

FIFA World Cup 2026 – Toronto, Governance Lessons Learned for Bidding and Planning to Host Future Mega Events

Date: June 26, 2025

To: Audit Committee

From: Auditor General

Wards: All

SUMMARY

In 2018, the City submitted a bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2026. Toronto, along with 15 other cities across the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico, will host the international football (referred to as soccer in North America) tournament. Hosting this Mega Event involves significant funding and involvement from multiple levels of government.

The purpose of this project was to examine the City's governance and cost control measures leading up to and during the execution of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Agreement. It also identifies opportunities for improvement for City Council and management on future Mega and large international events, as well as other City Council decisions requiring significant funding with financial support from multiple levels of government.

This report aims to reinforce best practices for City Council and staff to help strengthen governance and guidelines for future Mega Events, as well as to address areas for improvement in hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Toronto.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Auditor General recommends that:

1. The Mayor consider strengthening governance oversight at the Council level earlier in the process (e.g., beginning of the bidding process) for future Mega or large scale events (with costs above a certain threshold and/or requiring funding from other levels of government), in consultation with the City Manager and City Council where appropriate, which may include a Steering Committee to lead and oversee the relevant

division, and a Subcommittee to consider and make recommendations on all event-related matters to Executive Committee.

2. City Council request the City Manager to develop and propose policy and procedures, relating to Council delegated authority to staff, to ensure that Council is appropriately informed in cases where there is a significant change in the estimated value or a significant update of a project or agreement, that is not already covered under existing City policies.

3. City Council request the City Manager and General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to develop long-term bidding and hosting principles and strategies for Mega Events, including a comprehensive risk and opportunities assessment and risk mitigation strategy, with required reporting to City Council for consideration and for any further direction that may be required.

4. City Council request the City Manager and Executive Director, FIFA World Cup 2026 Secretariat, to expedite finalizing the remaining one agreement with MLSE, once the necessary information is available to finalize the agreement.

5. City Council request the City Manager and Executive Director, FIFA World Cup 2026 (FWC26) Secretariat, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to develop a standard and guidance for staff on documenting agreed-upon changes to hosting requirements for FWC26 and future Mega Events, where changes to the legal agreement is not possible. For informal communications, this should include documenting meeting minutes, retaining records of agreed-upon changes, and obtaining written confirmation by the other party(ies) where possible.

6. City Council request the City Manager and relevant Division Head to develop a process and policy to provide all relevant information on significant updates or changes (e.g., bidding process updates, significant changes to potential risks/opportunities or cost estimates) for future Mega Events to City Council on a timely basis, so that Council can make fully informed decisions.

7. City Council request the City Manager and relevant Division Head to develop a process and policy to have full cost estimates in staff reports related to future Mega or significant special events, including all potential costs for the City, as well as describing any uncertainties regarding whether it will be the responsibility of another party or level of government, or could fall under the responsibility of the City.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Implementing the recommendations will help to enhance governance framework for bidding and hosting future Mega events. It will also help to ensure that City Council receives transparent timely information to support decision making, through staff reports that provide realistic estimates when considering Mega events in the future.

The resulting financial implications of any anticipated efficiencies could not be determined at the time of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

The Auditor General's 2025 Work Plan included this project.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/au/bgrd/backgroundfile-250975.pdf>

COMMENTS

A high-level summary of key findings is provided in the At a Glance.

The attached report provides the Audit Committee and members of Council with the detailed results and recommendations together with management's response. Management has agreed to all seven recommendations.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: FIFA World Cup 2026 – Toronto, Governance Lessons Learned for Bidding and Planning to Host Future Mega Events