

City Council

Motion without Notice

MM29.11	ACTION			Ward: 12
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Taking a Stand to Protect Ontario Place and Our City's Public Waterfront - by Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Deputy Mayor Ausma Malik

** Notice of this Motion has not been given. A two-thirds vote is required to waive notice.
* This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.
* This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

Recommendations

Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Deputy Mayor Ausma Malik, recommends that:

1. City Council request the City Manager, in consultation with the City Solicitor and all relevant Divisions, to report to the next meeting of City Council with a status update on all City activities related to the Therme spa project, including:

a. whether the Province has taken ownership of the 16 acres of City-owned land at Ontario Place and, if so, what legislative mechanism has been applied, and any options for the return of that land to the City, particularly as a result of inadequate due diligence in the provincial bid award process;

b. the status of the City's review of the Province's initial planning application for Ontario Place, the City's findings during that review regarding public benefit and accessibility of the waterfront, and whether the proposal would have been recommended for approval based on the City's planning principles;

c. what remaining approvals or permits are required for the Therme project, and what public benefits Therme is obligated to provide, either under provincial legislation or which can be secured through these approvals; or already have been; and

d. status update regarding:

i. parking for the Ontario Place development;

ii. site servicing (water, sewage, electricity, etc) on the Ontario Place site; and

iii. construction related road closures/alterations at the Ontario Place site.

Summary

The actions by the provincial government to build a private spa by Therme at Ontario Place have already exacted a severe toll. The province has razed mature trees, destroying a waterfront recreation space beloved by Torontonians and the habitat of many animals including beavers, minks, foxes, coyotes and over 170 species of birds. However, another potential disaster raised in an April 16th New York Times article, can still be averted.

The Province has advanced its project through extraordinary legislative powers, including the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act. It exempted the Therme site from an Environmental Assessment, imposed an enhanced Ministerial Zoning Order that removed the City's Planning review authority, and expropriated City owned land within the Ontario Place site.

The Ontario Place redevelopment was the subject of an Auditor-General of Ontario report released December 3, 2024. The Auditor-General found that Infrastructure Ontario (IO) did not conduct due diligence to ensure that spas cited by Therme in its submissions were in fact owned and operated by Therme Group. They reviewed the six spas and found five instances where the spa cited in the submission was not owned or operated by Therme Group.

The April 16, 2025 New York Times article investigated these inconsistencies and determined Therme group "misrepresented itself, misleading the Ontario government and exaggerating its experience in its bid to secure the Toronto deal." Therme was able to misrepresent its experience by adopting the same name, and similar logo, of a more established spa company.

Therme used its deal with the Ontario government to secure funding for another project in Manchester and is closing in on deals in Dubai, Washington, and Dallas, which would require \$2.5 billion to construct all 4 sites. Given the company was found to only have \$1.1 million (USD) in equity, and losing money, there is now significant doubt that Therme would be able to deliver a spa in a reasonable timeframe, if at all.

The new information contained in the Times story has significant implications for the City of Toronto as the only thing worse on a public waterfront site than a private spa, that is anticipated to worsen traffic and congestion, is a derelict wasteland fenced off by construction hoarding. During its review of the Ontario Place planning application, the City raised serious concerns about the appropriateness of this development on the waterfront. The Ontario government's failure to provide proper due diligence on their spa partner requires a status update on all City activities related to the provincial government's Therme development before this dubious project becomes further entrenched.

This motion is urgent as Council needs an opportunity to assess the City's options given the significant revelations contained in an April 16th New York Times article titled, "A wellness Company with False Claims, Global Aims and a Toronto Island."

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM29.11