potential that could be realized through better integration — **WE BELIEVE IT IS TIME FOR ONTARIO AND THE CITY OF TORONTO TO EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL FOR A SHARED MASTER PLAN FOR THE TWO FACILITIES.**



It's a cluster of private-public partnerships. We really need to start thinking outside the box.”

Public Town Hall Participant

The goal should not necessarily be a merger— previous partnership discussions have ended twice in the last 15 years,<sup>4</sup> **WE DO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR THE PROVINCE AND THE CITY TO RECOMMIT THEMSELVES TO JOINT DISCUSSIONS** with renewed vigour, for at least three interrelated reasons:

**| RESPONDING TO FISCAL CONSTRAINTS.**

Given the fiscal challenges both governments face, coordinating planning discussions will avoid duplication and increase efficiencies in operations and logistics.

**| LEVERAGING COMPLEMENTARY ASSETS.**

Each site has assets and advantages the other lacks: Ontario Place is surrounded by water and has proximate access to parkland; Exhibition Place has extensive conference and sporting facilities, and access to public transit.

**| ATTRACTING GLOBAL ATTENTION.**

Together, a more integrated site would potentially attract a critical mass of attention from investors and partners outside the province — becoming one of the world’s leading waterfront revitalization projects with immeasurable potential.



**1. EXHIBITION PLACE**

- Owned by the City of Toronto
- Governed by Board of Directors
- 192 acres
- Shares pedestrian bridges with Ontario Place

**2. ONTARIO PLACE**

- Agency owned by the Province
- Governed by Board of Directors
- 155 acres including water lots
- Shares pedestrian bridges with Exhibition Place

Considering the potential outlined above, the panel recommends that Ontario Place explore the possibility of creating a shared development plan with Exhibition Place. With so much necessary infrastructure benefiting both sites — from new land bridges to connect visitors across the vast acreage, to new parking facilities for increased traffic, to an integrated public transit plan — **IT IS VITAL THAT ONTARIO PLACE BEGIN ITS TRANSFORMATION BY REACHING OUT FIRST TO ITS NEAREST NEIGHBOUR.**

**RECOMMENDATION 14**

**Ontario Place and Exhibition Place should explore the potential for JOINT MASTER PLANNING, SHARED ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING — to enrich the experience of visitors to both sites and expand the blueprint of a unique destination.**

# EXAMPLES OF GIFTS DONATED |

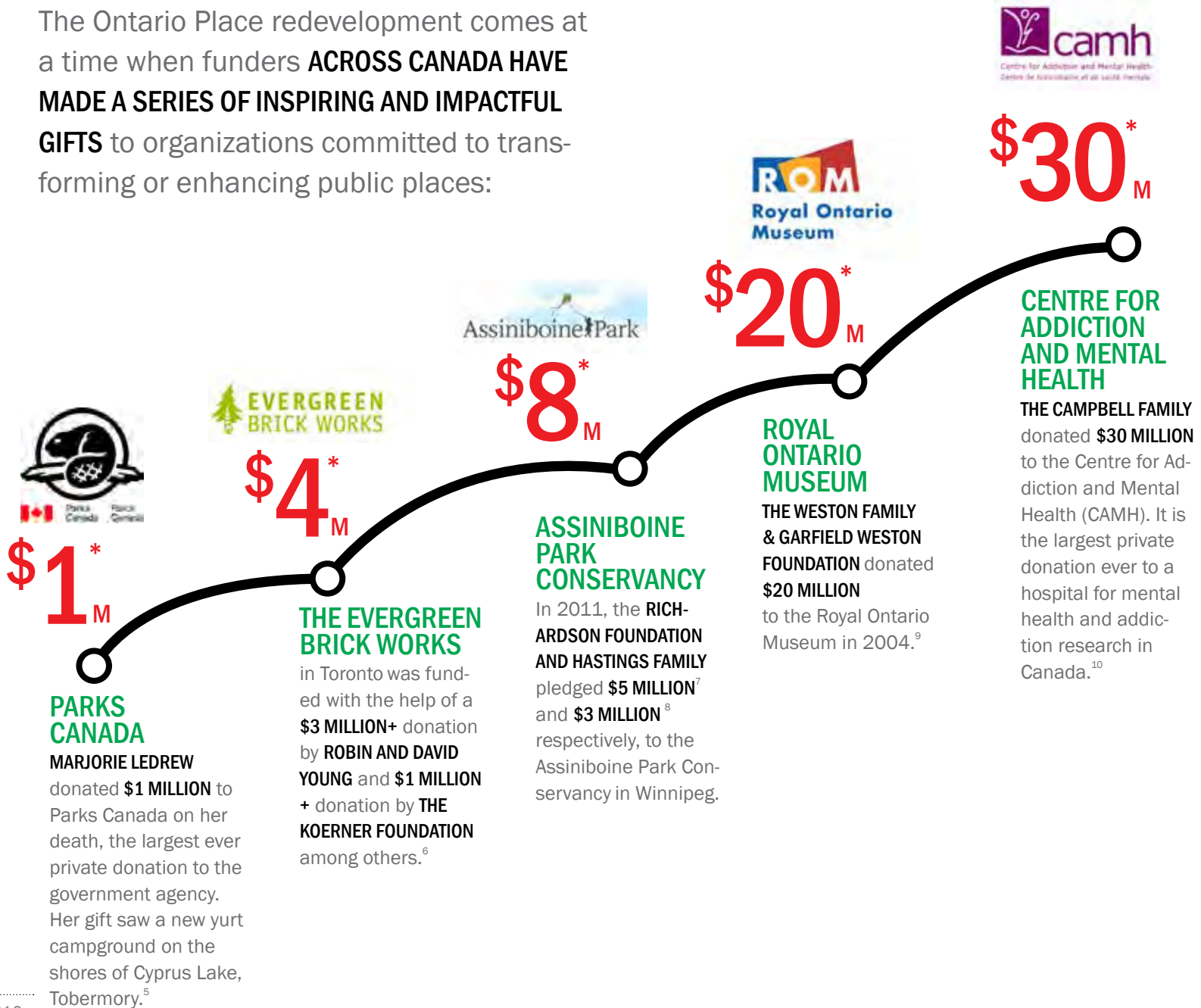
\* In millions of dollars.

