

THE LAND ECONOMIST



**A UNIQUE SPECIALIZED CREW OF WOMEN
HELP TO RESTORE THE STONework OF
CANADA'S PARLIAMENT IN OTTAWA** p.6

**FEATURE STORY: BILLIONS IN BURIED TREASURE
IN ONTARIO'S NORTH. OBSTACLES & SOLUTIONS
TO DEVELOPMENT.** p.15

"If I have to hop on a bulldozer myself, we're going to start building roads to the Ring of Fire".
Premier Doug Ford.



Association of
Ontario Land Economists

THE COMPANY WE KEEP



The Association of Ontario Land Economists

30 St. Patrick Street Suite 1000, Toronto, ON M5T 3A3

admin@aole.org

PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE



30 St. Patrick St., Suite 1000
Toronto, ON M5T 3A3

Email:
admin@aole.org

Website:
aole.org

Editor-in-Chief:

John Blackburn, AIHM, PLE
(Vice President & Journal Chair)

Administrator:

admin@aole.org

Editorial Team:

Design, Layout and Copy Editing
by Graphic Flow Design Ltd
(GFDL)

Copy Editing:

Leslie Savlov (GFDL)

Design & Layout:

Benito Del Monte Medina
(GFDL)

Contributors:

Pat Brennan,
Andy Manahan PLE
(Legislative Chair)
Mike O'Dwyer
John T. Glen, MA,
AACI FRICS MIMA
Dr. Jim Ward, PhD
Joe Mathewson
(Professor Northwestern University)
Stefan Krzeczunowicz, PLE
AOLE President
Bonnie Bowerman, PLE
Ed Sajecki, PLE
Dr. Frank Clayton, PhD
Leslie Savlov
Benito Del Monte Medina

FEATURES

4 THE DON RIVER UNPLUGGED



6 COVER STORY A UNIQUE SPECIALIZED CREW OF WOMEN HELP TO RESTORE THE STONEMASONRY OF CANADA'S PARLIAMENT IN OTTAWA



9 HOW "HOOKERS" BUILT THE CITY OF TORONTO



11 UNDERSTANDING UGLY: HUMAN RESPONSE TO BUILDINGS IN THE ENVIRONMENT BY IAN ELLINGHAM Book Review by Dr. Jim Ward



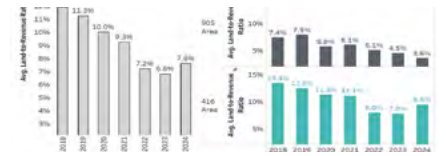
13 FIRST NATION BAND CO-OWNER OF CANADA'S LARGEST WIND FARM



15 FEATURE STORY BILLIONS IN BURIED TREASURE IN ONTARIO'S NORTH. OBSTACLES & SOLUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT.



27 Q1-2024 GTA HIGH-RISE LAND INSIGHTS REPORT



28 ASSOCIATION NEWS Welcome New Members AOLE Holiday Mixer

33 NEWS BLASTS

37 THE LEGISLATIVE BEAT

Cover Photo Credit: courtesy of Public
Services and Procurement Canada
Media Relations



The Don River Unplugged

By Pat Brennan

New Don River route and Villiers Island. Source Waterfront Toronto.

There'll be no big explosion at the wedding of the new Don River and Toronto Harbour.

An earthen dam currently separates the two bodies of water, but the dam won't be eliminated by dynamite. A diamond-studded rope will cut into the dam, which project engineers call a plug.

The water levels in the river and harbour are at equal heights, so there'll be no gush of water when the dam is breached, according to a Waterfront Toronto spokesperson.

There are three plugs holding back water in the Lower Port Lands. One is in the original Don River where it enters the Keating Channel. Soon that sharp right turn will be eliminated when the plug is cut, and the water will flow into the river's new route.

There's also a plug just under the new Cherry Street South bridge that will allow the river to empty into Toronto Harbour.

A third plug is in the Don Greenway – a marshy area designed to accommodate flood waters when the Don is overwhelmed by heavy rainfall or spring runoffs. That plug will let the marshland empty its excess waters into the shipping canal to the south.

[It took three weeks for an artificial creek to fill the new Don River to a depth of three metres.](#)

Engineers wanted the flow to go slow so as not to disrupt the thousands of plantings of trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers on the groomed banks of the new river route.



New plantings on embankment., Source Waterfront Toronto.

Many truckloads of particular-sized stones had been placed on the dry riverbed and engineers didn't want those stones moved by a sudden gush of water. The stones are small enough to serve as ideal breeding grounds for fish, but large enough not to be washed out into the harbour by the river flow.



Placing stones on riverbed. Source Waterfront Toronto.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority estimates there are 26 different species of fish waiting to set up home in the new riverbed.

