

Ontario Government Summary Report: Ontario Place Public Survey and October 2021 Information Sessions

Online Survey

From August 30 to October 27, 2021, more than 7, 200 people participated in the Government of Ontario's online survey to share feedback on:

- how they saw themselves using a modern and revitalized Ontario Place
- what features are important to them

Feedback from the survey is helping the Government of Ontario understand what's important to the people of Ontario in redeveloping the site.

What we heard

Ontario Place Features

Top five features that respondents felt were important to include at Ontario Place:

1. Open public access/realm spaces
2. Access to the lake
3. Outdoor gardens/green spaces/conservation
4. Live music and performance venue
5. Family-friendly recreational play space

When asked, the majority of respondents agreed that waterfront views and access, washrooms, resting areas (including benches and picnic tables), and open trails were features that would make Ontario Place most welcoming for all people. They also suggested the following additional features:

- Healthy food options
- Shade/trees
- Affordability
- Access to free public spaces
- Accessible design (e.g., for wheelchairs)
- Restaurants

Heritage Features

When asked about existing heritage features, respondents ranked walkways, trails, lagoons and bridges, and the Cinesphere as most important, followed by the pods and water features (e.g., marina, pavilion bay, inner channel).

"Bring back IMAX and be proud of this heritage."

Transportation

When asked how they most preferred to get to Ontario Place, respondents selected the following as their top choice:

- Public Transit (28 per cent)
- Driving (27 per cent)
- Walking (21 per cent)

"The ability to travel through transit to easily access Ontario place, making it accessible."

Programming

Respondents identified a variety of programming that would be of interest. For example, when asked about the top three types of science-based programming and activities they would like to see at Ontario Place, they selected:

- Solar and night sky observing (69 per cent)
- Programming linked to Lake Ontario (66 per cent)
- Interactive exhibitions (63 per cent)

Ontario Place as a learning space was a key theme in the feedback we received. Two-thirds of respondents strongly agree or somewhat agree that they see Ontario Place as a field trip destination for school-aged children. This remained true for respondents whether or not they had children.

In addition to being a learning space, cultural programming was also noted as important:

"I plan to use Ontario Place for recreational activities, introducing out-of-province friends to Ontario's history/culture, and enjoying a safe, green, and active public space."

On-site Activities

Half of those who responded to the survey have visited Ontario Place within the last two years. Only three per cent of respondents have never visited Ontario Place.

Top five activities/features respondents participated in when they last visited Ontario Place were:

1. Walk/bike trails and park
2. Live music/performance
3. Films and programs in the Cinesphere
4. Food stations/restaurants
5. Festivals and events, including private events

October 2021 Public Information Sessions

In addition to collecting public input from the Government of Ontario's online survey, the Ontario government held two virtual information sessions on October 13 and 27, 2021 that were facilitated by Bespoke Collective. More than 450 people from across Ontario participated.

At the sessions, participants asked questions and shared their thoughts on a range of themes. Among the questions and comments received, common themes included:

- Access to open space
- Environmental and heritage impact
- Affordability
- Public engagement

Below are frequently asked questions that were submitted by participants, accompanied by answers. In an effort to avoid duplication, some questions were grouped together.

Redevelopment Process

“How were the three redevelopment concept partnerships selected?”

We put out a Call for Development that asked applicants to submit redevelopment concepts that were unique, yet financially viable and sustainable.

The process that the Ontario government used for selecting preferred partners was flexible and allowed for a range of ideas on how the site could be used.

All submissions were assessed against the following criteria:

- Alignment with the Ontario government's vision
- Concept viability
- Delivery certainty
- Costs and benefits to the province

Following the assessment process, the three concepts selected demonstrated strong alignment with the assessment criteria.

“How are the redevelopment partners working together to create a holistic plan for the site (vs. working on independent parcels), given that the site was conceived and developed as a holistic ecosystem?”

All partners are working together to create a shared experience at Ontario Place that is enjoyable and easy to access. The province will maintain oversight of the entire Ontario Place redevelopment process to ensure this becomes reality.

