



**ARCHITECTURAL  
CONSERVANCY  
ONTARIO**

**BACKGROUND — ONTARIO PLACE IS AT RISK**

*Drafted by ACO Policy Committee, January 30, 2019*

Ontario Place, opened in 1971, designed by two of Ontario’s most important design professionals, architect Eberhard Zeidler and landscape architect Michael Hough, is currently at risk. It was a gift to the people to celebrate Ontario from the Ontario government, an initiative started under Premier John Robarts and opened by Premier William Davis.

Recent press reports indicate that the Ontario Place Corporation may be disbanded. The chair has been replaced with Jim Ginou, who was reported in the Toronto Star on January 7, 2019 as saying “the site is in complete disrepair” and can be rebuilt “any way” that Premier Doug Ford wishes.

In January, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sport, Michael Tibollo, announced that the government would be embarking on a process to request expressions of interest for development of the site that requires only a minimum of 7.5 acres of parkland remain, and for proposals that include “local, provincial and international visitors — with potential landmarks such as sports and entertainment attractions, and retail.”

There is no mention of conserving any aspect of the site in the government announcement, even though Ontario Place has been evaluated by the provincial government as “a cultural heritage landscape of provincial significance.” The evaluation of the site was undertaken under the government’s Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties., which sets out a mandatory process for government-owned properties to ensure that heritage property is identified and its heritage attributes conserved.

The government’s own Statement of Cultural Heritage Value — which outlines why Ontario Place is significant and what features should be conserved in any changes to the site — has been removed from the Ontario Government website.

Removing the statement does not eliminate the “designation” of Ontario Place as provincially significant or the requirement to follow the government’s own process. However, the ultimate decision-maker about whether a provincially significant property

can be demolished is the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sport, Michael Tibollo, who has given little indication that he would act to protect the heritage attributes of Ontario Place.

## LEGAL SITUATION FOR PRESERVATION

- The Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties (S&Gs, found here: [http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/publications/Standards\\_Consevation.pdf](http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/publications/Standards_Consevation.pdf)) apply to Ontario Place as long as it is owned by the province. The S&Gs were put in place by Cabinet in 2010 under the Ontario Heritage Act. They are mandatory with no exemptions or exceptions.

No decisions on redevelopment of the site have been made at this point. It appears that the property will stay in provincial ownership. It is quite possible that once Expressions of Interest from developers have been received the government will purport to follow the letter of the S&Gs. This means that if the government wants to demolish or allow demolition of buildings at Ontario Place it will simply go through the required process, which requires that the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport approve demolitions on provincially significant sites (see paragraph F.5.) — and basically give itself the permission to demolish!

## RECENT MEDIA POSTINGS: TOBuilt in the Ontario Place sources

**IMPORTANT QUOTE:** Michael McClelland, “*It’s like developing Niagara Falls and saying, ‘You don’t have to keep the falls.’*” Toronto Star, January 27, 2019

## PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION FOR ONTARIO PLACE

### Early Publications:

*Architecture d’Aujourd’hui, Architectural Design, Architectural Review, Deutsche Bauzeitung, Domus, Landscape Architecture, and many others*

### Awards

1969	Canadian Architect Award of Excellence	For Projects in the Design Stage
1973	American Iron & Steel Institute, Design in Steel	Citation for Excellence in Engineering Low-rise Construction

1975	American Society of Landscape Architects	Merit Award
1975	American Society of Interior Designers	International Design Award
1976	Ontario Association of Architects	Design Excellence Award
1999	Ontario Association of Architects	Landmark Designation Award
2012	National Trust for Canada	Top Ten Endangered List
2012	Docomomo	International Register
2017	Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the National Trust for Canada	Prix du XXe Siecle

## **ACO ASKS**

Ontario Place is a major landmark which belongs to the people of Ontario. ACO wants to ensure that the significant public investment and treasured architecture of this provincially and nationally significant public legacy remains for future Ontarians.

1. In the upcoming Request for Expressions of Interest proponents should be directed to The Statement of Cultural Heritage Value regarding components of the property that should be conserved in any redevelopment proposal.
2. The Statement of Cultural Heritage Value be returned to the Ontario Government website for public information.
3. The government acknowledge that it will make decisions about the future of the site/buildings in accordance with its own Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties and that the decision-making process be transparent.