

# Three's Company

**A Review of Waterfront Toronto's  
Tri-government Approach to Revitalization**

BY GABRIEL EIDELMAN



School of Public Policy & Governance  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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# Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
I. Introduction .....	3
II. The Tri-Government Approach: An Experimental Model.....	6
III. Evaluation: Successes and Setbacks.....	9
THE MANDATE .....	9
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS.....	14
Relations with the City of Toronto .....	14
Relations with the Province of Ontario .....	16
Relations with the Government of Canada .....	16
COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES.....	17
SUMMARY OF EVALUATION .....	19
IV. Looking Ahead: Issues and Options.....	20
LAND OWNERSHIP .....	20
ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY .....	22
INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN .....	24
THE TRANSFORMATIVE OPTION .....	24
V. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	26
Endnotes.....	29
References.....	31

# Executive Summary

Over a decade has passed since Waterfront Toronto, a joint federal-provincial-municipal development corporation, was established to spearhead waterfront revitalization in Toronto. Then, as now, Waterfront Toronto marked a unique governance experiment, exceptional in both national and international perspective. This report evaluates the early results of this experiment, assessing the relative effectiveness of the tri-government approach as the corporation crosses the halfway mark of its 20-year mandate.

Overall, we find that Waterfront Toronto's tri-government approach has proven moderately effective. Judged against its public commitments, the corporation has produced real, but modest, results amid significant constraints. It has won accolades for its planning and design work, and delivered several notable improvements to the public realm. But many of its projects remain well behind schedule—some abandoned altogether.

In its relations with government partners, the corporation has shown itself remarkably adept at managing and responding to immediate political crises. But the tri-government model has not been completely embraced by all participating departments and agencies. And while the corporation has earned considerable praise by a core group of stakeholders for its public engagement and community consultation efforts, the broader public remains skeptical.

Could the same results realistically have been achieved without the tri-government model? Almost certainly not. As hard as it is to imagine, at no time in the last 50 years has the waterfront witnessed as much coordinated redevelopment activity as during Waterfront Toronto's tenure. Without it, the same pattern of utterly disjointed decision making that typified waterfront planning and implementation for the past half century would only have worsened.

Yet clearly, the model is not working as well as it could be. Lingering issues of fragmented land ownership, accountability, and transparency in decision making suggest the need to rethink the status quo. Many of the challenges and potential solutions facing the corporation have been identified by Waterfront Toronto itself.

The report outlines a spectrum of institutional reforms as potential remedies, ranging from complete transformation, to major renovation, to minor enhancement of the existing model. Without further indication of each partner's commitment to the tri-government approach, no specific alternative can be considered a comprehensive solution. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for immediate improvement. The report advances four recommendations that should be pursued by Waterfront Toronto and its partners regardless of overall institutional design:

**1** Waterfront Toronto must refocus its work with an eye to medium-term objectives and time scales. Public promises become meaningless, even counterproductive, without clearly articulated, mid-range deliverables. Greater effort should be made to produce—and crucially, stick to—a list of realistic, five-year targets and timetables.

**2** The corporation must mend relations with various arm's-length agencies, such as the Toronto Port Lands Company, which have deteriorated over time. Executive-level meetings should be restarted or freshly organized with all agencies involved, to produce tangible agreements that confirm organizational roles and responsibilities, articulate shared principles, and address individual grievances—the aim not necessarily to build consensus, but trust.

**3** Tri-government meetings must once again be formalized. Government partners should, through their respective waterfront secretariats, either reconvene the Intergovernmental Steering Committee, suspended since 2009, or establish a new forum for high-level intergovernmental dialogue. The ad hoc nature of current relations both undermines meaningful tri-government collaboration and obfuscates lines of accountability. As a matter of transparency, the public should also be made aware of when such meetings take place, and be provided reasonable access to relevant documentation.

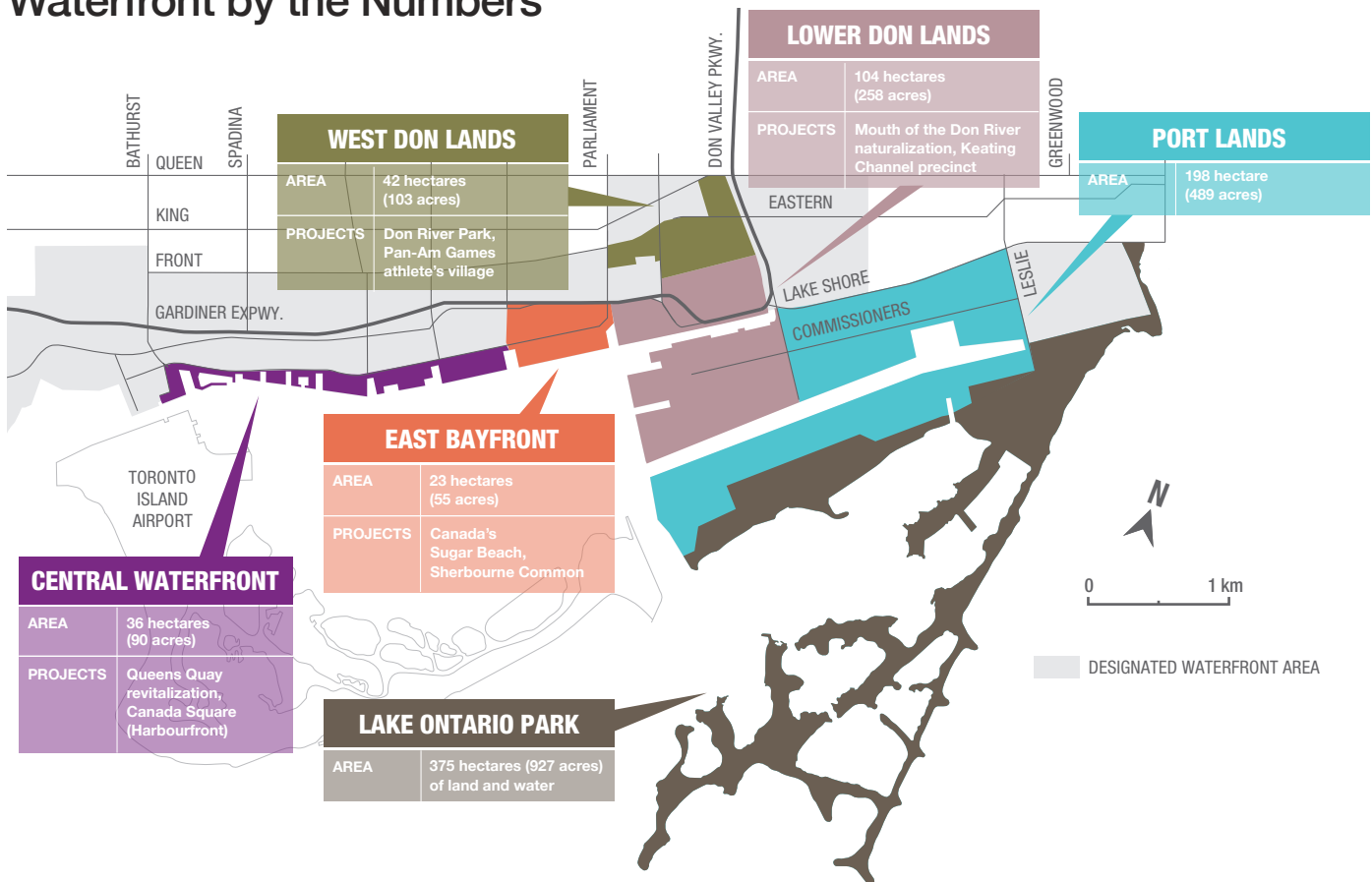
**4** Public waterfront lands must gradually be consolidated under the sole authority of Waterfront Toronto. The lesson from Toronto's waterfront history, going back several decades, is that consolidated ownership is essential to effective planning and development. As a first step, a comprehensive study should be commissioned to examine the legal and financial risks involved in any prospective asset consolidation strategy.

