

MINUTES OF YQNA MEETING #109 Monday March 9, 2026

In person at Radisson Blu hotel, 249 Queens Quay W.

Co-chaired by Ed Hore and Neal Colgrass

[Full video here](#) on YouTube

1. 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.

2. Neal Colgrass – Co-chair

- Neal welcomed all attendees and opened the meeting.

3. Massimo DeMaria – chief operating officer of Harbourfront Centre & Joanna Sorelli – senior site operations manager of Harbourfront Centre

- Massimo introduced highlights from the past winter including successful programming, notably the [31st Kuumba festival](#) celebrating Black arts and culture.
- Joanna shared that schools participated in curling activities at the ice rink, which had a partnership with Canadian Tire, promoting physical activity.
- Massimo updated ongoing revitalization efforts including repairs to Canada Square and critical infrastructure work, such as repairs to docks and public space, planned for completion by the end of May.
- On the upcoming World Cup 2026, Massimo anticipated over 300,000 people visiting for FIFA with visitors up to 3 million. While Harbourfront Centre is not an official site of FIFA 2026, it will be a high traffic place.
- Cathy Loblaw has left Harbourfront Centre, and the search for a new CEO is ongoing.

4. Ausma Malik – Deputy Mayor and City Councillor

- Regarding Ontario Premier Doug Ford's [decision](#) to take over Toronto's Island Airport and expand its runway, Malik said any significant decisions on the airport and city must be done publicly through a transparent process — she has always been firm in this. While there is no detailed proposal available and the plan is developing, Malik said any discussion of changes to the airport must align with the City's vision of the Waterfront, which people can safely enjoy. The vision includes important priorities around housing, economic development, the public realm, recreation, green spaces, and of course any related traffic and transportation.
- Doug Ford also [intends](#) to build a new Metro Toronto Convention Centre at Exhibition Place. Ausma said she is supportive of the Metro Toronto Convention Centre's redevelopment on its current site. As the current Chair of Exhibition Place, Ausma reiterated that Exhibition Place is a City asset and any unilateral moves to seize it must be challenged.
- Ausma said Amsterdam Bridge will reopen by early June and she will continue to move the Waterfront East LRT project forward, as an update report is supposed to come before the summer. ([\\$3B in government funding](#) was soon dedicated to the project.)
- On the One Young development application, Ausma said there will be dedicated meetings for YQNA and other neighborhood associations with city planning staff and her office to discuss the application of new residential towers in the South Block.
- Sign up for Ausma Malik's newsletter [here](#).

5. Chris Glover – MPP

- Glover stressed the Waterfront's significance as a tourist attraction, drawing 18 million visitors annually, and warned against potential negative impacts from provincial interventions.
- He criticized recent government actions which allow the government to bypass laws, undermining democratic processes and community rights. Bill 5, for example, allows the provincial government to declare any part of the province a special economic zone where the government can break any law, including heritage laws, environmental and labour laws. The government can also decide who the laws apply to. [Ontario Place Protectors](#), a group fighting the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act (ROPA), seeks community support in their legal battle against both provincial and federal governments. In January, the Supreme Court of Canada [granted](#) the group leave to appeal.
- Ford's government [hired](#) two researchers from the CD Howe Institute to study why our Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) scores are going down. Glover

claimed that the CD Howe Institute has been an opponent of public education and an advocate for a privatized education system for decades, while schools need to see funding restored, class sizes reduced and teachers brought back on the job.

- He is looking for people who are interested in joining his working groups on these issues. Contact him [here](#) and sign up for Glover's newsletter [here](#).

6. Jason Thorne – Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning at the City of Toronto

- Jason discussed Toronto's rapid growth, highlighting the need for 30,000 new homes annually to accommodate an expected population increase. He highlighted that City Planning works with many other divisions across Toronto to make sure that critical city initiatives are aligned with anticipated growth.

