

**Waterfront  
Design Review  
Panel Members**

Bruce Kuwabara,  
Chair

George Baird

Paul Bedford

Peter Clewes

Claude Cormier

Renee Daoust

Siamak Hariri

Anne McLroy

Janet Rosenberg

Brigitte Shim

Greg Smallenberg

Betsy Williamson

May 11, 2010

Mr. John Campbell, President & CEO  
Waterfront Toronto  
20 Bay Street, Suite 1310  
Toronto ON M5J 2N8

Dear Mr. Campbell,

Why would the City of Toronto compromise the vision and potential for the Lower Don Lands?

Waterfront Toronto is a leading force in transforming under-utilized lands into a comprehensive vision for a 'new Blue Edge' for metropolitan Toronto. The Lower Don Lands is part of a larger vision linking Lake Ontario Park, the West Don Lands and the Central Waterfront. These are not isolated, singular plans randomly butting up against each other. Each is part of a comprehensive, interconnected system of linked open spaces that together will facilitate large-scale public access and enjoyment of Toronto's waterfront.

The vision for the Don River is the result of an international design competition that has garnered broad local support and international acclaim. It balances naturalization by shifting the river mouth south of the Keating Channel, and urbanization with a series of mixed-use communities around the renaturalized river mouth.

The City's decision to locate four ice hockey rinks and their common, support and parking facilities on this new precinct is short-sighted and shortchanges the vision to develop a vibrant civic community on the River's mouth and to create a crucial link to Lake Ontario Park.

The more recent decision by the City to abandon further study of stacking the ice hockey facilities contradicts the design team's preferred solution and has precipitated the resignation of Ken Greenberg, a respected urban planner from that team.

As evidence of its deep concern, The Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel held a special meeting outside of its regularly scheduled meetings to address this issue and to reaffirm its commitment and support of the award-winning Lower Don Plan and its urban design principles.

Following review of the various site planning options, the Design Review Panel strongly recommends reconsideration of the location. The panel recommends that the city recognize the character and quality of the competition-winning Lower Don plan and think about the hockey facility in the big picture of the waterfront, its planned precincts, and its future.

The Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel strongly recommends that further consideration be given to exploring other urban options. If the ice pads stay where they are then they must embrace an urban solution. If they move south of the ship channel then a new site plan must be developed that is sensitive to the context.

One option might be the site south of Unwin, closer to Cherry Beach, if considered in the context of the best long-term use of this prime location at Lake Ontario Park and the water's edge. The panel would be willing to consider a different site plan, recognizing that the lack of servicing and sewers may require a greener, innovative off-the-grid solution to deal with waste management. However, there would have to be a review of substantial servicing costs on deep bedrock and whether this would be more efficient on lands developed for residential versus recreational facilities. There would also be significant traffic on Cherry through the Lower Don Lands to this type of regional recreational facility that people tend to drive to, despite the availability of public transit.

If the site South of Unwin is determined as the best use of the land, the design of the hockey facilities must be integrated with the landscape of willows, dunes, and natural habitats on the Leslie Street Spit and the outdoor sports fields, linear bike paths and recreational activities being developed at Cherry Beach and Tommy Thompson Park.

Ultimately, the Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel does not support the sprawled out design of the proposed sports complex. It directly contradicts Toronto Waterfront's sustainable, transit-oriented, and mixed-use vision to create "the City connected to the Lake".

Are we building a suburb or a city?