

# April 12th 2022: Visioning Workshop Summary Report



## Background

The Ontario government is bringing Ontario Place back to life, making it a remarkable world-class, year-round destination that will include family-friendly entertainment, public and event spaces, parkland, and waterfront access.

The government's vision for Ontario Place will provide people of all ages with something to enjoy, including enhanced public spaces that will make up approximately two-thirds of the 155-acre site, as well as increased access to the waterfront, beach, pools, health and wellness services, as well as an indoor-outdoor live music and performance venue.

It's been an entire decade since Ontario Place closed its water and amusement parks. This resulted in the site going from a bustling, vibrant attraction to more than half of it being unused and in need of repair.

The Environmental Assessment Act (EA Act) applies to the government-led site repair activities. These will be assessed using the Ministry of Infrastructure Public Work Class Environmental Assessment (PW Class EA) as a Category C undertaking. On March 16, 2022, a Category C Environmental Assessment was launched with a Notice of Commencement posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario and the Ontario Place project website ([EngageOntarioPlace.ca](https://engageontarioplace.ca)).

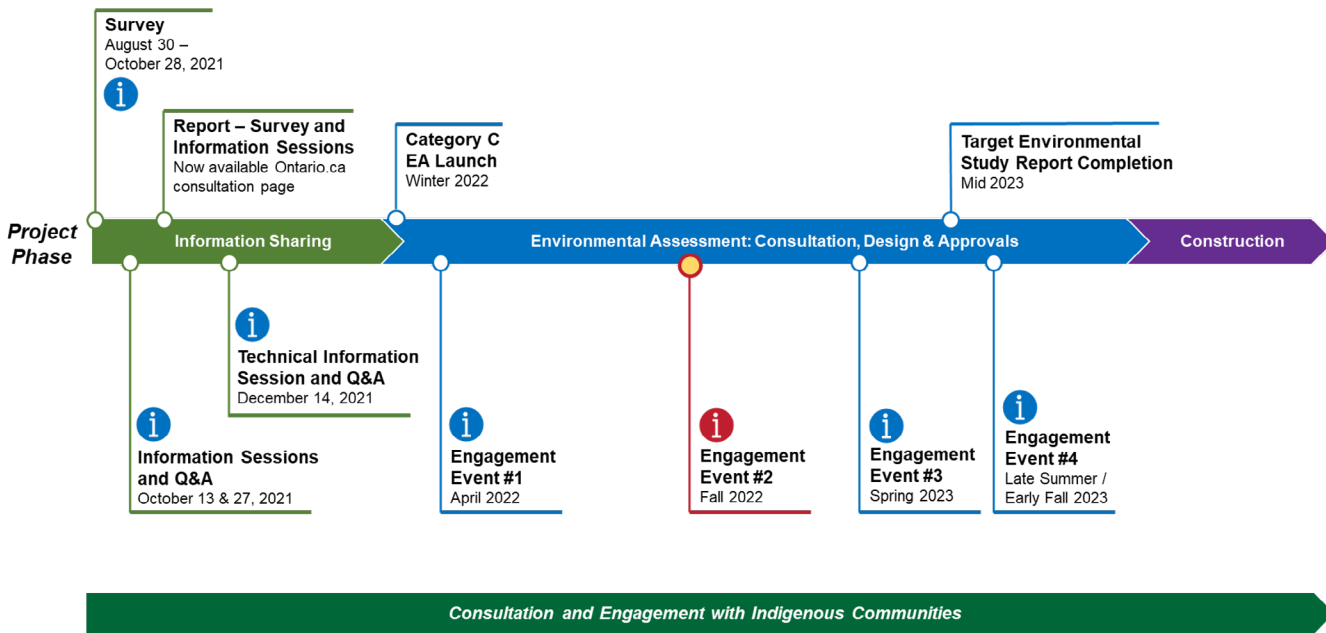
The PW Class EA defines public consultation as “the process by which interested and/or affected individuals and organizations both receive information on the proposed undertaking and provide input into the decision-making process” and states the purpose is “to provide opportunities for members of the public to contribute to and influence decisions”.

As the redevelopment project moves forward, the government will engage with the public and stakeholders to ensure perspectives from across the province are recognized and considered. The government will continue to seek input from Indigenous communities, the public and stakeholders and work with the City of Toronto to bring this site back to life.

The first of four public consultation events as part of the Environmental Assessment and public realm design process for Ontario Place was held on April 12, 2022.

## Overview

Between April 2022 and fall 2023, a series of public consultation events will be held where the public can learn more about and provide input on design of the public spaces and the Environmental Assessment process for Ontario Place. Feedback received at each public consultation event will inform the next steps in the Environmental Assessment process:



On April 12, 2022, at the first public engagement event of the EA process, 140 participants participated in a two-hour virtual visioning workshop focused on Ontario Place’s public realm, including public space and parkland. The goal of the event was to give participants an opportunity to learn about the Ontario Place redevelopment project, including the Class Environmental Assessment process, and to share the experiences they want to have within Ontario Place’s public spaces to help inform the design of the public realm.

Throughout the workshop, participants provided feedback verbally and via interactive tools, such as Mentimeter and Miro. Participants also joined smaller group discussions where they had the opportunity to provide more in-depth and focused feedback.

