



FIFA World Cup 2026 – Toronto

Governance Lessons Learned for Bidding and Planning to Host Future Mega Events

June 26, 2025

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**AUDITOR
GENERAL**

TORONTO

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Background

About this report

Our office examined the City's governance and cost control measures leading up to and during the execution of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Agreement and identified opportunities for improvement for City Council and management on future Mega or international events, as well as other decisions of City Council involving significant funding together with commitment required from multiple levels of government.

This project was included on the Auditor General's 2025 Work Plan. An audit of lessons learned from an operational perspective may be included in a future Auditor General's Work Plan and would occur after the FIFA World Cup 2026 is complete.

The work performed in relation to this report does not constitute an audit conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). However, based on the evidence obtained, we believe we have gathered and reviewed sufficient appropriate information to provide a reasonable basis for our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

FIFA World Cup

The FIFA World Cup is an international football (referred to as soccer in North America) competition among the senior men's national teams of the members of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the sport's global governing body. Teams compete at the World Cup tournament at venues within the host nation(s).

The next World Cup tournament is set to take place in 2026, and is historically one of the world's most watched sporting events. The FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar reached a global audience of 5 billion people with an attendance of 3.4 million spectators.¹

United Bid Committee

In 2017, the national soccer associations of Canada, the United States of America, and Mexico, formed the United Bid Committee (UBC) to advance the first-ever multi-country bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2026. Canadian Soccer Association, the Canadian national soccer federation, opened the bid for seven Canadian cities to apply.

Host City Bid Advisory Group

The Canadian Soccer Association formed a Host City Bid Advisory Group in Toronto to discuss hosting a portion of the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Toronto and to prepare an initial information package.

¹ [FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ in numbers | FIFA Publications](#)

City's bid for FIFA World Cup 2026

See **Exhibit 1** for a high-level chronology of events related to the City's bid for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

In September 2017, Toronto applied to become part of the "United Bid". The United Bid Committee selected Toronto as one of the 32 shortlisted cities, alongside three other Canadian cities: Edmonton, Montreal, and Vancouver.

On January 31, 2018, staff reported to City Council that in order to be considered as a host city, the City of Toronto was required to enter into a number of irrevocable agreements, including a Host City Agreement, Stadium Agreement, and other ancillary agreements (the Bid Agreements), by February 5, 2018.² The staff report also explained that due to the time-sensitive nature of the bid, it was unlikely that a cost-sharing agreement outlining funding from the federal or provincial governments would be reached before the deadline for Toronto to sign the Bid Agreements, while still providing enough time for City Council consideration and approval. Taking this into consideration, City Council authorized the City Manager to negotiate and execute the Bid Agreements with conditional confirmations of support from the federal and provincial governments.

In June 2018, FIFA announced that the United Bid was selected to host the FIFA World Cup 2026, with the host cities to be announced at a later date.

City enters agreements with FIFA and MLSE in 2022

In March 2022, City Council adopted the recommendations in 2022.EX31.3, authorizing the (then) Mayor and (then) City Manager to enter into agreements with FIFA to pursue Toronto's candidacy as a host city.³ City Council also authorized the (then) Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (MLSE) for activities in support of hosting FIFA World Cup 2026 in Toronto, including but not limited to managing temporary and permanent upgrades at BMO Field (known as Toronto Stadium during the event).

On June 3, 2022, the City of Toronto executed an addendum to the Host City Agreement with FIFA, as a requirement of its continued candidacy as a host city.

FIFA Official Match Schedule released February 2024; Toronto to host 6 matches

On February 4, 2024, FIFA released the Official Match Schedule for the FIFA World Cup 2026, announcing that Canada would host 13 matches, with Toronto confirmed to host six matches and Vancouver seven.

² [Agenda Item History - 2018.EX30.14 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

³ [Agenda Item History - 2022.EX31.3 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

Results

A. Governance

A. 1. Oversight Controls

Leadership and Dedicated Staff

FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto Secretariat

In June 2022, shortly after FIFA announced Toronto as a host city, staff identified the need for dedicated leadership and staff to plan for and host the Mega Event. The report included as part of item 2022.EX34.8, approved by City Council, directed staff to create the FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto Secretariat (the Secretariat) to support project planning and preparation.

The Secretariat is tasked with overseeing and coordinating the City's responsibilities and is the main point of contact for City Divisions, Agencies and Corporations, other governments, FIFA, and Canada Soccer Association. It is also the primary point of contact for Council, other committees formed to support this work, the public, and event partners.

The Secretariat is responsible for overall project management, financial tracking and budget management, intergovernmental relations, stakeholder management, and developing the FIFA Fan Festival. See **Exhibit 2** for the Secretariat organization chart.

City Council and Committee Oversight

City Council delegated authority to City Manager

In February 2018, City Council approved a recommendation authorizing the City Manager to negotiate and execute the Bid Agreements for the FIFA World Cup 2026:

*"Subject to the City Manager negotiating and executing a Multiparty Agreement or other acceptable arrangement confirming financial support from the federal and/or provincial governments that protects the City's interests, City Council authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute the Bid Agreements for the FIFA 2026 World Cup, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the City Manager and the Acting Chief Financial Officer and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor."*⁴

⁴ [Agenda Item History - 2018.EX30.14](#)

A Multiparty Agreement or acceptable arrangement confirming financial support from other levels of government was not executed by the time of the next staff report to Council in March 2022. However, the March 2018 briefing note outlined that staff reached an alternate arrangement with the Canadian Soccer Association, which included a caveat around financial support from other orders of government, enabling the City to withdraw from candidacy if this financial support could not be confirmed. See **section C.1.** for more details.

With this delegated authority from City Council to the City Manager, the City Manager could negotiate and execute the Bid Agreements for the FIFA 2026 World Cup, but there was no clear formal reporting structure in place to keep Council informed. Staff should still have kept Council informed of any significant changes to estimates, bidding, and hosting requirements on a timely basis as discussed in **section C.1.** Earlier staff updates would have provided Council with information and visibility needed regarding terms of the agreement between the City and FIFA.

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. These potential risks were heightened due to the event's size, scale and cost, as well as funding required from other levels of government. It is important that when Council decides to delegate authority, that staff still appropriately report back to update Council in a timely manner.

Council oversight strengthened starting in March 2024

Mayor Chow and City Council later addressed this by strengthening the governance structure for improved oversight by City Council. On March 20, 2024, Mayor Chow outlined a new governance structure and mandate related to the FIFA World Cup 2026 planning that aimed to strengthen and clarify the role of some internal and external advisory bodies integral to delivering the event.^{5,6}

As part of this, the Executive Steering Committee, chaired by the Mayor and composed of councillors, staff, and external stakeholders, was expanded to lead and oversee the Secretariat.⁷ The Executive Steering Committee's purpose was to provide high-level direction on strategic priorities specific to delivering the FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto requirements, as defined in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Agreements.

⁵ [Establishing a FIFA World Cup 2026 Financial Oversight Subcommittee](#)

⁶ [Agenda Item History - 2024.EX12.2](#)

⁷ The Executive Steering Committee was first established in 2020 to help guide Toronto's bid. It included representatives from the Mayor's Office, Economic Development & Culture, Parks, Forestry & Recreation,

Executive Steering Committee

Through the Executive Steering Committee, three subcommittees were established in 2024 (see **Exhibit 3**):

1. **The Champions Table** – responsible for supporting fundraising efforts and generating revenue through donations. This table contributes to financial success by fundraising to offset event costs and fulfil legacy opportunities.
2. **FIFA World Cup 2026 Forever** (formerly known as the Councillor Liaison Group) – focused on event promotion, community outreach, legacy building, and economic development.
3. **FIFA World Cup 2026 Subcommittee** – a subcommittee of Toronto City Council's Executive Committee to review the spending plans and expenditures related to the FIFA World Cup 2026. Further details of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Subcommittee are described below.

FIFA World Cup 2026 Subcommittee

First called the FIFA World Cup 2026 Financial Oversight Subcommittee, the subcommittee was established to ensure proper budget oversight. In June 2024, the subcommittee was renamed the FIFA World Cup 2026 Subcommittee, amended with a new mandate to consider and make recommendations to Executive Committee on all FIFA World Cup 2026-related matters, including contracts, the procurement plan, and the *Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 71, Financial Control – Schedule A*⁸ expenditures in excess of \$500,000 (exclusive of taxes).

The Financial Planning Division assigned an analyst to ensure the FIFA World Cup 2026 finances are reported separately from other City budgets. This reporting, as well as procurement related to the games and issues, will be considered by the FIFA World Cup 2026 Subcommittee.⁹

See **Exhibit 3** for the City's full governance structure for the FIFA World Cup 2026. Although the City strengthened oversight in 2024, we have included a recommendation below so that going forward, strong City Council governance oversight is in place earlier in the process for a future large scale or Mega Event.

Exhibition Place, Destination Toronto, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, Province of Ontario, Canada Soccer, and MLSE.