# I. Introduction

Over a decade has passed since Waterfront Toronto, a joint federal-provincial-municipal development corporation, was established to spearhead waterfront revitalization in Toronto.<sup>1</sup> Its goal: to reverse nearly a century of planning failure and political neglect, and turn hundreds of acres of undeveloped and underutilized waterfront property into a vibrant mix of new residential neighbourhoods, parks, public spaces, and commercial areas.

Then, as now, Waterfront Toronto marked a unique governance experiment. Armed with \$1.5 billion in start-up funding provided and overseen by three equal government partners, the corporation, and the governance model upon which it operates, remains exceptional in both national and international perspective. Few waterfront development corporations around the world have relied on tri-level collaboration between governments—none with principal authority over an area roughly 800 hectares (2,000 acres) in scale.<sup>2</sup>

**FIGURE 1**  
**Waterfront by the Numbers**



Now past the halfway mark of Waterfront Toronto's 20-year mandate, it seems appropriate to assess the early results of this experiment. Does the tri-level approach work? Has it led to noticeable waterfront improvements? And if not, what changes must be made to ensure that Torontonians finally receive the superb waterfront they rightly deserve?

Past studies of Waterfront Toronto have concentrated on questions of value-for-money and organizational efficiency.<sup>3</sup> The goal of this report is instead to assess the relative effectiveness of Waterfront Toronto's tri-government approach to revitalization.

An effective organization is one that delivers on its mandate. This report evaluates the extent to which Waterfront Toronto has achieved its public objectives, and the degree of cooperation between federal, provincial, and municipal governments toward these ends. Special attention is paid to key deliverables promised in the corporation's five-year strategic business plans, which have been approved by government partners and communicated to the public through various channels.

We also recognize that context matters. Waterfront Toronto is the product of particular historical circumstances that have left it burdened by serious political constraints (see next page). We therefore also measure the corporation's achievements against the expectations of its founding partners, and the local community it serves.

Findings are based on careful reading of internal documents and intergovernmental correspondence made available by Waterfront Toronto, published media accounts, and third-party reports. A total of 13 confidential interviews were also conducted with past and present politicians, public servants, and outside observers well-positioned to comment on waterfront progress to date.

Overall, we find that Waterfront Toronto's tri-government approach has proven moderately effective. The corporation has produced real, but modest, results—results that likely could not have been achieved without tri-government collaboration. Yet lingering issues of fragmented land ownership, accountability, and transparency in decision making suggest the need to rethink the status quo.

## THE GENESIS OF WATERFRONT TORONTO

Waterfront Toronto was born in the early 2000s, during the run-up to Toronto's failed bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games, as organizers tabbed the waterfront as an ideal location for Olympic facilities. As part of the bid process, then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Premier Mike Harris, and Mayor Mel Lastman convened a task force to develop a strategic business plan to kick-start redevelopment.

Headed by investment banker Robert Fung, the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force's final report recommended the creation of a joint federal, provincial, and municipal enterprise modelled on waterfront development agencies in London and New York that, although not tri-government in nature, successfully attracted billions of dollars of capital investment. The tri-partite corporation was expected to centralize authority over waterfront planning and development and help stimulate \$12 billion in public and private investment over 25 years (Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force 2000).

The three levels of government announced the establishment of an interim Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation in November 2001, made permanent via special provincial legislation in December 2002. The corporation, later renamed Waterfront Toronto, was expressly prohibited from borrowing money, mortgaging assets, raising revenues, or establishing subsidiaries without tri-government consent. Instead, it received initial commitments of \$500 million from each level of government, overseen by a 12-member board of directors, plus chairperson, appointed equally by the three partners (Ontario 2002).

### The Central Waterfront

## II. The Tri-Government Approach: An Experimental Model

The cost and complexity of waterfront redevelopment regularly necessitates intergovernmental collaboration. In Canada, no single level of government holds sufficient authority or resources required to deliver redevelopment on its own.

The federal government possesses significant financial resources, of course. But its jurisdiction over waterfronts is generally restricted to oversight and management of air and marine port operations. Provinces hold limited authority over environmental protection and infrastructure, as well as direct constitutional authority over natural resources and municipal affairs, including housing and land use planning. Yet the latter is rarely exercised without comprehensive input from municipalities, which have the greatest obvious interest in redevelopment, yet the least fiscal capacity to act.

Waterfront Toronto was conceived as a novel way to bring the authorities and resources of all three governments under one roof. The experiment called for the corporation to prepare and oversee the implementation of waterfront precinct plans, phasing strategies, environmental assessments, and calls for developer proposals.

Importantly, though, the three partners stopped short of granting Waterfront Toronto complete control of waterfront land assets, or the authority to raise revenues by borrowing against those assets. Instead, the corporation is bankrolled via a series of bilateral and trilateral funding agreements, referred to as “contribution agreements,” which are individually negotiated on a project-by-project basis.

The resulting approval process requires that Waterfront Toronto maintain almost daily contact with at least ten separate secretariats, departments, or special purpose authorities across the three levels of government (Figure 2). This is in addition to regular communication with various political offices, including the federal minister responsible for the Toronto region, the provincial minister of infrastructure, the mayor, as well as local councillors with waterfront constituencies.

To date, a total of 81 separate contribution agreements have been signed between Waterfront Toronto and at least one of its government partners. Each takes anywhere from three months to one year to negotiate. If projects are delayed, separate rounds of negotiation are started to amend relevant disbursement figures and delivery timetables.

## TRI-GOVERNMENT WATERFRONT PROJECTS IN CANADA

Several waterfront redevelopments in Canada, such as Saskatoon's River Landing district, Montreal's Lachine Canal, and Vancouver's South False Creek, have been achieved with the help of tri-level funding agreements. Only in Winnipeg's Forks district, however, has tri-government cooperation led specifically to the establishment of a permanent development corporation akin to Waterfront Toronto.

Established in 1995, the Forks North Portage Partnership oversees the planning and redevelopment of 22 hectares (56 acres) of former industrial rail yards located at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, which over the past three decades have been transformed into a successful mixed-use district in the downtown core.<sup>4</sup> Like Waterfront Toronto, the Partnership is governed by a board of directors equally appointed by three levels of government. But the parallels end there.

