



## 2019 Year in Review

Ed Hore, Chair, Waterfront for All, November 27, 2019

Waterfront for All is an umbrella group of residents associations and other groups interested in the revitalization of the Toronto waterfront from the Rouge River in the east out to the Etobicoke boundary in the west.

Big things happened along the Toronto waterfront in 2019. Here is a brief round-up. Waterfront for All or its member organizations have been involved one way or another in most of them.

**Flooding:** 2019 will be remembered as the year of the flood. The water was higher, and stayed longer than it did two years ago. Substantial parts of Bluffers Park and the beaches at the foot of the Scarborough Bluffs and Etobicoke were underwater for months. The homes of Toronto Islanders were threatened. You may have spent time filling sandbags, as some of our board members did. Significant portions of Toronto Island were under around six inches to a foot of water. The Toronto Island ferries kept running, unlike in 2017, but there was lots of damage to buildings and infrastructure.

Major government expenditures were announced even before the 2019 flood waters reached the high-water mark. In April, 2019, the Federal Government announced it would contribute \$33.80 million in funding to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Toronto Waterfront Erosion Hazard Mitigation Project. The City of Toronto committed \$50.69 million. The project will protect priority sites across 10 kilometres of Toronto's Lake Ontario Waterfront, including 13 parks, from flooding and severe storms. It will rehabilitate 80 structural assets along the north shore of Lake Ontario, from Etobicoke to Scarborough, including major community spaces like Bluffer's Park in Scarborough, Ashbridges Bay Park and Colonel Sam Smith Park in Etobicoke. There will likely be more resources coming.

Is more needed? It may well be. Were the 2019 water levels the new normal? We just don't know yet.

Should the City of Toronto play a role in advocating for release of more water down the St Lawrence River from the Moses-Saunders Dam in Cornwall Ontario as some smaller cities and towns are now doing? This issue is being raised for the first time.

**Waterfront 2.0 and the naturalization of the mouth of the Don River:** The biggest project on the waterfront is the implementation of Waterfront Toronto's Flood Remediation Plan, a \$1.2 billion project, the largest of its kind in the world. When complete in 2024, the project will enable development of the Port Lands, which have been underutilized for a century or more because they are in the flood plain of the Don River. Members of the Waterfront for All Board and its member organizations have been involved in this project for decades.

The project involves digging a second river mouth of the Don River, creating a flood run-off park area, and creating a new island, Villiers Island. Ground breaking took place in 2018. Construction continued through 2019. Landfill has created the outline of the future Promontory Park, now roughly in place on the west end of what will one day be Villiers Island. The second river mouth is starting to form. I took a kayak several hundred metres up the beginning of the new waterway, a portion of the new mouth of the Don, last weekend. I probably wasn't supposed to be in there, but no one arrested me.

**Billy Bishop Airport:** A master plan was released in 2018 at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. The Terminal has been substantially expanded. Future work will include upgrading and beautifying the dock wall along the Western Gap. There are still no jets (except medically-related small ones) at the airport, and no expanded runways are planned to accommodate jets. The jets issue may or may not be dead, but it is at least dormant for now.

Federal regulations will come into force in 2020 that will require Runway End Safety Areas (RESA) at the end of the runways at all airports above a certain threshold size, which Billy Bishop clearly exceeds. The City will have a say in how Ports Toronto, the airport's owner and manager, responds to these new regulations. Will lakefill be required? We don't know yet. The number of passengers has remained roughly constant. We have been in many meetings over the years about RESA and the airport in general.

**Scarborough Bluffs Project:** The Environmental Assessment of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Scarborough Bluffs Project was approved on November 6, 2019 by the Ministry of the Environment. The project will bring accessible community green spaces, enhanced shoreline protection, and habitat improvements along an 11-kilometre shoreline multi-use trail for users of all abilities between Bluffer's Park and East Point Park. Our guest Nancy Gaffney of TRCA is here to talk about it.

**Ontario Place:** There continues to be very little information available to the public about what the Provincial government plans for Ontario Place. Proposals from developers had to be submitted by September. They aren't public unfortunately. It seems clear there won't be a casino or condominiums. There's been talk of a spa and/or a convention centre. Although there has been a conspicuous lack of public consultations so far, the province now says there will be consultations at some point, although we know no details as yet. Waterfront for All generated a new organization, Ontario Place for All, to raise awareness of these issues. It has held several large meetings.

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In 2019, the Government of Ontario announced it plans a rapid transit line connecting Ontario Place to downtown Toronto and extending further north east to the Ontario Science Centre, targeted to open in 2027.