⁸ [Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 71, Financial Control](#)

⁹ [Agenda Item History - 2024.EX13.16](#)

Recommendations:

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.

B. FIFA Host City Agreement

B. 1. Bidding

In June 2016, City Council adopted recommendations from the (then) General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, on items 2016.ED12.4 and 2016.EX15.7, including adopting the City of Toronto's Bidding and Hosting Strategy for Significant Special Events (see **Exhibit 4**), a framework to evaluate bidding and hosting opportunities for special events. This strategy considered the Mayor's Advisory Panel Report on International Hosting Opportunities.^{10, 11}

Policy for City's Bidding and Hosting Strategy for Significant Special Events

The City of Toronto Bidding and Hosting Strategy for Significant Special Events framework states, "This strategy was intended to apply for Category A and B special events. Other event categories, including Mega, C, D, and E, fall outside of the scope of this strategy due to their sizes." **Exhibit 5** provides definitions and criteria to determine the event categories.

While the City has not adopted a specific framework for Mega Events, the strategy described above also explains that the Strategic Hosting Principles outlined in the framework, "...can apply broadly to special events of all sizes, and may be considered as a tool for event organizers to consider..."

¹⁰ [Agenda Item History - 2016.ED12.4](#)

¹¹ [Agenda Item History - 2016.EX15.7](#)

Evaluating the FIFA World Cup 2026 bid opportunity

Therefore, management used this strategy to assess the FIFA World Cup 2026 bid opportunity. Their evaluation is included in the staff report titled “Authority to Enter Into Bid Agreements for the FIFA World Cup 2026” (2018.EX30.4) (see **Exhibit 6** for bid evaluation).

Mega Event policy and framework are needed including comprehensive risk assessment and risk mitigation strategies

Although opportunities to bid and/or host Mega Events may not occur often, their scale requires that the City have a policy and adopted framework in place, including a comprehensive assessment of the risks and opportunities and risk mitigation strategies, for when they do occur.

In March 2024, City Council (2024.EX12.2) directed the City Manager to report back to the Executive Committee in the second quarter of 2025 with a set of principles for bidding on large international events.¹² Upon adopting the new economic development plan in November 2024, City Council (2024.EC16.2) revised this direction to instead “...direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to develop a major event bidding and hosting strategy in partnership with Destination Toronto, other orders of government, stakeholders from the private sector and the hospitality industry and report back to the Economic and Community Development Committee by the fourth quarter of 2027.”¹³

Although there is currently Council direction to develop a framework for evaluating bids for major events, we have still included a recommendation to ensure the framework includes a comprehensive risk and opportunities assessment and risk mitigation strategies.

It is important to recognize that some risks can’t always be fully mitigated, such as non-negotiable requirements by sporting or other organizations, or other levels of government not providing upfront written guarantees of funding commitments. In the event of these types of constraints, it is important for City Council to consider the risk assessments, decide whether the strategies to address or accept the risks are acceptable, and to provide any further direction that may be required.

¹² [Agenda Item History - 2024.EX12.2](#)

¹³ [Agenda Item History - 2024.EC16.2](#)

Recommendation:

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.

B. 2. Negotiating and Entering into an Agreement with MLSE

Council authorized to negotiate and enter into an agreement with MLSE

In June 2022, City Council adopted item 2022.EX34.8 to negotiate and enter into an agreement with MLSE:

“City Council authorize the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment for activities in support of Toronto's hosting of World Cup 2026, and any amendments and extensions as required, including but not limited to management of temporary and permanent upgrades at the BMO Field and maximization of the value of delegated commercial rights to help offset the City's costs of organizing the World Cup in Toronto, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the City Manager, the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, and the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, and in a form acceptable to the City Solicitor.”¹⁴

The staff report identified MLSE as a key partner in Toronto's bid, with a unique mix of roles and expertise required to host the FIFA World Cup 2026. The staff report also stated that the partnership would protect the City's interests and maximize the economic and cultural benefits of hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026, with the potential to reduce financial and operational risks for the City.

¹⁴ [Agenda Item History - 2022.EX34.8.](#)

Why MLSE in a unique position as a key partner according to staff report

The staff report outlines that MLSE is in a unique position, as it:

- Manages the stadium and pitch, via a Management Agreement with the City and Exhibition Place, that FIFA will use for the matches in Toronto.
- Has previously led capital upgrades, including undertaking and paying for the major seating expansion at BMO Field in 2015 as well as periodically erecting additional temporary seating for major events, such as the 2008 MLS All-Star Game and the 2017 NHL Centennial Classic.
- Has a vested interest as owners of the Toronto FC and Toronto Argonauts franchises, other properties impacted by the World Cup and FIFA-qualified field.
- Co-chaired the bid committee, provided event and marketing expertise during the bidding process, and helped with decision-making, and execution due to subject matter knowledge.
- Invested \$23 million, backed by a \$123 million investment from the City, to upgrade the stadium.
- Can help the City raise funds to help further offset costs and leverage commercial opportunities around this sporting event.

The staff report concluded that due to timeliness, its extensive experience with sponsorship and other commercial opportunities, and its commitment to sport (and to soccer in particular), an MLSE partnership was needed to help Toronto to successfully deliver the FIFA World Cup 2026.¹⁵ Council approved that the City negotiate and enter into an agreement with MLSE.

A framework for multiple agreements between the City of Toronto and MLSE was formed through a Letter of Intent and signed on February 2023 by the City Manager and MLSE. The letter of intent outlines services MLSE will provide for and on behalf of the City in connection with the City's obligations and responsibilities as the Host City Authority and Stadium Authority. These services include project management, stadium operations, exercising host city commercial rights, and event promotion.

¹⁵ [Update on Hosting FIFA World Cup 2026](#)

B. 3. MLSE Letter of Intent and Agreements

Letter of Intent with MLSE signed February 2023

The Letter of Intent (LOI) with MLSE was signed by the City Manager and MLSE on February 10, 2023. The LOI provides a framework for three agreements for services (a fourth, outlined below, is no longer required) that MLSE will provide to the City for FIFA World Cup 2026. These services include:

Framework for 3 agreements; 4th agreement for promotions no longer required as of June 16, 2025

- 1) **Project Management:** On behalf of the City and at the City's cost and expense, MLSE will provide project management services with respect to construction of stadium upgrades. (Agreement signed June 25, 2025.)
- 2) **Stadium Operation:** On behalf of the City and at the City's cost MLSE will manage and deliver all City Stadium Obligations required by the City, as host city for FIFA World Cup 2026 under the Hosting Agreement. (Agreement to be finalized.)
- 3) **Host City Commercial Rights:** The City will assign its host city Commercial Rights from FIFA to MLSE for commercialization (e.g., sponsorship, advertising, events, and VIP access). (Agreement signed June 25, 2025.)
- 4) **Promotions:** MLSE will provide the City with marketing, branding, and promotional services, including creative and design, required locally of the City by FIFA to advertise and promote FIFA World Cup 2026. (On June 16, 2025, the City sent a letter to MLSE confirming that both the City and MLSE decided that an agreement for Promotional Services, as described in the LOI, will not be required.)

LOI terms

Stadium Operations – MLSE Lost Revenue

During 2026, FIFA requires that BMO Field enter an exclusive use period. This period begins 30 calendar days before the opening match and ends seven days after the last use of the stadium for the tournament. During this time the stadium cannot have any other use. MLSE has two professional sports teams using the stadium during this time: the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League, and the Toronto FC of Major League Soccer. By hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026, the City is potentially displacing MLSE's teams and disrupting their revenue.

MLSE and the City will work together to find solutions to offset or mitigate the lost revenue. The City will reimburse MLSE for revenue to the extent that it cannot be offset or mitigated by MLSE using commercially reasonable efforts. This also includes pre-approved costs of relocating the Toronto Argos and Toronto FC due to MLSE fulfilling its obligations as a result of FIFA World Cup 2026.

City to invest \$123 million in BMO stadium

Project Management – Stadium Upgrades

BMO Field is an outdoor stadium located at Exhibition Place and is owned by the City of Toronto and managed by MLSE. The 30,000-seat stadium will undergo temporary seating capacity upgrades to accommodate 45,000 seats. Permanent changes include four new videoboards as well as upgrades to hospitality suites, locker rooms, lighting, audio, broadcast infrastructure, and stadium Wi-Fi. The City will invest \$123 million in the stadium and MLSE will contribute an additional \$23 million towards upgrades. According to staff, permanent upgrades will enhance the City-owned asset and allow for new and different high-value uses, with potential for new revenue sharing opportunities given advertising assets.

The City and MLSE will have an arrangement commonly referred to as “Construction manager not at risk” whereby MLSE will procure, negotiate, and recommend to the City the award of contracts for MLSE with third-party contractors. The City will pay contractors directly for work performed.

MLSE will project manage the procurement, execution, and delivery of all capital construction in BMO Field stadium as required by the City under the Hosting Agreements. MLSE is acting on behalf of the City and the City will pay for the construction costs and expenses. Management advised that construction work began on the stadium in November 2024.