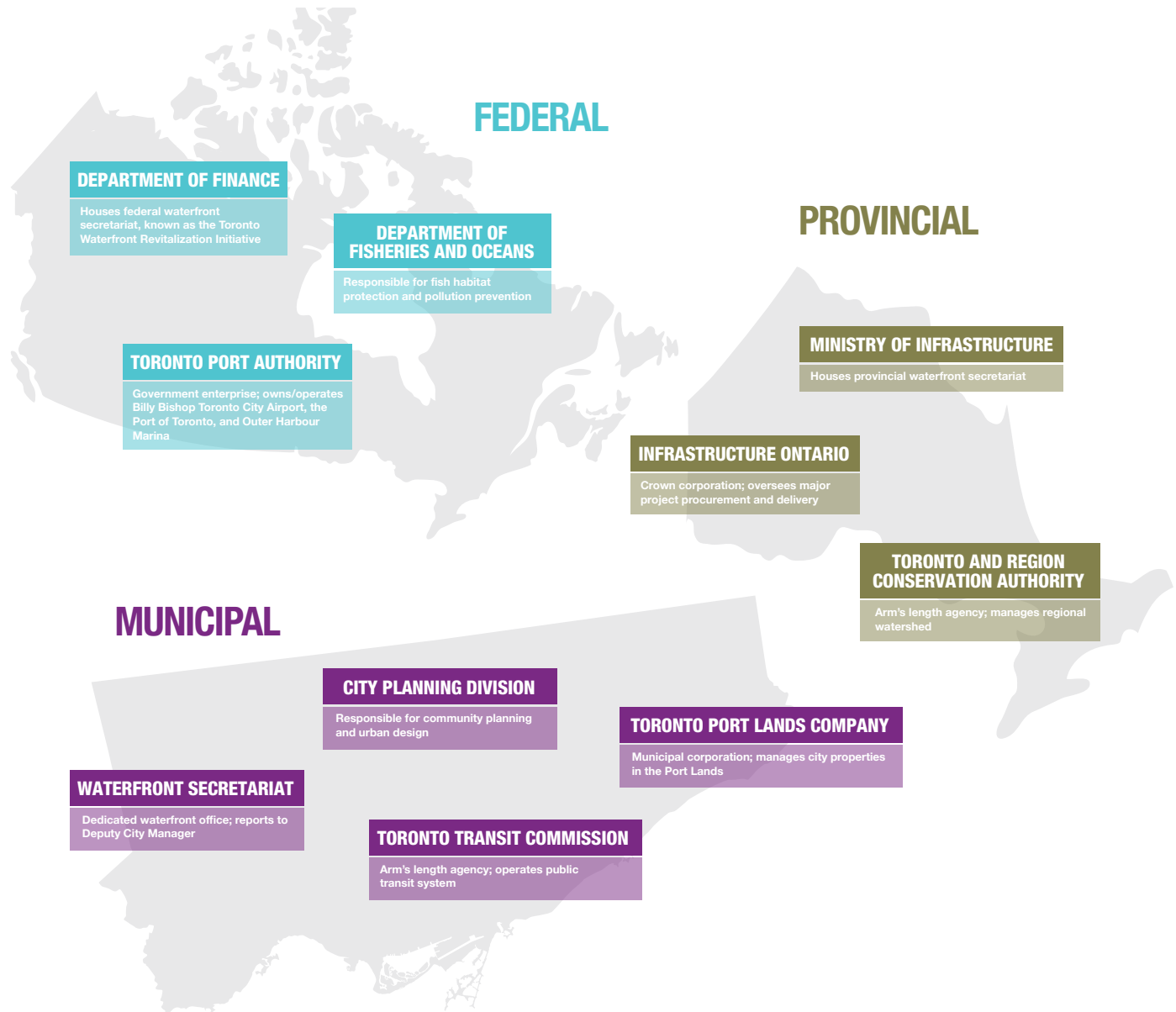
The Forks North Portage Partnership operates as a financially self-sufficient entity. It owns property and raises revenues from a range of residential, commercial, retail, and entertainment facilities that help maintain various public amenities, recreational spaces, and heritage sites under its authority. Waterfront Toronto, by contrast, owns relatively little property, and is not legally entitled to borrow money, mortgage assets, or create subsidiaries to independently raise revenue for redevelopment.



**The Forks, Winnipeg**  
COURTESY THE FORKS NORTH PORTAGE PARTNERSHIP

## FIGURE 2 Tri-Level Partners

WATERFRONT TORONTO MAINTAINS ALMOST DAILY CONTACT WITH THE FOLLOWING WATERFRONT SECRETARIATS AND SPECIAL PURPOSE AUTHORITIES:



Several value-for-money audits have concluded that the existing tri-level funding framework hinders Waterfront Toronto's ability to deliver projects on time and on budget. The corporation has subsequently made at least five separate, formal requests to governments for new powers and enhanced authority. Each, however, has been summarily denied by one government or another—a casualty, at different times, of either intergovernmental distrust or inauspicious timing.<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime, the corporation has spent roughly \$1.2 of its original \$1.5 billion funding commitment. The only substantial portion of government money yet to be allocated comes from the City. The remaining provincial contribution is allocated for the West Don Lands, expected to run dry in 2015/16. Federal contributions were officially exhausted in January 2013.

Waterfront Toronto thus finds itself at a crossroads. Now past the halfway mark of its 20-year mandate, and with funding commitments set to expire, the natural question arises: has the tri-government model actually worked?

### III. Evaluation: Successes and Setbacks

With few national or international peers to compare against, and in the absence of useful benchmarks, Waterfront Toronto's effectiveness is best measured against three criteria: (a) the corporation's public objectives; (b) the health of its relations with government partners; and (c) the expectations of the local community it serves.

#### The Mandate

Waterfront Toronto's enabling legislation mandates the corporation to "implement a plan that enhances the economic, social, and cultural value of the land in the designated waterfront area... in a fiscally and environmentally sustainable manner" (Ontario 2002, Sec. 3.1.1). Yet apart from requiring annual audits and financial reports, the legislation provides little guidance to assess how well this mandate has been achieved.

A reasonable place to start is by looking at key deliverables found in the corporation's five-year business plans. By law, every five years, the corporation is required to produce a medium-range business plan that sets out current and forecast levels of redevelopment activity in areas under its jurisdiction, accompanied by a list of priority projects and implementation timetables—in short, a list of five-year promises.<sup>6</sup>

The first such list of deliverables was presented as part of the corporation's initial strategic business plan, published in October 2002 (Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation 2002). The next plan conforming to the legislation's original intent was not released until nearly nine years later, in June 2011 (Waterfront Toronto 2011).

In the interim, medium-term deliverables were presented to government partners in a series of rolling five-year business plans. Four such plans were submitted to city council on an annual basis between 2005-2008.<sup>7</sup> Similar versions presented to provincial and federal governments were not released to the public.

As a result, Waterfront Toronto has often lacked a consistent list of medium-term milestones against which the public can easily evaluate promises delivered. Its website is teeming with vision statements and flashy renderings. But a run-down of the corporation's actual public commitments reveals a patchwork of shifting priorities (Figures 3 and 4).

**FIGURE 3**  
**Five Year Deliverables and Progress to Date:**  
**2002 Development Plan and Business Strategy**

AREA	DELIVERY TARGET	TARGET MET?	STATUS
<b>EAST BAYFRONT</b>			
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	NO	COMPLETED 2010
PRECINCT PLANS	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	YES	COMPLETED 2005
PARKS PLANNING	INITIATED BY 2007/08	YES	INITIATED 2007
RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY	BEGINNING 2007/08	NO	EXPECTED 2017/18
<b>WEST DON LANDS</b>			
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	YES	COMPLETED BETWEEN 2005-08
PRECINCT PLANS	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	YES	COMPLETED 2005
PARKS PLANNING	INITIATED BY 2007/08	YES	INITIATED 2006
DON RIVER BERM/FLOOD PROTECTION	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	NO	COMPLETED 2012
<b>PORT LANDS</b>			
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	NO	COMPLETED 2010
PRECINCT PLANS	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	NO	COMPLETED 2010
PORT LANDS "DISTRICT FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION"	CONSTRUCTION INITIATED BY 2007/08	NO	RELOCATED TO EAST BAYFRONT, EARLY DESIGN STAGE
MOUTH OF DON RIVER NATURALIZATION	CONSTRUCTION INITIATED BY 2007/08	NO	ON HOLD PENDING PORT LANDS ACCELERATION INITIATIVE
PORT LANDS "PREPARATION PROJECT" (LAND MANAGEMENT/SOIL REMEDIATION STRATEGY)	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	NO	ON HOLD PENDING PORT LANDS ACCELERATION INITIATIVE
LAKE ONTARIO PARK	PLANNING INITIATED BY 2007/08	YES	PLANNING INITIATED 2008
<b>OTHER</b>			
FRONT STREET EXTENSION	COMPLETE BY 2007/08	NO	CANCELLED 2008
UNION STATION SECOND PLATFORM	COMPLETE BY 2008/09	NO	EXPECTED 2015

**FIGURE 4**  
**Five Year Deliverables and Progress to Date:**  
**2005-08 Five-Year Business Plans/Ten Year Forecasts**

