

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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## **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

P-5

## **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

P-5

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

2024 Annual Report,  
Auditor General:

Ministry of Infrastructure

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming

Infrastructure Ontario

Metrolinx

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
44<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Monday 3 November 2025

### **Comité permanent des comptes publics**

Rapport annuel 2024,  
vérificatrice générale :

Ministère de l'Infrastructure

Ministère du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux

Le siège social d'Infrastructure Ontario

Metrolinx

1<sup>re</sup> session  
44<sup>e</sup> législature

Lundi 3 novembre 2025

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Chair: Tom Rakocevic  
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Tom Rakocevic  
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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Hansard Publications and Language Services  
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building  
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Telephone 416-325-7400  
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Journal des débats et services linguistiques  
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement  
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Téléphone, 416-325-7400  
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-4327

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTSCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
COMPTES PUBLICS

Monday 3 November 2025

Lundi 3 novembre 2025

*The committee met at 1459 in room 151, following a closed session.*

2024 ANNUAL REPORT,  
AUDITOR GENERAL  
MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE  
MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CULTURE  
AND GAMING  
INFRASTRUCTURE ONTARIO  
METROLINX

Consideration of the Performance Audit: Ontario Place Redevelopment.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** I would like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to order. We are here to begin consideration of the 2024 Performance Audit: Ontario Place Redevelopment.

Joining us today are officials from the Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming; Infrastructure Ontario; and Metrolinx. You will have 20 minutes collectively for an opening presentation to the committee. We will then move into the question-and-answer portion of the meeting, where we will rotate back and forth between the government, official opposition and the third party caucuses in 20-minute intervals.

Before you begin, the Clerk will administer the oath of witness or affirmation. The way we're going to be doing it is just the people at the lead table. If you have to reach out to somebody behind you, at that point they will have to either affirm or swear an oath as well. During the question-and-answer rotations, I will pause the clock so as not to lose member time when that transition occurs.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna):** I'll just administer the oath and then we can go ahead.

I'll begin with Nancy Kennedy. Do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I do.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna):** Ali Veshkini, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** I do.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna):** Thank you.

Michael Robertson, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** I do.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna):** Thank you.

Angela Clayton, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I do.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna):** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** You may begin, but I remind you: On the first time that you are speaking, if you may, give your name and title for Hansard. Thank you very much. Please begin.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Good afternoon. My name is Nancy Kennedy, and I'm Ontario's Deputy Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

Chair and members of the committee, it is a privilege to be here to speak with you today. I'm joined today by Deputy Minister Ali Veshkini from the Ministry of Infrastructure; Angela Clayton, chief executive officer of Infrastructure Ontario; and Michael Robertson, assistant deputy minister of the Ontario Place Redevelopment Secretariat. I also want to thank Michael Lindsay, who is present today in his capacity as the former CEO of IO.

To start and for context, I want to take you on a quick journey that begins with Ontario Place as many of us remember it. It was once a vibrant hub for families, friends, concertgoers and tourists to gather. For years, Ontario Place stood as a symbol of what was possible; a place where innovation, recreation and culture converged on Toronto's waterfront. But as time passed, while some of the areas of the site remained open, declining visitors and revenues led to its closure in 2012. The site became derelict, its potential untapped, its legacy at risk of fading away.

The government saw not just what Ontario Place was but what it could be and moved forward to transform Ontario Place from a neglected relic into a world-class waterfront tourism destination, welcoming millions of

visitors from across Ontario, Canada and the world, becoming a hub for unique visitor experiences and community connections.

Ontario Place offers more than a stretch of shoreline, more than a scenic backdrop. We have a bold vision. We see a living, breathing and evolving destination that has the potential to contribute significantly to Toronto's waterfront and Ontario. That is why we are transforming the site into a modern, year-round attraction that will restore Ontario Place as a vibrant hub for families, students and tourists, while also driving economic growth for the province as a whole.

This is more than a rebuild; it's a reinvestment and a reimagination for Ontario's future. We are giving a new life to a place that means so much to so many, ensuring it continues to enrich the province's economy, culture and communities for generations to come. People across the province deserve modern amenities and attractions, and the government is confident that the reimagined Ontario Place will both provide for Ontarians everywhere and showcase to millions of visitors everything our province has to offer.

The new public park at Ontario Place will preserve key heritage and recreational features of the site, connecting to all the new attractions while offering free public access to the waterfront for residents and tourists alike to explore year-round.

I am grateful for this opportunity to highlight the steps we have taken to transform Ontario Place. We know Ontario Place has a special place in the hearts of people across the province. We understand and respect its importance as a waterfront public destination for communities across the city of Toronto, the greater Toronto area and the province. The government made sure commitments for Ontario Place's redevelopment were included in the terms of the new deal with the city of Toronto, ensuring continued collaboration and engagement with municipal partners as we move forward with this project.

After two years of Indigenous, public and stakeholder engagement, the government unveiled the final designs for Ontario Place's public realm earlier this summer. We understand that Ontarians do not want a casino or condos on the site, and we have listened. Between 2021 and 2024, more than 9,300 people provided their input directly to the government on the future of Ontario Place along with feedback received from Indigenous communities, the city of Toronto and key stakeholders. Feedback received was considered as part of early planning and development of the site including the design of the future park land and public spaces.

I'd like to take a few minutes to describe what you can expect of Ontario Place in the area we call the public realm, which people will be able to access free of charge. Ontario Place's beloved parkland and shoreline have been reimagined to include more than 50 acres of free public space with brand-new modernized amenities, family areas, event spaces, picnic spaces, art fixtures and more.

Upon first approach to the park, visitors will come across the mainland district, the front doors of the renewed

Ontario Place. Incorporating public plazas, promenades and marquee gateways, this area will also allow for connectivity with travel and transit options, reaching streamlined access to waterfront trails, parking and rideshare drop-off locations.

At the heart of the park, the forum will provide ample space for concerts, outdoor markets, festivals and community events of all sizes. The forum's centrepiece will be a full one-acre splash fountain in the shape of Ontario's iconic trillium—the largest fountain of its kind in the province.

To the south, the new water's edge district will feature a brand-new terraced shoreline incorporating an extended William G. Davis Trail. This innovative design will not only provide an exciting visitor destination for relaxation, picnics and sunsets, but it will also ensure long-term sustainability with its focus on erosion protection and flood mitigation.

Brigantine Cove will be transformed into an urban beach, featuring boardwalks and playgrounds, including a multi-level interactive tree house and a turtle-shaped play structure paying homage to the location's First Nations heritage. The new family-friendly cove will provide a year-round destination for cultural events, Indigenous storytelling and children's play while also incorporating expanded amenities such as changing areas and washrooms.

The Ontario Place Marina will become a vibrant hub of open-air pavilions, boardwalks and expanded spaces for future programming and amenities. Featuring stunning views of Toronto's skyline, modernized facilities and moorings will accommodate enhanced boat traffic for visitors travelling by water. This integration of land and water is a crucial aspect of the government's vision for Ontario Place. We are expanding possibilities for exploration with new canoe and kayak launch sites to allow visitors to enjoy Lake Ontario and explore the park from the water itself.

Finally, an Indigenous cultural pavilion will provide up to 3,400 square feet of public space on the east island, offering a dedicated area for community gatherings, workshops and learning programs.

The final design of the parkland and public spaces at Ontario Place reflects more than two years of public stakeholder and Indigenous engagement. We're proud of the work, the partnerships and the conversations that have gone into planning and designing the public realm and are excited to see it take shape.

As you know, Ontario Place will also become the new home of the Ontario Science Centre. The new OSC has always been an element of the government's bold vision for Ontario Place. The new state-of-the-art facility will be designed and built to modern standards, ensuring an accessible and welcoming environment for all visitors and staff while also inspiring the next generation of innovators. It will provide fresh opportunities for the OSC to offer expanded programming and exhibits, sparking curiosity and innovation in a new generation of visitors.

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Serving as a vibrant hub of dynamic partnerships focused on science education and engagement, the new Ontario Science Centre will continue its mission of inspiring and engaging teachers and students with learning-centric approaches, directly and measurably contributing to Ontario's STEM pipeline. It will drive awareness, engagement and participation in science and innovation in everyone we serve, helping to build science capital in our society and supporting strong citizenship. It will broaden the centre's reach as a beloved and trusted source of family-focused fun and interactive in-person and virtual scientific experiences, serving as a premier destination in the province's cultural tourism landscape and contributing to a strong Ontario economy.

The OSC's brand new custom-built facility will be located on the mainland of Ontario Place. During the transition period, the OSC currently has two temporary satellite locations continuing to serve visitors, offering programming and exhibitions—one at Harbourfront Centre's downtown Toronto location and another at Cadillac Fairview Sherway Gardens in Etobicoke—along with many pop-ups and other events.

Ontario Place will also feature Live Nation's revitalized amphitheatre, transforming the iconic seasonal venue into a year-round destination to continue delivering world-class concerts and performances from a leader in the live entertainment industry. The amphitheatre has been a long-time staple of a Toronto summer, operating on the site since 1994 and creating musical memories that last a lifetime. With this transformation, the expanded venue will be able to build on that legacy, thrilling concertgoers every month of the year, becoming a key destination in the city and part of the province's dynamic music tourism sector.

Finally, the west island will feature Therme Canada's water park and wellness destination, a new landmark along Toronto's waterfront. The family-friendly facility embodies a commitment to wellness, well-being and connection with social saunas, wade pools and thermal bathing—

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We're past the half-way mark.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** —all set amongst a vibrant botanical garden and inspired by spa traditions from around the world. Therme's facility will sit alongside 16 acres of public park and beach areas, offering year-round free public access to the iconic waterfront, and new immersive spaces representing a commitment to ecological stewardship and community connection.

The new Ontario Place will be served not only by transit connections but also by a new provincially owned parking structure with up to 3,500 spots, designed to enhance connectivity across the waterfront and support access to the site's many attractions. This parking will be built for long-term sustainability, serving the needs of all Ontario Place users, from beach-goers and trail-walkers to concert attendees, marina users and Ontario Science Centre visitors. It reflects the province's commitment to ensuring the revitalized Ontario Place has the infrastructure needed

to handle not only the demands of today but the needs of tomorrow.

Beyond transportation and financial sustainability, our redevelopment efforts are also focused on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. The government has already taken significant steps in ensuring the site is development-ready, and this has gone far beyond basic infrastructure. Site preparation work has paid close attention to ecological stewardship. Soil remediation, heritage preservation and environmental investigations underpin our dedication to the natural environment of this crucial area.

Redevelopment work will reinforce the island's shoreline, creating a flood-resistant landscape that preserves the waterfront destination for future generations. The water's edge will be supported by open spaces, connected by a network of multi-use trails. The landscape strategy prioritizes plants and trees that are indigenous to southern Ontario, creating a dense and diverse habitat that showcases our province's natural history and beauty.

In addition to these environmental enhancements, the redevelopment of Ontario Place will deliver significant economic benefits to the province. During the site's construction, early estimates anticipate the project will create more than 4,700 jobs, add \$420 million to Ontario's GDP, generate \$68 million in provincial tax revenue and attract \$500 million in private investment. Once complete, we expect Ontario Place to attract up to six million visitors a year and support more than 2,000 jobs.

This economic activity will boost Toronto, the GTA and the surrounding region, but most importantly it will deliver upon the promise of Ontario Place, creating a destination that not only drives prosperity but truly belongs to and serves all Ontarians now and for generations to come.