The assessment of project management, oversight, and monitoring controls for construction operations has not been included in the scope of this project. These areas could be included in a future audit on the Auditor General’s Work Plan once construction is complete.

Net revenue up to \$10M to be split equally by City and MLSE; 60/40 split to City/MLSE if in excess of \$10M

Commercial Rights – Revenue Sharing

As part of the commercial rights related to FIFA World Cup 2026, MLSE and the City will work cooperatively to identify commercial opportunities that could arise by leveraging City events, programs, and other assets. Net revenue will be split equally by MLSE and the City up to \$10 million, and net revenues in excess of \$10 million will be split 60 per cent to the City and 40 per cent to MLSE.

Net revenue is defined as gross revenue received by MLSE and derived directly or indirectly from the Host City Commercial Rights assigned to MLSE minus Sponsorship Costs.¹⁶ This is essentially splitting the profit generated by the commercial rights.

At the time, the City contracted the former head of Economic Development and Culture to help with contract negotiations, as they had more experience with commercial rights agreements. To inform negotiations, the City retained a firm to evaluate the commercial rights package delegated by FIFA to the City. Staff were unable to provide us with additional documentation to support the reasoning for the revenue sharing percentages.

Delay in signed agreements

On June 25, 2025 (after the Auditor General's Office completed fieldwork), management provided us with two of the three signed agreements (Project Management and Host City Commercial Rights) between the City and MLSE for these agreed-upon services described within the LOI. For future Mega Events, it would be prudent for the City to finalize these types of agreements earlier. One agreement remains outstanding, but staff advised it requires additional information from FIFA before finalizing.

Recommendation:

- 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.**

B. 4. Host City Requirements and Documentation of Agreed-Upon Changes

Requirements for hosting the World Cup

As part of the Host City agreements, all Host Cities must follow the 2026 FIFA World Cup Hosting Requirements document (Hosting Requirements). The Host City agreement with FIFA cannot be altered or amended. However, agreed-upon changes can be made to the Hosting Requirements. Management advised that FIFA acknowledges that the Hosting Requirements are blanket terms and will work with Toronto and the other Host Cities to revise requirements and terms as they become relevant to planning and executing the FIFA World Cup 2026.

¹⁶ Sponsorship costs include the sale, licensing, and servicing of Host City Commercial Rights including costs associated with creative and fabrication, activation, production, labour (including MLSE sales staff), hosting, fulfillment or servicing, ticketing and hospitality, and applicable taxes.

These agreed-upon changes to the Hosting Requirements may be communicated formally, such as written letters, updates on FIFA's project management online portal¹⁷, presented by FIFA during Host City Meetings and workshops, or through more informal meetings, calls, and emails.

An example of co-operation between the Host Cities and FIFA is the initial hosting requirement that all match ticket holders have free access to public transit on match days to allow travel between stadiums, airports, railway stations, hotels, other tourist areas, and the FIFA Fan Festival. The Host Cities and FIFA agreed on the change that public transportation is no longer required to be free to match day ticket holders and will be charged at cost. This was communicated through multi-city meetings and then included in the summary documents uploaded to the FIFA portal.

We found inconsistencies with how City staff document changes to Hosting Requirements. Staff were not always able to provide us with documented meeting minutes and other agreed-upon changes to Hosting Requirements resulting from informal communications. It is important to document and retain records of agreed upon changes to the hosting requirements, to reduce the risk of a misunderstanding between City of Toronto staff, other host cities, and FIFA.

Management should develop a standard and guidance for staff in documenting agreed-upon requirement changes for FIFA World Cup 2026 and for hosting future Mega Events.

Recommendation:

- 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.**

¹⁷ FIFA hosts an online portal where they upload summary documents of changes or revisions made to hosting requirements.

C. Improving Timely Updates to Council and Cost Estimates

C. 1. Keeping City Council Informed

Federal and Provincial funding guarantees

It was made clear by staff in their report (2018.EX30.14) dated January 18, 2018, that,

*“Due to the time sensitive nature of the bid opportunity, it is unlikely that a cost-sharing agreement will be reached prior to UBC's [United Bid Committee] deadline for Toronto to sign the Bid Agreements and still have an opportunity for Council to then approve. Accordingly, this report recommends that the City's signing of the Bid Agreements **be made conditional on confirmation of support from the federal and provincial governments, to be secured through a formal Multiparty Agreement or other acceptable arrangement. If a cost-sharing agreement with other orders of government cannot be reached, the City would either submit documents with caveats around financial support or withdraw from the bidding process.**”¹⁸*

City Council endorsed bidding on the condition that the Federal and Provincial governments confirm their financial support, including a commitment to cover security costs. Staff informed us that communication with Federal and Provincial Governments had already begun as part of the bidding process and would continue throughout the process. However, at the time of their January 2018 staff report, no level of government had indicated what support, if any, they would contribute.

Based on briefing notes dated February 9, 2018, it appears that at the time, staff intended that Toronto would not bid without the financial commitments from the Federal and Provincial governments.

By March 8, 2018, staff were informed that all Canadian Host Cities were required to submit copies of all FIFA Agreements and supporting documentation (Bid Agreements) to the Canadian Soccer Association and the United Bid Committee. These documents could not be altered or amended, and non-receipt would exclude Toronto from the bid process.

In order to bid by the March 9, 2018, deadline, and meet City Council requirements, the Host City agreement was amended with Supplementary Terms and Conditions outlining the Conditions for Withdrawal of Candidacy by June 30, 2020, should guarantees and coverage for security costs from the Government of Ontario and/or Canada not be in place.

¹⁸ [Agenda Item History - 2018.EX30.14](#)

FIFA did not accept the amended Host City Agreement since the Bid Agreements cannot be altered or amended, and Toronto was required to submit these documents to the United Bid Committee no later than March 12, 2018 to be included in the bidding process. The Bid Agreements were submitted with no alterations or amendments.

Collateral agreement with the Canadian Soccer Association

Given FIFA did not accept the amended Host City agreement and to mitigate risk, the City negotiated a Collateral Agreement with the Canadian Soccer Association outlining conditions for Withdrawal of Candidacy by June 30, 2020, if guaranteed funding, including coverage of security costs, from the Government of Ontario and/or Canada was not secured. A March 12, 2018 briefing note stated that *“the City of Toronto Solicitor has reviewed the attached Collateral Agreement with the CSA [Canadian Soccer Association], and it meets with the recommendations and conditions of the Toronto City Council adopted report, “Authority to Enter into Bid Agreements for the 2026 FIFA World Cup” of February 1, 2018 [item 2018.EX30.14].”*

The Collateral Agreement with the Canadian Soccer Association outlining conditions for Withdrawal of Candidacy was later extended multiple times. The final extension signed by the (then) City Manager and President of the Canadian Soccer Association extended the Withdrawal of Candidacy clause to March 31, 2022.

A March 16, 2022 staff report (2022.EX31.3) to City Council explained that “the bid agreements were in FIFA's standard form and were non-negotiable with the result that the funding condition was not included in the bid agreements”. However, this staff report was written over four years after the original report to Council as part of item 2018.EX30.14 dated January 2018. Furthermore, the update did not include background on how risks were mitigated in relation to having a multi-party agreement in place where no guarantees from the other levels of government had been obtained.

Potential reasons for delays in updating Council

Management advised a key consideration in delays in reporting to City Council were the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, since many City operations shut down in March 2020, shortly before the original June 30, 2020 deadline. During this time, many staff were reassigned to other divisions and carried out tasks related to the pandemic. Management advised that staff would not have been able to report back to Council before the June 2020 deadline.

FIFA’s evaluation process to determine the host city candidates was also delayed due to the pandemic. Management advised this would have further delayed staff updates provided to Council.

Although these potential delays may have played a factor in staff's ability to report to Council closer to the June 2020 deadline, the original report was brought to Council in January of 2018, and the staff report was not provided to Council until March 2022. Although the agreement was extended to March 2022, Council should still have been made aware of the agreement and any significant updates.

Reporting timeliness and transparency

In order to provide timely and transparent reporting to City Council, staff should have provided an earlier update to Council making them aware of the Collateral Agreement with the Canadian Soccer Association, outlining the conditions for the City to be able to withdraw from the hosting bid by the deadline. Having this information would allow Council to make an informed decision to continue or withdraw.

Recommendation:

- 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.**

C. 2. Cost Estimates and Cost Control

2018 estimated cost of a successful bid

According to the January 2018 staff report (2018.EX30.14) brought to City Council, the cost to host three to five matches in the FIFA World Cup 2026 was initially estimated at \$30-\$45 million.¹⁹ The staff report underlined the preliminary nature of the cost estimates and the exclusion of major cost categories such as capital and public safety costs. This staff report was the first time a financial impact was included. Details of this estimate are in **Table 1** below.