## Building a legacy: Attracting individual donors and corporate sponsors to a unique Ontario project

FAMILIES, INDIVIDUALS AND CORPORATIONS HAVE A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A LASTING GIFT TO A NEW ONTARIO PLACE – to add their signature to a revitalized symbol of the vibrant, dynamic province in which we live.

This is the time to explore charitable donations and corporate sponsorships in Ontario. What unites individual and company donors is their shared desire to find compelling projects to support, to offer ideas and insights as well as capital, and to make a meaningful and recognized difference in their communities.

The Ontario Place redevelopment comes at a time when funders **ACROSS CANADA HAVE MADE A SERIES OF INSPIRING AND IMPACTFUL GIFTS** to organizations committed to transforming or enhancing public places:



**AT THE SAME TIME — AND DESPITE A DEEP AND PROLONGED RECESSION — CANADIAN CORPORATIONS HAVE ALSO DEMONSTRATED THEIR INCREASING COMMITMENT TO CHARITABLE GIVING.**<sup>11</sup>

As a case in point, four institutions and facilities in the immediate vicinity of Ontario Place have all tapped philanthropic and corporate donations and sponsorships to help bridge funding gaps in delivering programming to the public: the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, BMO Field at Exhibition Place and the Four Seasons for Performing Arts.

Outside Canada, Chicago's Millennium Park has been internationally recognized as a model for the innovative use of legacy gifts in developing its urban assets. Almost half of the nearly \$490 million needed to develop the park came in privately or from the private sector. Landmark projects include the Harris Music and Dance Theater, the Frank Gehry-designed BP pedestrian bridge and the AT&T gate and plaza.<sup>12</sup>

The public programming at Millennium Park is also provided through extensive and generous support from private and civic sector funders. Target Corporation sponsors the summer-long Family Fun Festival, a highly successful series of events

**50%**

of the nearly \$490M to build Chicago's Millennium Park came from DONATIONS and SPONSORSHIPS.<sup>12</sup>

**33**

Major GIFTS OF \$20M or more have been donated to organizations across Canada SINCE 2007.<sup>11</sup>

**DESPITE A DEEP AND — PROLONGED RECESSION CANADIAN CORPORATIONS HAVE ALSO DEMONSTRATED THEIR INCREASING COMMITMENT TO CHARITABLE GIVING.**



Family Fun Festival at Millennium Park, Chicago sponsored by TARGET.

that in 2010 drew close to 230,000 visitors.<sup>13</sup> Daily activities include music and dance lessons, reading circles, art projects and gardening — all run by local institutions and suitable for all ages.

As the redevelopment of Ontario Place gets underway, its leadership must learn from the Millennium Park example as well as from the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum and other organizations. **FUNDING FOR IMPORTANT PUBLIC PROJECTS IN MANY GLOBAL CITIES COMES FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES — NOT SIMPLY THE PUBLIC SECTOR.** This change is becoming Ontario's reality as well — and must now become an instrumental part of the future of Ontario Place.

**RECOMMENDATION 15**  
To achieve its full potential, Ontario Place must become a **MORE FLEXIBLE MODEL** based on **STRONG PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS**. It can become an inspiring and exemplary new model for future revitalization projects.

**RECOMMENDATION 16**  
Ontario Place should explore the potential for **INDIVIDUAL DONORS** and **CORPORATE SPONSORS** to help invest in a shared legacy project along the water of Lake Ontario.



Scotiabank Toronto Caribbean Carnival, TORONTO | Photo by Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation.