I would like to focus next on the important work we are engaged in with First Nations and Indigenous partners. I touched on this a bit earlier in my remarks, but I think it merits highlighting in more detail. It's a great example of the kind of truly meaningful consultation we are all aspiring to.

The Ontario Place Redevelopment Secretariat, led by my colleague Michael, has always recognized that its duty to consult is a vital component of our work. Ontario, as the crown, has a legal obligation to consult with First Nations people on decisions or actions that may adversely impact asserted or established treaty rights.

The redevelopment of Ontario Place includes activities related to in- or above-water work, which have been legally assessed as presenting a medium-to-high risk due to potential impacts to fishing rights and title to water. Accordingly, we have sought consultation with the Mississaugas of the Credit; the Six Nations of the Grand River, as represented by elected council; the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council; and Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Mississaugas of Scugog Island and Kawartha Nishnawbe First Nations. We ensured this consultation happened early, often and transparently, and we remain committed to continuing this consultation as the project moves forward. We have maintained a tailored nation-to-

nation approach to consultation, respecting each nation's concerns and asserted treaty rights. Consultation has been structured across multiple project streams and activities to ensure it is meaningful and comprehensive.

Since 2019, the Ontario Place Redevelopment Secretariat has developed productive relationships with First Nations and Indigenous organizations and consulted on more than 20 project streams related to the redevelopment. Over a dozen consultations have already been completed, with a dozen more planned or under way as we continue to work with our First Nations partners on how we're preparing the lands and Ontario Place for redevelopment.

In addition to consultation, we have also engaged Indigenous communities and urban Indigenous organizations on design elements for the public realm, working closely with design firm LANDinc to ensure the reimagined Ontario Place honours Indigenous peoples and perspectives, educates visitors on the site's rich heritage and serves as a welcoming and educational environment for current and future generations.

As part of this work, more than 60 engagement sessions with Indigenous communities and organizations were held to inform Indigenous place-keeping initiatives. For example, this past September, Minister Cho and I met with Chief Claire Sault of the Mississaugas of the Credit to share the final designs of the Indigenous place-keeping initiatives and the strong engagement that has fed into those designs.

Meaningful opportunities for First Nations to participate are vital to constructive dialogue and have included economic reconciliation. Through Infrastructure Ontario's Indigenous engagement and participation program, nearly \$5.5 million in contracts have been awarded to Indigenous-owned businesses on the Ontario Place site servicing work.

We will continue to value our relationships and work with First Nations throughout this project to ensure Ontario Place is also an Indigenous place for communities and Indigenous people to gather.

I want to thank you for allowing me the time to present on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, and I also want to thank the Auditor General for her recommendations and report.

I am proud of the work our ministry does in serving the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who work in the tourism sector and our millions of annual visitors. The sector supports more than 320,000 jobs and nearly 93,000 businesses, contributing more than \$32 billion to the Ontario economy.

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Ontario Place represents a unique opportunity to grow this impact even further. Waterfront destinations and experiences provide an outsized impact on our economy, culture and shared heritage. We have internationally recognized tourism destinations in Ontario, like Niagara Falls and Wasaga Beach, and we are looking forward to creating an Ontario Place worthy of the same distinction.

The government will continue in its work and its bold new vision with diligence and transparency.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** One minute remaining.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** We have confidence in our strategy, and we are excited for the path forward as we are building on our momentum, showcasing the very best our province has to offer and demonstrating to the world Ontario is the global destination we know it to be.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Thank you very much.

This week's rotations begin with the third party, the official opposition and then government members. Just to let members know, I will be giving you a roughly 10-minute warning and a two-minute warning to help you with your timing for your questions.

We will now begin with the third party. MPP Fairclough, you have the floor.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Thank you for those introductory comments for the discussion today.

I'm going to start with—we have seen the reporting on the financial viability of the Therme Group, including the European auditor's concern that financing issues make its future a significant uncertainty. And it's clear that that was probably known during the selection process. So, can you just maybe tell us why Therme was chosen when there were issues with their financial viability?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question. At the time of the selection process, there was rigorous financial due diligence that was done on all of the proposals.

I'd like to turn it over to my colleague from Infrastructure Ontario to talk a bit about the process at the time and to answer questions that you might have about that particular process.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Thank you for the question. Two things I would offer: Consistent with best practices, the call for development required participants not only to provide their experience on similar projects but also to identify all of their team members. Our review focused on both the qualitative strength of the member's team that they put forward as well as the formal ownership. Prior to entering into the lease agreement with Therme, we did our due diligence to ensure that the key members of the team had a proven track record in delivering successful projects in line with what they had proposed at Ontario Place.

Additionally, a financial review was undertaken. As part of this review, an analysis of the audited financial statements demonstrated that Therme met the financial net worth test that was required. This test was informed by advice by IO's independent third-party real estate and financial adviser, E&Y, on an appropriate test of financial substance to enter into a deal of this structure.

The lease includes a provision, and is ongoing, that Therme has to maintain a net worth of at least \$100 million or would be in default of a term of the lease agreement. This is in section 16.8 of the publicly available lease.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** I want to maybe turn my questioning then to how we arrived at Therme in the first place in the selection process. Because it's my understanding they didn't necessarily have the strongest proposal in that process and there were some concerns at that time with the



financial viability. In the selection process itself, we see that there was a single process that was used. Now you're saying that there will be a realty development solicitation policy that will be used for a staged approach going forward for these types of procurements.

Can you talk a little bit about why you chose to go that route? Why not use things like RFQs, RFPs? There's a table—I think it was figure 5—that showed what had been done at other big waterfront projects. I think for me, I'm just really trying to understand why this process was selected for this particular decision.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** At the time, I think with the process, it was designed to ensure flexibility, and it took under consideration best practices for different sorts of procurement practices. I'll turn it to Angela to provide a bit more detail about that. But flexibility was the key objective.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Just to echo that, the process we designed was meant to be flexible but also infused with some of the best practices from our formal procurements—as you mentioned, our RFQ, RFP process—but allow for the comparison of very different types of submissions.

We agree with the Auditor General's findings that the outcome of the call-for-development process would not have been materially different if these procedures had not been followed, but we also are implementing the recommendations that they have put forward.

Once all the assessments were complete—and that was a summary of the 34 submissions that we received and evaluated, including a review of how each submission performed against the primary assessment of criteria that were prescribed as part of the process—ultimately, we made the recommendation, and government made the decision in terms of moving forward with Therme.

With regard to the recommendation for a realty development solicitation policy, we did accept and adopt that recommendation from the Auditor General. In 2024, we brought a policy forward to our board which was approved, and this policy imposes a best practice for competitive solicitations and is being applied to all future solicitations.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** I do want to ask a little bit about the process you did use in this case with Triple Five. As I understand from the reports, they were the only proponent that was offered more time, and also interacted with a senior member of the organization managing the process—to provide advice on what additional information was needed.

What I'm accustomed to in these kinds of processes is that anybody involved in the competitive process is aware of what is being offered to other proponents.

So I really want to dig in on this point, because it seems that the initial submission wasn't sufficient, and I'm just trying to understand how we arrived at a decision to allow for more time and allow for that interaction directly with a senior member—when others submitting were not.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I would say that during the call-for-development process, actually, multiple participants

requested additional time to complete their submissions. This is a common occurrence in such processes—where extensions are requested. As the call-for-development process required participants to prepare comprehensive concepts, an extension of three weeks was granted to all participants, not just Triple Five. Most participants who submitted responses to the call for development did use this three-week extension and submitted their proposals after September 3. The timeline extension was granted in the interests of maximizing participation, following the multiple requests from a number of the different bidders.

With regard to Triple Five, I would say Triple Five is a well-known developer with world-class projects across Canada and beyond. They have a strong and demonstrated track record delivering projects that aligned well with the criteria for the call for development process. Within the criteria communicated between government and the call-for-development participants, they were permitted to communicate through a designated email address, and that was specified in the documents. In fact, at least 18 of the participants used that form of communication to go back and forth.

To complete a comprehensive review of the submissions, government may need to complete additional due diligence on submissions, so it's not uncommon for us to ask for clarification after a submission is received. The government may choose to contact participants as part of this due diligence or undertake its own due diligence as part of the submission.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Maybe I've got my facts incorrect. I thought you said that all were given three weeks—everybody that would submit, three weeks additional. But this particular proponent was actually given longer than three weeks to resubmit information. Is that accurate?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** All of the submissions were submitted by the deadline. There was a clarification that was requested from Triple Five after that submission, that allowed them to provide additional information.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** And all the other proponents were made aware that that was happening for that organization?

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**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I'm not able to speak to what the proponents were made aware of at that time. I'm happy to call on one of my colleagues to answer that question.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** It's okay. We can keep moving on.

I do just want to talk a little bit more about the call for development document, because it noted that there would be “no communication with government staff or appointed officials ... permitted during the call for the development process.” How will this realty development solicitation process ensure similar guidelines are used in the future?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I will at this point ask my colleague Heather Grey-Wolf to join us. She's our chief investment officer with Infrastructure Ontario.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna):** Very quickly, I'm just going to have you affirm.

Heather Grey-Wolf, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** I do.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna):** Thank you.

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** Could you repeat the question, please?

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Sure. The call for development document noted that “no communication with government staff or appointed officials is permitted during the call for development process.” I just wondered, your new process, the realty development solicitation policy, how will it ensure similar guidelines are followed in future solicitations? It’s part of our role to give recommendations around process, so I’m just curious about how this will ensure this in the future.

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** Thanks, and I appreciate the question. I’d like to thank the Auditor General of Ontario for their review of the call for development process. As an organization, Infrastructure Ontario is an implementing agency of the government and committed to continuous improvement in our processes and procedures, with the goal of delivering the best value for taxpayers.

As a result of the audit process, our board of directors approved the realty development solicitation process in 2024. Through that process, we started to implement a lot of the recommendations that came forward through the audit, including a prohibition of any contact outside the formal channels outlined in the solicitation processes with Infrastructure Ontario staff.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We’re at the second half.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Great. Thank you.

I’m going to just switch gears a little bit and just talk about the presentation of the information to Treasury Board. I guess my very first question is, why was Triple Five brought forward as the master developer when they ultimately scored the lowest score? I think that that was the recommended proponent that was brought forward to Treasury Board, so can you explain what happened to get to that decision to present them?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Sorry, Triple Five in terms of?

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** They were presented as the preferred option, but my understanding from the report is that they were actually one of the lowest scores. So how is it that they came to be presented to the Treasury Board? I want to talk a little bit about that process itself.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Okay. At this point—apologies—I am going to call on another one of my colleagues, Michael Lindsay, to join us, if I may

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** He was getting ready to come up.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna):** Michael Lindsay, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** I do.

The answer to your question is that when we made recommendations to Treasury Board, we never recommended, as Infrastructure Ontario, the wisdom of a single party doing a comprehensive development of the entire island. We always suggested that the right path was a multi-partner approach, which was what led us to the shortlist that then government endorsed.

