

(Draft) MINUTES OF YQNA MEETING #99 Tuesday March 12, 2024

On-line Via ZOOM with approximately 102 participants

Hosted by Ryan Singh

Chaired by Angelo Bertolas, YQNA Chair

1. Angelo Bertolas

Angelo welcomed participants to the YQNA's regular bi-monthly meeting and thanked Ryan Singh for being our chief technical officer tonight.

2. Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Wendat, the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. We pay tribute to their legacy and the legacy of all First Peoples of Canada. Today the traditional meeting place of Toronto is still home to many Indigenous People from across Turtle Island, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work in the communities that have grown in the treaty lands.

3. City Hall Update – Deputy Mayor and City Councillor Ausma Malik

- **City Budget** – The City had pre-budget consultations with the public through meetings and surveys. Key priorities are housing, affordability, protecting public services, public transit, and building a sustainable future for the city, while getting us back on track fiscally as well. A major accomplishment was planning 65,000 new affordable rent-controlled units on City land. This year the City was able to make a \$100 million investment in the multi-unit residential acquisition program over three years. In addition, the city froze TTC fares for this year and restored TTC service to 97% of pre-pandemic service.
- **New Deal between the City and the Province** – The Province had taken the extraordinary action of exempting themselves from all the rules that were in place as it relates to Ontario Place. In November the new deal agreement between the City and the Province was made public. It included uploading the maintenance and upgrade costs of the DVP and Gardiner to the Province, the TTC operating funding of \$330 million over three years, \$600 million in operating support for homeless shelters and over \$750 million for 55 new subway trains for Line 2. This agreement frees up City funds to invest in public and green spaces, expand transit lines, and address urgent priorities like the shelter system. In return, the City agreed to accept the province's authority to advance approvals for Ontario Place. Meanwhile, the City is working closely with the MPP and City staff to keep an eye on what is happening at Ontario Place and its implications. We are also pushing the developer to make a different choice as well by giving them other options. Ausma said she had received questions concerning the implications of the DVP-Gardiner uploading for the Bentway project. She said it meant prioritizing the continuation of the work done by the City, Waterfront Toronto, the Bentway and Waterfront BIA,

to make safe connections and spaces for folks under that structure as well, to make sure that collaboration is being preserved in this new agreement.

- **Harbourfront Centre** – There are now regular meetings with Harbourfront Centre and key City divisions to discuss issues such as the disrepair of the Amsterdam bridge and ensuring that Harbourfront serves both our cultural and recreational needs. While the leadership process is unclear, Ausma is focusing on serious Harbourfront concerns, like seizing opportunities to commit to seasonal skating at the site, and the creation of a regular forum between Harbourfront Centre and the Community to have a proactive dialogue and collaboration. The new CEO is expected to be in place by June. The CEO posting is public now, and Ausma will ensure that the posting is shared with YQNA. There will be some activities around the Centre’s renovations. Angelo said YQNA suggested that Harbourfront expand the skillsets that are necessary for the CEO role.
- **Island airport** – The Island Airport includes a considerable amount of City land. Any significant review or decisions of the future of the Island Airport lands must be made through a transparent and democratic process. All discussions about the Island Airport that require City approvals must prioritize the public interest and proper public engagement. PortsToronto has said it is required to meet Transport Canada's Runway End Safety Area (RESA) requirement by mid-2027. PortsToronto is expected to seek an amendment to the Tripartite agreement. It is important that enough time is taken to make an informed decision; it should not be rushed.
- **East Waterfront LRT** – Waterfront Toronto and the City have been planning for the next phase of design work to bring segments two and three to 60% following City Council approval this past November, for funding to advance the project. The final draft of the agreement between Waterfront Toronto and the City is expected.
- **Rees Park** – Waterfront Toronto is working with the City to review feedback on programming and goals that was provided by the stakeholder advisory committee that includes the YQNA. Next step will be to come back to stakeholders with an assessment of what's been heard. A tender for a design team and the construction is planned to begin in 2026.
- **Short-Term Rental Bylaw** – City staff are bringing a report to the Planning and Housing Committee in April, with changes to the short-term rental bylaw based on several public meetings that were held last October.
- **Micro Mobility** – In July 2023, City Council directed staff to develop a micromobility strategy to identify what types of micromobility are allowed, where they can be used, and to address opportunities and challenges that micromobility presents. Presentation materials from the town hall held on February 29 are at [Developing a Micromobility Strategy – City of Toronto](#). The site will be updated with a summary of feedback received at the Town Hall.
- **Helicopters** – Meeting participants expressed concern about helicopters from the new and expanding helicopter port at the east end of the harbour. Ausma said she will follow up with a response.

