

AUDIT AT A GLANCE

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

WHY THIS REPORT MATTERS

The FIFA World Cup 2026 is a large international event, also called Mega event, with six matches to be hosted by the City of Toronto at a budget of \$380 million.

Given the magnitude and financial impact of the FIFA World Cup 2026, including involvement with other levels of government, this can expose the City to risk, so it is important to have strong Council oversight and governance in place, as well as timely and transparent reporting by staff to Council.

BACKGROUND

The FIFA World Cup is an international football (soccer in North America) competition and one of the world's most-watched sporting events. The FIFA World Cup 2026 will be hosted by Canada, the United States of America, and Mexico, and is set to take place from June 11 to July 19, 2026.

This report examines City Council'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 or international events, as well as other decisions by City Council involving significant funding together with commitment required from multiple levels of government.

BY THE NUMBERS

- **48** teams competing from around the world
- **16** host cities from North America
- **Six** matches to be hosted by Toronto
- **\$380 million** budget to host the tournament, with **\$179 million** to be funded by the City
- **\$104 million** committed in funding from the Federal Government
- **\$97 million** conditionally committed in funding from the Provincial Government

HOW RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BENEFIT THE CITY

The seven recommendations in this report are aimed at reinforcing best practices for City Council and staff to help strengthen governance and guidelines for future Mega or large international events, as well as to address areas for improvement in hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Toronto.

WHAT WE FOUND

A. Governance and Oversight

- Need for strong governance oversight by City Council early in the bidding process for future Mega or large-scale events.
- In 2018, City Council authorized the City Manager to negotiate and execute the Bid Agreements for the FIFA World Cup 2026.
- City Council's limited visibility into the agreement terms, combined with staff not providing timely updates, could have left the City exposed to potential financial, operational, and reputational risk.
- The Mayor and City Council later addressed this in 2024 by strengthening the governance structure to provide improved oversight by City Council.
- When City Council delegates authority to staff, Council needs to be appropriately informed on significant changes in estimated values or significant updates of a project or agreement in a timely manner.

B. Transparency and Timeliness

- The City needs a Mega Event policy and framework that includes a comprehensive risk assessment and risk mitigation strategies.
- Significant updates or changes relevant to Mega Events should be brought to City Council on a timely basis, so that Council can make fully informed decisions.
- City Council should be informed of all relevant potential costs and funding responsibilities in the early estimate stage, as certain costs in the initial \$30-\$45 million hosting estimate were excluded due to uncertainties.
- Finalizing agreements should not be delayed and finalization of the one remaining agreement with MLSE should be expedited once the necessary information is provided
- Documenting and retaining records of agreed-upon changes to the hosting requirements should be strengthened to reduce the risk of a misunderstanding between City of Toronto staff, other host cities, and FIFA