The document in question says that if the government did not accept that recommendation or couldn’t come to terms with the parties that we were recommending short-listing for a multi-partner site, there were viable single-party partners that you could go back to and have a conversation with about an integrated development for the island. Triple Five was one of five parties that we ultimately listed in that respect.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** I see. When the information was presented to them, it was won because it was done in this sort of piecemeal way, and they were just a different kind of proponent than the other four? Just so I’m clear.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Because it wasn’t the recommendation of Infrastructure Ontario to have a single partner for the entirety of the island, we were pointing at five of the proponents that had come forward, as my colleague Angela has said, that we knew had a track record of development elsewhere in the world, that could be partners the government would go back to, to have a conversation with if for whatever reason they did not want to do a multi-partner site, or if for whatever reason they couldn’t come to terms with any of the shortlisted parties that we were recommending. So it all portended more conversation, more elucidation of any one of those five parties, if ultimately that would have been the government’s direction.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Maybe this is a good time to ask then about the criteria that they were all assessed on, because there were some comments about whether those criteria were clear from the beginning. Were all of those that submitted aware that there was this preference, that they would only be considered if the government then directed to go to a single?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Part of the reason we used a call-for-development real-estate-solicitation approach was precisely because we wanted to get a bunch of different types of proposals for Ontario Place. We were creating, by design, something that would allow us to compare oranges to apples, a little bit, in respect to ranking.

It’s worth noting that other real estate proposals that have happened, whether Quayside or the city of Hamilton with Pier 8, have had similar language in their actual documents that specifies—the giveaway phrase is, “This is not a contract A/contract B procurement,” giving flexibility to evaluators. Everybody knew what the government’s four objectives were, publicly stated at the start of this call-for-development process, and we made them aware of the evaluation criteria. We did not draw a distinction in the evaluation for anybody at the time who received information as between a preference for a multi-partner or single-integrated-partner site. That came after our recommendation.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Oh, it came after the recommendation. So it wasn't clear up front when people were putting the bid in that that it might carry more weight to be a single versus multi.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** It was very clear to everybody that we were trying to get a wide set of development proposals for Ontario Place and that we had four criteria that every proposal was being evaluated against consistently.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. Let me just look here for my next question.

I do want to come back then to the Treasury Board submission process because that was the next part of this. The response around what was presented to Treasury Board was more training—more training about what should be taken forward to inform those decisions. I guess I just needed to ask, aren't most of our MOI staff that completed some of the Treasury Board submissions for Ontario Place—wouldn't they already have been trained in that process? Do we think it was a training issue for what was being presented to the government to make those decisions?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Maybe I can speak on the issue—

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Yes.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Ali Veshkini, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure.

Training is one component of it, absolutely. We accept and thank the Auditor General for her recommendations. There are a few things in her recommendations beyond just training. The first was with respect to working with our partners, whether it be Infrastructure Ontario or other agencies, to have some more fulsome, when available, business cases. However, this was done in stages, as Michael Lindsay has alluded to, and we wanted a wide spectrum—but as much as possible, having more information, maybe having less of a spectrum in the future. So we took that recommendation and accepted it as well.

The second was really looking at the process and the criteria, which Angela Clayton just spoke about. That's kind of the second component.

The third component is obviously training as well, because this was new in terms of how to do the call for development. So it's not that the staff don't understand in terms of the Treasury Board process, but when you're doing things that are novel, not routine-based Treasury Board submissions, making sure we're training with respect to the criteria, the process, how to look at things, the due diligence and also the intake of information as well. It's not that they didn't, it's more that this was just new, so we wanted to make sure in the future, whether it was MOI or if we can help any other ministry—to ensure that that's robust moving in the future. But we accepted all the recommendations of the Auditor General.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** And it will include the kind of cost-benefit information for—yes. Thank you.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** If I can just add to Ali's remarks, Deputy Veshkini's remarks, we work very closely with his ministry on constructing business cases. It's something that, with our own staff at tourism, culture and gaming, we've made an effort to be much stronger at, at the min-

istry level. While Infrastructure Ontario might inherently have that skill set within their staff, it's something that we're deepening within the ministry.

1540

I feel at this point that our business case and our economic analysis is much stronger than it would have been at that particular time. We put real emphasis at the ministry, and it's a priority for me in particular.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. And on that—

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Two minutes remaining.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** How many, sorry?

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Two minutes.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Oh, two minutes. Okay.

I did want to ask a question about the provisions in the agreement with Therme, particularly in the event that their facility is no longer commercially viable through low attendance once open, lower-than-expected profits or losses, or, prior to opening, the company or the facility deeming that it's no longer viable. If the agreement is cancelled, what happens with Therme? Can they walk away? Will Therme assign that lease to another entity? And what are our protections for the government in that circumstance, given that people have a lot of concerns around the financial viability of this organization?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I'll turn it over to Infrastructure Ontario, but there are penalties in the lease if there is transgression. I'll let them go through what those are.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Yes. Maybe when we do, can you highlight what the risk is for the province and the government in those situations?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** Absolutely. As we went through the lengthy lease negotiation process with Therme, Infrastructure Ontario had, first and foremost, protecting the interests of the government as a key outcome of the negotiation, delivering value for the taxpayer.

One of the considerations was what to do in the event if Therme should decide to cease operations and what the conclusion would be. I don't have the provisions at my fingertips today, but there are—

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We're out of time.

We now move to the official opposition. Who will be beginning? MPP Glover, you have the floor.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Actually, I'll ask a question about that. In the terms of the lease, it says that if Therme ceases operations or declares bankruptcy, they could sell the property to a third party for 50% and keep the money, and then the Ontario government would have to sue them. Is that not accurate? We would have to sue Therme for—

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** Therme, as part of the lease provision and their vision at Ontario Place, is making a significant capital investment in the lands at Ontario Place. Were they to choose to cease operations, they're able to, under the terms of the lease and with the co-operation of government, seek a partner to take over this facility. So we would have a water park facility at Ontario Place, and they would be looking for an operator to take over that facility so that all of Ontario could enjoy the continued operation

of such a facility at Ontario Place, which aligns with the government vision to activate the area.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. If they go bankrupt, according to the terms of the lease, and they cease operations, the Ontario government—so, us—would be responsible for 50% of the value of the lease.

Now, 50% of the value of the lease: Is that on a fair market value of a 95-year lease on public parkland, or is that based on the assessment of—say they built half the spa; we're responsible for giving them 50% of the cost of half the spa that they built, which would be 25%. What does 50% of the value of the lease mean?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** It would be the value of both the facility, which we could then take control of and lease out to another party, as well as the business.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. But if they build half a spa and they go bankrupt—they don't have the money to complete the spa—then we have to pay them for 25% of the cost of the spa. So, we have to pay them for half of what they built. But if it's not a viable business operation, then we are paying them for something that's of no use to the people of Ontario. Is that not a substantial risk for the people of Ontario?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** In our opinion, it is a viable business, and that was part of the evaluation process, as well as—Therme invests \$500 million on the site. Those assets in that situation that you're outlining become assets of the province. So they will be making significant improvements at Ontario Place to our benefit.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** The Auditor General has said there is no actual requirement in this lease with Therme for them to invest any specific amount into the project. There is with the contract with Live Nation but not with Therme. Is that accurate?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** The lease does not specify a quantum.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. I've got a couple of quick questions. Let me just ask these ones.

Would one of you be able to provide this committee with copies of the emails mentioned on page 77 of the Auditor General's report, one in which a senior IO adviser pointed out that Therme group "had low liquidity and it was not cash flow positive," and the other email from IO that Therme had met the \$100-million financial test to be eligible for the lease of Ontario Place? Are you able to provide those emails to the committee? I mean, not today, but—

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** These emails were provided to the Auditor General.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Right. Can you provide them to us at the committee? The Auditor General, under the terms of her work, is not able to release them to us. Can you release them to us?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** I'm not able to answer that question, but I might ask my legal counsel.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** We'd have to take the request away and report back.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. So you'll take the request and report back to the committee?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Yes.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** You'll take the request and report back to the committee. Is that correct?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Yes. We'll take the request away for review and report back.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. Thank you.

Let's see. Was Infrastructure Ontario aware that Therme's claim of having \$100 million to meet the financial test was based on projected revenues from an unbuilt spa in Germany? It's a yes-or-no question.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Sorry, can you repeat that?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Was Infrastructure Ontario aware that Therme's claim of having \$100 million to meet the financial requirements for this project—that that \$100 million was based on projected revenues from an unbuilt spa in Germany?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** The \$100 million was based on audited financial statements. That was what the basis of the assessment was.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Right. Okay. Were you aware that those audited financial statements were based on projected revenues from an unbuilt spa in Germany?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** It would have been based on the team that the Therme Group included in their submission, which included a number of different members. We would have looked at the composition of the team and the audited financial statements, and that would have been the basis for the evaluation.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'm still not clear. Were you aware that the \$100 million is actually from projected revenues from an unbuilt spa?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** If that's what was included in their audited financial statements, that would have been the basis of our evaluation.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** But you weren't aware of what was in those financial—

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** We used the audited financial statements, so that's the basis of the evaluation.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay.

And then the other thing that Therme did is they said that they owned and were operating six spas in Europe when they actually only owned one. There's this proof of concept. IO approved them as saying they have a proof of concept, they will be able to run this thing based on the six spas they're running in Europe. Was IO aware that they actually only owned and operated one of those six spas?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Again, the team that Therme put forward in their response included several members, and these individuals had extensive experience in construction and operation of the spas across Europe, which included similar projects.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** But they don't actually own or operate those, so whoever's on the team didn't actually own and operate five of the spas that they're claiming credit for.

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** I would suggest that that's not the case. The call for development process allowed for a range of partnering approaches, giving the teams opportunity to include a required diversity of expertise and

experience. The Therme Group proposal included members of Therme Group as well as Therme Wund and allied heat exchange, in addition to several other Canadian and international firms. These team members collectively had the experience in delivering and operating the example projects provided by the proposal, including ownership of the spas outlined in the proposal.

1550

**Mr. Chris Glover:** But they were not the same company. The contract that IO signed is with Therme Canada and these other entities were not part of that, so they have no legal obligation to the people of Ontario.

Why would IO include them as a proof of concept if they don't have a legal obligation or a legal connection to Therme Canada?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** They were actively part of the proposal, and the consortia is considered—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Were the other five spas actively part of this proposal?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** Yes, they are owned by Therme Wund, which is one of the members of the consortia put forward in the proposal.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'll pass it over.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Therme Wund, are they on the hook financially if they can't deliver those five spas?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** I'll turn it over to Michael.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** A couple of points, MPP, through you, Chair: First, it's important to remember what this process was a financial threshold test that was conducted by us of audited financial statements, which by the way, we also had Ernst and Young as an independent real estate adviser, working with us to review exactly the probity and the accuracy of those audited financial statements.

What we got from Therme was something that, with large international companies, is not atypical. They do have a Canadian domicile, an entity that is set up in this country, but they are part of a parent group of companies that is more international.