AREA	DELIVERY TARGET	TARGET MET?	STATUS
<b>EAST BAYFRONT</b>			
EAST BAYFRONT PRECINCT PLAN	COMPLETE BY 2005/06 <sup>A</sup>	YES	COMPLETED 2005
RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY	700 UNITS AVAILABLE BY 2009/10 <sup>A</sup>	NO	EXPECTED 2017/18
SHERBOURNE PARK/Common	COMPLETE BY 2009/10 <sup>A,C,D</sup>	PARTIAL	SOUTH SIDE COMPLETED 2010 NORTH SIDE COMPLETED 2011
LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY 2011 <sup>B,C</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2012 <sup>D</sup>	NO	ON HOLD
DISTRICT ENERGY SUPPLY	FIRST PHASE: COMPLETE BY 2009 <sup>C</sup>	NO	CANCELLED, REPLACED BY PRIVATE SECTOR SOLUTION
<b>WEST DONLANDS</b>			
WEST DON LANDS PRECINCT PLAN	COMPLETE BY 2005/06 <sup>A</sup>	YES	COMPLETED 2005
RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY	ORIGINAL: 1,100 UNITS AVAILABLE BY 2009/10 <sup>A</sup> REVISED: 1,250 UNITS AVAILABLE BY 2010/11 <sup>B</sup>	NO	FIRST OCCUPANCY 2013
DON RIVER BERM/FLOOD PROTECTION	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY 2009/10 <sup>A</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2010/11 <sup>B,C,D</sup>	NO	COMPLETED 2012
DON RIVER PARK	COMPLETE BY 2010/11 <sup>C,D</sup>	NO	COMPLETED 2013
LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY 2009/10 <sup>A,B</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2010/11 <sup>C</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2011/12 <sup>D</sup>	NO	CONSTRUCTION EXPECTED 2015, FULL OPERATION UNKNOWN
DISTRICT ENERGY SUPPLY (DISTRICTS 1 AND 3)	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY 2009/10 <sup>A</sup> REVISED: TEMPORARY PLANT COMPLETE BY 2008, PERMANENT PLANT COMPLETE BY 2010 <sup>B,C</sup>	NO	CANCELLED
<b>PORT LANDS</b>			
PORT LANDS PRECINCT/IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	COMPLETE BY 2009/10 <sup>A,D</sup>	NO	ON HOLD PENDING PORT LANDS ACCELERATION INITIATIVE
LOWER DON PRECINCT/IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	COMPLETE BY 2009/10 <sup>D</sup>	PARTIAL	COMPLETED 2010, ON HOLD PENDING PORT LANDS ACCELERATION INITIATIVE
MOUTH OF DON RIVER NATURALIZATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY 2006/07 <sup>A,B</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2008 <sup>C</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2009 <sup>D</sup>	NO	COMPLETED 2010, AWAITING AMENDMENT AS PART OF PORT LANDS ACCELERATION INITIATIVE
CONSTRUCTION	INITIATED BY 2009/10 <sup>A,B,C</sup>	NO	ON HOLD PENDING PORT LANDS ACCELERATION INITIATIVE
LAKE ONTARIO PARK	ORIGINAL: CONSTRUCTION INITIATED BY 2007/08 <sup>A,B</sup> REVISED: DESIGN PROCESS COMPLETE BY 2007 <sup>C</sup> REVISED: DESIGN PROCESS COMPLETE BY 2008 <sup>D</sup>	PARTIAL	DESIGN PROCESS COMPLETED 2008 CONSTRUCTION NOT YET INITIATED
TOMMY THOMPSON PARK INITIATIVES (E.G., WASHROOM FACILITIES, RESEARCH STATION)	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY 2007/08 <sup>A,B</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2008/09 <sup>C</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2009/10 <sup>D</sup>	NO	COMPLETED 2013
COMMISSIONERS PARK	ORIGINAL: CONSTRUCTION INITIATED AND SOIL REMEDIATION 50% COMPLETE BY 2009/10 <sup>A</sup> REVISED: CONSTRUCTION INITIATED BY 2011 <sup>B,C</sup>	NO	DESIGN COMPETITION COMPLETED 2007, ON HOLD PENDING PORT LANDS ACCELERATION INITIATIVE
INTERIM SPORTS FIELDS, SOUTH OF SHIP CHANNEL	COMPLETE BY 2007/08 <sup>A,B,C</sup>	YES	COMPLETED 2008
REGIONAL SPORTS COMPLEX	COMPLETE BY MARCH 2008 <sup>A,B</sup> COMPLETE BY 2010 <sup>C</sup>	NO	ON HOLD, FEASIBILITY STUDY COMPLETED 2007
MAJOR CORRIDOR CLEAN-UP AND SITE PREPARATIONS	COMPLETE BY 2007/08 <sup>A,B,C,D</sup>	NO	EXPECTED 2013/14
<b>CENTRAL WATERFRONT</b>			
LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	COMPLETE BY 2007/08 <sup>A,C</sup>	NO	COMPLETED 2009
HARBOURFRONT WATER'S EDGE (JOHN QUAY)	COMPLETE BY 2006/07 <sup>A</sup>	YES	COMPLETED 2006
CANADA SQUARE UNDERGROUND PARKING	COMPLETE BY MARCH 2008 <sup>A</sup>	NO	COMPLETED 2012
<b>OTHER</b>			
UNION STATION SECOND PLATFORM	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY 2014/15 <sup>A</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2011 <sup>B</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2012 <sup>C</sup> REVISED: COMPLETE BY 2013 <sup>D</sup>	NO	EXPECTED 2015
PORT UNION LINEAR PARK	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY MARCH 2008 <sup>A</sup> REVISED: PHASE 1 COMPLETE BY FALL 2006 <sup>B</sup> REVISED: PHASE 2 INITIATED BY 2008 <sup>D</sup>	YES	PHASE I COMPLETED 2006 PHASE II COMPLETED 2013
MIMICO LINEAR PARK	ORIGINAL: COMPLETE BY 2007/08 <sup>A,B,C</sup> REVISED: PHASE 2 COMPLETE BY 2012 <sup>D</sup>	PARTIAL	PHASE I COMPLETED 2008 PHASE II OPENING 2013
WESTERN BEACHES WATER COURSE	COMPLETE BY 2006 <sup>A</sup>	YES	COMPLETED 2006
UNITED NATIONS PEACE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS	COMPLETE BY 2008 <sup>A,B,C</sup>	NO	CANCELLED
ASHBRIDGE'S BAY SEASONAL THEATRE	COMPLETE BY 2008 <sup>A,B,C</sup>	NO	CANCELLED

A NOTED IN 2005 PLAN

B NOTED IN 2006 PLAN

C NOTED IN 2007 PLAN

D NOTED IN 2008 PLAN

Judged against this basic list of public promises, Waterfront Toronto's record of redevelopment is anything but exemplary. Many projects remain well behind schedule; several have been cancelled outright. Most setbacks have been the result of forces outside Waterfront Toronto's control, such as political wrangling between partner governments or unforeseen technical obstacles. Yet the fact remains that on-the-ground results have not consistently matched the corporation's medium-term commitments.

Waterfront Toronto reminds stakeholders that its overarching mandate is to promote waterfront "revitalization," not simply redevelopment. The distinction emphasizes a commitment to economic, social, and environmental benefits beyond basic real estate development: employment growth, improvements to the public realm, and commitments to community consultation, environmentally sustainable design, and architectural excellence.

On these fronts, Waterfront Toronto has made admirable strides. A recent economic impact analysis commissioned by Waterfront Toronto, for instance, concluded that the corporation's work has generated approximately 16,200 person years of employment and contributed roughly \$3.2 billion to the Canadian economy, and \$622 million to government coffers (Urban Metrics Inc. 2013).<sup>8</sup> It has also constructed or restored over a dozen waterfront parks and public spaces—one of which, Sherbourne Common, even doubles as a storm water treatment facility for the surrounding area, helping the corporation earn a LEED Gold designation for neighbourhood development from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Still, whether we measure redevelopment or revitalization, Waterfront Toronto has had trouble meeting its own medium-term objectives. That the corporation does not rigorously track outcomes against these public commitments and deliverables only exacerbates the issue.

## Government Relations

Part of the original motivation behind the tri-government experiment was a belief that a purpose-built, tri-level waterfront development agency could help improve relations between government departments and agencies with long-standing waterfront interests, and encourage intergovernmental coordination. In this regard, results have been mixed.

For several years, governments met to discuss waterfront affairs in a forum known as the Intergovernmental Steering Committee (IGSC), comprised of senior public servants (deputy/assistant deputy ministers and the city/deputy city manager) from all three levels. The IGSC served as a *de facto* board of directors, outlining the terms of contribution agreements and final project approvals.