- **Street Performers** – Residents have expressed concern about increased noise as we move into the warmer season, with street performers using amplifiers. Ausma said recent changes to the City’s noise bylaws should help in terms of appropriate enforcement around issues of noise, especially amplified sound.
- **Asylum Seekers** – It was asked if the Federal government has stepped up to meet their funding commitments for asylum seekers. There has been some movement on certain commitments. The Federal government is looking at sites close to the airport for a Welcome Centre. One of the important pieces that the mayor was able to negotiate was a commitment around the Canada Ontario housing benefit, so that there is an opportunity for folks who are asylum seekers and or refugees to have openings to access safe shelter.

4. Provincial Update —MPP Chris Glover

- **Housing Crisis** – Chris is pushing at the provincial level. The province did step in with \$60 million to help with that project.
- **Fourth Annual Community Awards** – The 2024 Community Recognition Ceremony was held to honour those persons who contributed to build our community. The recipients that Chris particularly wanted to point out were:
 - Cindy Wilkey and John Wilson, who led the West Don Lands Community for 26 years. Their work helped lead to the creation of projects like the Corktown Common, the Distillery, the redesigned Queens Quay, and the Pan Am Village area. They were also central to saving the Foundry site and are heavily engaged in the fight to save Ontario Place.
 - Kevin Lee, who was the director of Scadding Court Community Centre. He built community gardens and created Market 707, the shipping container market at Dundas and Bathurst.
- **Chris’s Community Updates** – There are two new features in Glover’s newsletter: [Seniors for Climate Action Now \(SCAN! Toronto\)](#) and a History Section. The History article this month is about Toronto’s most terrifying Guy Fawkes Night in 1864. You can sign up for Chris’s updates at [Chris Glover - Spadina–Fort York \(chrisglovermpp.ca\)](#).
- **Birds** – Bald eagles have nested in Toronto for the first time. This speaks to the need at the provincial level for bird-safe windows; Chris has a bill before legislature to mandate bird-safe windows as part of the Ontario building code. It also speaks to the need for an environmental assessment at Ontario Place, since that plan calls for a giant glass dome on a bird migration route.
- **Bill 154** – This bill was rushed in by the Provincial Government and passed in December. It attempts to give the government the power to override the environmental Bill of Rights, the Environmental Protection Act and the Heritage Act. It also states that if a government official has broken the law or committed breach of contract, breach of tort, or abuse of government power, he or she cannot be taken to court. Ontario Place For All and Ontario Place Protectors are challenging this law in the courts.

5. Federal Update – MP Kevin Vuong was not available to provide an update at this meeting.

6. Island Airport Discussion - Guest speakers Gil Penalosa (founder of “8 80 Cities” and international expert on public spaces) and Ed Hore (chair of Waterfront for All, environmentalist, lawyer and kayaker) addressed the accelerated public discussions around the future of the 210 acres now used by the declining Island Airport. See much of their presentations on YouTube at [Will the Island Airport Become Toronto's Central Park?](#)

- A decision needs to be made by the city concerning the Billy Bishop Airport soon – possibly in the next year or so. The entire airport is governed by the Tripartite Agreement, signed in 1983 by the City of Toronto, the Federal Ministry of Transportation and Ports Ontario. This agreement set up ground rules for the airport and the lease of the land’s 210 acres. This agreement expires in 2033 without any provision for renewal. However, there are several amendments to the Canadian Aviation Regulations which requires Runway End Safety Areas (RESA) to be built by January 2027 if the airport is to remain in operation. Ports Toronto estimated the cost in 2021 at \$50 million-\$130 million and has asked the City for an extension of the Tripartite agreement, since they will need to borrow money to pay for RESA, and decades to pay back the loan. It is imperative that the City does not rush the decision to extend the Tripartite agreement.
- Gil emphasised that waterfronts should be public to everyone; airports are not public. Most large cities in the world have gotten rid of their downtown airports. It would make more sense to use the land as a downtown park like Central Park in New York City.
- It costs three times as much to fly planes from the Island Airport than from Pearson, where Porter has been moving its flights and switched to jets. It does not make sense to spend the money to build the Runway End Safety Areas if the Island Airport turns into a White Elephant.
- We now have excellent transportation from downtown to Pearson: the UP Express runs every 15 minutes from Union Station and only takes 25 minutes to reach Pearson. The question is whether everyone should subsidize the small number of people that use the Island Airport.

7. Waterfront BIA – Tim Kocur, Executive Director

- Tim said that the Waterfront BIA plans to release a retail review/strategy soon, based on discussions with residents and visitors last summer. As a Business Association, the Waterfront BIA wants people to visit the entire Waterfront. So it is trying to find ways to expand on east-west connectivity, encouraging people to explore the whole waterfront. It also hopes to improve signage so people are encouraged to explore more of the neighbourhood.

8. Adjournment – Angelo Bertolas

- Next YQNA meeting projected for Tuesday, May 14th 2024.
- Angelo reminded people that YQNA is a volunteer organization with rising expenses. Donations are greatly appreciated. Please visit our website, yqna.ca, and click on the Donate button.