The virtual workshop was facilitated by Bespoke Collective to inform the work of the technical consultants, Jacobs, who is leading the Class Environmental Assessment, and the design of the public realm, LANDinc and Martha Schwartz Partners, on behalf of Infrastructure Ontario (IO) and the then Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Cultural Industries (MHSTCI).

## Facilitation Approach

As part of the event, participants were divided into 12 smaller groups for a 60-minute breakout room session. In each group, a facilitator guided participants through three activities, facilitating conversations about what is most valued at Ontario Place and discussing ideas and concerns for the future public space. The primary aim of the smaller group discussions was to seek feedback from participants to help inform the design of the future public spaces at Ontario Place.

At a previous consultation event, when asked about how they’d like to be engaged, attendees said that they wanted to participate virtually in small groups. Additionally, this approach was informed by the City of Toronto’s COVID-19 measures, which at the time prohibited large in-person public gatherings.



# Key Findings

1. When participants were asked what single word describes Ontario Place, the top responses were:
  - b. Park, green or nature (14.1%)
  - c. Swimming (12.5%)
  - d. Lake or water (12.5%)
  - e. Entertainment or events (6.3%)
  - f. Family (4.7%)
  - g. Fun (4.7%)

In general, participants had positive associations to Ontario Place, using words such as historic, adventure, recreation, pride and destination. However, some participants commented on the current challenges of Ontario Place being old and isolated.

2. When participants were asked about their greatest hope for the future of Ontario Place's public realm, the top three themes present within their comments were:
  - a. **Nature** (29.2%): Participants used words such as nature, trees, environment, flowers, forest, green space, rewilding, wildlife, and habitat restoration.
  - b. **Public access** (27.1%): Many participants expressed a desire to maintain public access to nature and the lake. Some participants also submitted the words inclusive, barrier-free and accessible..
  - c. **Swimming** (8.3%): Some participants expressed that they want to be able to swim at Ontario Place.
3. From a set of 40 images, participants were asked to select four images that best reflected the experience they want to have within the public spaces at Ontario Place. The following is a list of the top four images selected by participants across all breakout groups:
  - a. **Rest and relaxation:** The top image depicted a woman enjoying relaxation next to water and under the shade of a tree. Some of those who selected this image identified a need for areas to have space for quiet reflection, solitude, meditation, peace, tranquility, rest, relaxation, and connection to nature and the water.
  - b. **Water activities:** The second image showed two kayakers in a narrow, overgrown channel. Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining public access to the water for recreational activities, such as swimming, paddle-boating, kayaking and rowing.
  - c. **Walking, running and cycling:** This image showed cyclists, joggers and people walking using a paved park path on a bright, sunny day. Participants stated a need for connected paths and trails that enable walking, running, and cycling.
  - d. **Entertainment and events:** This image showed a band performing on a raft in a wetland as the audience watched from the shore. Participants referenced wanting to experience outdoor entertainment and events, such as performances, concerts, screenings, public art, festivals and drive-in movies..

4. When participants were asked what they envision for the future of Ontario Place’s public realm, the following are the experiences and attributes that participants most wanted to have or see within the public spaces at Ontario Place:
  - a. Amenities for swimming such as showers and changing rooms
  - b. Maintain natural landscape (i.e., more trees and green spaces, rewilding, preservation, biodiversity, minimal intervention, well-integrated public space design, Trillium Park as an example)
  - c. Spaces for gathering (i.e., picnics, yoga, informal gatherings, spaces for friends and families)
  - d. Year-round activities or programming (i.e., cross-country skiing)
  - e. Affordable, inclusive and accessible public space<sup>1</sup>
  - f. Cost- and barrier-free public access

1. In addition to being accessible to the public, the term “accessible” or “accessibility” was also discussed in relation to the quality of being easily reached, entered, or used by people who have a disability, which includes wheelchair accessibility.

When participants were asked if there is anything else they would like to see at Ontario Place, they recommended:

- a. Swimming
  - b. Public amenities such as washrooms and seating
  - c. More food, dining or snack options (i.e., street food, pop-ups, food trucks)
  - d. Flexible public spaces
  - e. Year-round programming and entertainment (i.e., outdoor screenings, jazz performances, festivals)
  - f. Birdwatching
  - g. Community gardens
  - h. Botanical garden
  - i. Japanese garden
  - j. LEED-certified landscaping
  - k. Intergenerational activities
  - l. Ski hills
  - m. Environmental education and engagement (i.e., environmental research center or laboratory on climate change)
  - n. Cultural centre dedicated to arts, Indigenous cultures, the environment or diverse local communities
  - o. Fire pits
  - p. Parking (i.e., underground parking, removal or greening of surface parking lots)
  - q. Integration with public transportation
  - r. Signage
  - s. Lighting
  - t. Native plants that attract Monarch butterflies
  - u. Preservation of historic architecture and landscape
  - v. Opportunities for local businesses
  - w. Preservation of Japanese Temple Bell
  - x. Consideration to natural heritage
  - y. More focus on community
5. During the breakout room session, participants shared feedback on the following:
    - a. **Private development:** Some participants expressed their concerns about the development by Therme, particularly regarding the spa, and the use of glass and palm trees on the site. Some expressed their distrust with private developers; some called for their removal from the project. Some participants anticipated that private developers would inhibit free and public access to the site, create physical barriers and security measures, and “destroy what is most loved about Ontario Place.” One participant noted the choice of non-Ontario-based developers for the project.