- **Population increase.** In 2023 and 2024, Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) was the fastest growing metropolitan region in the US and Canada. In 2024, it grew by 50,000 more people than the next fastest growing urban region, which was New York City. We are on pace to hit a population of about 4 million people over the next 25 years. To accommodate a population of another million, we're looking at somewhere in the range of 30,000 new homes per year for the next 25 years to accommodate that amount of growth.
- **Housing affordability.** Historically, a house would cost maybe three times the median income — now it's over five times. Pressures also exist on the rental side. For example a registered nurse, who might earn \$80,000-\$85,000 a year, could afford a rent of about \$2,100 a month based on an affordability metric. But at the end of 2025, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment was \$2,500 a month.
- **Uneven growth.** Growth across the city has been disproportionate over a 20-year period. Between 2016 and 2021, four wards in the city of Toronto, including our harbourfront, accommodated 93% of the population growth in that period.
- **City planning.** In a nutshell, the province sets the rules. And those rules have been changing in recent years. The City now has less authority and less control over things like protecting heritage buildings, ensuring environmental sustainability, trying to seek a good urban design and architectural quality. We also see a much more active provincial government directly zoning different properties around the province through what are called Minister's Zoning Orders. Recent legislative changes have also affected what municipalities can require from new developments. The good news is that most recent growth is in areas where growth was already planned.

- **Planning initiatives.** *Gentle density: garden suites, laneway suites or multiplexes:* over the next 25 years, Toronto can fit around 123,000 units built within this gentle density parameter. *Mid-rise housing: six-story, 60-unit mid-rise buildings:* In 2024, Council approved as-of-right development for mid-rise housing on major streets. *Taller mid-rise buildings: 6 to 12 stories:* In 2025, Council approved 282 kilometers of new avenues around the city to accommodate this kind of taller mid-rise development. Higher density development will continue to be focused downtown and the city's urban centres.
- **Affordable housing.** Toronto has a unique program called rental replacement. If you're demolishing a rental building that's more than six units, you are required to replace them, same size, same scale, similar rents, in your new development. This has protected over 4,000 units for the last five years. A City program called MURA (multi-unit residential assistance program) ensures that the City will provide funding for community groups to purchase market rental buildings to protect their affordability.
- **Planning for employment.** There's over 10 million square metres of new commercial/employment development in the pipeline. Seven thousand hectares of land is protected for employment, accounting for 11% of land and 25% of jobs. The City requires new development to include retail/commercial on the ground floor.
- **Mobility planning.** If a million more people are added to Toronto, that likely amounts to two million more trips. The TTC carries about 1.3 million trips per day. Now we should figure out a way to add two million trips.
- **Culture is infrastructure.** Christopher Hume said that culture is to the contemporary city what roads, sewers, and bridges were in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Since 1990, developers have contributed over 300 public art installations around Toronto amid new development. The City's urban design program includes a civic improvement fund that seeks to create small, interesting, joyful public spaces around the city.

7. **Rei Tasaka – Director, Urban Design at Waterfront Toronto & Patrick Meredith-Karam – Senior Manager for Transportation, Waterfront Toronto**

- Rei and Patrick presented a brief overview of the 2020 Marine Strategy Initiative, the Seabus Feasibility Study and the East-West Water Shuttle Pilot program that is going to launch this year.
- In 2024, Waterfront Toronto in partnership with PortsToronto and CreateTO [launched](#) a pick-up and drop-off pilot program called Kiss n' Sail to provide short-term docking opportunities for private vessels in the Inner Harbour at Yonge Street Slip, to streamline docking activity and improve safety for all users.

- The Seabus Feasibility Study [tries to determine](#) whether a fixed-route permanent sea bus system could happen on our Waterfront. The key finding: the success of the higher-capacity fixed-route sea bus system will rely on increased demand in future years.
- To understand the real demands, the East-West Water Shuttle Pilot program will be implemented first. Two new docks will be built on the Waterfront, one at Portland Slip and one on Ookwemin Minising, and a new east-west focused water shuttle service will connect the two docks, with the goal of running this summer.

8. Dorsa Alizadeh-Shabani – operations manager of the Waterfront BIA

- Dorsa shared the events including Sugar Shack at Harbourfront Centre and Island Awakening on the Toronto Islands. See more at [Waterfront BIA's homepage](#).

9. Margarete Akens – treasurer

- Margarete reported YQNA's current balance ended with \$2,248, which was quite healthy. She suggested people donate to YQNA by clicking on the "[Make a Donation](#)" button at the YQNA website.

The next meeting will be on Zoom Tuesday, May 12, 2026.