LUMINATO, TORONTO | Photo by LUMINATO.

### Leveraging our arts, culture and sports: Using programming to galvanize attendance

The natural environment of the new Ontario Place will offer quiet spaces for picnics, recreation and reflection; however, **IT IS PUBLIC ART AND CULTURAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING** that will engage, enchant and attract visitors — and reinvent the public side of the facility time and time again for visitors.

As a site well suited to serving as Ontario’s “landing pad,” **ONTARIO PLACE NEEDS TO TAP INTO AS MANY OF THE PROVINCE’S WORLD-CLASS EVENTS, FESTIVALS AND ORGANIZATIONS AS POSSIBLE** — the Art Gallery of Ontario, Science North, the Ottawa Folk Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival, the Ontario Science Centre — the province is home to dozens of institutions and events whose global reputation and profile is every bit as strong as the strength of their Ontario ties.



# BRING ONTARIO TO ONTARIO PLACE.

Ontario is also a great sporting province. The Pan/Parapan Games are coming to the Golden Horseshoe in 2015 and some of the games are planned for along the lakeshore, potentially including areas of Ontario Place.<sup>14</sup>

It is this type of world-class event that Ontario Place should take advantage of — these kinds of partnerships will add a depth of experience for visitors.

**THE PANEL URGES ONTARIO PLACE TO REACH OUT TO THE PROVINCE'S LEADING ARTS, CULTURAL AND SPORTING INSTITUTIONS IN ORDER TO SECURE THEIR SUPPORT AND LEARN FROM THEIR EXPERTISE** as well as position the site as a worthy destination for their shows, exhibits and performances.



This type of new programming to showcase Ontario's excellence and diversity will help maximize attendance at the new Ontario Place, and give partner institutions a new space in which to design their own installations and activities.

## RECOMMENDATION 17

**The many assets in ONTARIO'S ARTS, CULTURE AND SPORTING SECTORS SHOULD BE LEVERAGED at Ontario Place — to offer a venue that showcases Ontario's cultural diversity.**

## Making the link: Opportunities for improved public transportation

**FOR MANY PEOPLE, GETTING TO ONTARIO PLACE IS NOT EASY — WHETHER BY BIKE, ON FOOT OR PUBLIC TRANSIT.**

This challenge — and its accompanying perception — must be addressed as quickly as possible if the Ontario Place redevelopment plan is going to succeed in its primary goal of attracting a new generation and a new demographic of visitors. This requires addressing **THREE DISTINCT CHALLENGES:**

## TTC STREETCARS AND THE GO TRAIN DO NOT GO TO ONTARIO PLACE.

**ONTARIO PLACE MUST BE BETTER CONNECTED TO ITS PROXIMATE NEIGHBOURHOODS.** These include Liberty Village, Queen West, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, Brockton Village, Niagara and Fort York. This means better access by bike and on foot.

**ONTARIO PLACE IS UNDERSERVED BY PUBLIC TRANSIT.** TTC streetcars and the GO Train do not go to Ontario Place. Streetcars go as far as Exhibition Place, and the commuter GO Train service provides access at the GO Exhibition station that is adjacent to the streetcar loop. The only mode of public transportation that goes directly to Ontario Place is the Dufferin Street bus — but this is only in the summer season.

**ONTARIO PLACE CAN BETTER SERVE THE CRITICAL MASS OF VEHICLES BY RELOCATING ITS CURRENT GROUND LEVEL PARKING** space into underground, above ground and/or to Exhibition Place.







# Create direct transit access and make it easier for us to get there by foot or bike.”

Public Town Hall Online Participant

**WE SEE A NUMBER OF OPTIONS TO IMPROVE THE ACCESS REQUIRED** to generate the crowds Ontario Place needs to attract: first, extend Dufferin Street further south to provide direct bus access to the area and extend the streetcar loop from Exhibition Place. Second, create more north-south pedestrian and cycling paths. Finally, bicycle storage and rental locations must grow — to encourage riders to bring their own bicycles, and to link to the growing network of bicycle rentals.

**WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE CURRENT FISCAL SITUATION OF GOVERNMENTS** across the country means there is limited funding for new or enhanced transportation projects. But we also need to emphasise that improving connections ensures a more vibrant and prosperous site in the long-term.

Public transit linkage possibilities | Bay Consulting Group/AECOM 2011



Ontario Place could be reconnected to adjacent neighbourhoods through innovative and improved active transportation, public transit, roadway links and trails. The sample map above illustrates potential new road and rail extensions (Bay /AECOM 2011).

At the same time, **A NEW LIVE, WORK, PLAY, DISCOVER MODEL FOR ONTARIO PLACE WILL ENSURE A DEMAND FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT YEAR-ROUND.** Thankfully, there are some important ideas currently being discussed, including Metrolinx's Waterfront West Light Rail Transit line in its 25-year plan; however, the line is unfunded at the moment.