Table 1 – 2018 Estimated Cost of a Successful Bid

Category	Total (\$ in millions)
Planning and Preparation Costs Includes activities undertaken to support operational needs in advance of the FIFA World Cup 2026, starting in 2023.	2-3
Event Services Delivery Costs Includes costs related to increased City service levels during the FIFA World Cup 2026.	6-10
Fan Festival and Host City Showcase Includes costs related to fan festival and other special projects to engage residents and visitors.	15-25
Contingency (15%)	7
Total Estimate	30-45

Source: [Authority to Enter Into Bid Agreements for the FIFA World Cup 2026.](#)

The report noted that security and policing costs are substantial for an event of this scale and impossible to fully estimate at the time given unknown levels of risk and the global security situation in 2026.

The City Manager further explained to us that this initial estimate did not reflect the overall costs and was not anywhere near an accurate estimate, as there were too many unknowns at the time. Given this, the City Manager advised that this initial estimate should not be used as a comparable figure. Unknown factors that would have affected the cost estimate are discussed below.

Costs of capital and security

The capital cost required for hosting the games was excluded from the initial estimate, and the report stated “there are very little capital costs expected”²⁰. However, FIFA’s requirements were not yet provided to the City. Further discussion with staff revealed that this estimate was excluded because it was unclear whether the City, another level of government, or even FIFA would be responsible for the capital costs. Based on the 2022 estimate, the capital cost is

¹⁹ [Authority to Enter Into Bid Agreements for the 2026 FIFA World Cup](#)

²⁰ [Authority to Enter Into Bid Agreements for the 2026 FIFA World Cup](#) (9/12/2018).

approximately \$110 million. Security costs were also excluded from the initial estimate, as staff did not know who would be responsible for them. Based on the 2022 estimate, the cost of security is approximately \$40 million.

Uncertainty for other costs

Other costs with uncertainty relating to responsibilities included the FIFA Fan Festival, unknown hosting requirements from FIFA, and an unknown number of matches. During this time there was also a surge in inflation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was challenging to estimate at the time, although a contingency could help to cover this type of uncertainty.

2022 estimated cost of a successful bid

An April 2022 staff report (2022.EX31.3) updated City Council on the bidding process, presented the potential financial implications for the City, outlined the risks and opportunities, and recommended that Toronto accept the host city nomination, should it be successful, based on the substantial benefits of being a host city. With a better understanding of the FIFA hosting requirements, staff included an updated cost estimate of \$290 million to host five games, as seen in **Table 2** below.

Table 2 – 2022 Estimated Cost of a Successful Bid

Category	Total (\$ in millions)
Operations	
Stadium Operations	32.0
Training Sites Operations	7.6
Venues, Other	8.3
General Operations	8.1
Executive Management	9.3
Finances, Administration & IT	8.2
Communications	2.8
FanFest Operations	17.2
Safety and Security	40.3
Legacy Fund	5.0
Contingency, Inflation, Tax	42.2
Subtotal – Operations 2026 Dollars	181.0
Capital	
Stadium Capital Projects	63.7
Training Sites Capital Projects	41.2
FanFest Capital Projects	3.7
Subtotal – Capital 2026 Dollars	108.6
Overall	289.6

Source: [Toronto's Bid to Participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026](#)

2024 estimated cost of hosting

On March 20, 2024, staff presented City Council with a new estimate for hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026. The latest cost estimate came in at \$380 million dollars.²¹ The increases were partially the result of now hosting six matches – one more than the five originally planned, increasing costs for safety and security, inflation impacts, and revised FIFA requirements. The updated figures are in **Table 3** below.

Table 3 – 2024 Estimated Cost of Hosting

Category	Total (\$ in millions)
General Operations	28.1
Tournament Operations	156.0
Commercial Rights expenses	7.0
Legacy Funding	7.5
Contingencies (Operating & Inflationary)	25.3
Subtotal Operating	223.9
Capital Improvements	144.1
Contingencies (Capital & Inflationary)	9.4
Subtotal Capital	153.5
Total Cash	377.4
Value of In-Kind Operating Services	2.6
Total event cost	380.0

Source: [FIFA World Cup 2026](#)

As of June 26, 2025, the estimate of total cost continues to hold at \$380 million, net of any offset from cost reductions and revenue generating opportunities as described further below.

In an effort to increase visibility of the FIFA World Cup 2026 budget for Council and to help staff monitor actual costs compared to budget, management presented the 2025 FIFA World Cup 2026 budget as consolidated figures under the City Manager's Office. Previously, the budgeted amounts for FIFA World Cup 2026 were allocated to various City Divisions and Agencies, making it difficult to easily determine the true total costs for FIFA World Cup 2026. It would be helpful for management to adopt this approach for future Mega or large-scale events as well.

Federal and Provincial support

In May 2024, the Federal Government announced it would contribute \$104.34 million towards Toronto's bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2026. In March 2025, the funding commitment was secured through a contribution agreement signed between the Government of Canada and the City of Toronto.

²¹ [We Are 26 - Update on Hosting FWC26](#)

The Provincial Government and the City of Toronto are in negotiations to solidify and execute the contribution agreement formalizing the Province's \$97 million contribution.²² A supplementary report presented to Council on May 21, 2025, explained, "The Province of Ontario's funding was intended to provide cash to the City to offset tournament expenses, including capital infrastructure and legacy investments, and inclusive of any provincial services, like policing, transportation, and health care, required to meet the City of Toronto's contractual obligations with FIFA. While negotiations continue to be productive, provincial service costs are still substantially higher than budgeted, and in some cases completely unbudgeted...drawing down on the \$97 million [cash] contribution while increasing the City's funding gap."²³

As of May 21, 2025, the estimated provincial service costs, inclusive of the contribution, is almost \$40 million, resulting in Council adopting a motion (2025.EX23.17) to restrict FIFA World Cup 2026 expenses (including procurement commitments) to \$340 million until the City of Toronto has identified savings, secured intergovernmental funding, or other sources of revenue, to fund FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto's full \$380 million budget.²⁴

Management advised us that as of June 26, 2025, negotiations on provincial service costs continue to be productive, currently estimated at \$40 million. Scope of services and associated costs continue to solidify as planning advances.

The remaining balance of \$178.646 million is expected to be funded by the City of Toronto. In order to fund the remaining balance, staff have explored cost-reducing and revenue generating activities.

Cost savings

As noted in the item adopted by Council in November 2024 (2024.EX18.17), the FIFA World Cup 2026 Subcommittee, the former Chair, FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto Secretariat, and the Mayor's Envoy, David Soknacki, met with divisions and agencies to review capital and operating budgets associated with hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Toronto. In 2024, the review yielded approximately \$4.8 million in savings against a \$10 million budget pressure. For example, FIFA allowed the City to reduce its training site requirements from two fields to one and these savings were allocated to the increased capital costs for the stadium upgrade.

²² Ontario's investment to support this event is exclusively limited to investments that will build lasting public infrastructure and benefits that will serve the community long after the games are over. It would be limited to provincial priorities such as community infrastructure projects with long-term public benefit, sport legacy and tourism support impacts and would exclude any costs where the primary beneficiary is a private, for-profit, or otherwise non-public entity. Finally, the contribution would be inclusive of any provincial services, like policing, transportation, and health care, required to meet the City of Toronto's contractual obligations with FIFA.

²³ [FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto: Status of Federal and Provincial Funding](#)

²⁴ [Agenda Item History - 2025.EX23.17](#)

Additional savings are expected as part of ongoing reviews across all areas of the FIFA World Cup 2026 budget and associated impacts. As actual costs come in over and under budget, any additional cost savings will be reallocated to other areas in the budget to offset overruns elsewhere in the budget. Staff continue to work at keeping costs contained which could mean scaling back and reducing the scope of some budgeted items.

Including areas of uncertainties in earlier cost estimates

In the future, staff should include costs that could fall under the responsibility of the City of Toronto in earlier estimates. To provide full transparency, these costs should be included in estimates, even as a footnote. This ensures that City Council has all relevant information to make an informed decision. Excluding uncertain costs can cause problems in the future if those costs fall within the City's responsibilities and suddenly increase the estimates.

Recommendation:

- 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.**

Conclusion

Through this project, we identified lessons learned for City Council and management on bidding and planning to host future Mega or international events, as well as other decisions of City Council involving significant funding together with commitment required from multiple levels of government.

The Auditor General has made seven recommendations to reinforce best practices and help strengthen governance and guidelines for future Mega or international events, as well as to address areas for improvement in hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026.

Report Purpose, Scope and Methodology

Objective and Scope of this Project

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 large international events, as well as other City Council decisions requiring significant funding with financial support from multiple levels of government.

Our Procedures

Our procedures included:

- reviewing supporting documentation, including contracts, staff reports and minutes and recordings of City Council and Committee meetings, budget documents and estimates, and correspondence
- reviewing policies and legislation, including the City's Bidding and Hosting Strategy.
- interviews with staff in the City Manager's Office, Economic Development & Culture, FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto Secretariat, and Legal Services
- other relevant procedures, as required

Project Scope Limitations

This project did not include examining the conduct of the Mayor and/or Councillors; inquiries into the conduct of the Mayor and Councillors fall under the jurisdiction of the Integrity Commissioner.