For reasons not entirely clear, the IGSC stopped meeting sometime in 2009.<sup>9</sup> Intergovernmental dialogue has since taken the form of bilateral meetings—some frequent, others sporadic—between Waterfront Toronto and each of its government partners. As a result, many approvals now require shuttling between parties for respective sign-offs.

### RELATIONS WITH THE CITY OF TORONTO

At an operational level, relations between Waterfront Toronto and municipal staff appear strong. Meetings to discuss technical concerns and other planning issues (by-law compliance, permits, and approvals) take place almost on a daily basis. From time to time, however, these discussions are shaken up by disputes at the political level, precipitated by conflicting organizational mandates and changes in leadership.

The most dramatic breakdown in relations along these lines occurred between Waterfront Toronto and a former municipal agency known as the Toronto Economic Development Corporation (TEDCO), which managed the City's land interests along the waterfront until its dissolution in 2008. Disagreement stemmed from each organization's competing vision for the 28-acre Queen Elizabeth Docks, in the East Bayfront district (see next page).

Most recently, following the 2010 municipal election, TEDCO's successor agency, the Toronto Port Lands Company (TPLC), attempted to retake control of its lands holdings in the Port Lands. Under the new mayor's direction, the City threatened to amend, even terminate, the existing memorandum of understanding to allow TPLC to pursue its own plans for the area. Public outcry eventually forced members of city council to broker a compromise affirming Waterfront Toronto's leadership role, but compelling it to accelerate implementation efforts in the area.

## TROUBLE ON THE EAST BAYFRONT

Waterfront Toronto completed an international design competition for the Queen Elizabeth Docks, located between Jarvis and Parliament Sts., in 2003. TEDCO, the landowner, was not directly consulted in the process, and saw fit to commission its own plans for the site with the help of a local design firm. Stalemate ensued. Only after three years and two dozen negotiations was a memorandum of understanding finally reached between the parties. TEDCO was allowed to move ahead with plans for a \$130 million, city-funded office complex at the foot of Jarvis St., today known as Corus Quay. In return, Waterfront Toronto was assured that the City and TEDCO would respect its role as “revitalization lead” in remaining parts of the East Bayfront, as well as the Port Lands.<sup>10</sup>



Sugar Beach

## RELATIONS WITH THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

Relations between Waterfront Toronto and the province have been relatively smooth by comparison. Meetings between corporation staff and senior provincial officials are generally held on a quarterly basis, with little fanfare.

To date, the corporation has signed two memoranda of understanding with provincial partners regarding the revitalization of the provincially owned West Don Lands. The first agreement, reached in 2005, was with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Ontario Realty Corporation; the second, finalized in 2010, with Infrastructure Ontario, the Ontario Realty Corporation, and the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, concerned preparations for the 2015 Pan American/Parapan Games and Athlete's Village.

Agreements regarding other provincial properties, including Ontario Place and the former Liquor Control Board of Ontario headquarters on Queens Quay Blvd., were drafted, but never signed. Broadly speaking, this does not seem to have affected the corporation's day-to-day dealings with the province.

Relations with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority—which was created under provincial legislation, and has been involved in plans to re-naturalize the mouth of the Don River as well as improvements to Tommy Thompson and Lake Ontario Parks—also appear to function well.

## RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Federal engagement on the waterfront has been remarkably dependent on the enthusiasm of the minister responsible for the Greater Toronto Area.<sup>11</sup> When Waterfront Toronto has enjoyed personal support from its responsible minister, as it has in recent years, relations between the corporation and the federal government have been productive. Without such support, the federal presence has been limited to audit and oversight responsibilities.

The personality-driven nature of federal interest does not seem to have compromised Waterfront Toronto's working relationships with federal agencies such as the Toronto Port Authority. Despite the potential impacts on waterfront planning that could be created by port operations—from issues of noise, to land use, to transportation—Waterfront Toronto has generally maintained what one respondent described as a “close” working relationship with the Port Authority.<sup>12</sup>

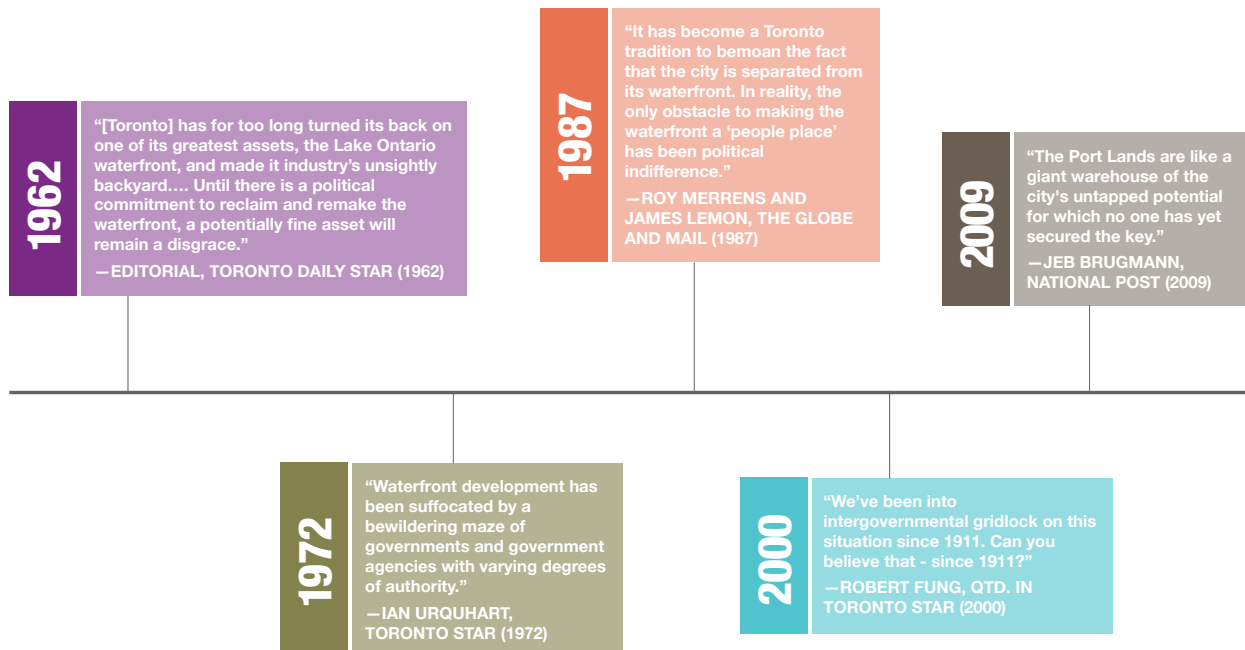
Overall, Waterfront Toronto's relations with the three levels of government have ebbed and flowed according to shifts in both the electoral and bureaucratic landscape—a by-product, it would seem, of a tri-government model that has not been completely embraced by all participating departments and agencies.

## Community Perspectives

Rightly or wrongly, Toronto's waterfront has long been considered a story of political failure. After several decades of neglect and mismanagement, a communal malaise toward the waterfront has become embedded in the city's collective consciousness—even as new public spaces are finally unveiled and construction cranes take to the air.

A survey conducted in 2011 reveals that just 37% of Greater Toronto Area residents believe that “some” or “a lot of” progress has been made on the waterfront, compared to 46% who note “little” or “no progress at all.”<sup>13</sup> While residents of the City of Toronto were more likely than surrounding “905” municipalities to acknowledge progress made (43% to 32%), an equal number (43%) of residents across the region expressed disappointment with development to date.

**FIGURE 5**  
**A History of Waterfront Malaise**



No doubt, part of this collective dismay has been fuelled by the media, which has long depicted the waterfront as a victim of political meddling. Headlines tell tales of a “port in a storm” (Kuitenbrouwer 2004), of a “waterfront... adrift again” (Gillespie 2006). Indeed, of the more than 400 waterfront-related articles, editorials, and op-ed columns collected by the Mowat Centre for this report, negative impressions of the waterfront outnumbered positive roughly two to one.<sup>14</sup>

Such views from the outside, however, stand in stark contrast to those of a smaller, yet highly engaged, group of individuals more closely connected to Waterfront Toronto's work—the academics, urban planners, developers, and activists, who have had direct contact with the agency in one capacity or another. Among this community of interested stakeholders, a far more sympathetic and optimistic outlook emerges, both about the future of Toronto's waterfront and, specifically, the good work of Waterfront Toronto.