Thousands of children's windmill toys lined the groomed banks of the river this spring. They swayed and spun in the wind to scare off birds from eating the newly planted seeds on the embankments.



Small windmills along the Don River banks to scare off birds. Photo by Pat Brennan.

Waterfront Toronto's \$1.2 billion Port Lands Flood Protection Project will free up nearly 600 acres of waterfront lands that were subject to annual spring flooding and therefore were restricted to industrial use only.

Rerouting the Don River created an 83-acre artificial island in the Port Lands called [Villiers](#).

Villiers will house a mixed-use community considered the most ambitious environmental renewal project in North America with 10,000 residents living in 5,000 homes – mostly midrise apartments with about 1,000 square feet of space.



Rendering of Villiers Island's northern edge along the Keating Channel. Source Waterfront Toronto.

The environment plays a major role in the design of Villiers Island Precinct – the first of several design precincts for the 880-acre Port Lands.

No combustible engines will operate on the island. Electric vehicles – including public transit – plus personal cars will be electrically driven. Bicycles get a high priority for transportation. Among the 62 acres of parkland planned for Villiers Island will be an outdoor public art trail funded by a \$25 million donation from Toronto's Pierre Lassonde Foundation.

The free open-air art gallery will be operated and curated by the foundation and world-renown artists will be invited to submit creations for the art trail.

"It has always been a dream of mine to put great art within reach of the public," said Pierre Lassonde, founder of the Pierre Lassonde Family Foundation. "If one wishes to have a profound and lasting impact on the wellbeing and happiness of Torontonians, the waterfront offers a multitude of philanthropic opportunities."

For More Information:

The following are from Waterfront Toronto:
View this wonderful video presentation about the project courtesy of Waterfront Toronto and Toronto East Rotary Club.
[Watch Video](#)



Photos From The Construction Site
[View Gallery](#)

Take yourself on a tour of the Port Lands
[View Presentation](#)

[View The Port Lands Photo Gallery](#)



Pat Brennan is a freelance writer and former real estate editor at the Toronto Star. You can reach Pat by phone at 647-898-9717 or at travelswithlefty@gmail.com

A Unique Specialized Crew Of Women Help To Restore The Stonework Of Canada's Parliament In Ottawa

By Pat Brennan



Women workers on Parliament Hill, photo courtesy of Public Services and Procurement Canada Media Relations.

Huge blocks of sandstone weighing tons were hoisted high onto the Peace Tower on Canada's Parliament Building.

Now, 100 years later, young women wearing hard hats and orange vests are high on that tower bringing those stones back to life.

Among the hundreds of construction workers employed to restore Parliament Hill are two dozen women using delicate dental instruments to carve tiny details - like the eyes of gargoyles and little Canada flags - into the massive stone blocks.

In the midst of an Ottawa winter these ladies are high up on the Peace Tower restoring the huge stones that have been deteriorating by collecting dirt, grime and acid rain for a century. They're playing a significant role in the \$6 billion renovation and restoration of the three stone buildings of the Parliamentary Precinct.

There's a lot of stone blocks on that hill and the stonemasons are going to be chiseling and carving them for at least another six years, says veteran stonemason Bobby Watt.

Watt owns the company [RJW Stonemasons Ltd.](#) Most of the stonemasons work for him. His company has worked on most of the best-known stone buildings across Canada - including Queen's Park.

Watt was a Metro Toronto Police Officer when working part time to restore big stones at Queen's Park. He had learned the trade in his native Scotland and when he immigrated to Canada being a police officer paid better than being a stonemason.



The hundreds of workers that restored and renovated the West Block inside the temporary home of the House of Commons. Source: Public Services and Procurement Canada



Lady stonemason.

However, when working on Queen's Park he learned there was a severe shortage of stonemasons across Canada.

That's when Watt started a school in Whitby to train stonemasons. He was also happy to leave the police force where he was a department scuba diver regularly called on to recover drowning victims.

Watt says his female stonemasons are better than his male employees at carving fine details in the stone blocks.

Carvings by Colleen Wilson, a 49-year-old project manager for RJW Stonemasons Ltd. won praise from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

When he visited West Block to see the renovations underway, he saw a 50-pound lion Wilson had carved from a block of sandstone to be part of Canada's Coat of Arms being replaced above the East entrance to the West Block.

He asked Watt if he could have the carved lion to present to Donald Trump at his inauguration as president.

Watt said you can't have that one, but we can carve another one for you. Wilson also taught Trudeau how to use a hammer and chisel to carve his initials into a stone wall in the West Block.



Lion for Trump

His office is in the West Block where the House of Commons now sits temporarily (for 10 years) while the Centre Block undergoes a major facelift.



Hoarding parliament.

Wilson found it much more comfortable to work on interior restorations than restoring deteriorating stones near the top of the Mackenzie Tower on the West Block.