This project did not assess:

- Whether the terms of the MLSE Letter of Intent and related agreements are appropriate, nor does this project assess procurement, contract management, monitoring, oversight, or compliance with the terms of the agreements.
- The project management, oversight, or monitoring controls of construction for the temporary and permanent stadium upgrades taking place at BMO Field.
- Whether it was appropriate to use the Bidding & Hosting Strategy framework and whether in deciding to use it, staff applied the framework properly.

This is not an Audit

The work performed in relation to this report does not constitute an audit conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

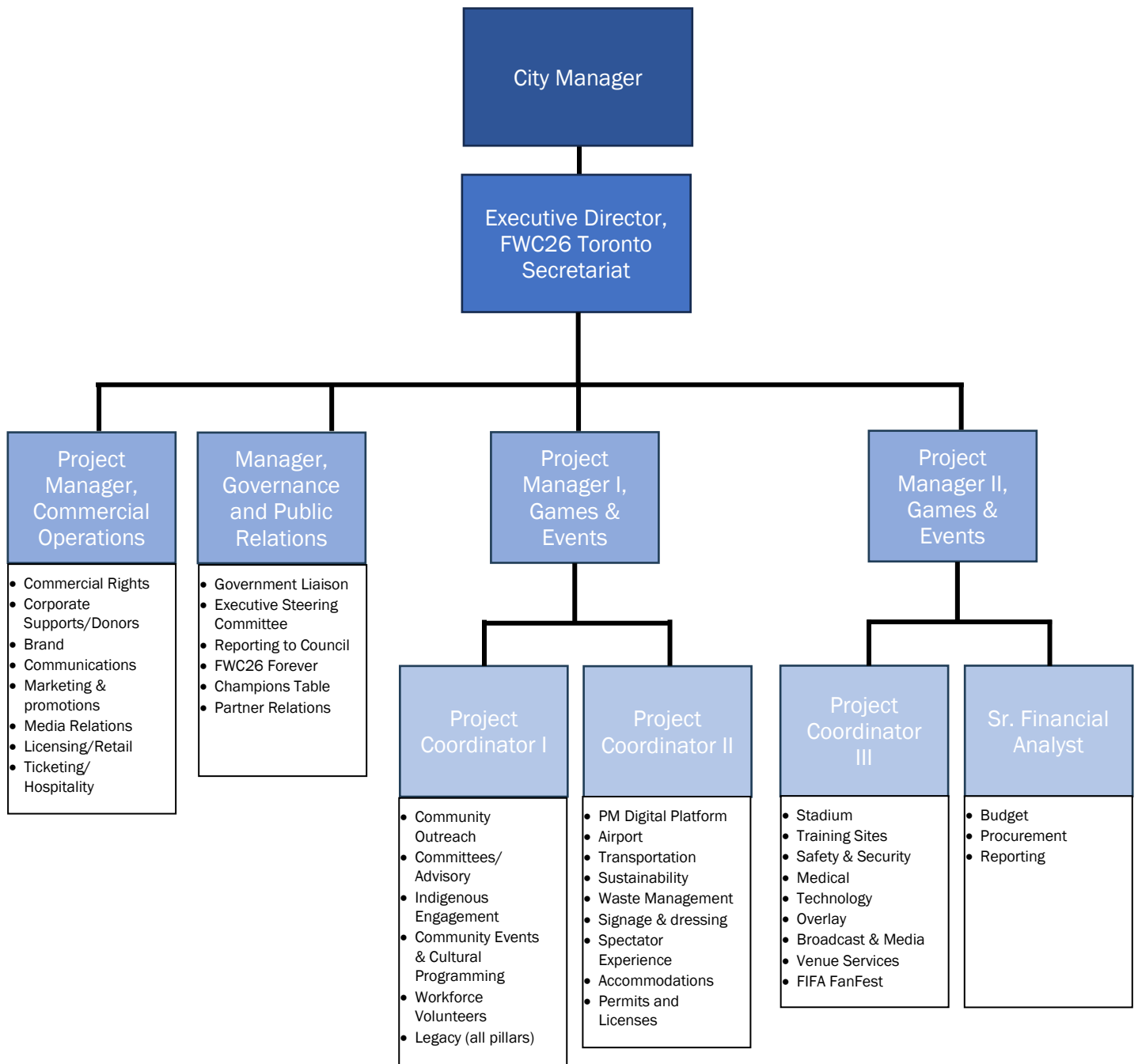
However, based on the evidence obtained, we believe we have gathered and reviewed sufficient appropriate information to provide a reasonable basis for our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Exhibit 1: High-Level Chronology of Events

2017	Summer	Canada, United States of America, and Mexico announce “United 26” to bid for the FIFA World Cup 2026. ²⁵
	September	Toronto applies to the United Bid Committee be part of the “United Bid”.
2018	January	Staff provides a report to City Council, including an initial cost estimate. Council gives authority to enter into “Bid Agreements” (including the host city agreement) for the FIFA World Cup 2026.
	February	Toronto submits “Bid Agreements” to the United Bid Committee.
	June	FIFA announces “United Bid” to host the FIFA World Cup 2026.
2020	-	Executive Steering Committee established to help guide Toronto’s bid.
2022	March	Staff provides an update report to City Council which includes an updated cost estimate. Council authorizes Toronto to continue to pursue candidacy as a host city.
	June	The City of Toronto executes an addendum to the host city agreement. FIFA announces 16 host cities, including Toronto.
	July	City Council approves the Mayor and the City Manager to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment to manage the stadium and commercial rights.
2023	December	Province of Ontario conditionally commits \$97 million towards Toronto hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026.
2024	February	FIFA releases match schedule, revealing Toronto will host 6 matches.
	March	Staff provides city Council with new cost estimate for Hosting FIFA World Cup 2026.
	April	To improve governance, the Executive Steering Committee is expanded to provide leadership and oversight to the Secretariat and will now provide high-level direction on strategic priorities specific to the delivery of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto requirements. Additionally, three subcommittees are established: The Champions Table to help with funding, FIFA World Cup 2026 Forever to help with promotion, and FIFA World Cup 2026 Subcommittee to help with budget reviewing spending and expenditures.
	May	Federal Government announces \$104 million toward Toronto hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026.
2025		City of Toronto prepares for hosting FIFA World Cup 2026.
2026	June	FIFA World Cup 2026 begins June 11, 2026, and ends on July 19, 2026. Toronto’s first match will take place on June 12, 2026, and the last match will be on July 2, 2026.

²⁵ The bid put forth to host the FIFA World Cup 2026 became known as “United Bid” or “United 2026”.