The panel believes that Ontario Place will only prosper if it focuses every bit as much on enhancing access as on increasing attractiveness. **WITH THIS FACT IN MIND, WE URGE ONTARIO PLACE TO BECOME AN INVOLVED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE IMPORTANT REGIONAL TRANSIT DISCUSSIONS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY.**

In this day and age, no organization can succeed without a wide range of meaningful partnerships. This is especially true for an organization like Ontario Place, which is **EMERGING FROM ITS TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SECTOR IDENTITY AND MORPHING INTO AN ENTITY CREATED WITH THE INPUT, INSIGHTS, IDEAS AND RESOURCES** of governments, cultural and other civic institutions, individual donors and private sector sponsors and investors – the type of partnerships that will help bring a critical mass of people to Ontario Place.

If we seek these types of partnerships early on, we believe Ontario can also build a more flexible model for Ontario Place – **ONE THAT IS ABLE TO EVOLVE, ADAPT AND CONSIDER NEW OPPORTUNITIES THAT PRESENT THEMSELVES ALONG THE WAY.**

## RECOMMENDATION 18

**Working with the PRIVATE SECTOR and PROVINCIAL and MUNICIPAL PARTNERS, Ontario Place should explore NEW PUBLIC TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES to better access the western lakeshore area.**



**PEOPLE FROM ACROSS ONTARIO HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT ONTARIO PLACE AS IT CURRENTLY EXISTS DOES NOT HOLD THE SAME KIND OF APPEAL OR RELEVANCE IT ONCE DID.**

The declining attendance numbers combined with the increasing costs to keep the site open have signalled that it is time to move forward and imagine a new Ontario Place — one that better reflects Ontario’s exceptional culture, character and life.

We believe Ontario Place can draw crowds again and contribute economically to the province; but to do so, it must make a fundamental shift from a seasonal attraction to a year-round, world-class destination that attracts local residents, Ontarians and visitors from afar.

**WHILE THIS IS NO SMALL TASK, WE BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE.**

an **ICONIC PUBLIC PARK** that will **RECONNECT ONTARIANS** to the

First and foremost, **ONTARIO PLACE MUST PROVIDE OPEN ACCESS TO THE WATERFRONT.** No one should have to pay admission to enjoy the natural beauty of Lake Ontario.

The area should be **OPEN YEAR-ROUND — NOT JUST FOR THE SUMMER.** Any new development on the property must fully consider all the seasons and explore ways to adapt to the changing weather.

A significant portion of **THE SITE MUST BE PARKLAND** where individuals and families can gather for picnics or for play.

Our vision is of **A STATE-OF-THE-ART PARK ON THE EDGE OF ONTARIO'S GREAT LAKE** that sets an example for urban and waterfront design excellence in one of Canada's most vibrant cities.

Our vision is of **A WATERFRONT COMMUNITY** that offers Ontarians a new opportunity to **LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND DISCOVER** along the water's edge. We say, be bold and excellent in design, and use sustainable and green building principles. We should not shy away from being architecturally adventurous with a new Ontario Place.

To help this vision become reality, it is imperative that the government opens the area to a new set of partnership possibilities. The future of Ontario Place will be limited if it continues to be primarily a publicly-funded asset. **IT IS TIME TO EMBRACE A NEW COLLABORATIVE MODEL IN WHICH A RANGE OF REVENUE SOURCES FUND AND OPERATE THE NEW ONTARIO PLACE.**

reimagine.

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reconnect.

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revitalize.

# WATERFRONT and will be open YEAR-ROUND for people to LIVE, WORK, PLAY + DISCOVER.

## NEXT STEPS

While we have presented a new model for Ontario Place, as well as a range of both specific and general recommendations, we have tried to refrain from being too prescriptive.

Our aim has been to recommend a vision and a number of core elements to create a strong foundation for the revitalization project as well as **A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERESTED PARTIES FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND OTHER PARTNERS TO WORK WITH** as they begin to think about concepts for the new site. We have also recommended a number of factors — **ACCESSIBILITY, INTERACTION AND SUSTAINABILITY** — that should be used to assess ideas for the site as well as help measure the success of a new Ontario Place.

It is clear to the panel that there is avid interest in this enormous revitalization project with talented organizations excited to bring their ideas to the future

of this waterfront destination. The larger community of **CANADIAN AND INTERNATIONAL DESIGNERS AND DEVELOPERS** will be able to take the ideas outlined in this report and **BRING THEIR OWN CREATIVITY, INGENUITY AND EXCEPTIONAL CONCEPTS TO THE TABLE.**

Before the government initiates a formal competition for proposals, however, the panel needs to underscore the **IMPORTANCE OF TAKING A NUMBER OF STEPS THAT ARE ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL** to the long-term success of the revitalization project.