We found no reason, through the call for development process, to suspect in any way that they were not a viable business, and as my colleague Angela has told you, the provisions in the lease state that if they do not continuously demonstrate that they have \$100 million in net worth, the lease is void.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Hi, Mr. Lindsay. We have spent lots of time having our back and forth at estimates, and I was reviewing some of that before this conversation. You were very clear and definite that this had been a fair and transparent process during those conversations. We're here discussing the Auditor General's assertion that it was not fair or transparent so I would love to know how you're feeling now, and if that is still something you stand by, that it was a fair and transparent process.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Chair, through you to the MPP: We designed a process that was built for purpose, flexibility. It was informed by several independent entities that helped us ensure integrity and that openness and that fairness—KPMG, a transaction adviser; Colliers, a broker

partner; EY, a real estate adviser in connection to some of the evaluations that we have done. The process was meant to ultimately result in a short-list of recommendations that would inform government decision-making. I stand by the probity and integrity of that process.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakoccevic):** We're in the second half.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The \$100 million, where does that number come from? Just because, also, it was exactly what Therme was able to come up with in short order. Where did that \$100 million come from?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** A specific answer, and then a broader answer, if you'll permit me, MPP—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I might.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** First, EY real estate and financial adviser was the source of the threshold test, and it was applied not only to Therme but to the entirety of the people who responded to the call for development—

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Let me ask about that then. Ernst and Young did an audit or looked at their audited financial statements, and Ernst and Young said that they met this \$100-million financial threshold.

In 2018, their documents show that they've got a negative equity; in 2019 and a member of Infrastructure Ontario wrote to the government saying, "Hey, their equity's actually just a million euros," which is roughly \$1.6 million. Suddenly, in 2020, they've got \$100 million.

Did IO or Ernst and Young not ask them, "Where did you suddenly get \$99 million?"

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** MPP, I would say two things: First, we continuously assessed the financial strength of Therme throughout this process, and as Angela has indicated, the government continues to do so on an ongoing basis. The second thing that I would say is, we certainly observed the parent company of Therme in the world advancing other properties, other developments, consistent with a growth agenda which certainly specified that there was a viability in respect of the business that they had. We made the evaluations on the basis of the financial information that we received at points of time, and we've continued to check on that financial viability over time.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Was there any pressure on Infrastructure Ontario from the ministry or the minister to look at Therme's project, look at Therme as a vendor of choice?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** At the time of the call for development, I was the president of project delivery at Infrastructure Ontario, having arrived four months earlier back to IO. I was not intimately connected to the call-for-development process, but I can tell you that I am aware of no such pressure that was brought to bear on anybody at Infrastructure Ontario either while I held that role or while I was the CEO of Infrastructure Ontario.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Has the property been handed over? Has the site been handed over to Therme at this point?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Efforts for site preparation are still under way. In parallel, Therme is advancing their design and working with the city of Toronto for applications for their permits to commence construction.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. When do you expect to hand over the site?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** The site servicing is scheduled to be completed early next year, and at that point Therme would start construction for their facility.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** According to the terms of the lease, because we haven't—first, I'll start with the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General's report calculates that Ontario taxpayers are paying \$1.5 billion towards this project, not including the operation of the public-realm portion of the site, for the next 95 years. With that \$1.5 billion that we're investing, Therme said that they will be investing \$700 million, although as you've said, they're not actually obligated under the contract to invest any specific amount.

One other part of the contract specifies that if the site is not ready by January 1, 2025, which was almost a year ago, every 180 days the Ontario government, which means taxpayers, would be liable to give Therme \$250,000. So according to the lease, as of July 1, the government was liable to give Therme \$250,000 because they didn't prepare the site quickly enough, and as of January 1, 2026, they'll be liable for another \$250,000. Is this accurate?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Those reflect the terms of the agreement. However, throughout the site preparation and site readiness, as we encounter some challenges and needed to modify scope, we did enter into negotiations with Therme to extend that handover period, which essentially waived the province's obligation to make any payments with regard to liquidated damages. So, no, we are not obligated to make any payments at this time.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** So—under the contract, but you've made a supplementary arrangement not to pay that.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Correct. What you reflected is consistent with the terms of the agreement. However, we've amended those terms of the agreement to reflect the ongoing site development.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Oh. Is that in writing from Therme?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** It is, yes.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Can you provide that to the committee?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** We can take that away.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. The Ontario government's investing \$1.5 billion into this site for preparation. The other question about Therme's financial viability is that, according to the Auditor General and building on Therme's own projected number of visitors, 1.7 million in the first few years and then going up to 2.7 million, it would be 21 years before Therme actually returns a profit. That does not include financing costs or taxes. Are you still confident in Therme's business model?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** There has been nothing that has been brought to our attention through the ongoing due diligence that we're doing on the lease or through active conversations that we've had with Therme that would suggest that this is no longer a viable operation.

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**Mr. Chris Glover:** There's so much risk to the Ontario government with this lease. We are putting out \$1.5

billion. We're giving them a 95-year lease that Therme could sell. We are giving them—I mean, they may have waived it, but come January 1, we would owe them \$500,000 because we haven't prepared, spent, invested the \$1.5 billion to incite preparation fast enough.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Two minutes remaining.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. The Auditor General pointed out a number of ways that a decent process was not followed in the development of this lease. Are you confident that Therme will be able to deliver this project, or will we be left with a giant, half-built spa that then we have to pay 50% of the construction costs on?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Again, Therme have made significant investments of their own in the development of Ontario Place. We continue to do due diligence on their financial state, and there have been no indications that it is not going to be a viable operation.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** To IO's knowledge, has Therme locked in any investors specifically for the Ontario Place project?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** We understand that they're in active conversations about an investor and are planning on making an announcement imminently.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay, but not yet.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** An investor or investors?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I'm only aware of a single investor at this time.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Can you say who that investor is?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I cannot disclose that. That's commercially confidential.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. Let's see—how much time?

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Thirty seconds.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** The Auditor General—actually, I'll leave it. That's good. We'll come back. We've got another 20 minutes later.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** No, I have a quick one. I've got 20 seconds. I know we're going to talk about Triple Five again, but it's the folks who scored the lowest being elevated to the top—I'd just like us to think about that, and we can maybe come back to that, but I am dying to hear how someone goes from the bottom of the pile to the top in a recommendation to cabinet or Treasury Board. That's something that we'll be talking about again.

My colleague across the way has talked about three weeks—

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We're out of time.

We're now moving on to the government members, beginning with MPP Rosenberg. You have 20 minutes.

**MPP Bill Rosenberg:** Thank you to the team for being here today. I represent the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. It's a home to many First Nation groups and Indigenous organizations. I have 58 communities in Algoma; 18 of them are First Nations. I know how important it is to build a real relationship and make people feel included when big projects like this are taking place. Consultation and education, as I travel throughout my riding, are the most important, and I understand the importance of both of them. Can you tell me about the work that has been done

to engage Indigenous groups connected to this area? I'm especially interested in the Indigenous place-keeping aspects of the design.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question, and as I said in my opening remarks, the Indigenous consultation is something that we're quite proud of at the ministry. I'd like to turn it to my colleague Michael, who has been leading that consultation work and has put a lot of effort into it, just to give you an overview of what we've done.

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Thank you, deputy. Thank you for the question, Mr. Rosenberg. My team and I are quite proud of the work we've done with First Nations communities in the redevelopment of Ontario Place. There are seven communities where there are treaty rights or credibly asserted rights, and we have developed relationships with all of them—some big ones, such as the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Six Nations of the Grand, represented by their elected council. We were able to negotiate a memorandum of understanding with Mississaugas of the Credit to talk about how we would work together with them as the treaty holders as we move forward on the redevelopment, so we're particularly proud of that.

We also had the opportunity, as the deputy was saying earlier, to have the minister and Deputy Kennedy meet with Claire Sault, who is the fairly newly elected Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit, and prior to that we used to meet with Chief Stacey Laforme, who was Chief Sault's predecessor, to talk about how we could be respecting and honouring First Nations at the Ontario Place site.

For those of you who are familiar with Ontario Place today, you will know we have the moccasin trail, which are etched moccasins—MPP Fairclough, I see you smiling; you know it well—that reflect First Nations communities. We're also working to put up a language wall, where we're talking about ensuring that we have welcoming messages in English and French, certainly, but also in all of the First Nations languages that are reflected in this part of southern Ontario.

As part of the redevelopment of the public realm area—Mr. Rosenberg, you were asking specifically about this—we knew we wanted that to reflect First Nations history here in southern Ontario. We worked with the seven communities where we have a duty to consult, but we've also moved above and beyond just the duty conversations. We want to develop real, respectful relationships both with the recognized First Nations but also groups like Métis Nation and the Indigenous communities here in downtown Toronto that may not be reflected by some of the more recognized communities.

In sitting in conversations with those groups, we talked about ways that we could reflect the cardinal markers, so we have the north, south, east and west pillars that will be part of the design. We've also looked at how we can develop Indigenous symbols in some of the paving that we're doing throughout the public realm. We had an opportunity to show some of this off back at the end of June, beginning of July. Some of these designs are reflective when they get wet. They're luminescent; they some-

what glow in the dark when they get wet. They reflect First Nations community symbolism as told to us by the First Nations communities themselves.

I think what we're most proud about, Mr. Rosenberg, is the Indigenous cultural pavilion. This, we're building on the east end of the property at Brigantine Cove, and we see this as a bit of a boathouse concept. It looks like a bit of a boathouse there on the edge of the water. It will be operated by First Nations communities with the agency that ends up running the site. We want to make sure that that's an opportunity for education. We also want to make sure it's an opportunity for celebration where the First Nations communities can host weddings, but we can also host, in conjunction with the First Nations, education seminars, learnings, teachings, especially with the young people that will be coming down to the site to visit the science centre, for example, and then can come over with their parents and play. Deputy Kennedy was speaking earlier of some of the play structures, the giant turtle that we're building and the two-storey treehouse. We're hoping that that will entice younger people to come over and not just play but learn as part of the exercise.

My team and I work under a principle that we have an obligation as the crown for a duty to consult, but we have a higher obligation to ourselves to respect the truth and reconciliation initiatives that all of us as Canadians are invested in.

**MPP Bill Rosenberg:** Thank you and meegwetch.

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** MPP Cooper. You have 14 minutes.

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** Thank you for being here today. There's been a lot of public interest in Ontario Place, and I think it's because so many people remember what it used to be. I remember growing up and going to Ontario Place with my parents. This is what it could be again, so that is why there's so much interest.

For more than a decade, Ontario Place sat empty. Under the previous Liberal government, it was closed off, left to deteriorate, and a whole generation lost the chance to make those same memories. I didn't have an opportunity to take my own children.

My question is, if our government hadn't stepped in to invest or reimagine the site and bring in the right public and private partners, what do you think Ontario Place would look like today? Would it still be sitting abandoned and sinking further into the lake instead of becoming the destination we're now working to bring back to life?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question. I remember going there myself—I'm dating myself—in the 1970s with my Girl Guide troop. So I think we can all look back fondly at that time.

**1610**

As you know, the site closed in 2012, and it had been unutilized. It had been experiencing trouble up until that point in terms of declining revenue and attendance. The goal is, working with private partners and having public elements, that the combination of those things will make the site more sustainable in the long term. The idea being

that with private partners such as Therme, it should increase visitation, tourism traffic, customer experience, and that will help support other elements of the site such as the public realm, the science centre. It's the combination of those things together that should make it, I'm hoping, an incredible customer experience. We are expecting about six million visitors a year. We wanted to bring this site back to its former glory and even more so.

From a tourism perspective, if I may, what will be important about it is you'll have this anchor in Toronto. When you think about somebody coming to this province for a visit, you want them to come to Toronto, visit Ontario Place, perhaps then extend their trip, go to Niagara—and we're doing very important work in the Niagara Parks Commission there, also working with some private partners—perhaps go up to Wasaga Beach, go to Algonquin Park, and then you've got a couple of days' stay that turns into a two-week stay.