Exhibit 2: FIFA World Cup 2026 (FWC26) Toronto Secretariat - Organization Chart



As of September 2024

Exhibit 3: Governance Structure for City's FIFA World Cup 2026

Advisory & Operations

Revised November 1, 2024

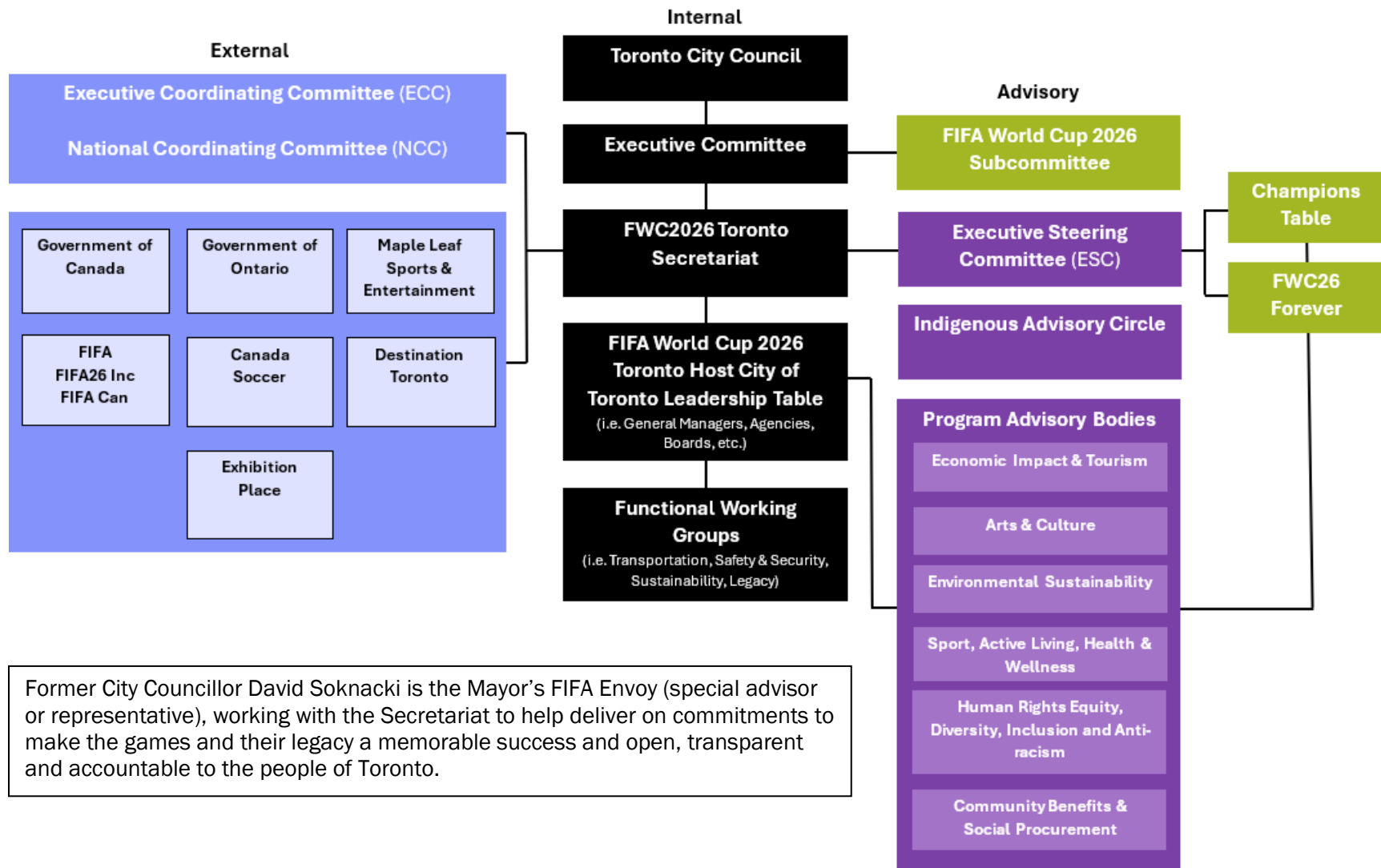


Exhibit 4: The City of Toronto's Bidding and Hosting Strategy for Significant Special Events²⁶

Overview

The City of Toronto Bidding and Hosting Strategy for Significant Special Events provides a framework for managing and evaluating Category A and B event opportunities (see Exhibit 4 for definitions) in Toronto. Objectives for the Strategy include:

- Position Toronto as a preferred host for significant events and conventions that have or could have a notable international profile.
- Implement a proactive approach to developing, promoting, and incentivizing competitive event bids.
- Respond to event bid opportunities as efficiently as possible in order to maximize the impact and legacy of the 2015 Pan American/Parapan American Games.
- Identify dedicated resources to support competitive event opportunities that provide a high return on investment for the City.
- Work closely with partners to increase the development of expanded event hosting capabilities in Toronto.

This Strategy is intended to apply to Category A and B special events, as defined in the City of Toronto Standard Definitions for Special Events. Other event categories, including Mega, C, D, and E, fall outside of the scope of this Strategy due to their size. However, the Strategic Hosting Principles outlined below can apply broadly to special events of all sizes, and may be considered as a tool for event organizers to consider as part of future growth strategies.

Assessment Framework

Taken together, the Strategic Hosting Principles form an evaluative framework, as summarized below.

Strategic Hosting Principles for Category A and B Events:

1) Start from a Position of Strength

Does the event have the necessary support from other government partners?

- Strong – Yes, all partners have pledged support.
- Medium – Event has secured some government support, and has a strong likelihood of additional investment.
- Weak – No, or limited government support.

Does the event demonstrate the potential to secure support and commitments from the private sector, including corporate sponsors and/or philanthropic donors?

- Strong – Private sector support has been secured, and there is considerable potential for additional partnerships.
- Medium – No support has been secured to date, but there is considerable potential for private support.
- Weak – No corporate support and there is limited potential for private support.

²⁶ [Bidding & Hosting Strategy – City of Toronto](#)

Does the event engage the local community in a meaningful way and respond to their interests and concerns?

- Strong – Actively engaged through a range of strategies.
- Medium – Engaged in limited way with plans for more.
- Weak – No community engagement to date.

In cases where an event is led by a third-party organization, does the event organizer demonstrate sufficient capacity to successfully execute the proposed event?

- Strong – Organization has strong governance and proven track record of hosting successful Category A or B events.
- Medium – Good governance, but limited track record of hosting A or B events.
- Weak – Limited capacity has been demonstrated.

Is there a high degree of confidence in the success of a bid?

- Strong – Understand process, strong concept and confident of success; or, bid has been secured.
- Medium – Understand process, and somewhat confident of success.
- Weak – Lack of clarity about process and no certainty of success.

2) Optimize Toronto as a Host City

Do the investments in both the bid and hosting concept have public value?

- Strong – High degree of public value.
- Medium – Some degree of public value.
- Weak – Limited public value.

3) Advance Key City-Building Priorities

Will the event advance key City-building priorities and goals as articulated in City Council-endorsed strategies, including the City of Toronto Strategic Actions, 2013-2018; Creative Capital Gains, the City's cultural plan; and Collaborating for Competitiveness, the City's economic development plan?

- Strong – Achieves two or more Council-endorsed strategies.
- Medium – Achieves one Council-endorsed strategy.
- Weak – Does not contribute to any Council-endorsed strategies.

4) Responsibly Manage Hosting Costs, Resources and Risks

Do the City and its partners have confidence that they can manage costs/resources and avoid or mitigate risks associated with hosting the event? Does the event have a guarantor?

- Strong – Plans are in place to ensure all costs and risks are well managed.
- Medium – Plans are in place, but one or more risks have yet to be resolved or addressed.
- Weak – No plans currently in place.

5) Generate benefits and legacies for Toronto

Will the event generate broadly shared benefits and will it leave a meaningful legacy for local communities after the event has ended?

- Strong – Will deliver a range of benefits and leave positive long-term legacies for communities across Toronto.
- Medium – There will be some benefits, but more short-term or focused on a specific stakeholder group.
- Weak – No meaningful community benefits or legacies.

Evaluating Event Bidding and Hosting Opportunities

To date, requests to support a Category A or B event bid or hosting opportunity have been managed on a case-by-case basis. This Strategy addresses this gap by proposing a new assessment framework for third-party initiated opportunities, which represent the majority of Category A and B events. An overview of the assessment and delivery framework for Category A and B events is illustrated below.

Assessment and Delivery Framework for Third-Party Initiated Events

Step 1: Initial Assessment

Following receipt of a request from event proponent, staff will conduct an initial review to ensure eligibility as Category A or B event, and follow up with proponent for additional information as needed. Requests should be received a minimum of 8 weeks ahead of a review deadline.

Step 2: Consideration by Event Bidding and Hosting Advisory Panel

A new Bidding and Hosting Advisory Panel, comprising of senior City management and up to two external members, will assesses the request using the Strategic Hosting Principles. The Panel will meet at regular intervals, with special sessions as needed for time-sensitive opportunities

Step 3: Decision to Support

Using the Panel's expert advice, a final decision to allocate funding or institutional resources in support of an event is made by the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture. This decision is dependent on availability of funds and will require consultation with the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer as well as Council approval, if it exceeds divisional resources. If applicable, City and proponent enter into formal funding agreement.

Step 4: Interdivisional Working Group

A working group with representation from key City divisions is formed to coordinate the delivery of municipal services during the event. Working group collaborates with event organizer to streamline client service and resolve issues as they arise.

Step 5: Evaluation

Following the event, the third-party organizer will submit a final report and budget to the City, including performance metrics to measure impact of investment.

Identification, Assessment, and Development of City-Initiated Bids

A similar framework can also be applied to City-initiated bids, or event opportunities without a formal bid. While it has been rare in the recent past for the City to lead a bid for Category A or B events, the adoption of a proactive approach to event bidding is encouraged to attract and secure events that best support the City's economic, social, cultural, and infrastructure development goals.

Examples of Category A and B Event Bids

Examples of Category A and B events for which the City could consider placing a bid in the future are listed below. This list is intended to be representative of the different types of touring events, and includes cultural events, sporting competitions, and gaming championships. Consideration would need to be given to the value of each event in relation to the Strategic Hosting Principles, as well as funding availability.

- Call of Duty Championship – Gaming championships for “Call of Duty”, drawing 10,000+ participants to host city.
- Chess Olympiad – Biennial international chess tournament.
- Commonwealth Games – Summer multi-sport games for Commonwealth countries.
- Commonwealth Youth Games – Summer multi-sport games for youth from Commonwealth youth.
- Deaflympics – Multi-sport competition for deaf athletes.
- FEI World Equestrian Games – Eight World Championships in one event.
- FINA World Aquatics Championships – World championships of aquatic sports – including swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, water polo, and others.
- Gay Games – Sporting and cultural event for the LGBTQ community.
- IAAF World Championships in Athletics – All track and field disciplines and events.
- ICC Cricket World Cup – World championships of cricket, and one of the most viewed sporting events.
- ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup – World championship cricket tournament, for athletes under age 19.
- IIHF Women’s World Championships – World Hockey championships for women.
- Juno Awards – Presented annually to Canadian musical artists and bands to acknowledge their artistic and technical achievements in all aspects of music.
- Operalia Competition – International competition for young opera singers.
- Rugby World Cup – Men’s rugby union tournament with the top international teams.
- World Curling Championships – National men and women’s teams compete in world championships.
- World Lacrosse Championship – Men’s world championships. Canada is current world champion
- World Police and Fire Games – Led by police and fire departments, these international multi-sport games are for police and firefighters.
- X Games – Annual sports event controlled and arranged by broadcaster ESPN.