The highest praise centres around Waterfront Toronto's considerable public engagement and community consultation efforts. The corporation has organized over 216 public stakeholder events, such as community meetings, design charrettes, and information sessions. It has also convened nearly two dozen stakeholder advisory committees, nine of which are still active, to help guide waterfront planning—all to great effect.

Among the professional planning and design community, Waterfront Toronto has garnered dozens of accolades from local, national, and international organizations, including the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, Canadian Urban Institute, and American Society of Landscape Architects. Many academics who, in the past, were notably critical of Waterfront Toronto have since grown to support the corporation and its cause.<sup>15</sup> In 2011, over 150 scholars mobilized alongside a grassroots community organization known as CodeBlueTO to support Waterfront Toronto in the face of pressure from City Hall to rethink plans for the Port Lands (Cities Centre 2011).

On balance, the majority of respondents interviewed as part of this review spoke favourably of Waterfront Toronto's performance. Even those skeptical of the corporation's contribution to waterfront revitalization generally admired its local engagement efforts. Nevertheless, there appears to exist a marked disconnect between the level of support expressed by Waterfront Toronto's core group of community stakeholders and the broader public.

## Summary of Evaluation

All in all, Waterfront Toronto has proven moderately effective. Judged against its public commitments, the corporation has produced real, but modest, results amid significant constraints. It has won accolades for its planning and design work, and delivered several notable improvements to the public realm. Many of its projects, however, remain well behind schedule—some abandoned altogether.

Regarding relations with its government partners, the corporation has shown itself remarkably adept at managing and responding to immediate political crises, relying heavily on creative work-arounds and diplomatic manoeuvring. Quite clearly, though, deep-rooted turf wars remain.

This comes as no surprise to a general public that has witnessed decades of political bickering. Despite its admirable commitment to local consultation, and subsequent buy-in from academic and professional circles, Waterfront Toronto has yet to convince the wider community that the waterfront has, in fact, turned the corner.

Thus, we come to the crucial question: how far would waterfront revitalization realistically have progressed over the last decade without Waterfront Toronto? Could the same results have been achieved without the tri-government model? Almost certainly not.

Placed in historical context, the past decade of revitalization marks the first era in Toronto's modern waterfront history wherein the interests of each level of government have been even remotely aligned. As hard as it is to imagine, at no time in the last 50 years has the waterfront witnessed as much coordinated redevelopment activity as during Waterfront Toronto's tenure. Without it, the same pattern of utterly disjointed decision making that typified waterfront planning and implementation for the past half century would only have worsened.

Slowly, but surely, waterfront revitalization is in fact moving forward. Yet clearly, not as well as it could be. In the words of one colourful respondent, "It's worked. But boy, it sure could work a hell of a lot better."

## IV. Looking Ahead: Issues and Options

For the tri-government approach to work best—for Waterfront Toronto to make good on its promises, work collaboratively with its government partners, and gradually earn the public's confidence—the issues of (a) land ownership, (b) accountability and transparency in decision making, and (c) institutional design must be addressed.

### Land Ownership

One can understand why Waterfront Toronto has sought to obtain enhanced powers. Newfound authority to borrow money, mortgage assets, and independently raise revenue would theoretically help the corporation withstand imminent budgetary pressures. Few of these powers, however, would do any good given existing land ownership conditions.

Based on Waterfront Toronto's own figures, the corporation currently owns less than 0.5% of all land assets across the central waterfront (Figure 6), limited to a few parcels in the East Bayfront. This sets it apart from nearly all other waterfront development corporations around the world. In almost every case, public land ownership has been consolidated under a single public authority.

**FIGURE 6**  
**Waterfront Land Ownership**

	AREA (HECTARES)	AREA (ACRES)	DISTRIBUTION
WATERFRONT TORONTO	6.61	16.33	0.44%
FEDERAL	413.71	1022.30	27.50%
PROVINCIAL	393.23	971.69	26.14%
MUNICIPAL	497.52	1229.39	33.07%
PRIVATE	157.48	389.13	10.47%
UNKNOWN/RESIDENTIAL	35.77	88.39	2.38%
TOTAL	1504.31	3717.23	100.00%

SOURCE: WATERFRONT TORONTO. LIMITED TO "DESIGNATED WATERFRONT AREA," AS DEFINED BY PROVINCIAL REGULATION.

In London, hundreds of acres of public (and even private) property were conveyed to the London Docklands Development Corporation. In New York, the Battery Park City Authority was granted complete ownership of city lands targeted for redevelopment. Even in Winnipeg, federal land assets were transferred to the forerunners of the Forks North Portage Partnership from the outset. By contrast, Waterfront Toronto remains expressly prohibited from acquiring waterfront property without tri-government approval.<sup>16</sup>

## LAND OWNERSHIP FRAGMENTATION

Fragmented land ownership, particularly public land ownership, has complicated waterfront redevelopment in Toronto for decades.

In the late 1960s, the former Toronto Harbour Commission and Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department jointly revealed a dramatic redevelopment proposal calling for the construction of a new residential community on the western waterfront, dubbed “Harbour City.” However, the province scuttled the project in favour of its own (eventually abandoned) plan for the area, upon realizing it owned the majority of land in question.

Harbourfront, a federal project announced in 1972, became mired in controversy through the 1980s as the crown corporation that owned the land vigorously resisted demands by the City for more park space and lower building heights. The dispute erupted into a political firestorm, leading to the establishment of a Royal Commission on the matter.

Later, during the 1990s, the City became embroiled in a fierce legal battle with the Toronto Harbour Commission, as it sought to seize waterfront assets in the East Bayfront and Port Lands. A series of lawsuits, countersuits, and arbitration hearings ensued, freezing development for years.

Curiously, Waterfront Toronto has never explicitly sought to increase its share of waterfront ownership. “As long as everybody agreed to do what the corporation wanted to do,” explained one respondent familiar with Waterfront Toronto’s long-standing position, it should not matter who owns the land. This is ill-advised.

The history of waterfront politics and development in Toronto is clear: those who own waterfront land inevitably control the shape and scale of redevelopment (see Eidelman 2013). The greater the number of landowners, public or private, the more difficult it is to successfully coordinate waterfront planning and implementation.

The City’s recent bid to wrest authority over Port Lands development away from Waterfront Toronto is a testament to this historical reality. The proposed takeover could never have been orchestrated so quickly if the city-controlled Toronto Port Lands Company did not already own such a large portfolio of waterfront assets in the area. Likewise, the fate of two provincially-owned waterfront properties—Ontario Place and the former Liquor Control Board of Ontario headquarters—remains unsettled as the province, specifically the Ministry of Finance, has refused to concede title to the land.

If Waterfront Toronto is truly expected to deliver on its promises, public waterfront assets must gradually be consolidated under its authority. As it stands, the various memoranda of understanding signed between the corporation and its government partners grant it “effective” control of waterfront lands in various districts, but not legal title. Title to the land would reduce the number of veto points in the system, which currently pits the property rights of one public landowner against the jurisdictional authority of another.

A detailed analysis of available options to consolidate waterfront land ownership is beyond the scope of this report. It would involve complex calculations of financial risk (potential revenue losses, write-downs, and purchase costs) and legal liability. However, given that similar concerns have been dealt with in other jurisdictions, there is reason to believe these issues could be addressed.

## Accountability and Transparency

Waterfront Toronto’s tripartite governance structure ensures that no one level of government holds exclusive control over waterfront decision-making. The model affords the corporation a degree of autonomy that has helped it avoid being held hostage to a single set of interests. But such quasi-independence also creates an obscure system of decision making.

Waterfront Toronto takes direction from two parallel decision-making structures—one far more open and transparent than the other. Its board of directors, appointed equally by the three levels of government, is chiefly comprised of experts in the fields of finance and real estate development, who serve as intermediaries between the corporation and its government partners, and meet publicly on a monthly basis.