And then there's a kind of knock-on effect in terms of economic activity. We also have a lot to enjoy in the city in terms of cultural institutions, our museums, our galleries. And so the idea with such a vibrant site is it is going to serve as a real draw for people to come to the province specifically for that experience.

So, thank you for your question. I don't know if there's anything you want to add to that, Michael, in terms of our vision, but we're very, very excited about it.

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Thank you. Certainly, I share the same memory of going down to Ontario Place as a kid growing up in the greater Toronto area. I think the best thing that was often in my third-term report card was two tickets to the CNE, and that also got you access across the water into Ontario Place. So I have some fond memories of the way it was. And, of course, we know what happened in 2012, when declining patrons forced the government of the day to close it.

I would say that, a tip of the cap if you will, to the people who were my predecessors who were able to invest in places like Trillium Park and the William G. Davis Trail to try and keep the place going, keep the brand alive.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Ten minutes remaining.

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** And I think that really was a bit of a down payment on what we're trying to accomplish as part of the redevelopment of Ontario Place.

If you have an opportunity, or when you have an opportunity, to go through Trillium Park or the trail, then you can imagine that's expanding out westward across what will be the public realm and the new parkland in what is now really an asphalt-covered area. We will soon see that as a park and the Trillium fountain that Deputy Kennedy was speaking of earlier. All of that I think is very exciting. Really, what excites us is this ability to work across both the private and the public investment environment.

We're certainly working with Therme, and we've talked about that a little bit this afternoon. We're also working with Live Nation. Those of us who are from downtown Toronto know that live music venues are few and far between these days, so the opportunity to have the

Live Nation facility be open 12 months of the year I think is very exciting and really will drive the music scene here in Toronto.

The way we look at the public realm that we announced back at the beginning of summer, and the way I talk to my team about this, is, imagine you're with your family, you're with your kids, and you're walking through it and you've come down for the day. There are areas of it that are really geared to children, and there are areas of it that maybe are geared to adults a little bit more. Maybe you want to spend a little time down by the water with a significant other, and then there's areas of the site that will be for the entire family. That can include the science centre. That can include going to a concert. That can include down the road maybe having a cool drink sitting down by the water and enjoying the sunrise one way or the sunset the other, depending on what time you're down there.

I think it's a very exciting opportunity to bring people back down to Ontario Place. We know that people have always come down to Ontario Place. There's a magic to it. And I think the work that we're doing right now with the folks that are involved in this project are very excited because we can feel that magic that we're bringing back into the site.

Thank you for your question.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** MPP Darouze, you have seven and a half minutes.

**MPP George Darouze:** Thank you, Chair. Through you: I really appreciate the presentation and the conversation.

I know you bring some memories—because I remember, I also brought my kids back to visit Toronto, and we would go through the park.

I know we've been speaking about what is in the past and what is happening in the future, but for me, I look at it as a beautiful waterfront property. People are really eager and excited to see what's going to happen with the site once it's fully brought to life.

Can you tell me a little bit more about how the development of Ontario Place will transform the waterfront? I want a little bit more about that side of it—because it's not only parks and partnerships, and it's not only a spa. So I want to talk a little bit about that. When people come from outside of Toronto, from Ontario—and every visitor who comes, across the board—what can they to expect to see on that site?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I'll start, and then I'll turn it over to Michael to add.

You're right; it is a beautiful site down by the water. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, that connection between land and water is very important for the beauty of the site and the experience of people who are going to be going down there.

So, a couple of things—there's the park itself. There will be canoe and kayak launches there, and people can enjoy the lake. There's a marina. Indeed, there has been a marina down there for quite a long time—but you can see people coming and going by boat. So it won't just be accessible by land, but people will be able to come through



Lake Ontario. There are the views of the lake, food and beverage, restaurants, boardwalks, people enjoying picnics by the water, in addition to the actual Therme spa itself. And there will be a beach there and a public park there that people can enjoy on that side of the island.

I'll turn it over to Michael just to add to some of those, but that should give you a bit of a flavour of the types of experiences people will have.

Michael?

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Thank you for the question.

I think the connection to the water is probably what drives us the hardest on this. It's such an exciting opportunity. Those of us who grew up in Toronto have long heard the criticism that Toronto is a city that's on the lake but forgot that it's on the lake.

One of the things that we are building, as part of the parkland and the public realm, will be steps down to the waterfront, steps down to the lake on the east island. When we were announcing it back at the beginning of the summer, some absolutely fantastic renderings of what that will look like—because it does come out, and you can see east and west. You'll be able to come down there, and those of us who jog could jog—I'm not one of them. But those who do jog can come down and see the sunrise in the morning or sit there and watch the sunset in the evening. So that's very exciting to us.

The deputy had spoken about the boating opportunities and the marina that has been there for some time. As we look at the opportunities for the marina and the future of the marina, we think about: How do we tie this into other things that are happening in downtown Toronto? How do we tie this into the water taxi service that exists? Right now, most of those go north and south, back and forth from the mainland to the island. What if we were able to convince some of these operators to go east and west and stop at Harbourfront, stop at the new waterfront Toronto parks in the east end, stop at Ontario Place, and maybe move further west into some of the parks in Etobicoke as well. So we're looking at that.

One of the things we're also looking at is, is there a market for other ferries that could come in here? Could we be looking at people coming in from Niagara? Could we look at people coming in from Rochester? Maybe they're coming over for the weekend and they want to see a concert; they want to attend a spa; their kids want to play in the new public realm. There will be something for everybody. We want to make sure that they're able to come over by boat, if that's what they want to do, and that there will be an opportunity for them to use the marina as a—we call it "transient"; it's maybe not the best word—but to use the marina for the weekend, as opposed to having to buy a slip for the entire season.

So we're really excited about how that relationship will be between the land, as the deputy has said, and the water at Ontario Place.

**MPP George Darouze:** How much time is left?

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Just under three minutes. MPP Firin.

1620

**MPP Mohamed Firin:** Thank you for the presentation. My kids were born after 2012, so they really haven't had the opportunity to visit Ontario Place. Hopefully, once it's done they'll have that opportunity.

Just a quick question here: We've heard a lot of conflicting information coming from various parties relating to public consultations, so I'd love to hear straight from the source today and on the record: What was the public consultation process like—and procurement process as well?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question. We received over 9,300 comments about Ontario Place over the two-year period and what people wanted from the particular site—wanting there to be a public element of the site, concerned about the environment at the site, concerned about access.

Also, as we've discussed, we've undertaken very extensive Indigenous consultation on the site as well.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Two minutes remaining.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** We've had a number of round table sessions. We've had open dialogue through those sessions.

I'll turn it over to Michael, who did a lot of that work. He will provide you an overview of the different steps of consultation that we've undertaken on a range of issues.

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Thank you very much, Deputy, and thank you for the question, sir.

As the deputy has said, we had a consultation with almost 10,000 people. A lot of that was done through some online town halls that we conducted when we first started this project. We also did a survey out into the marketplace to see what people thought, and we got many thousands of responses back to that.

Then we really started to drill into some of the more specific groups that have an interest in the site. So we wanted to talk to the voters. This comes back to the question I was answering earlier. We wanted to talk to the people who had been members and users of the marina previously as to what sort of things they wanted to see, so we hosted some round tables with previous marina users. We also talked to people who are in the vicinity of the site, specifically around the western channel on the mainland, to understand how they utilize the property so that we understood. They're our neighbours; we want to understand how they were using the site and how we could work a little bit more closely together.

And then I think, as I was mentioning earlier, one of the things that we're the most proud of is the conversations with the First Nations communities, both the nations as well as the groups like the Métis nation and the urban Indigenous communities here in Toronto. We've had a series of both duty-to-consult conversations but also relationship-building conversations with communities to understand what they're looking to see on the site and how they could best be involved. I think—

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We're at time. Thank you very much.

We are now moving to the second and final half. We're beginning with the third party. MPP Fairclough, please proceed.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** I know this must feel like a marathon, so thank you for continuing along with us.

My first question is actually just: Given the responses that we had heard to the different recommendations, there was one recommendation that I don't think there was a response for, so I thought I would just ask about it right now, which is the recommendation in recommendation 14 to "negotiate a long-term legal easement with the city of Toronto to allow it access to municipal infrastructure at Ontario Place for servicing and maintenance."

Is anybody in a position to comment on that?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** We are in discussions with the city of Toronto. We're working collaboratively with them, and those conversations are ongoing right now.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. And you feel comfortable that you'll be able to put that easement in place? There are no concerns around it?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Yes. We're in discussions with them on the issue right now. I think those conversations are going relatively well?

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Yes.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Yes.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Do you have a sense of the timeline?

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** It's a bit difficult to speculate on that, I would say. The city is a partner with us on this development work so we're talking with them on a number of fronts. Sometimes it's tough to know exactly how long things are going to take in these types of negotiations, so I don't think I have a specific time as to when that might be completed, but it's certainly very active discussion under way right now.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Thank you.

Then I wanted to just come back on some of the questions on consultation. It's helpful to hear all of that. Can I just confirm, though: Was that consultation done prior to us going to look for somebody to do this development work at Ontario Place? How did the consultation inform the ideas around, for example, the criteria that proposals would be assessed against and all of that, and were people responding aware of what came from the consultations that was important to people?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Yes. Maybe taking a step back a bit, there was a fair bit of public consultation that had been done on the site historically. If you go back to 2012 and you go back to that period, there was a fair bit of public dialogue and consultation that was done on the site that informed the development work that came forward later.

Then, yes, there was consultation that happened after the fact, but that wasn't informed by dialogue with the public. So there was sort of consultation at a certain point in time and then later.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** And those consultation criteria would have been shared as part of the call-for-proposal process? Do you know what I'm getting at? Would they have known?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Angela, I'll ask you to comment on that particular period of time.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** The consultation would have informed the criteria assessment. There were four main criteria assessments. Those were most certainly disclosed in the call-for-development process. Those criteria were: alignment with the government's vision; viability of the proposed concept; qualifications and experience of the team; and the benefit to the province. Those four criteria were disclosed as part of the call-for-development process.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Even something like a spa would have come up in those consultations as preferable to people?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** One thing that I would say did come out of the consultations—you may recall Ontario Place historically was a ticketed site. So having the over 50 acres of public park was an important element that came out of the feedback that I think was received. Indeed, I would say the public realm project was informed by feedback from the public.

I think also the consultations would have said that they wanted a site that was vibrant. I think an important part was something that was going to be sustainable and stay open.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. Great.

I just wanted to go next to the plan on the site and the plan for the science centre. I want to understand—I think there has been a \$400-million increase in the Ontario Science Centre relocation project, and I don't know if we've seen an updated business case or a cost-benefit analysis for that decision. I think the original commitment was that that would open by 2029. Is that still the case?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question on the science centre. We are involved in an active procurement on that particular project right now, so I'm going to be a bit circumspect in my comments because of that.

But 2029 is indeed the date that we hope that the site opens. We are still working towards that, and that is the goal.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. Great.

I did want to ask just about oversight for this project as it continues. Is there a single body that's overseeing all the costs, the progress and the accountability, including the government dollars, the \$2.2 billion? Who's ultimately going to be overseeing and accountable for this?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Responsibility for the project was transferred over to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming as the lead. We work with our partners at the Ministry of Infrastructure and IO on the development and the procurements on the capital and the infrastructure side.