Over the coming months, the government must initiate a due diligence assessment as well as an environmental assessment of the site — both of which will provide detailed analyses of the quality of the site for development. It is our view that an environmental assessment be started as soon as possible so as to continue the momentum with the revitalization project. With both the due diligence and environmental assessments in hand, **THE PRIVATE**

**SECTOR AND OTHER PARTNERS WILL THEN BE FULLY INFORMED AS THEY MOVE FORWARD WITH THEIR CREATIVE INPUT.**

**WE UNDERSTAND THAT THESE IMPORTANT ASSESSMENTS ADD MORE TIME TO THE PROJECT BUT WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THE PROJECT IS DONE RIGHT.**

With this in mind, we recommend that the government should encourage the project to be **COMPLETED IN PHASES TO MAKE SURE THE TRANSFORMATION OF ONTARIO PLACE IS DONE IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE.** The goal should be to have part of the site open for Canada's sesquicentennial celebrations in 2017, with additional phases to follow.

The panel is unanimous in the belief that there is a fantastic opportunity to revitalize Ontario Place. There is an opportunity to **TRANSFORM THE AREA INTO A VIBRANT TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY WORLD-CLASS DESTINATION**, one that serves as an economic boost to the province and the city of Toronto, and creates a **NEW ERA OF EXPERIENCES AND SPECIAL MEMORIES FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

# recommendations

## A PLACE TO CONNECT

LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND DISCOVER AT THE WATER'S EDGE

- 1 The new Ontario Place must be committed to design excellence in building, landscape and planning, as well as to creative sustainable principles — this means ensuring a small ecological footprint in all that is developed.
- 2 Any new development must respect and enhance the natural beauty of the surroundings by improving and protecting sightlines to the water, creating easy public access to the waterfront.
- 3 Ontario Place should use a small portion of its 155 land-water lot property (10 to 15 per cent) for residential development with buildings that demonstrate design excellence, sustainability principles and are sized appropriately. Ontario Place should also consider the feasibility of a hotel or resort.
- 4 Ontario Place must be a place for people to work — not just visit or live. From corporate headquarters to cafés and shops, the redevelopment should include space for commerce and business.
- 5 Ontario Place should have a venue — like the original Forum — for a range of cultural activities, from concerts and theatre, to performances, festivals and community events. The new venue should be designed to operate year-round.
- 6 Ontario Place should look at a range of entertainment and cultural activities to infuse the community with vibrancy — and generate revenue to offset the operating costs of the new public space.
- 7 Ontario Place should position itself as an ideal site for a research or education centre for excellence and work diligently to secure an institutional anchor tenant with international repute.

## YOUR ONTARIO, YOUR ONTARIO PLACE

DESIGNING A NEW PUBLIC REALM

- 8 Ontario Place and its waterfront must be accessible — an open door — and completely barrier-free to all who visit.
- 9 Ontario Place needs to be open year-round, offering compelling activities to draw a range of audiences throughout the different seasons.
- 10 Ontario Place needs to be flexible and better able to adapt to changing times. It can do this through creative programming that engages with visitors in fresh, new ways; and new technologies that create connections with a tech-savvy generation of visitors.
- 11 Ontario Place must demonstrate leadership in environmental sustainability and design excellence.
- 12 Ontario Place should respect and celebrate the natural landscape as well as the historical connections with the site.
- 13 Future designs for Ontario Place should explore ways to feasibly include the iconic Cinesphere and pods.

## DOING MORE WITH MORE

EXPLORING POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

- 14 Ontario Place and Exhibition Place should explore the potential for joint master planning, shared access and transportation planning — to enrich the experience of visitors to both sites and to expand the blueprint of a unique destination.
- 15 To achieve its full potential, Ontario Place must become a more flexible model based on strong private-public partnerships. It can become an inspiring and exemplary new model for future revitalization projects.
- 16 Ontario Place should explore the potential for individual donors and corporate sponsors to help invest in a shared legacy project along the water of Lake Ontario.
- 17 The many assets in Ontario's arts, culture and sporting sectors should be leveraged at Ontario Place — to offer a venue that showcases Ontario's cultural diversity.
- 18 Working with the private sector and provincial and municipal partners, Ontario Place should explore new public transit opportunities to better access the western lakeshore area.



# APPENDICES | endnotes

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# APPENDICES | stakeholder and public feedback

## CONSULTATION HISTORY

Over the past two years, there have been various stages of public and stakeholder engagement to help inform the revitalization of Ontario Place.

In 2010, MyOntarioPlace.com and the Ontario Place Pavilion were launched to capture public interest generated by the Request for Information (RFI) issued in July 2010. Approximately 1,200 comments from the public were received in total.

The July 2010 RFI was issued to gain insight from interested and qualified respondents — and was designed to encourage creative and innovative ideas to rejuvenate the site, while endeavouring to protect the original purpose of Ontario Place as a showcase for the province. The RFI attracted 35 submissions in total, from Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

In September 2010, the Ontario Place Corporation hosted a roundtable with more than 30 invited stakeholders. Participants representing a cross-section of Ontario's tourism and culture sectors, shared recommendations on what Ontario Place should consider when reviewing the RFI responses.