From a design and redevelopment perspective, the Ontario government is establishing site-wide public realm design standards that current and future partners must adhere to. In addition, the Ontario government is retaining full control over comprehensive site-wide approvals for the entire redevelopment project.

Access to open space

“How much public green space and waterfront access will be publicly available once redevelopment is complete?”

Ontario Place has remained open to the public for recreational use throughout the Call for Development process and will continue to be open throughout the next stages in the redevelopment project, subject to safety considerations during construction.

Following redevelopment, more than two-thirds of the land at Ontario Place will be open for free public access on a year-round basis. Existing destinations, such as Trillium Park and the William G. Davis Trail, will be fully retained and integrated into any new public realm redevelopment allowing visitors to walk the entire perimeter of the site with full access to the waterfront, just as they can today.

Environmental and heritage impact

“Why did you choose the three partners before you conducted the environmental assessments and heritage impact assessments? What will you do if those assessments indicate that these proposals are not a good fit?”

The redevelopment partners are obligated to protect the environment through federal and provincial legislative requirements (e.g., Fisheries Act, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Birds Convention Act, Conservation Authorities Act), municipal requirements (for example, tree bylaws) and municipal planning processes.

In addition, the Ontario government has completed a series of investigations to understand the plants, animals and ecosystems currently on site. This information will be used to ensure that redevelopment plans are done in a sensitive and appropriate manner and follow all federal and provincial statutory processes for habitat protection and provision.

With regards to heritage, we are working on a strategic conservation plan for the property that will ensure any future work appropriately considers the cultural heritage features of the site in all redevelopment plans. The partners and Ontario government will also complete Heritage Impact Assessments.

“Ontario Place has heritage significance. Will redevelopment take this into account?”

Yes! Many heritage features on the site contribute to its provincial heritage value, and the Ontario government is required to protect those heritage features.

We will undertake all necessary heritage impact assessments, consultations, and approvals outlined in the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The Ontario Place Statement of Cultural Heritage Value and the Strategic Conservation Plan, once final, will be used to support the redevelopment of Ontario Place.

Affordability

“How are you going to make the new Ontario Place affordable?”

The site will remain open to the public 365 days a year with free public access to more than two-thirds of the land at Ontario Place, including a waterfront experience that can be enjoyed by all. Visitors will be able to walk around the majority of the site as there will continue to be no admission fee to enter Ontario Place. There will be a fee to access facilities operated by the three partners. However, these fees have not been determined.

“How much will the redevelopment cost taxpayers and how much will the government spend to prepare the site for the three private operators?”

Total costs are being refined as we undertake the technical work to better understand what needs to be done. Ontario Place requires significant capital investment to prepare the site for the future as there have been no material upgrades to the Ontario Place site in nearly 20 years. Site readiness work will include shoreline repair and flood mitigation, upgrades to utilities and servicing, repairs to the pods and Cinesphere, upgrades to roads and bridge infrastructure and other technical work required to redevelop the Ontario Place site.

We are undertaking the redevelopment process in a manner that will provide Ontarians with the best value for money, minimizing costs to the Ontario taxpayer by maximizing cost sharing opportunities with our public and private sector partners.

Public engagement

“How can the public provide input into the redevelopment?”

We are committed to engaging and keeping the public and stakeholders informed throughout the redevelopment process. The input we received through the public survey and virtual public information sessions will inform our redevelopment plans and areas of focus in upcoming technical consultations.

On December 14, 2021, public engagement related to site-wide environmental assessment, heritage, and site servicing began with a technical information session. Engagement will continue throughout 2022 and 2023.

“How are you engaging with Indigenous communities to ensure their interests are respected?”

The ministry has been actively consulting with Indigenous communities on the redevelopment project, and we will continue to seek communities' input and ensure their rights and interests are respected.

The Ontario government will continue to explore opportunities for meaningful engagement and representation with Indigenous communities in the redevelopment project.