On a go-forward basis, we are starting conversations on the operating model for the site and how that will be structured. We're undertaking policy work and policy conversations now on how that operating model and that revenue model will work. We are the lead on that, working though with other ministry partners.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** So IO won't be involved from this point?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** They are involved, yes. They're involved in the—

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Sorry.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Sorry.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Our involvement is to continue to run the competitive processes that we have under way for the capital investments on the site. We then report that information back into the ministry, who ultimately consolidates that and shares that information with the government and with Treasury Board.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I would see them as our capital and commercial arm. They work as support to the government. They have the expertise there to advise us on the work.

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**Ms. Angela Clayton:** But once the construction is done, right now there's no ongoing role for Infrastructure Ontario in the operations.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Right.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** We also have financial—

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Sorry to interrupt you, but that's once the site has been turned over to Therme, right?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Correct—once the construction is complete.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Complete, not started.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** We will have ongoing monitoring of construction for Therme and all of our partners—Live Nation, as well—plus the oversight of the Ontario Science Centre, the parking garage and the public realm, because there are multiple projects that are entering into construction consecutively. So our role will be to oversee, once we've competitively procured all of them, the construction and then, once the site is open, ultimately hand operations back to the ministry.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I would be remiss if I didn't mention that as a line ministry, we report quarterly on this project to the Treasury Board. There is always central agency oversight in terms of our work and everything we do, and so we report to them on the status of the project and the financials of the project, and we continue to work with our central agency partners in that regard. They work hard to keep us on track.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. But the ultimate accountability will move to the ministry of tourism and sport for all the pieces, yes?

Sorry; I'm just wanting to be sure, because there are a lot of recommendations in here. Some of them are for IO; there will be other recommendations. That will be the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Previously when Ontario Place was operating, it reported into the Ministry of Tourism. It was a different name at the time. It has taken different configurations as an agency itself, as a stand-alone agency that reported into the ministry.

As I mentioned, we're undertaking the policy work now to say what would be the entity going forward to provide that type of oversight. That's part of the next phase of work.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. I did just want to talk about some of the transparency around the full project. What are the plans for the ongoing transparency of how this is de-

veloping? And for the costs that we're seeing—I mean, some of this will be in some of the financial reporting, but will we be able to easily see what that cost breakdown is looking like for the full project?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** First of all, I would say in terms of the procurements that are being undertaken, all of that is available on IO's website. It's completely transparent in terms of the process, the steps, the different RPs and the RFQs. All of that is open for the public, including the lease with Therme. That was also released publicly, so all that information is open to the public.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Ten minutes remaining.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** We go through the normal sort of financial process as a ministry, where all those things are available through reporting and through our own annual reporting with, as I mentioned, the Treasury Board, as we report into the Legislature on public accounts, estimates and all those particular processes. You'll be able to have a good sense.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** And we'll be able to see the full project easily? This is a little bit related to my question about single point of oversight and who's ultimately responsible for the full project. If there's going to be a single point, then there should be very easy line items in the budgets in the future, so we can understand the kind of progress—

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I'll turn it over to Deputy Veshkini, because right now, some of the financials still rest with the Ministry of Infrastructure and will be transferring over to us next fiscal year, because it was with one ministry and it will coming over to the next.

I don't know if you have anything to add on that, Deputy.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Absolutely, and Angela can even supplement as well.

In general, the various components of the project, whether it be the science centre, parking, public realm—all of them are following, generally, the same process of RFQs and RFPs going out. All of those costs, once the RFPs do come back and we select a vendor, will be posted publicly, so you can take each individual component and see what are the true costs of each one once a vendor is selected.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Right. Okay.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** The only thing I would add is we also post redacted versions of the contract as well, so that that information is publicly available.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. I'll see how it all kind of plays out and look forward to following it through estimates and other places pretty closely.

I was just thinking more about some of the responses around the original process to identify Therme. I just want to say that in the answer that I got, the primary reason for Therme ultimately being awarded this was because they were the only primary comprehensive site-wide solution—it was the opposite. There were four primary site solutions and then Therme was a different one. Can you just tell me the name of that again? I apologize for bringing it back up.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** MPP, through the Chair, to you: The final recommendation of Infrastructure Ontario embraced a multi-partner concept, of which Therme was one.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Was one but not the only one?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Correct. There were other parties and indeed, Ecorecreo and Live Nation wound up being, after government decision-making, the multi-partner configuration that was ultimately selected for the negotiation of leases.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. But what I also heard you say is that that criteria of having a multi-partner versus a single primary, that preference was determined after the initial call for submissions.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** IO's recommendation was always for a multi-partner approach and not a comprehensive site-wide solution. In our materials to government that was part of the briefing, the read-out of the call for development process, five potential entities, who could be a comprehensive site solution provider were identified in category B, which was essentially a back-up plan if the original recommendation was not taken, or we did not succeed in negotiating effectively with multi-partners.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. I do just want to double-check. My understanding, though, is that they were one of the lowest-ranked of those submissions, Therme.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Therme?

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Yes.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** No.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** They were not?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** No.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** They ranked well on all the criteria?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** All submissions were assessed by a panel of four assessors, which was the process that was intended. The four objectives of government were the score card associated with that. Therme's scoring against that particular evaluation was very robust.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. That criteria included the financial viability, which you then got to a place—the follow-up information that you got from them, you got to a place—

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Correct. I would think of the financial viability test as being a bar that various respondents had to meet, and as we've said, on the basis of the tests that we applied with the help of third parties, they met it.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. I just really wanted to circle back on all of those issues because I think that they're very important. Again, there's a lot in the Auditor General's report that sort of says the criteria were a little bit unclear. There was a lot of variability on how those were assessed, even within the committee. So I just wanted to be very clear that after all the scoring, they were the lead and that was why they were recommended.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** They were amongst the parties that we'd put on the short list for a multi-partner solution for government, which was our recommendation, and their scoring, based on the evaluation, was robust.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. Thank you.

How much more time have I got, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocovic):** You have four minutes, 45 seconds.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Okay. Let me just see here. What should I delve into next? Oh, I know. Sorry, just bear with me for one more second here.

I did just want to come back on one other question, which is really on the parking solutions. Based on the parking solutions that were presented to the government in May 2024—it was highlighted in the AG report that the option ultimately selected, announced by the government in June 2025, seems different. So, how was that option selected?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question. There are more stalls in the solution that we've ultimately put out for RFP initially. That's because, first of all, we're hoping that we get, as I mentioned, up to six million people a year to the site. We're trying to build parking for the future, so we want to be able to ensure that if there's growth over time that it can sustain the volume. So, as well, we see that the parking solution should also provide some revenue-generating opportunity for the rest of the site. Just in terms of the economics of it, having a larger site now—it seemed better to build it that way now, as opposed to adding into something in the future.

1640

I don't know, Deputy Veshkini, if there's anything you wanted to add on that from an infrastructure perspective.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** I think it's just about maximizing the amount of spots, trying to get the maximum amount of spots that you can on a building, knowing that it's going to be a busy site, a very integrated site, especially to the north of the site as well. Who knows what the future holds for the north of the site, but making sure that there is one parking for the whole site and also for the growth and any other future vision any government, whether provincial or municipal, has for the north end of the site as well.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** As you may know, at our ministry we have 18 agencies in different sites, and I would say parking is the number one issue that I hear about from tourist attractions in terms of accessibility. We wanted to make sure that we didn't run into challenges in the future.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** This came after, right? This wasn't part of the original business planning for this whole site development at Ontario Place?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** It came after, but it was something that we heard about from partners, that parking was something that was going to be needed. Indeed, I would say in that part of Toronto, and in Toronto in general, parking comes up as a concern just in terms of not having it.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocovic):** Two minutes left.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** So just to ensure that the site, again, was going to work for customers, we decided to add in the requirement later.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Just to come back on that, I guess from the perspective of the budget and priorities for this component, this was a much later development?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** It was, but I think the revenue model is such that we think that, given the nature of how parking operates, it should be a component that we hope pays for itself quickly in terms of the infrastructure investment.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Is it fair to say that I'm not sure the Auditor General agreed on that point—around the projected revenue from this whole model and what it was going to mean for the government?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** As we outlined, the parking garage is bigger than it probably was just because of that type of reason. We should be getting more revenue in just because of the size of it. Back to the economics of it, a bigger site works in terms of the financials.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We now move to the official opposition, beginning with MPP Glover. You have the floor.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you, my first question is that you mentioned that Ernst and Young provided an audited statement saying that Therme had met the financial threshold of \$100 million. Was that a clean audit or just an audited statement?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Chair, through you to the MPP, we were provided with audited statements by Therme, IO reviewed them, assessed them, EY then did their own independent review on top of that. It was on that basis that we determined that they had met the financial viability threshold.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Can you provide both those audited statements and the Ernst and Young report on that to the committee?

The Auditor General flagged that some participants in the call for development process had repeated access to a particular IO vice-president during the open period, but others did not. Who was this IO vice-president?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** The individual in question is no longer with Infrastructure Ontario, and so I'm not quite sure what the restrictions are in terms of disclosing that individual to the committee, but I would take some guidance on that—

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** The individual was not named in the Auditor General's report, I'm sure, because the person is no longer with the company, so I would say we'll have to respect that—

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** —but I'll take the guidance from the committee on what can be shared.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** If possible, we would like the name, so if you could take that back and report back whether you can or can't—

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Yes, I'll add it to the list.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** That's good. The other request is that the Auditor General revealed that this Infrastructure Ontario vice-president exchanged nine emails with a lawyer representing Therme during the open period, when

no such communication was permitted. Can you provide the committee with copies of those emails?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I'll add that to the list to review.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** To the list? Okay, thank you. I'll pass it to my colleague.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** There's not enough time to ask all of the things, but I had teased that I would ask about Triple Five, so I'm going to start there.

Triple Five's bid was ranked low on all nine objectives, but after the November 5 meeting with the Premier's office and minister's office, Infrastructure Ontario invited Triple Five to revise its bid substantially, which it did. Did anyone in the Premier's office or the minister's office direct that Triple Five should be invited to revise its bid?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Chair, through you to the MPP, I was not present in that meeting, but I can tell you that it was never the recommendation of Infrastructure Ontario that Triple Five would be the preferred partner for development at Ontario Place. It did not feature in our recommendation. As I said, it was one of five integrated site-wide proposals that we had advanced as a plan B, as a possible recommendation if our primary recommendation was not taken. But again, government never endorsed a single-party developer for Ontario Place. I can tell you that the process of the call for development specified explicitly in section 5, "To complete a comprehensive review of the submissions, the government may need to perform due diligence on submissions to address areas of ambiguity and/or if further clarification on any material contained in the submission is required."

Triple Five was not unique as an entity in being asked for more information about the submission. In fact, there were six participants who IO contacted as part of this formal process to provide clarifications associated with the materials that had ultimately been submitted. But I would come back again to the notion that at no time was it ever the recommendation of IO that Triple Five be the government's partner at Ontario Place.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I appreciate your answer.

On November 20, at the direction of an Infrastructure Ontario vice-president, Triple Five scores were upgraded. That's on November 20. The meeting, November 5, had happened; here we are at November 20. Was this the same vice-president who exchanged nine emails with Therme's lawyer during the CFD open period that my colleague was asking about before? Again, I would like to know the name of this vice-president; this may be a different vice-President.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Not to take away the answer to the question of who's who in respect to this, but let me, if I might, just answer a little bit about the procedure and the timeline associated with this. The clarifications that were sought not only from Triple Five but from six other participants were received. It is common practice for a committee of four assessors, with a lead assessor, to take on board that information and ultimately revise the scoring that goes with that submission. My understanding is that that is what has happened in the case of Triple Five.

