

ONTARIO PLACE

PUBLIC WATERFRONT · 95-YEAR PRIVATE LEASE

Ontario Place is provincially owned waterfront on Lake Ontario — not sold off, but leased to a private operator for generations. Unlike the reversed Greenbelt carve-out, this deal is still moving ahead: a commercial thermal spa and waterpark under a 95-year lease, with less public environmental scrutiny than similar-scale projects elsewhere.

95-YEAR THERME LEASE

BILL 5 · LESS EBR SCRUTINY

STILL MOVING AHEAD

WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED

Source: Ontario.ca final designs; CTV News on Ontario Place designs (2025).

- Ontario Place remains provincially owned waterfront — public land handed to Therme Canada under a 95-year lease.
- Therme would operate a large thermal spa and waterpark with paid day passes on a site many Torontonians treat as public waterfront.
- The province promotes rebuilt free parkland on the West Island — beaches, trails, and open space — alongside the commercial complex.
- A 2025 redesign roughly halved the spa footprint and lowered building heights; critics say the core lease structure is unchanged.
- A generation-long private hold is hard to take back — far longer than most political cycles or council terms.

BILL 5 AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

Source: Legislative Assembly of Ontario — Bill 5 (ola.org).

- Ontario Place redevelopment is carved out from normal Environmental Bill of Rights participation requirements.
- Residents get less notice and less recourse than for comparably large projects elsewhere in the province.
- Bill 5 stacks with the lease model: streamline first, consult later — the same playbook critics tie to the Greenbelt scandal.
- Weakened public participation makes it harder to challenge harms before construction locks in.
- More on Bill 5 rollbacks: protectont.ca/wildlife · protectont.ca/public-land

WHY THIS FIGHT MATTERS NOW

Unlike the Greenbelt, this deal has not been reversed — it is one of the most consequential live fights over public land in Ontario.

- Public pressure reversed the Greenbelt carve-out in 2023; whether the same happens here depends on waterfront organizing.
- Critics argue the public gets less waterfront control and less recourse than the scale of the project deserves.
- Jobs and tourism talking points do not replace democratic accountability on public commons.
- Waterfront land in Toronto belongs to the public — not a single term of government.
- Full background: protectont.ca/public-land#ontario-place

QUESTIONS TO ASK LOCALLY

Use at community boards, council meetings, and MPP offices.

- Who profits from a 95-year lease — and who pays maintenance and environmental costs?
- What public access and cultural programming is guaranteed in writing for the full lease term?
- Why exempt Ontario Place from normal Environmental Bill of Rights scrutiny?

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