Strategic Growth Funding for Toronto-based Annual Events

In exceptional cases, the City may consider requests for support from existing Toronto-based Category B events that will deliver a significantly expanded edition of the event, with demonstrated potential to have impact on a global scale through increased tourism and attendance, international media exposure, and spin-off benefits for local business. An example of one such expansion is Pride Toronto’s hosting of the 2014 edition of WorldPride in Toronto. These enhancements would generally be expected to result in the re-classification of the event as being in Category A. Such funding would be offered on a one-time basis only.

Measuring Success

Category A and B events have the potential to deliver a strong return on investment for the City through direct economic impact, increased tourism, an enhanced global media profile, and social

and cultural legacies. To assess the ongoing impact of Category A and B events, Economic Development and Culture will track the performance of City-supported events using a number of key performance indicators. For third-party events receiving financial support from the City, these metrics will be included as part of their final report.

Measurements of success will be developed to align with the Strategic Hosting Principles. Examples of such metrics include:

- Start from a Position of Strength
 - Number of new corporate partnerships created as a result of event
 - Funds leveraged as a result of City support
- Optimize Toronto as a Host City or Region
 - Detailed analysis of media impact, with metrics such as number of feature articles, media impressions including print, digital and social media, etc.
- Advance Key City-Building Priorities
 - Number of City Strategic Actions supported by event
 - Metrics related to cultural impact, including number of artists engaged, new works commissioned, etc.
 - Metrics related to social development, including number of participants in community outreach programs, etc.

Generate Benefits and Legacies for Toronto

Projected visitor spending during event – Detailed breakdown of event attendance, with metrics such as the number of same day vs. overnight visitors, number of first-time visitors, geographic origin of visitors (e.g. number of visitors from outside Greater Toronto Area, outside of Canada, etc.)

In addition to tracking the success of individual City-supported events, it is recommended that the Strategy be evaluated as a whole once per Council term to identify areas of strength, and opportunities for improvement and growth. This evaluation will consider the cumulative impact of events support as part of this Strategy, and illustrate the legacy of the City's investment.

Future Plans

The implementation of the Strategy, including identifying what events and how events are supported are in development. This includes a process for utilizing the Major Special Event Reserve Fund (M-SERF).

Strategic Hosting Principles for Category A&B Events

This Strategy adopts the Strategic Hosting Principles proposed by the Mayor's Advisory Panel on International Hosting Opportunities as an evaluative framework for assessing the merits of a Category A or B event bidding or hosting opportunity for which the City is asked to provide some level of commitment– including financial contributions, institutional resources, or political support. From time to time, the City is also asked to underwrite or guarantee the financial performance of an event. It is recommended that the City not undertake any open-ended guarantee due to the associated financial risks. While the Principles were designed to apply to “Mega Events”, they can broadly be related to special events of all types and sizes.

Exhibit 5: City's Event Criteria, Definitions & Examples²⁷

Key Dimensions & Criteria

There are a number of key dimensions and criteria that can influence the character and impact of a special event. The first set of bullets focus mostly on the scale of the event. Then there are two additional dimensions that can impact policy (characteristics of the proponent/organizer) and whether the event is gated (entry is controlled usually for liquor license or ticketing) or totally open to the public.

Category A and B events defined below are those specifically covered by the City's existing Bidding and Hosting Strategy outlined in Exhibit 3. The FIFA World Cup 2026 would be considered a Mega Event as described below.

Scale

- Length and frequency of activity: How many days and how often the event occurs.
- Number of venues, roads or sites: Single site/venue or multiple
- Attendance: Number of participants and spectators expected
- Out-of-town Attendance: Number of participants and/or spectators drawn from outside an 80km radius of Toronto
- Quantity of City permits and/or approvals required
- City coordination required: Number of services, divisions required and complexity of the event
- Value of City services required: Includes paid and in-kind services, does not include grant programs
- Bidding Process: Is there a global bid process
- Infrastructure Requirements: Purpose-build facilities and infrastructure (transit, housing)
- Measured Benefits: Economic, Tourism, Hotel Rooms, Media, Exposure

Two additional criteria would further divide each category:

- Organizational status: Private, for profit, corporate or charitable, not-for-profit, government
- Admission: Open/free or Gated/charge

The City of Toronto uses SIX categories – Mega Events, A, B, C, D and Local Street and Community Event.

Mega Event

- Length: A minimum of two weeks, to up to six months
- Frequency: Held every four years in rotating global locations
- Number of venues, roads or sites: Unlimited (usually many across City and/or region)
- Attendance: Unlimited (usually over 500,000)
- Out-of-town Attendance: Over 100,000 out-of-town draw
- Quantity of City permits and/or approvals required: Unlimited (usually many)
- Value of City services required: Over \$1,000,000

²⁷ [Event Criteria, Definitions & Examples – City of Toronto](#)

- Bidding Process: Bid takes place on global scale, with significant international support and promotion required to be successful.
- City Coordination Required: Production of event led by external organization or other order of government. City leads local event coordination, including venues and logistics.
- Infrastructure Requirements: Purpose-built event facilities and significant levels of ancillary infrastructure (e.g. transit, housing, etc.)
- Measured Benefits: Significant economic and business benefit, utilizes hotels City-wide, provides the City of Toronto with international media/branding opportunities via live broadcasting, and television, radio, or print advertising

Examples: Olympic Games (Winter or Summer), World Expo, FIFA World Cup

Category A

- Length: Could vary from a day to a month
- Frequency: Not occurring annually or repeating within five years
- Number of venues, roads or sites: Unlimited (usually many)
- Attendance: Unlimited (usually over 200,000)
- Out-of-town Attendance: Over 50,000 out-of-town draw
- Quantity of City permits and/or approvals required: Unlimited (usually many)
- Value of City services required: Over \$100,000
- City coordination required: Multiple levels of government coordination and/or City-wide divisional coordination
- Measured Benefits: High economic and business benefit, utilizes 3 or more hotels, provides the City of Toronto with media/branding opportunities via television, radio, or print advertising

Examples: World Youth Days and Papal Visit, 100th Grey Cup Festival

Category B

- Length: Up to 1 month
- Frequency: often annual
- Number of venues, roads or sites: Up to 5 locations
- Attendance: 20,000 to 200,000
- Out-of-town Attendance: Minimum 25% out-of-town draw
- Quantity of City permits and/or approvals required: 5 to 10
- City coordination required: Over 3 City Divisions
- Value of City services required: Up to \$100,000
- Measured Benefits: International, national and local media coverage, economic and business benefit, promotes the City of Toronto within the event's marketing campaign

Examples: Honda Indy, Luminato, Pride Festival, Taste of the Danforth, Toronto Caribbean Carnival, Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)

Category C

- Length: Up to 5 days
- Frequency: can be annual
- Number of venues, roads or sites: Up to 5 locations

- Attendance: 10,000 to 50, 000
- Out-of-town Attendance: Minimum 10% out-of-town draw
- Quantity of City permits and/or approvals required: 5 to 10
- City coordination required: Up to 3 City Divisions
- Value of City services required: Up to \$50,000
- Measured Benefits: Local media coverage, economic and business benefit, promotes the City of Toronto within the event's marketing campaign

Examples: Canada Day Events, Khalsa Day, Sporting Life 10K, Toronto Ribfest, Woofstock, Ride for Heart

Category D

- Length: Up to 3 days,
- Frequency: can be annual
- Number of venues, roads or sites: One location
- Attendance: 2,000 to 10,000
- Out-of-town Attendance: Minimal
- Quantity of City permits and/or approvals required: Under 5
- Value of City services required: Between \$1,500 and \$25,000
- City coordination required: Single Division
- Measured Benefits: Local Business Benefit

Examples: Festival on Bloor, Himalayan Festival, Turkish Festival

Local Street and Community Event

- Length: Under 1 day to 2 days,
- Frequency: annual or can be a one off, local event
- Number of venues, roads or sites: One location
- Attendance: Less than 2000
- Out-of-town Attendance: Minimal
- Quantity of City permits and/or approvals required: Under 3
- Value of City services required: Under \$1500
- City coordination required: Single Division
- Measured Benefits: Local community focus

Examples: Local Block Party, High School Parade

Exhibit 6: City's Evaluation of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Bid Opportunity Using the City's Bidding and Hosting Strategy for Significant Special Events²⁸