**Sidewalk Labs:** June saw the release of Google-affiliate Sidewalk Labs' Master Innovation and Development Plan (MIDP), approximately 1500 pages in length. Several members of Waterfront for All's Board, including me, are on Sidewalk-related advisory committees. Some of us actually read the MIDP.

Sidewalk wants to build a new high-tech development called Quayside at the northeast corner of Toronto Harbour. The proposed development has attracted attention around the world. As the project would include new data-gathering technologies, many expressed concerns about privacy issues. There has been an elaborate consultation process.

In the MIDP, Sidewalk proposed to develop not only the 12 acre Quayside site at Parliament and Queens Quay East in Waterfront Toronto's Request for Proposals, but also half of nearby Villiers Island. It also proposed to play a major role in a much larger area of the Port Lands, which it called the IDEA District. Sidewalk proposed a new independent entity called the Urban Data Trust which would own data and deal with privacy issues.

All that was rejected by newly appointed Waterfront Toronto Chair Steve Diamond and CEO George Zegarac. The proposal is to be scaled back to the original 12 acre site. The idea of an Urban Data Trust was also rejected; existing institutions and laws would govern instead.

Sidewalk then released a 500 page new proposal concerning data ownership and privacy, the Digital Innovation Appendix, on November 15, 2019. Negotiations are ongoing. Waterfront Toronto's Board of Directors will decide whether to go ahead with the project and if so on what basis on or about March 31, 2020.

**Rebel, Cabana Pool Bar Nightclub liquor license:** The owners of the existing Rebel nightclub and associated outdoor patio Cabana Pool Bar, at the eastern end of Toronto Harbour, sought a new liquor license. They wanted the new license to allow more people, longer hours and fewer restrictions on amplified music on the outdoor patio. This was opposed by the City, the Islanders and one of our members associations York Quay Neighbourhood Association, which I represented. In a decision released in August 2018, the License Appeal Tribunal granted permission for a new liquor license, but with conditions much worse for the nightclub than the license they already had: amplified music on the outdoor patio was prohibited. The nightclub appealed, but has been slow to push the appeal forward. They changed lawyers twice. They finally filed a written argument in late 2019. The appeal will probably be heard in the Divisional Court some time in 2020.

**New Disabled Sailing Club:** A new sailing club for the disabled, Able Sail, started operations in 2019, located at the National Yacht Club at the Western Gap. Able Sail uses specially designed boats for the disabled or elderly called Martin 16s, which allow a companion to sail with the

disabled person and help if necessary. The new club operates entirely on donations and volunteer time.

**Ports Modernization Review:** In response to widespread concerns across Canada about the management of the 18 federal ports under the *Canada Marine Act*, the federal government announced a Ports Modernization Review in 2018. Waterfront for All filed a written submission about our port authority, Ports Toronto, in late 2018. We pointed out Toronto Harbour is no longer primarily a port for freighters, and raised concerns about a lack of accountability at Ports Toronto, whose statutory mandate seems out-of-step with the revitalization of the Toronto waterfront. We met with a Transport Canada official involved in the Review in early 2019. It seems a work product will be forthcoming soon from the government's Review process.

**Marine Use Study:** Waterfront Toronto is updating its 2006 Marine Use Study, most of which was drafted by Chris Glaisek, Chief Planning & Design Officer of Waterfront Toronto. Chris is our guest tonight and may talk about it. There will be public consultations early in 2020. Engineering/consulting firm WSP has been retained. Various people have already been interviewed including me. The Study will look at mooring, management and movement. The mooring issue is how to allocate boat and ship mooring around the harbour. The management question is: who is in charge? We hope the study will sort out jurisdictional confusion about the dock walls and clarify who owns what. Such issues have often prevented even routine maintenance from happening, let alone long-term planning. Should there be a governing committee comprising different levels of governments, landowners, and the public so things get done around the Harbour in a coordinated transparent manner? How should it work? The movement issue relates to people getting around on the water: who wants to do what and go where on the water? Should the ferries go other places on the City side, instead of just one place at the foot of Bay Street? What docks, promenades and infrastructure are necessary? I hope the Study will consider how to ensure access to the water for small craft like kayaks, canoes, small sailboats etc.

**Canadian National Exhibition Master Planning Process:** A master planning process is now going forward for the CNE at the urging of various neighbourhood groups which make up the West Side Community Council, one of our member organizations. The process has made possible public consultation and an open airing of ideas as to what should happen at that very large and probably under-used piece of prime real estate. A big issue is to what extent planning should be coordinated with Ontario Place; the CNE is run essentially by the City, but Ontario Place is run by the Province.