Under the board's direction, the corporation regularly publishes meeting minutes, presentations, and financial reports on its website. It also routinely discloses awarded construction contracts as well as travel and hospitality expenses.<sup>17</sup> And though it is not legally subject to freedom of information legislation, the corporation has recently developed its own policy generally consistent with federal, provincial, and municipal transparency guidelines.<sup>18</sup>

These disclosures, however, deal only with the operation of the corporation itself, not the hands that guide it. In truth, the board of directors maintains no authority to approve new capital projects, sign multi-year contracts with developers, or re-allocate funds between projects.<sup>19</sup> Real authority instead lies hidden within the bureaucracy, where confidential negotiations between senior officials take place.

Formerly, such negotiations were carried out under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Steering Committee, described earlier. Now that the IGSC has stopped meeting, even a close observer would have trouble pinpointing exactly where and how decisions are made.

Behind-the-scenes negotiations are, of course, a normal feature of intergovernmental relations in Canada. But with no formal structure to channel intergovernmental dialogue on waterfront issues, no regularly scheduled meetings, no easily accessible record of meetings that do take place, and no clear protocol for the public to scrutinize these discussions, any "normal" standard of accountability and transparency seems distinctly inadequate.

Insofar as over one billion dollars of public money has been invested on the waterfront to date, even the perception of impropriety—however false—cannot be left to fester. Whatever good reputation Waterfront Toronto has earned over its first decade of work will be for naught unless measures are taken to simplify the corporation's existing decision-making structures, and bring them into the open.

## Institutional Design

In a 2007 interview published in the *Toronto Star*, Waterfront Toronto president and CEO John Campbell argued that when the corporation was initially formed, “there probably wasn’t enough thought given to how [its] mandate meshed with other agencies” (Hume 2007). Now is the time to restart this conversation of institutional design.

The spectrum of institutional reforms available ranges from complete transformation, to major renovation, to minor enhancement of the existing model. Without further indication of each partner’s commitment to the tri-government approach, no specific alternative can be considered a comprehensive solution to the issues listed above. Still, we offer the following scenarios as useful starting points for debate.

### THE TRANSFORMATIVE OPTION

Entails abandoning the tri-government model altogether in favour of a corporation controlled by two, not three, equal government partners. In theory, this would create a more cohesive set of core stakeholders, thus streamlining coordination. Under this scenario, a compelling case could be made that the corporation should be reconstituted as a joint provincial-municipal agency, for three reasons. First, the City and, to a lesser extent, the province control the largest remaining share of developable waterfront lands—far greater than the federal government. Second, several federally-funded Waterfront Toronto projects, such as Sugar Beach, have been completed without participation from other levels of government; a lack of formal federal participation would not prevent future federal investments through existing grants and programs managed by Infrastructure Canada. Third, such restructuring would be consistent with the federal government’s stated commitment to “open” federalism respecting provincial and municipal jurisdiction.

While this approach may improve efficiency and help clarify lines of accountability—better a two-headed than three-headed monster, one might say—history would suggest to proceed with caution. Despite its flaws, the tri-government model has forced previously uncooperative agencies and departments to begin considering the waterfront a shared resource. “I’ve been here when we haven’t had that,” noted one respondent with several decades of experience at multiple waterfront agencies, and it ended up with “everybody squabbling.”

## THE MAJOR RENOVATION

Retains the tri-government model, but empowers Waterfront Toronto with new financial tools and authority similar to waterfront development corporations in other jurisdictions.

This option, which Waterfront Toronto has advocated to governments at various times, particularly in its first few years of existence, would allow the corporation to raise its own revenue (through development charges, land sales, or leasing activities), issue debt, and create independent subsidiaries, among other proposals.<sup>20</sup> It would also make it easier for the corporation to consolidate land assets under its control. Effectively, the corporation would become both master planner and developer across the entire central waterfront.

Although new powers would certainly make for a more flexible and self-sufficient development corporation, again, there is history to consider. The former Toronto Harbour Commission, it should be remembered, essentially operated as just such an empowered development corporation for over 80 years. The Commission enjoyed almost complete legal autonomy, able to raise revenues from its property—at one time, totalling more than a third of all land across the central waterfront—virtually at will. As a result, it held a disproportionate lock on waterfront redevelopment for decades.

Waterfront Toronto's intentions are certainly more benign than the former Harbour Commission. But to grant the corporation similar powers does run the risk of repeating the same mistake—particularly if, as suggested earlier, public land ownership is consolidated under its authority.

## THE MINOR FIX

Preserves the basic elements of the current tri-government model, with only incremental adjustments to help address the issues highlighted in previous sections of this report.

For example, public land ownership could gradually be consolidated under Waterfront Toronto's authority—perhaps as a public trust—to create some assurance that existing landowners do not disrupt a now-established planning process with considerable legitimacy. As a measure of accountability, Waterfront Toronto could be prohibited from selling or leasing waterfront assets without the express consent of the original landowner. In effect, neither party would be able to realize financial gains without mutual accommodation, thus creating an incentive to cooperate.

This is but one minor reform; other alternatives may be available. The risk, of course, is that any option contingent on further intergovernmental negotiation could make the corporation's already cumbersome approval process even more unwieldy—not to mention secretive, given the material assets potentially at play.

## V. Conclusions and Recommendations

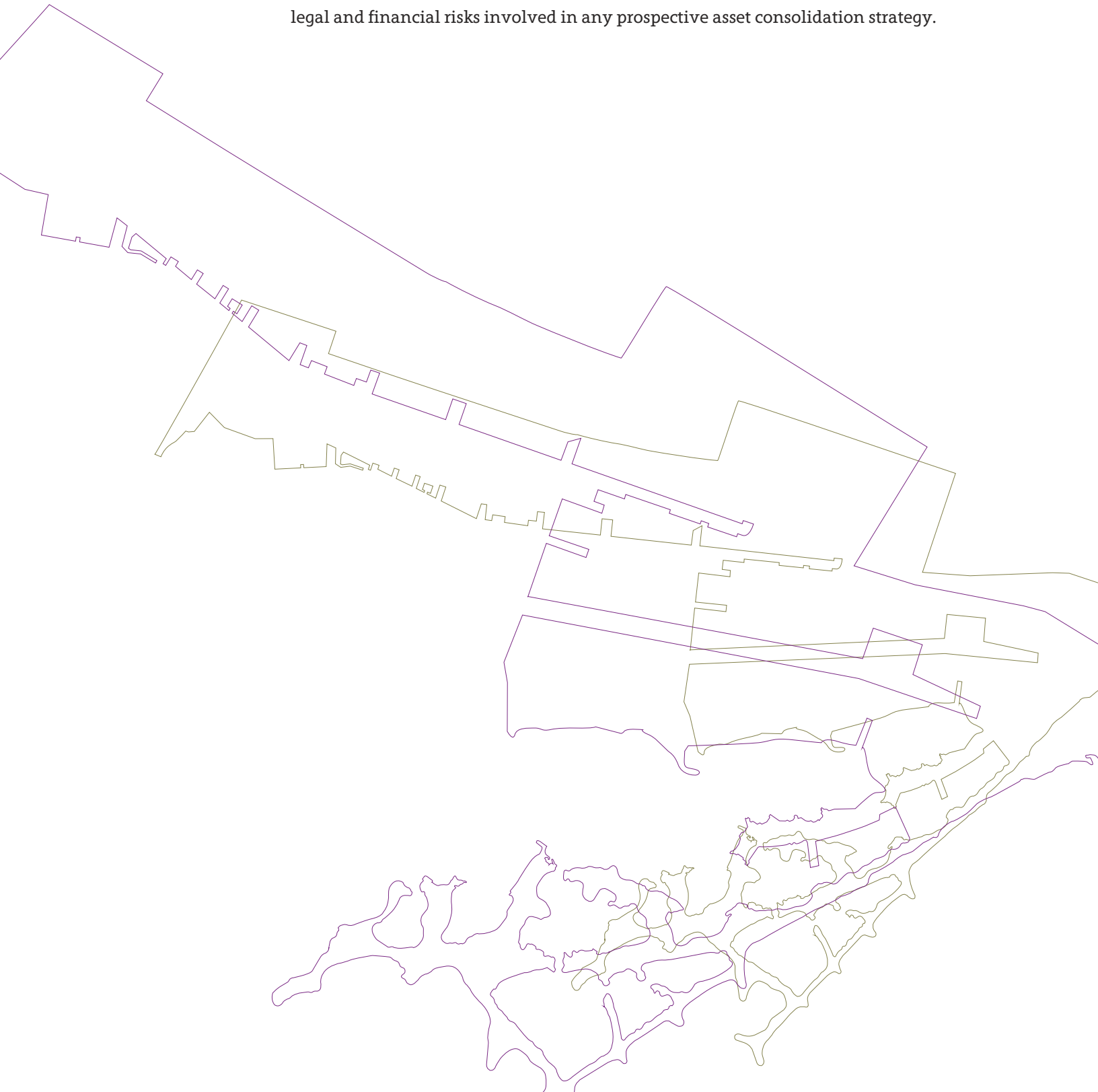
The goal of this report has been to assess the effectiveness of Waterfront Toronto and its tri-government approach to waterfront revitalization. Our findings suggest the corporation has proven moderately effective, but not decidedly so. Thanks to Waterfront Toronto, there is indeed greater coordination between governments than in the past. But not without lingering issues.