By 2011, additional technical consultations had been held with representatives from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Ontario Place and several other key stakeholder groups to identify potential issues, constraints and opportunities for the revitalization of Ontario Place. Organizations consulted included: Aquatic Habitat Toronto, Toronto Port Authority, Toronto Island Airport Authority, Toronto Transit Commission, Ministry of Infrastructure, Waterfront Toronto, Ministry of the Environment and the City of Toronto.

MyOntarioPlace.com was re-opened in February 2012 along with a phone number, to hear further suggestions on what a revitalized Ontario Place should include — as well as to keep the public updated and informed. To date, there have been more than 450 submissions. Common themes include: waterpark, multi-use park, revitalize existing park, Cinesphere, casino, bars/restaurants and year-round uses.

Following the Minister's Advisory Panel's initial meeting in March 2012, the panel heard from several key stakeholder groups, including Waterfront Toronto, Metrolinx, Tourism Toronto, Pan/Parapan Games, Toronto Port Authority, Toronto Port Lands, Exhibition Place and Canadian National Exhibition.

The panel also heard from the New Democratic Party of Ontario (all political parties were invited), Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation / Ministry of Finance, Infrastructure Ontario and TD Canada Trust and equity partners. Presentations covered a range of topics, key issues and impacts on the Ontario Place Revitalization, as well as visions for a new Ontario Place. The panel also met with the Ontario Place Corporation board of directors to provide an update on the proposed vision for the future of Ontario Place.

## ONTARIO PLACE REVITALIZATION TOWN HALL

On June 5, 2012, the panel hosted a public town hall at the Toronto Metro Convention Centre on the future of Ontario Place — creating an opportunity for the public to provide feedback before the panel submitted its final recommendations on a revitalized Ontario Place to the province.

Over 125 participants attended in-person with an additional 95 joining online from across Ontario — including Brampton, St. Catharines, Gore Bay, Sault Ste. Marie as well as other areas. Key stakeholders in attendance included Exhibition Place, Canadian National Exhibition, City of Toronto and previous RFI respondents. Members of the Ontario Place Corporation Board of Directors were also present, as were a number of media representatives from the CBC, CTV, Toronto Star and several others.

After an overview presentation by John Tory, Chair of the panel, attendees were invited to indicate their preferences for the types of public, commercial, and residential spaces that Ontario Place could emulate — they were asked to cast their vote using two sets of coloured stickers on poster board pictures: green for "like" and red for "do not like." By the end of the evening, images of parks, public spaces and recreational activities — think restaurants along the Riverwalk in San Antonio — topped the list of likes. It was an exercise in "dot-mocracy" as Mike Layton, Toronto City Councillor, tweeted later that evening.

Attendees then participated in roundtable discussions framed around four key questions on how to make Ontario Place a successful, year-round destination:

- **WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A PUBLIC SPACE THAT MATTER TO YOU?**
- **WHAT WOULD ENTICE YOU TO RETURN TO ONTARIO PLACE MANY TIMES DURING THE YEAR?**
- **WHAT ARE OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT ON THE SITE TO PAY FOR THE PUBLIC REALM COMPONENT?**
- **HOW DO WE ENSURE ONTARIO PLACE IS A DESTINATION FOR ALL ONTARIANS?**

After an hour of brainstorming and lively discussion, participants then had the opportunity to hear a recap of some of the key themes discussed:

- **ACCESS:** the public realm must be accessible by transit and by foot. Access to and from Exhibition Place is also necessary. Access to public space and the water's edge should be free and should be for everyone to enjoy, from children to seniors.
- **INTEGRATION:** the public realm must consider integration with the natural surroundings — water, land, air — and celebrate the four seasons.
- **PROGRAMMING:** Ontario Place should be Ontario's canvas to showcase creative programs, arts and entertainment. It should include activities like festivals and concerts and represent the cultural diversity of Toronto and Ontario. Arts, science, environmental and other learning programs are essential, including youth engagement activities and workshops.

- **RECREATION:** include walking promenades, benches, shade and rest areas, urban gardens, splash pads and other water features, public art, skating rinks and sports facilities for all seasons.
- **GREEN SPACE:** a place that is open and evokes its natural surrounding, including green spaces where people can gather, hear music, share great food and relax.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:** ensure eco-friendly elements, green roofs, natural landscaped elements, and renewable energy features.
- **RETAIL & BUSINESS:** A place where locals and visitors can eat great food and shop year-round, whether it's an outdoor farmer's market or indoor shopping.
- **MULTI-USE:** a place, complex or community centre to accommodate events and venues for arts, sports, learning and more.
- **ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN:** showcase iconic architecture and sustainable design that retains some of the heritage of the site. Ensure good way-finding and connectivity, especially connectivity with the waterfront.
- **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:** examples can include revenue from leases, residential development, retail, parking revenue, bonds, corporate sponsorships and/or hotels. Selling advertising space or corporate naming rights could be considered. Ensure that revenue generators do not take away from public accessibility and public enjoyment of the site and waterfront.