She and her fellow stonemasons were on scaffolding 220 feet in the air, but the protective tarps couldn't go that high for fear they would catch too much wind and pull the scaffolding down.

"There were days when we worked in -38C weather up there on the MacKenzie Tower" said Wilson.

Most of Watt's female stonemasons graduated from fine art programs at Canadian universities, such as University of Regina for Wilson or Western University for stonemason Meredith Thomson who calls herself a restorer.



*Meredith at Work on another project
Photo courtesy of Meredith Thompson, Conservator ,CAHP.*

Thomson, 36, worked at a variety of museums restoring historic artifacts before tackling stone buildings.

She often uses a laser gun to melt accumulated grime and scum covering the stones. The laser beam vaporizes the gunk without harming the stone surface.



Conservator Meredith at work. Photo courtesy of Meredith Thompson, Conservator ,CAHP.

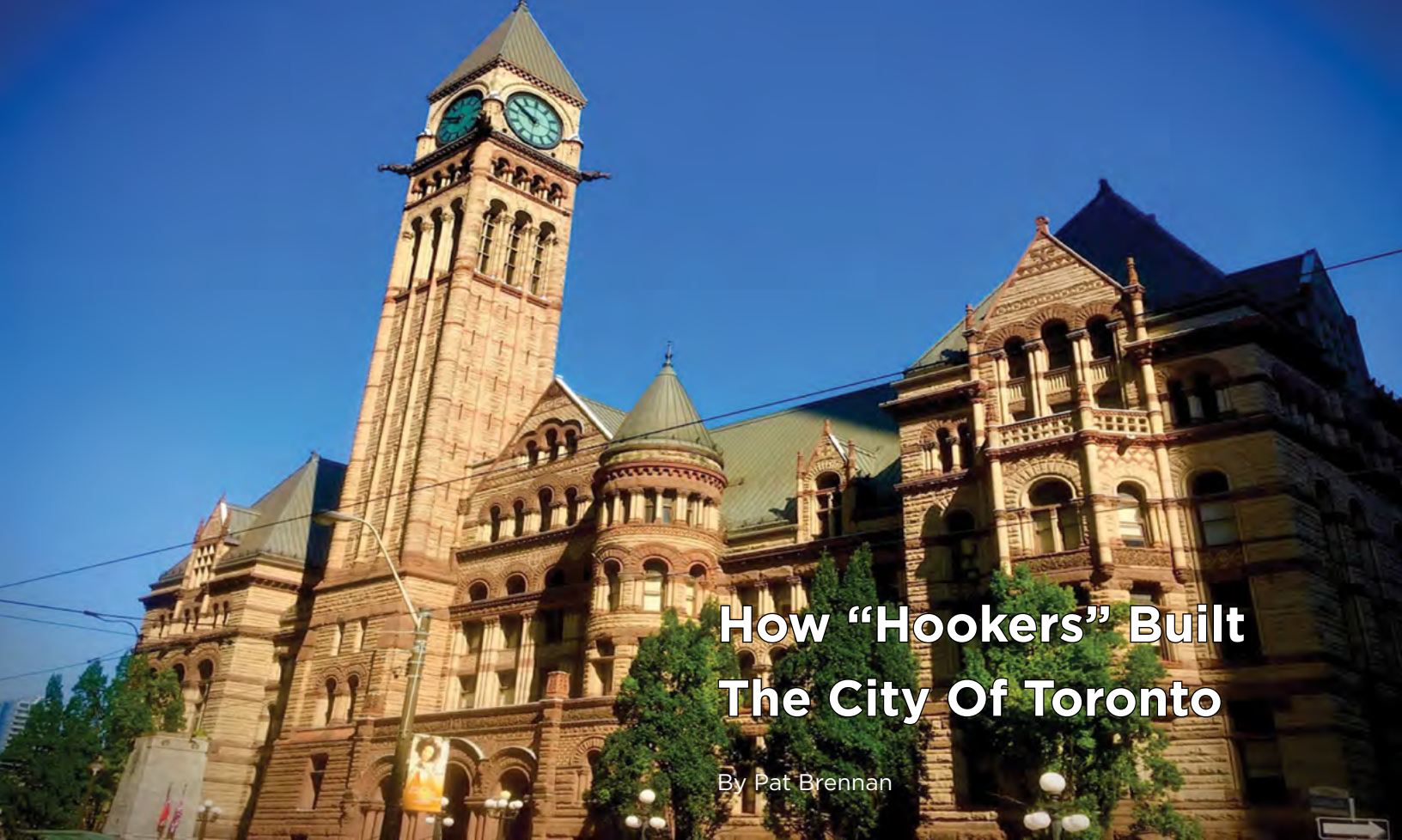
Watt's firm won a national architectural award for its restoration in 2006 of the Parliamentary Library at the back of the Centre Block.