Although no specific set of institutional reforms can be considered a comprehensive solution, there are indeed opportunities for immediate improvement. The following four recommendations should be pursued by Waterfront Toronto and its partners regardless of overall institutional design:

- 1 Waterfront Toronto must refocus its work with an eye to medium-term objectives and time scales that sit between day-to-day project management and long-term, aspirational planning. Public promises become meaningless, even counterproductive, without clearly articulated, mid-range deliverables. Greater effort should be made to produce—and crucially, stick to—a list of realistic, five-year targets and timetables.
- 2 The corporation must mend relations with various arm's-length agencies, such as the Toronto Port Lands Company, which have deteriorated over time. Executive-level meetings should be restarted or freshly organized with all agencies involved, to produce tangible agreements that confirm organizational roles and responsibilities, articulate shared principles, and address individual grievances—the aim not necessarily to build consensus, but trust.<sup>21</sup>
- 3 Tri-government meetings must once again be formalized. Government partners should, through their respective waterfront secretariats, either reconvene the Intergovernmental Steering Committee, suspended since 2009, or establish a new forum for high-level intergovernmental dialogue. The ad hoc nature of current relations both undermines meaningful tri-government collaboration and obfuscates lines of accountability. As a matter of transparency, the public should also be made aware of when such meetings take place, and be provided reasonable access to relevant documentation.

## 4

Public waterfront lands must gradually be consolidated under the sole authority of Waterfront Toronto. The lesson from Toronto's waterfront history, going back several decades, is that consolidated ownership is essential to effective planning and development. The exact process by which such consolidation should take place depends on prospective changes to the corporation's fundamental governance structure and powers—a topic on which this report arrives at no clear conclusion. For now, as a first step, a comprehensive study should be commissioned to examine the legal and financial risks involved in any prospective asset consolidation strategy.



# Endnotes

1 Waterfront Toronto was originally known as the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation until rebranding in 2007.

2 A full review of international comparisons is beyond the scope of this report. However, a background analysis completed in 2000 as part of the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force confirms that tri-partite collaboration for the purposes of waterfront redevelopment is exceedingly rare (Urban Strategies Inc. 2000).

3 See Mercer Delta Organizational Consulting (2004), Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2005), Oliver Wyman Delta Organization (2007), and R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (2008).

4 The Partnership is, in fact, the third such organization in charge of redevelopment in the area, having initially been created by merging the former North Portage Development Corporation (created in December 1983) and Forks Renewal Corporation (created in July 1987).

5 In 2004, for instance, the provincial Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal agreed in principle to grant the corporation the requested powers. Officials in Ottawa and City Hall, however, thought otherwise. Four years later, this time with the mayor's support, city council voted to grant Waterfront Toronto requisite borrowing powers, as well as the ability to reinvest raised revenues and create business subsidiaries—provided, though, that the federal and provincial governments followed suit (City of Toronto 2008b). Again, the remaining partners refrained.

6 The corporation also prepares annual business plans outlining major activities, budgets, and objectives for the upcoming fiscal year.

7 See City of Toronto (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008a).

8 Several interview respondents questioned the methodology used to calculate these figures. While Mowat is not in a position to comment on these concerns, it is important to at least put the reported figures in context. The original business case presented by Waterfront Toronto to government partners in 2002 forecast 194,000 person years of employment during construction, 30,000 ongoing jobs, and over \$10 billion in direct, indirect, and induced government revenues over 30 years (Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation 2002).

9 Interview respondents suggested various explanations, from bureaucratic disinterest to fatigue—none of which could be verified. Access to IGSC minutes and supplementary documents remains difficult to come by, as these materials rest with governments, not Waterfront Toronto. Retrieval requires separate freedom of information requests to each level of government. Unfortunately, the long timelines involved with such requests would have delayed final publication of this report.

10 See City of Toronto, Toronto Economic Development Corporation, and Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (2006).

11 Ministerial responsibility for Waterfront Toronto follows the Greater Toronto Area's regional representative in Cabinet, regardless of respective portfolio. The federal waterfront secretariat has thus moved between several departments, including: Transport (2001-03), Human Resources and Skills Development (2003-05); Citizenship and Immigration (2005-06); Treasury Board (2006); Environment (2007-08); and Finance (2009-present).

12 This is no doubt related to the fact that the Billy Bishop Airport is not considered part of Waterfront Toronto's "designated waterfront area."

13 Data collected between April and May 2011, as part of an Environics omnibus survey commissioned by Waterfront Toronto. Similar results were obtained in prior polls conducted in 2009 and 2010.

14 Articles compiled from daily newspapers the *Toronto Star*, *Toronto Sun*, *Globe and Mail*, and *National Post*, as well as several weekly and monthly magazines, such as *NOW* and *Spacing*, from the years 2001-2013.

15 For example, several contributing authors to the recent edited collection *Reshaping Toronto's Waterfront* (Desfor and Laidley 2011), who in their earlier writings often treated Waterfront Toronto with considerable suspicion, have since become some of the corporation's most vocal advocates.

16 In some cases, consent may also be obtained from just two government partners. A clause to this effect was included in the initial contribution agreement signed by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario, the City of Toronto, and the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation, July 18, 2001.

17 The former, it should be noted, only after a direct request from city council.

18 With one glaring exemption: any information that "could harm the financial or other interests" of the corporation (Waterfront Toronto 2012).

19 Waterfront Toronto has advocated for some time that its board of directors should be granted increased authority and responsibility in line with corporate best practices, to no avail. Internal documents made available by Waterfront Toronto make reference to a variety of accounting guidelines and reports, such as the Independent Blue Ribbon Panel on Grant and Contribution Programs (Treasury Board of Canada 2006). It should be noted, however, that none of these reports deal specifically with tri-level governance arrangements similar to Waterfront Toronto.

20 This would likely involve amendments to the corporation's enabling legislation. Though it should be noted that the existing Act does afford the province exclusive authority to prescribe new powers via regulation (Ontario 2002, Sec. 3.5).

21 Again, there is historical precedent to consider. During the 1970s and early 80s, the City organized a Central Waterfront Planning Committee, which regularly brought together up to 26 different stakeholders representing various government departments and agencies in a public forum to hash out concerns. During the 1990s, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust successfully arranged numerous public roundtable events involving government representatives. Both deliberative forums were eventually dissolved, but only because many invited members did not demonstrate a sincere interest in the process. If Waterfront Toronto could channel its expertise in community consultation to its government stakeholders, such interest could well be secured.

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The Mowat Centre is an independent public policy research centre located at the School of Public Policy & Governance at the University of Toronto. The Mowat Centre is Ontario's non-partisan, evidence-based voice on public policy. It undertakes collaborative applied policy research, proposes innovative research-driven recommendations, and engages in public dialogue on Canada's most important national issues.

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