The evening concluded with an open question and answer period with John Tory, providing participants a chance to elaborate on key points raised during the discussion period.

## KEY QUOTATIONS FROM ONTARIO PLACE REVITALIZATION TOWN HALL

"I think that we should either keep Ontario Place open or make a new amusement park or put a hotel in its place that isn't like a regular hotel, because it has activities and water parks and talking animals...."  
— *Young Town Hall participant.*

"Let's have a residency program at Ontario Place to learn about people and things happening from other parts of Ontario."  
— *Town Hall participant.*

"Bring Ontario's wilderness to the city — maybe a campground at Ontario Place."  
— *Town Hall participant.*

"How do we create the perfect mix of music, art, recreation, residential and other uses?"  
— *Town Hall participant.*

"Create a floating hotel in Lake Ontario..."  
— *Town Hall participant.*



# APPENDICES | summary of research and analysis

In addition to the public and stakeholder engagement, the panel looked at a number of previous studies on Ontario Place.

More than 25 studies had been commissioned by the Ontario Place Corporation over the past 40 years to address a range of key questions and improvements. From strategic plans to operational efficiencies, many areas have been examined. Each study stated infrastructure concerns, identified visible shortcomings and provided recommendations for improving Ontario Place.

Although each study focused on answering a central question or issue, common themes appear throughout the reports.

Some reoccurring themes include:

- **TRANSPORTATION ISSUES:** transportation concerns include the need for an accessible traffic network with adequate parking and transit. The 2009 Tourism Competitiveness Study, titled *Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism*, stated the need to develop a transportation strategy that would allow easier access for visitors to reach Ontario Place from downtown Toronto<sup>1</sup>;
- **ELIMINATION OF BARRIERS:** the *2005 Exhibition Place and Ontario Place Master Plan Study* highlighted that Lake Shore Boulevard physically and operationally divides Ontario Place and Exhibition Place;
- **FACILITIES:** several reports underline the importance of enhancing the utilization and expansion of existing facilities. The *1982 Master Plan For The Long Range Development of Ontario Place* by Zeidler Roberts Partnership/Architects recommended the introduction of new facilities and improvement of existing facilities so as to maintain the image of Ontario Place<sup>2</sup>;
- **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** the importance of increasing community involvement is visible in many reports, such as in the *1987 Ontario Place Corporation Long Range Strategic Plan* by Lavenhol & Horwath. The management consultants stressed that Ontario Place Corporation should reach out to the community for both participation and support when developing and implementing valuable interactive programming<sup>3</sup>;

- **PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY:** general accessibility to the site for members of the public with pay-for-entry facilities;

- **PEDESTRIAN FLOW:** improve main entrances and strengthen pedestrian networks and natural traffic patterns. For example, in the *2007 Strategic Plan for Ontario Place*, 720 Consulting–Ryerson University listed ‘Improve Connectivity & Accessibility to & Within Ontario Place’ as their first guiding objective;

- **OPEN YEAR-ROUND:** establish Ontario Place as a year-round destination. This is evident in the *1991 Preliminary Master Plan* by Garrison Common, which examines year-round use of the grounds and buildings. The report states that extending the activity seasons means not only finding year-round uses for many of the buildings, but also programming activities for the winter and shoulder seasons;

- **ATTRACTIONS:** the need for improvement and addition of major tourist attraction(s); and

- **UNIQUENESS:** retain and highlight the site location and the surrounding environment.

Recently, Bay Consulting Group in collaboration with AECOM Canada produced the *Ontario Place Revitalization Study (2011)*. The key purpose of the study was to investigate viable options for the future of Ontario Place and to suggest an approach that would meet desired outcomes. Business options considered in the study included:

1. MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO – CONTINUING TO OPERATE AS IS
2. DIVESTMENT – SELLING THE PROPERTY
3. REVITALIZATION – A MATERIAL REVITALIZATION OF THE PRESENT OPERATIONS.

Over the course of our panel meetings, these previous studies were excellent resources. The panel also complemented the existing research with additional analysis – including, social-historical research, interjurisdictional research, and cost analysis and modelling – to put together the Ontario Place Revitalization report.

1. Greg Sorbara, *Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism*. February 2009, pp.55.

2. Zeidler Roberts Partnership/Architects, *Master Plan for the Long Range Development of Ontario Place*. August 1982, pp.1.