**New Toronto Island ferries:** Two new ferries are now being designed. The four existing ferries will be gradually retired in coming years as they are all well past their operational lifetime. Toronto Parks is handling this project and has enlisted a ferry designer and builder. We will see draft designs for new ferries in 2020. To what extent should the new design preserve the legacy look of the iconic ferries, or be something new?

**Ferry Terminal:** A new ferry terminal was designed some years ago, after a design contest conducted by Waterfront Toronto. Phase 1 involving mainly the entrance walk from Queens

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Quay was under construction through 2019 and now is largely complete. There is at present no funding for the much larger next phase: a new ferry terminal and redeveloped adjacent park. That may have to wait for redevelopment of the surrounding Westin Hotel property. We have no idea when that may happen.

**Toronto Island Master Plan:** The City wants to create a Toronto Island Master Plan. A study will consider the future of Toronto Island. Among other things, it will look at how to accommodate the growing numbers of visitors, and clarify which government agency is responsible for what parts of the Island, as there is often jurisdictional confusion. A recent example is the long collapsing concrete jetty on the island at the eastern gap, which no government body apparently owned, so it sat unmaintained and falling into the lake for a century or more, until most of it was removed in 2018 by Ports Toronto as a safety hazard, at our urging. A Request for Proposal put out by the City in 2019 brought in quotes that were more than the budget, so the City must either scale back the scope or budget more money. We hope that issue will be resolved in 2020, and the study will go forward. It will include public consultations.

**Possible Bird Sanctuary on Toronto Island:** The federal government and the City have both made efforts to designate Toronto Island and the Spit as a bird sanctuary under the federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act*. This would make resources available to preserve migratory bird habitat. The process is a slow one and is on-going.

**Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan:** There was a ground-breaking ceremony on October 25, 2019, for this important piece of waterfront revitalization, which involves creating beautiful public spaces and refurbishing some buildings and the dock wall on the city side of the Western Gap, across from the airport at the base of the malting towers. Mayor John Tory came, as did Joe Cressy, and Geoff Wilson, CEO of Ports Toronto, which has been involved. The City has contributed \$15 million. Phase 1 should be completed in 2021. The lesson is that a great revitalization plan can succeed even if the fate of land or features nearby is still undecided; no one yet knows what will happen with the malting towers which the City is dedicated to preserving.

**Rouge National Urban Park:** On June 15, 2019, it was announced that TRCA has transferred 1,847 hectares of lands to Parks Canada to become part of Rouge National Urban Park. The Park will be one of the world's largest protected areas in an urban setting. The transferred lands include the majority of the original regional Rouge Park, and encompass wilderness and biodiversity found nowhere else in the Greater Toronto Area. The natural features include dramatic river valleys, majestic forests, wetlands and portions of the Lake Ontario shoreline, as well as the highest concentration of species at risk in the region.

**Gibraltar Point Erosion Control:** Erosion control measures by TRCA are underway at Gibraltar Point, the southwest corner of Toronto Island. There have been barges out there lately dropping boulders in the lake to build up the shoreline. A groyne will extend south. There will very large deposits of sand at the beaches on the west side of the Island. This work will continue into next year and the year after. The project is necessary because studies showed the Island

eroding away at a rate of as much as 4 metres a year. A big storm could bring a breach in the centre of the island.

**Ashbridges Bay Landform Project:** TRCA is in charge of this project, which will limit shoreline erosion just east of the Leslie Street Spit, near the Generating Station and the Coatsworth Cut, the paddling location of the Balmy Beach Canoe Club. TRCA has completed an environmental assessment. Implementation is getting under way, and will take until around 2024. Large structures, mostly underwater, will be built in the lake not far from the generating station. There will a curving breakwater extending south to protect the Cut.

**Outer Harbour Marina rowing building:** Ports Toronto runs the Outer Harbour Marina on the north side of the Leslie Street Spit. It plans to build a new building dedicated to rowing, to be funded by Upper Canada College, on the little peninsula that sticks out from the shoreline north of the Outer Harbour Marina, southeast of Cherry Beach. It will also expand its storage building for bigger boats. The shoreline is bush now. Ports Toronto went before the Committee of Adjustment on April 17, 2019, and got the necessary variances. Construction will not start for a while because the COA said there must be a process akin to a site planning approval process, which will take time. We have suggested there also be a facility for paddlers, or at least outdoor storage racks or a little dock for kayaks etc., without success so far. We are continuing to meet with Ports Toronto.