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A 2011 global index of 130 major city-regions conducted by the prestigious Economist magazine ranked Toronto the world's fourth most livable city, yet our continued prosperity and sustained livability will only occur if we keep working in a focused and strategic way.

As we know, the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, which were completed on-time and on-budget, stand out as a true Canadian success story that showcased our nation to the world.

Now a similar opportunity knocks for the GTA: hosting a world's fair, or expo as it's commonly known. An expo is a global event that unites people, instills pride and is a major catalyst for jobs and economic growth. It could present the same transformative infrastructure and city-building opportunities as Expo 67 did for Montreal and Expo 86 did for Vancouver.

Major expos are held every five years. Shanghai's Expo 2010 welcomed an astounding 72 million visitors, Milan is now building Expo 2015, and the final bids for Expo 2020 are currently being evaluated. While 2025 seems a long way off, a formal bid to the governing expo body, the Bureau International des Expositions, must be submitted on May 1, 2016. Once a city is chosen, an eight-year period of planning, design and construction will begin in earnest, unleashing significant economic development for the region.

Yes, we have been down this road before. A prior Toronto expo effort collapsed in 2006, when the needed agreement of all three levels of government could not be secured. A future bid must have the support of the province, which helps underwrite it (as it did with the Pan Am Games); from the city, which helps with planning, organizational, and site issues; and from the federal government, which pitches the bid on our behalf, nation-to-nation.

The economic case for an expo, as demonstrated by PricewaterhouseCoopers for our prior bid, is compelling. It could result in:

- 143,000 jobs — an average of 17,000 jobs per year over eight years, generating \$8.4 billion in wages and salaries.
- \$13.5 billion of new value-added GDP (or economic activity) within Canada; \$8.1 billion of that would be generated in Greater Toronto.
- \$5.3 billion in brand-new revenues generated solely by the expo — \$2.7 billion to the federal treasury, \$2 billion for the province and 500 million for Ontario municipalities.
- A co-ordinated global marketing effort showcasing the GTA, Ontario, and Canada as a dynamic economic destination.
- Over 400 acres (175 hectares) of clean, newly usable, serviced land for future development, turning a mostly derelict Port Lands area into an urban jewel — a clean, green and sustainable community on a revitalized waterfront.
- A huge boost in tourism: An expo lasts for six months (from May 1 to Oct. 31) and would welcome approximately 40 million visitors to the site (an average of 225,000 each day). A 2009 tourism report prepared by MPP Greg Sorbara called for the doubling of tourism receipts in Ontario — Expo 2025 can help make that happen.



The colourful opening ceremonies of Expo 2005 in Nagakute, central Japan (March 25, 2005)

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A motion going to the June meeting of Toronto City Council this week calls for input from the city, province and federal governments regarding a potential expo bid, and for staff to report back in March 2013, well after a thorough review of the waterfront has been completed and received.

The report would include an analysis of how an expo could produce action on existing plans in key areas: investment, the environment, transportation infrastructure, marketing Toronto abroad, tourism, arts and culture, urban planning, research and innovation, a renewed waterfront, and showcasing Canada's ethnocultural diversity to the world.

It would examine core principles that could underpin a GTA expo, ranging from how we can develop the most innovative, technologically advanced expo while ensuring that it's the most socially responsible and environmentally sustainable fair ever held. It will deal with how GTA could successfully deliver a 2025 expo on-time and deficit-free by including broad private-sector participation.

Expo 2025 would be an economic generator that would attract investment to the GTA, clean up the Port Lands, build infrastructure, boost tourism, create jobs, and show the very best of our region, province and country.

An expo could build a dynamic legacy for Toronto for decades to come — a legacy of new transit, environmental cleanup, affordable housing, social and community improvements, and inclusion. It has too much potential benefit for us to simply take a pass.

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