3. Lavenhol & Horwath, *Ontario Place Corporation Long Range Strategic Plan*. November 1987, pp.v.

# APPENDICES | **minister's advisory panel**

## MANDATE

The Minister's Advisory Panel will report to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and will:

- Provide strategic advice to the government to move forward with a full revitalization of Ontario Place
- Provide input into a new vision for Ontario Place Corporation
- Help set parameters with government regarding public and private sector roles and expectations

The Advisory panel will provide advice on the steps leading to the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a revitalized site.

## JOHN TORY (CHAIR)

John Tory is a lawyer, business leader, community activist and broadcaster. He was formerly an elected representative serving as MPP for Dufferin Peel Wellington Grey, as Leader of the Ontario PC Party and as Leader of the Official Opposition in the Ontario Parliament.

In 1995, Mr. Tory joined the Rogers Group of Companies, first as President and CEO of Rogers Media Inc. and then as President and CEO of Rogers Cable, Canada's largest cable and internet service provider. He presently serves on the Board of Directors of Rogers Communications Inc. and a number of other companies.

Mr. Tory was a founding Board Member and is the voluntary Chair of the Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance (formerly the Toronto City Summit Alliance), a highly respected city-building organization. He hosts a daily three-hour talk show on Canada's leading talk station Newstalk 1010.

## JOE HALSTEAD

Joseph Halstead is Chair of the Ontario Place Corporation Board of Directors. He was the former Commissioner responsible for Economic Development, Culture and Tourism in the City of Toronto. In this capacity, he was also responsible for the parks and recreation system, as well as major events.

Previously, Mr. Halstead spent 24 years with the Government of Ontario in five different ministries in a broad range of management positions, rising to the position of Assistant Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation.

## PINA PETRICONE

Pina Petricone is a partner with Giannone Petricone Associates Architects, a multi-disciplinary office best known for projects such as Osteria Ciceri e Tria, Herman Miller Canada,

University of Toronto's Centre for Ethics, PCL Seminar Room, Inn on College and re:TREETHOUSE – work that has garnered international recognition through numerous awards and publications.

As an associate professor at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design at the University of Toronto, Ms. Petricone teaches design and critical theory at every level of the graduate architecture program. She has enjoyed acting as primary advisor for numerous award-winning thesis students whose proposals tend to question socio-aesthetic practices in architecture as urban constructions.

Ms. Petricone received a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Toronto in 1991 and in 1995, with a full fellowship award, received a Master of Architecture (II) from Princeton University.

## ROBERT (BOB) WONG

Bob Wong has an extensive background in business, government and community service. Currently, Mr. Wong serves as Vice-Chair and Senior Portfolio Manager at Leon Frazer & Associates Inc. Previously, he served as Ontario's Minister of Energy and Minister of Citizenship.

Mr. Wong began his business career as a securities analyst and has served as a senior officer and a director of a number of Toronto Stock Exchange member firms including May Mikkila & Co Inc. and Gouling Rose & Turner Ltd.

Mr. Wong holds a Master of Business Administration from the Schulich School of Business at York University and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Physics from the University of Toronto.

## SALIMA RAWJI

Salima is a Senior Development Manager for Build Toronto, an innovative real estate development corporation created as part of the City of Toronto's strategy to enhance Toronto's economic competitiveness. Her previous professional experience ranges from managing developments for SmartCentres, one of Canada's most active real estate developers, to producing some of Toronto's most successful cultural arts festivals for Harbourfront Centre, notably the Hot and Spicy Food Festival and Masala! Mehndi! Masti!

Outside of work Salima is engaged in community. She was instrumental to the establishment of TORONTO+acumen in 2010, where she continues as an executive member. Salima acts as Co-Chair of the Emerging Leaders Network (ELN), whose mission is to advance the Toronto Region through awareness, influence and action. In addition to her work with TORONTO+acumen and the ELN she also acts as a Mentor and sits on the investment committee for RISE Asset Development, a micro fund dedicated to financing entrepreneurs living with mental illness and addictions.

Salima holds an MBA from the Rotman School of Management at U of T, as well as a BCom from the Sauder Business School at UBC, where she was elected Valedictorian of her graduating class.

## STEVEN DAVIDSON

Steven Davidson is the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The ministry provides leadership in three rapidly expanding sectors of the Ontario economy, and oversight of 21 Ontario attractions and agencies.

Previously, Mr. Davidson was the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Culture Division at the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, and Assistant Deputy Minister of the Policy, Programs and Services Division at the former Ministry of Culture.

Mr. Davidson holds an honours Bachelor of Arts in History from Queen's University, a Master of Archival Studies from the University of British Columbia, and completed the Public Executive Program at Queen's University.

## INFRASTRUCTURE ONTARIO

The panel also includes representation from Infrastructure Ontario, the crown corporation responsible for both managing the renewal of Ontario's public infrastructure and managing the Ontario government's real estate portfolio.

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<http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/ontarioplace/ontarioplace.shtml>

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Virtualization

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city street grid. A prominent feature is a large, semi-circular building or plaza in the center. The streets are clearly visible, and the overall scene depicts an urban environment.

# revitalization

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