Again, at the end of all of that, it was still never the recommendation of Infrastructure Ontario that Triple Five be the partner for the government of Ontario at Ontario Place, nor did government not take our recommendation about a multi-partner solution when they did their own decision-making.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. What is the name of the lead assessor in that group of four?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Chair, through you to the MPP, I promise I'm not trying to be cagey or evasive. I'm trying to respect individual privacy. I will defer again, if I could, Deputy, to taking that away and responding to the committee.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Yes, we'll take these requests away.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay and I would never suggest that you were trying to be cagey.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Thank you.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm just going to keep asking questions knowing darn well that I may or may not get them today.

The AG reports that even after those adjustments occurred, some lower-scoring bids were shortlisted; other higher-scoring bids were not. I know this has nothing to do with SDF, but that's where we are right now in this moment in time. With that in mind, I would like to know, why did Infrastructure Ontario favour some applicants over others? And then my follow-up to that, did any Infrastructure Ontario or government official give preferential treatment to any of the short-listed bidders?

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**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I can start by saying that Infrastructure Ontario did not favour any of the bidders. We followed a standard evaluation process. It's standard to have variations across individual assessors that are typically resolved and aligned through consensus discussions. This process is intentionally designed for independent assessments that happened and then alignment through consensus.

Once all those assessments were complete, a summary of all 34 submissions were provided to government with a review on how each submission compared to the assessment criteria, which we've already discussed, and then ultimately government made the final decision, final selection for the shortlisted participants to enter into the subsequent phase of commercial negotiations.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I'm going to try and make sure I understand because earlier Mr. Lindsay had been talking about the plan B that was going to be or would have been presented to cabinet, should plan B be required. Did they ever see plan B? Like, if they rejected plan A, then you had plan B ready to go, but did the government or did cabinet know there was a plan B? Should they have chosen to reject plan A? I feel like I'm speaking in code, but you started it so I'm throwing it back to you.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Deputy, perhaps you and I together can answer this question. Plan B was never detailed in depth because plan B was not endorsed out of government decision-making. Government took the rec-

ommendation associated with a multi-partner approach, the redevelopment of Ontario Place, and our focus then became the terms associated with the partnerships and leases that would go with those multi-partners.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So they never saw plan B?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I think it was a good option that went into government, but there's a recommendation generally when people go forward to cabinet, and that's the recommendation that decision-makers took at the time.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Just to ask a supplementary question there: One of the things that the Auditor General reports is that if you hadn't gone for a multi-partner approach—the problem with a multi-partner approach is that the Ontario government is on the hook for a number of costs, including the maintenance of common spaces and site preparation and all these others. Those have now ballooned to \$1.5 billion, not including the science centre, but the science centre is at \$2.235 billion.

Was the government made aware or was cabinet made aware that this multi-partner approach would lead to higher costs for the Ontario government?

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Under 10 minutes remaining.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** First, what I would say about the two different approaches is I wouldn't assume if there was a single developer for the site that certain things wouldn't have been negotiated in terms of actual site servicing. That's pretty standard in terms of development. I would just say, just because you're going with one proponent as opposed to several doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to be cheaper.

In terms of a multi-site approach, the benefit of that is you get different expertise—it's a very large site. When you think about the tourism experience—and there were also existing positive partnerships on that site like with Live Nation that I think the government wanted to maintain.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** That's fine; thank you.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I've been all over the map, but that's okay. Welcome to committee.

Returning to Triple Five, I think where we had left off, I had asked if it was the same vice-president who had exchanged the nine emails with Therme's lawyer during the call for development open period. You said you would get back to me and whatnot. After several days of back and forth with IO officials, Triple Five finally submitted its revised bid on December 3, 2019, 70 days after the revised call for development deadline. Triple Five's revised bid still scored lower than the other bids and had not undergone due-diligence meetings, but despite this, Triple Five's submission was subsequently presented by Infrastructure Ontario as the top-ranked comprehensive site-wide submission.

I'd like to know who made the decision to rank them the highest above other bids that had actually scored higher. Mr. Lindsay, I heard you when you said that they were not Infrastructure Ontario's recommendation, and yet I can't reconcile these things.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Chair, through you to the MPP, a two-part answer to the question: The first is, and I'm not trying to quibble with words, this was not the resubmission of an entire bid by Triple Five. This was a follow-up in answer to diligence questions, questions of clarification, that we had asked, consistent with the call-for-development process that had been articulated, not only of this entity but six other entities as well. So this wasn't bid rehabilitation or a brand new bid. This was clarification answers.

To the question about the process: Any change in the scoring would have been subject to the exact same evaluation process of having four assessors ultimately come together, provide a revised scoring on the basis of the information they were receiving, the lead assessor sitting in what we call a consensus meeting—because, as my colleague has said, when you ask four people to evaluate things, you get differences as between the way in which they interpret how a solution is meeting government's objectives. All of that would have fed into the revision of the shortlisting. But again, I would stress, at no time was it the recommendation of Infrastructure Ontario to government that a single comprehensive site-wide partner be selected for Ontario Place.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I might just add that that consensus-based process—in procurements, it's not uncommon for assessors to get to talk about their assessment of a particular proposal and to dialogue about it and change their assessment during the process. That happens quite frequently when you're undertaking procurement.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Earlier, did we hear that three weeks had been what the others had been given? How does that compare to the 70 days for Triple Five? Am I misremembering? Did everyone have 70 days? I'd like to know apples to apples. If everyone was given time, was that equivalent?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Everyone was given the same three-week extension. That was provided to all the bidders. And then subsequent to those submissions being evaluated, there were clarification questions that were made, and that was when the request was made to Triple Five to submit additional information. And then after that request was made, it took them 70 days to respond to that. So it wasn't an extension specific to Triple Five. That was the duration of time for them to respond to our request for clarification.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** But 70 days—I wasn't there, but that doesn't seem like fine tuning or tightening up formatting. That sounds substantial. Here's my actual question: Was there pressure from the Premier's office or the minister's office? Was there direction or enthusiastic encouragement or whatever the right language is that Triple Five be ranked highest?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Chair, through you to the MPP, I wasn't present in every meeting, but in everything that I have learned about the way that this process has played out since, I have never found any evidence that there was pressure on behalf of any elected official in connection to Triple Five.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, so “not to your knowledge” is what I'm hearing there. Okay. Is Infrastructure Ontario or the government considering Triple Five as a partner for any other project at Ontario Place? East Island, for example?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** We are not currently considering, or in any active conversations, with Triple Five for anything to do with Ontario Place.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** You as Infrastructure Ontario?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Infrastructure Ontario, yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** To your knowledge, is the government?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** To my knowledge, the government is not.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** No, not from the ministry perspective—not to my knowledge, no.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I'm going to hand it back to Mr. Glover.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. I'm going to ask similar questions about Ontario Live. On December 11, 2019, Infrastructure Ontario said that there were to be no further discussions with Ontario Live. On January 30, Ontario Live is included as one of the short-listed participants. Did anyone in the Premier's office or the minister's office direct that Ontario Live be included as one of the short-listed participants between December 11 and January 30?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Again, I am not aware of Infrastructure Ontario receiving any such direction from the Premier's office or from the minister's office.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** So, what changed over that winter holiday, then?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I'm going to call for Heather Grey-Wolf to rejoin to speak to the evaluation for Ontario Live.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** So, the question is basically—December 11, it says no further discussions with Ontario Live. IO says that. And then on January 30, they're included as one of the short-listed participants. What changed?

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**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** Sorry. What is the calendar year that you're referring to?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** It's 2019. Do you want a minute to think about that? I could go to another question.

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** Our process allowed for—once the government made their decisions, we provided correspondence to all participants, or to some participants, to say while they were not the preferred proponent of the government at that time, we left open the possibility to return to certain proposals, to re-engage with them if the government should choose in the future.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** The Auditor General says that Minister Surma's chief of staff wrote to Infrastructure Ontario on April 6, 2023, to notify them that Ontario Live had been identified as the preferred partner for establishing food and beverage service and other services on the east island. Is it normal for Infrastructure Ontario to take direction from a minister's chief of staff about a vendor?

**Ms. Heather Grey-Wolf:** In this case, that's the example where while Ontario Live was one of the proponents or participants who had not been successfully chosen to be an initial tenant, we had reserved the right through the process to re-engage with them on ancillary opportunities on behalf of government. Therefore, we had that direction, as you state, back in April 2023 to re-engage with them, to speak to them specifically about opportunities for them to provide food and beverage services across the site, public realm, site maintenance and management, and potentially people-moving infrastructure.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Infrastructure Ontario did get instruction from the chief of staff of Minister Surma.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I'll turn this over to Deputy Veshkini, but I would say that the food and beverage conversations for the site—we haven't started a process on that regard yet.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** No.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I want to ask, if I may—

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Thirty seconds.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Yes. What was the basis of the ministry's high opinion of Ontario Live given that Infrastructure Ontario had previously recommended no further discussions with them?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I can't comment. I'll turn it to Deputy Veshkini—if there were any conversation at the time.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Unfortunately, I wasn't there at the time, so I can't comment. But when we did have carriage of the file at the Ministry of Infrastructure, in the summer of 2024, we did instruct IO to move forward with a competitive tender for the food and beverage.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The chief of staff is directing you to reconsider, and that maybe isn't normal. But where does the love come from? Do we know?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** I don't think anyone here can comment on that.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We're at time.

We now move to the final round for the government, beginning with MPP Smith.

**Mr. David Smith:** I'd like to thank the panel collectively for your presentation thus far. My question: Many Ontarians are curious about the economic side of the project, what it means for jobs and for Ontario's economy. Can you give a sense of the job creation and economic impact that the Ontario Place revitalization will have, whether that's in construction, engineering, design or other areas connected to the projects?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question. Let me start with the construction phase. It's a big project, as you know. It is anticipated during this phase that construction will create approximately 4,700 jobs and add about \$420 million to Ontario's GDP—so, significant in terms of impact. It should generate about \$68 million in provincial tax revenue and about \$500 million in private investment. That's just for the phase of construction.

After construction, the project is anticipated to support more than 2,000 full-time and part-time jobs on the site,

so it will be a big employer in the city, adding about \$184 million to Ontario's GDP. We will be receiving money in rent payments, and as I mentioned before, we hope to get as many as six million visitors to the site per year. So there's a fair bit of economic activity that's generated just from that level of visitation to the city: hotel stays, restaurants, undertaking visits to our other tourism sites, as I mentioned—ideally going to other parts of the province, extending their visits, going down to Niagara, up to Wasaga Beach, going to Algonquin Park. So we expect this site to be a significant anchor in our tourism economic plan.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Further questions?

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** Thank you for presenting. We've heard a lot about the environmental side of this project, particularly the emphasis on the waterfront. Can you tell us a little bit more about the green space that is contained within this proposal? How much of the project is green space? Will it be available year-round, and the accessibility aspect as well to that?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question. There will be over 50 acres of parkland and green space on the site, and that includes trails, parkland, playgrounds. There will be beaches. We're very conscious of the environmental sensitivity of the site.

