

Thank you to the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the opportunity to speak on Bill 57, Schedules 30 (amending the Ontario Place Corporation Act to wind up the Corporation) and 31 (the Ontario Place Corporation Repeal Act, 2018).

My name is Bruce Van Dietsen. I deputize as representative of Waterfront for All, a citizens group dedicated to preserving and enhancing the Lake Ontario waterfront as a unique natural and cultural resource for all Ontarians to enjoy. Waterfront for All comprises thirty civic groups from Etobicoke to Scarborough. I also deputize on behalf of its member group, the West Side Community Council, representing eleven community associations from University to Roncesvalles, from Lake Ontario to Bloor.

Ontario Place comprises 52 publicly owned acres of surface land and when including the water courses and marinas, the area rises to 154 acres. Ontario Place sits on some of the most precious and beautiful land on the shore of Lake Ontario, conveniently accessible to millions of Ontarians. Thanks to its proximity to the 192 acres of Exhibition Place, there is an opportunity for the City of Toronto and the Province, working together, to create a crown jewel of urban waterfront which Ontarians, and the world beyond, will celebrate for generations to come.

The Ontario Place Corporation Act (OPCA), Section 8, establishes as objectives for the Ontario Place Corporation (the Corporation), among others: (a) the operation of Ontario Place for *cultural, educational, research, and public* purposes; (b) developing projects and programs designed to provide the people of Ontario with a *greater appreciation of the Province and its accomplishments and potential*, and providing talented artists in the Province with the opportunity to exhibit their works and their abilities; and (c) developing special programs *to enhance the image of the Province*.

These objectives of the Corporation reflect the founding vision behind Ontario Place, the vision of Bill Davis and John Robarts. This founding vision is ambitious, future-oriented, generous, public-spirited, environmental, benefits all Ontarians, and in its celebration of Ontario, ties all Ontarians together and connects us to the world. The vision was realized through the creation of the Ontario Place lands, by the public, for the public, now and for the long term. In the pursuit of this founding vision, these lands, under public ownership, are an irreplaceable asset.

Moreover, sustaining and building on this founding vision is the responsible way forward. First, it is fiscally responsible: the economic benefits of singular public spaces, like Central Park in New York City and Millennium park in Chicago, are by now so widely recognized as to be beyond dispute. The waterfront access of Ontario Place, its intertwining landscaping and spectacular architecture, is an amenity unparalleled elsewhere. Secondly, it is fiducially responsible: Ontario Place was built by the taxpayers and continues to be owned by the taxpayers. We believe that procedural due diligence in any process by which the founding vision is significantly altered requires accountability to the taxpayer's right to know, understand, and be consulted.

In recent years, the founding vision may have become blurred. But this is not a reason to give up on the vision, but rather to re-assert it, and strengthen it — by, among other things, (1) working with stakeholders Province-wide to develop strategies for restoring the Ontario Place Corporations Act objects to contemporary relevance; (2) following through on the implementation of one of the many joint Master Plans with Exhibition Place; (3) adopting a joint transportation plan for Ontario Place and Exhibition Place; and (4) appointing a new Board to include community members from the surrounding area to take advantage of intensification in the surrounding area and add new animation to these lands.

We are therefore alarmed at the proposed repeal of the Ontario Place Corporations Act, the dissolution of the Corporation, and the transfer of the Ontario Place lands to the Crown in right of Ontario. We want to know: does the Government support the founding vision of Bill Davis and John Robarts? Does the Government think it is worthwhile for Ontario to continue to hold this irreplaceable waterfront jewel, created and sustained by the tax-payers for generations to come, for public purposes, to celebrate Ontario?

In our view, the founding vision deserves Ontario's support, now and for the indefinite future, because we can create a vision that will see people the world over admire Ontario for its fore-thought of governance in creating the new Ontario Place. And we are confident that the people of Ontario stand with us. We therefore call on the members of the Standing Committee, on behalf of all the people of Ontario, to amend the proposed Bill 57 to remove Schedules 30 and 31.