

A bold vision for western waterfront

Mon., Sept. 10, 2018

Ford eyes Ontario Place change, Sept. 7

I am a member of the Ossington Community Association, which is part of the West Side Community Council. We believe that Ontario Place and Exhibition Place can be the crown jewels in an integrated park and recreation area that flows from the Humber River east.

We imagine the land from Ontario Place westward as part of an organic whole, encompassing different uses, including parkland, recreation, waterfront access and sports, bike transit (via a muscular Martin Goodman Trail) and naturalized areas. All this while protecting the historic and cultural patrimony at Exhibition Place, which includes the CNE, Caribana and the Royal Winter Fair, along with more than 250 years of colonial history.

Plans to rebuild the aging breakwalls from the Humber westward have already been proposed to the city. They would see the breakwalls, which must be replaced anyway, created as a series of naturalized islands that would create beaches, act on flood and climate mitigation, and develop new areas for rowing.

Our council, along with the Waterfront for All group, seeks policy that will keep access to these lands open to the public now and in the future. We believe that any additional privatization of Ontario Place or Exhibition Place over what exists already would be contrary to good policy.

For Premier Ford and Mayor Tory, the revitalization of these waterfront lands represents city building. The process must reimagine these lands as an integrated whole that, 100 years from now, will still cause the world to look to Toronto for its civic architecture and forethought of governance.

The process should begin with a co-ordinated master plan encompassing Exhibition Place, Ontario Place and the western beaches. Ownership of Ontario Place should be transferred to

the city of Toronto on the condition that access to the waterfront is maintained for all.

We believe that we can create a world-quality civic experience that can serve many purposes – none of which would be satisfied through condos, malls, casinos or ferris wheels.

We are asking to be part of the decision-making process and to have seats on the board that will decide the future of these lands. We trust the people's premier will see the wisdom of having a robust public consultation and will announce quickly how people can get involved.

Bruce Van Dieten, Toronto

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