Evaluation Criteria	Score	Comments
Start from a position of strength, emphasizing the need for shared commitment by all orders of government and the private sector prior to launching an event bid	To be confirmed. The bid will only go forward if the federal and provincial governments commit sufficient resources in a way that limits the City's liabilities to an acceptable level.	Toronto's bid is strongly supported by private sector partners. Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment have championed the proposal and have committed to the use of BMO Field for the games. It is anticipated that other partners and sponsors can be secured if Toronto is selected as a host city. While the Canadian Soccer Association and City staff have both engaged in discussions with federal and provincial governments, no agreement has been reached on their financial support for the FIFA World Cup 2026 at this time. Similar to the Pan Am Games, a multi-party cost-sharing agreement or other appropriate arrangement between all three orders of government would be required to host the FIFA World Cup 2026. Confirmation of government support for the bid, including a commitment of financial support, is recommended as a mandatory condition for the City to sign the Bid Agreements.
Optimize Toronto as a host city and region, underscoring the importance of ensuring a strong hosting capacity through a responsible financial plan, diverse leadership team, and meaningful engagement with communities and partners across the Greater Toronto Area	High	Coming off the success of the 2015 Pan Am / Parapan Am Games, Toronto is well positioned to host a major international sporting event like the FIFA World Cup. Toronto has successfully hosted sporting events of similar scale to individual World Cup matches, such as the 2016 NBA All-Star Tournament, and individual games as part of the 2007 FIFA Under 20 World Cup. Toronto is recognized internationally for its top-tier sporting facilities and hosting capacity. In addition to BMO Field, Toronto has a number of smaller soccer fields that could be used as training facilities and base camps for visiting national teams, though these may require upgrades in order to meet FIFA playing standards. Staff have a high degree of confidence that Toronto could successfully host an international event of this scale and prestige, provided that the required resources are in place.
Advance key City-building priorities by leveraging a major event to advance areas such as transit, affordable	High	Hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026 is an opportunity for Toronto to advance legacy projects that align with key city-building priorities. Potential legacies will be considered in detail during the development of the bid and further refined if the bid is successful, but could include enhanced community soccer facilities, job creation, a greater international tourism profile, advancement of environmental

²⁸ [Authority to Enter into Bid Agreements for the FIFA World Cup 2026](#)

housing, and other civic infrastructure		priorities, and opportunities for collaboration with FIFA member states.
Responsibly manage hosting costs , resources and risks by minimizing the City's financial exposure, and mitigate risks related to bidding on and hosting a major event	High	<p>As one of the host cities in a joint bid, Toronto could be expected to reap considerable economic and community benefits from the World Cup, while limiting the amount of investment and risk by sharing hosting responsibilities with other cities. Since there are very little capital costs expected, the financial risk is minimal assuming the provincial and/or federal governments absorb security costs.</p> <p>The City will begin to incur costs for the FIFA World Cup 2026 in 2023-24, if Toronto is chosen as a host city. Prior to then, the City will need to identify a funding source for expenditures which would be incurred in the lead-up to and during 2026.</p> <p>While some FIFA events have been the subject of negative media attention in recent years, the organization has implemented strong management and ethics controls to mitigate the risk of such issues arising in the future.</p>
Generate benefits and legacies for all Torontonians to ensure that a major event has a wide-ranging, positive impact for communities across the City	High	<p><i>Accessibility</i></p> <p>The FIFA World Cup mandates that host nations produce accessible, barrier-free events. As well, to ensure that the FIFA World Cup is open to all residents and visitors, FIFA requires that each host city produce a free "Fan Zone" that is open to the public for the full duration of the event. Toronto's Fan Zone would likely be held at Nathan Phillips Square and serve as a community hub for live broadcasts, performances and other activities. Running for the full 30 days of the FIFA World Cup, the Fan Zone would allow all Torontonians to take part in the excitement of being a host city and celebrate the achievements of the teams and nations in competition.</p> <p><i>Legacy</i></p> <p>While specific legacy opportunities have not yet been identified, there is considerable potential to advance social, economic, environmental and cultural opportunities through the hosting of the event. As a next step, if Council authorizes the signing of the Bid Agreements, City staff would consult with stakeholders to develop a shared vision and potential legacies for the FIFA World Cup 2026.</p>

Appendix 1: Management's Response to the Auditor General's Report Entitled: "FIFA World Cup 2026 – Toronto, Governance Lessons Learned for Bidding and Planning to Host Future Mega Events"

Recommendation 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.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: This report is to be considered by the Mayor and City Council at the July 23-25, 2025 , City Council meeting.

Recommendation 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.

Management Response: <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer, in consultation with the City Manager's Office, will develop a policy to improve on reporting when changes are expected to be significantly greater than initial estimated values for projects or agreements where implementation has been delegated to City staff. Estimated completion is Q1 2026 .

Recommendation 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.

Management Response: ☒ Agree ☐ Disagree

Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:

The Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC) leads City of Toronto efforts in the bidding and hosting of major events. This included preparing for the City's bidding and hosting effort for the FWC26.

In November 2024 upon adoption of the City's new economic development plan, City Council directed EDC as follows: "Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to develop a major event bidding and hosting strategy in partnership with Destination Toronto, other orders of government, stakeholders from the private sector and the hospitality industry and report back to the Economic and Community Development Committee by the fourth quarter of 2027." This direction sought to benefit from the City's experience in hosting FWC26 to inform bidding and hosting principles. Work is underway in EDC to deliver upon Council's direction for an updated strategy. This strategy will include new directions around governance, Council engagement and risk mitigation.

A key component of this updated strategy will recommend the City confirm financial support from the federal and provincial governments prior to making a bid for a "Mega Event" like the FIFA World Cup, in addition to consideration of broader preliminary financial and risk analysis for the City of Toronto. This will be essential to any decision to pursue a major event, ensuring in advance, a comprehensive assessment and evaluation mitigating financial risk and exposure to the City. This strategy will be delivered to Council by **Q4 2027** as per Council direction.

In the interim, the City continues to draw guidance from its existing Bidding and Hosting Strategy. This policy, approved by Council in 2016, was informed by a report subsequent to Toronto's hosting of the Pan-Am Games in 2015. Bringing the World to Toronto: A Report from the Mayor's Advisory Panel on International Hosting Opportunities identified principles that the City should apply in pursuing major international event hosting opportunities. The accompanying staff report offered concise 'hosting principles,' that despite significant geopolitical and economic changes in the interim, remain very relevant and continue to guide City efforts in bidding and hosting. These principles are:

- Hosting international events needs to align with the city's long-term aspirations and priorities.
- Hosting needs to be done in a responsible, accountable and cost-effective way.
- The City must be able to support event hosting without negatively impacting the other services it provides.
- The community wants to be engaged from the earliest stages of event planning.
- International events should tell the story of who we are as a city and region.
- International events need to be built on a forward-looking vision of the city.

Recommendation 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.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The final agreement with MLSE is specific to tournament time stadium operations. More details and discussions between FIFA, the City, and MLSE are required in order to determine specific stadium staffing and game time operational requirements. Also noting, match times will impact stadium operations and the full match schedule (inclusive of specific match times) will not be available until the Official Draw in December 2025. As such, the Stadium Operations agreement is expected to be finalized in Q1 2026 .

Recommendation 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.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The FWC26 Toronto Secretariat will establish an internal process to ensure all changes to deliverables as part of the Host City Agreement for the FIFA World Cup 2026 are documented in writing and subsequently filed for future reference as needed. This process will be put in place immediately and maintained through to the completion of the FWC26 project. Looking forward and upon Council adoption of this report, EDC will develop new information management protocols. Such new information management practices will ensure greater diligence in the documentation of all significant discussions with key partners on major event bidding and hosting. The recent adoption of enterprise-wide communications solutions will aid in these efforts to improve information management. For example, the Secretariat and EDC, working together, have uploaded key documentation into the project management solution Jira. Improvements are underway and will be in place by the end of 2025 .

Recommendation 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.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: City staff, under lead of the City Manager's Office, will implement more frequent briefings to City Council on the bidding and hosting of major events, via reporting through the Economic and Community Development Committee of City Council to be led by the Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC). Starting in Q4 2025 , EDC will bring forward an annual report on bidding and hosting activities for major events, outlining specific opportunities, as well as an analysis of their benefits, risks, costs and potential economic impact. This annual update will complement the staff reports to City Council seeking authority to advance bids for specific events (as outlined below in the management response to recommendation 7.)

Recommendation 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.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: In reporting to City Council, staff will ensure that all available financial analysis is included in order to inform City Council's decision-making process. This would include any preliminary cost estimates including known costs, additional areas of potential costs for the City, and clearly identifying where unclear or unknown financial impacts remain that need to be reported on in the future. It would also include any potential or confirmed funding strategies, such as contributions from other orders of government. Further, reporting would include any preliminary risk assessments. Regular reporting and/or briefings will include updates as applicable. This practice will be implemented immediately .

**AUDITOR
GENERAL**

TORONTO