I'll turn it over to my colleague Michael, who can tell you a bit about the plans as well as some of our plans for ensuring that the foliage and the trees on the site are abundant and that the site ends up being a beautiful park.

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Thank you, Deputy, and thank you for the question.

As the deputy has said, we are very cognizant that this is an important environmental area within this part of downtown Toronto.

You know we've taken down trees on the site to make the site development-ready, and we have a very public commitment that we'll be replacing those at at least a 2-to-1 ratio. So, we'll have two trees put in for every one that was taken out. For the really large trees that are over 30 centimetres in diameter, a meter off the ground, we'll have a higher ratio.

We're not going to be throwing in just the small street trees that you see that don't have a great track record of survival. We're going to plant trees that are large, that will have a better chance of surviving in a fairly aggressive climate with the wind and the waves coming in off the lake. And they're all going to be native species. It's important to us, and it's been flagged to us by our First Nations partners on this project that it's important that we plant native trees.

One of the things that we did when the trees had to come down was: We wanted to make sure that nothing went to waste, so we had a group go in to collect seeds from the trees that were there, and then we replanted those seeds at places like Tommy Thompson Park at the Leslie Street Spit. We made sure that the wood from the trees that had to come down was going to be repurposed. Some of it was offered up to First Nations communities for firewood,



as many of the elders—as Mr. Rosenberg will know—still have wood stoves to heat their homes in First Nations communities. We wanted to make sure that that offer was made.

We're also using some of the larger trees, and we're putting them back into the site. I'll give you a great example: We're putting them in upside down so that the trunks of the trees will go into the ground in places like Brigantine Cove and then the root ball will become turtle nesting areas. Again, that was something that our First Nations partners flagged for us as being important. The turtles need a place to thrive, and these root balls will allow them to do so.

And then lastly, we were able to take some of the larger pieces of wood from the trees that had to come down and hand it off to First Nations artisans so that they could carve it, they could make into artwork, benches, sculptures, and we put that back onto the site so there would be that permanent memorial, if you will, of the trees that were there previously.

One of the things I do want to point out, though, is that the trees, as big as they were—and some of them, like weeping willows, were large on the site—were not very old. Fifty years ago, that site was part of the lake. Ontario Place is built on lakefill. None of those trees are more than 50 years old. Then much of that, certainly on the west island, was redeveloped in the early 1980s, so many of the trees are really not that old at all.

1710

Despite all of that, we wanted to make sure that we were respecting and honouring the wood that came out of these trees. That's an example, I think, that we're very proud of, the ability to repurpose in multiple different ways the wood that came from these trees.

Lastly, I just want to point out that with our First Nations partners, we ensured that there was the opportunity for the elders to come down onto the site, before any trees came down, for a tree cutting ceremony. We had multiple different communities that came down who wanted to participate in a ceremony to honour and respect the trees that were there, and it was a very moving ceremony that we had on site. We're very proud of that work because I think it really shows a respect for First Nations cultures as part of the truth and reconciliation agenda.

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** Thank you, Mr. Robertson.

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** MPP Cooper, you have 12 minutes.

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** The Ontario Place redevelopment is bringing together a lot of different partners and stakeholders, both inside and outside of government. Can you please talk a bit about how the ministry is coordinating that work, both across government and with its partners, to make sure the redevelopment moves forward smoothly and stays on track?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Certainly. Thank you for the question.

As I've mentioned before, this is a big project, and there are many tentacles of it. We have a lot of partners and a lot of help across government.

Two of my main partners are sitting right beside me. They're great partners to work with. We work very closely with the Ministry of Infrastructure, and we work very closely with IO on this initiative.

But we also work closely with partners from other ministries. We have a sort of central coordinating effort from our ministry through Michael's area. We work closely, for example, with our colleagues from our Indigenous affairs ministry. They're a very important partner in how we undertake consultation. We work closely with our central agency partners because of the size of the project.

We also work with partners at other levels of government. We work very, very closely with the city of Toronto, and I've referenced some of those conversations that are ongoing. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this was part of the new deal discussions with the city, so we work very collaboratively with them on plans for the site. They obviously have a lot invested in the site's success, and so we want to make sure that we remain good partners with them.

We've consulted with conservation authorities. We've consulted with other arms and agencies of government to make sure that as we move forward, people understand the plans, that we feel that things are well organized. There are probably nine or 10 different work streams associated with this project. We have many different trips that we have to make into central agencies for different approvals to make sure that we have the right oversight on such a large initiative.

I mentioned that one piece of policy work I'm very excited about is the operating and the revenue models of this site in its entirety as we go forward, and it's something that we're commencing with right now.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We're in the second half.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Again, there will be lots of conversations with our partners here and also our partners on the site, such as Therme and Live Nation, as well as our colleagues at the science centre.

The science centre as an agency sits under our ministry, and so we work very, very closely with them not just on the building but on the programming. How do we build a science centre for the future, and how do we make sure that that programming is in keeping with our work with the Ministry of Education? How do we make sure that we're developing a science centre that is modern and in keeping with the STEM curriculum that Ontario is invested in at the moment?

I don't know, Michael, if you want to add anything. We have an interministerial group that meets. There is a hive of activity in the Ontario Place secretariat—he's a hard-working fellow—and those 10 work streams keep them busy. If you want to add anything about your process, I think the committee would be happy to hear it.

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Yes. Thank you very much, Deputy. It's good to hear my boss say that I'm a hard-working fellow, so thank you.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Michael Robertson:** Exactly.

I think the deputy is correct. One of the things that we are looking at across my colleagues, across other ministries, is how this project fits into other government priorities. The deputy has spoken about the Ministry of Education and the science centre. We also work closely with the with IAFNER, our colleagues at Indigenous affairs and northern relations. We also work closely with our colleagues at the Ministry of the Environment. We recognize that there are processes in place, and we want to stay close with the work that the Ministry of the Environment is doing.

At our inter-ministerial tables where we where we talk about this, one of the things that we talk about is how this investment that the government is making in Ontario Place drives other aspects of government priorities. The science centre I think is a perfect example. With the science centre and the redevelopment of it and the relocation of it to Ontario Place, we have an opportunity not just to build a really fantastic world-class, children-focused museum on science, but we have an opportunity to drive a science curriculum. We've talked with our colleagues at education about whether every science teacher should do a course at the science centre so that they learn more about how to interact with children and they learn more about how to be better science teachers. We've talked about how investments in the science centre potentially drive STEM research. How do we collaborate both with education but with colleges and universities? How do we make sure that some of the science-centre-of-excellence work that is happening at the Ontario science centre is reflected in economic development, in job creation and in advancing made-in-Ontario solutions for health care challenges? And how we make sure we're knitting all of that together?

The science centre is not the only science facility in Ontario. We also want to make sure that we are taking advantage of Science North—and how do we link those two together? How do we make sure that what's being learned at Science North is known to the science centre, what's being learned at the science centre is known in Science North so that we are sharing that knowledge across the province?

There are a lot of opportunities, through you, Mr. Chair, to the member, where we can really use the government's investment here and what we're learning as part of the redevelopment of Ontario Place to further facilitate government priorities. I thank you for the question.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** If I can just add a bit about this site as an anchor for our tourism sector in this province. As the government thinks about protecting Ontario and our economy relative to what's happening in the geopolitical landscape, the United States, tourism—I'm going to use this as a bit of a plug for our sector. There is an incredible opportunity for job growth and job creation in this particular sector. This site plays a big role in providing that opportunity.

When we talk about investment in this site, I wouldn't see it as an unnecessary draw on the fiscal plan of the province. It is an investment not only in the future, but in this particular sector and job creation. Tourism doesn't just happen organically.

Sometimes I think when people think about it, because people are going on holiday and it seems—it takes sustained activity and an investment, just like other sectors do. I see the future, and I think the minister shares this view as well—as an important part of the Ontario economy, as we start to retool our economy and move away some from particular sectors and invest in tourism and culture.

When you see jurisdictions who undertake these investments, whether it's in South Asia or in Europe, they have huge economic growth associated with tourism, and there is that opportunity that exists now in Ontario. Having a site like this that is large, that is ambitious, will help put us on the map to our competitors.

We had a good summer. We were down with the US visitation for obvious reasons, but we were up with people who were deciding to stay in the province and enjoy our province here, and with international visitors. When people come internationally, they spend a lot of money. They stay for longer. Those are the type of people we want to attract and we want to attract to Ontario place.

So that is the vision that we have, that I would try to inspire the committee to think about in terms of the opportunity of the site, to grow this particular sector in a way that we haven't seen before. That's our ambition.

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Further questions? You have three minutes and 20 seconds. MPP Firin.

**MPP Mohamed Firin:** Ontario Place is one piece of a much bigger picture when it comes to tourism and culture across the province of Ontario.

Can you tell us how the redevelopment of Ontario Place fits with Ontario's other major cultural and tourism attractions? Will the new site have the capacity to hold large-scale events—things like global artists, festivals, cultural celebrations—that can draw visitors from across Canada and around the world?

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question. I'm going to build on the remarks that I just provided.

There's incredible opportunity here. It's a multi-faceted site. It's got many different things going on. There's something there for everybody—something for families, individuals. There's an educational component. If you're outdoorsy, there will be something there.

As I've said in some of my earlier remarks, the hope is that with such a large attraction, it will also spark visitation in other parts of the province. I would say our hope is, you start at Ontario Place, you move over to Niagara Falls and you go to Niagara Parks—and we're undertaking a lot of redevelopment at that particular park too. They've had a banner summer, despite some of the challenges with the US. They've got a great plan for redevelopment, and indeed, we're working on plans for the whole Niagara region. You might decide to do something outside and go

up to one of our provincial parks—and we work closely with the Ministry of the Environment to highlight the natural beauty of those parks and that experience. We know we have a lot of visitors who, for example, come from—our largest visitation would be from some European countries, like the UK, Germany. We have a lot of visitors from Korea, Japan who want to see the natural beauty that Ontario has to offer.

So we see starting at Ontario Place, having a great three or four days—I think there will be so much to do on that site and so many things to experience that it's going to take you more than one day. We'll have to think about that, in our operating strategy and our past policy, and how we create linkages of Ontario Place to some of our other attractions that we operate through the ministry, through our agency partners.

So we see a lot of opportunity and, as I mentioned, we're very excited about that and about how to utilize the site to spark more general economic activity.

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** You have 45 seconds remaining. MPP Smith.

**Mr. David Smith:** Can you give us a sense as to how much private sector fundings are involved in this project—

for example, non-taxpayer money is going into revitalization, particularly—when it comes to improving public lands and public space, on this file.

**Ms. Nancy Kennedy:** Thank you for the question.

I'll start with the partnership with Therme. As has been mentioned today, they're investing approximately \$700 million into the site, in terms of the construction of their facility. That's a significant investment. That's \$500 million for the facility itself, and \$200 million of that will be for shoreline works and new public realm works.

There's also the work that Live Nation does in the concerts—there's quite a significant investment on their part in terms of the amphitheatre and—

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** We're out of time. Thank you very much.

That concludes the time for questions this afternoon.

I want to thank the ministry and all who have come today. You are all dismissed. I hope you have a wonderful evening. Thank you again for your presence.

We will now pause briefly as we go into closed session so the committee can commence report-writing.

*The committee recessed at 1724 and later continued in closed session.*

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