It had survived unscathed when the house of commons was destroyed by a huge fire in 1916.

Watt - now 70 - says he is too old to wrestle with big stones high in the air, as do two of his sons. A third son is an aeronautical engineer in California.

Putting down the hammer and chisel gives Watt more time to sing folk songs in various Ottawa pubs. Earlier in his stonemason career he used to sing folk songs for CN Rail on its cross-Canada passenger trains.

Watch this Interesting Video presented by Public Services and Procurement Canada "Restoring The West Block- Stone Masons on Parliament Hill" [Watch](#)



How “Hookers” Built The City Of Toronto

By Pat Brennan

Toronto's Old City Hall



Emily The Stonehooker



A building by Oakville harbour that was build with stones taken out of Lake Ontario by stonehookers. Photo by Pat Brennan.

I was rather nervous when I heard some friends wanted to take me to a stoned hooker to celebrate my 78th birthday next week.

I misheard them.

They proposed to take me to the Stonehooker pub in Port Credit for lunch.

Port Credit was one of the principal ports for vessels that provided much of the construction materials to build Toronto throughout the 19th Century. Now I will take you back to 1867 and tell you about Emily Blower.

When Emily Blower's husband Thomas died at age 46, he left her with eight children, all under 16.

To put food on the table and keep her family together Emily Blower became a hooker. She and other hookers built the city of Toronto as we know it today.

It's not what you think.

Emily became a stonehooker, a person who pulls stones from the shallow waters of Lake Ontario to be used as building materials for a growing city.

That profession contributed 35 million square feet of Dundas Shale for foundations, floors and sidewalks for most buildings built in downtown Toronto between 1840 and 1912.

Emily's husband was a successful stonehooker in Port Credit, the principal port of the stonehooker profession, along with Oakville and Bronte.

Emily and her older sons sailed out of Port Credit Harbour aboard the Catherine Hays – known to sailors as “Katie.”

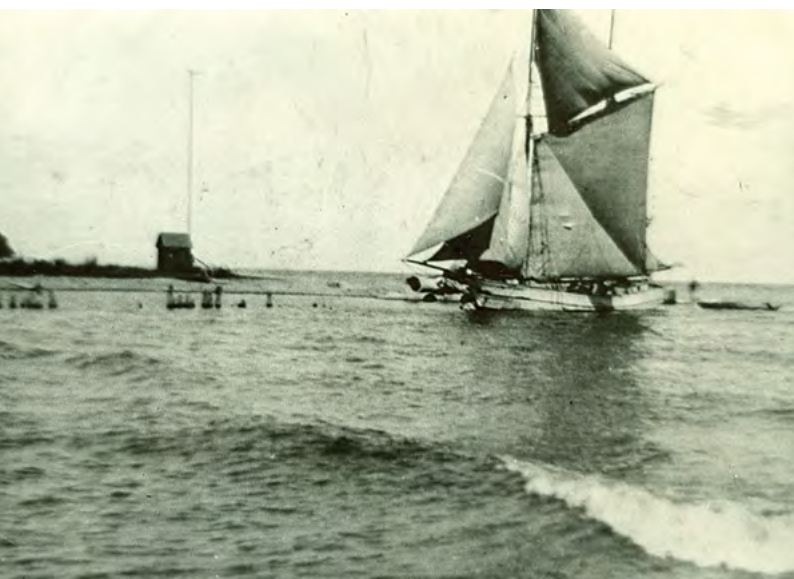


Port Credit Harbour - Stonehooker Lillian and Harbour Dredge, c1900

The schooners anchored along the north shore of Lake Ontario between Port Credit and Burlington in waters 6 to 12 feet deep. The crews – Emily too – went into the water to pry slabs of Dundas Shale off the bottom of the lake using long rakes called hookers.

They loaded the slabs onto accompanying barges equipped with small hoists to lift the stones onto the anchored schooners. The stones were then delivered to Queen's Wharf at the foot of Bathurst Street where contractors bought the vital building materials.

It was a very backbreaking work, and many hookers were lost at sea (Lake Ontario) from storms, fires on board and other mishaps.



Newsboy full sail Port Credit Harbour 1908 Harold Hare Collection
Mississauga South Historical Soc

Near the outbreak of World War I concrete, cement blocks and bricks took over the building materials market and the stonehooker vessels were phased out. Dozens were scrapped. Some were towed to Sunnyside Park along Toronto's west shore and set ablaze for the amusement of picnickers and sunbathers. By 1918 most were gone, but some lived on as storage containers.

However, you can still see “Stonehooker” under full sail on most weekends along the Lake Ontario shore. At the helm of the 33-foot-long sailboat is Ross Noel who opened the popular [Stonehooker Brewing Company](#) on Lakeshore Road in Port Credit five years ago.



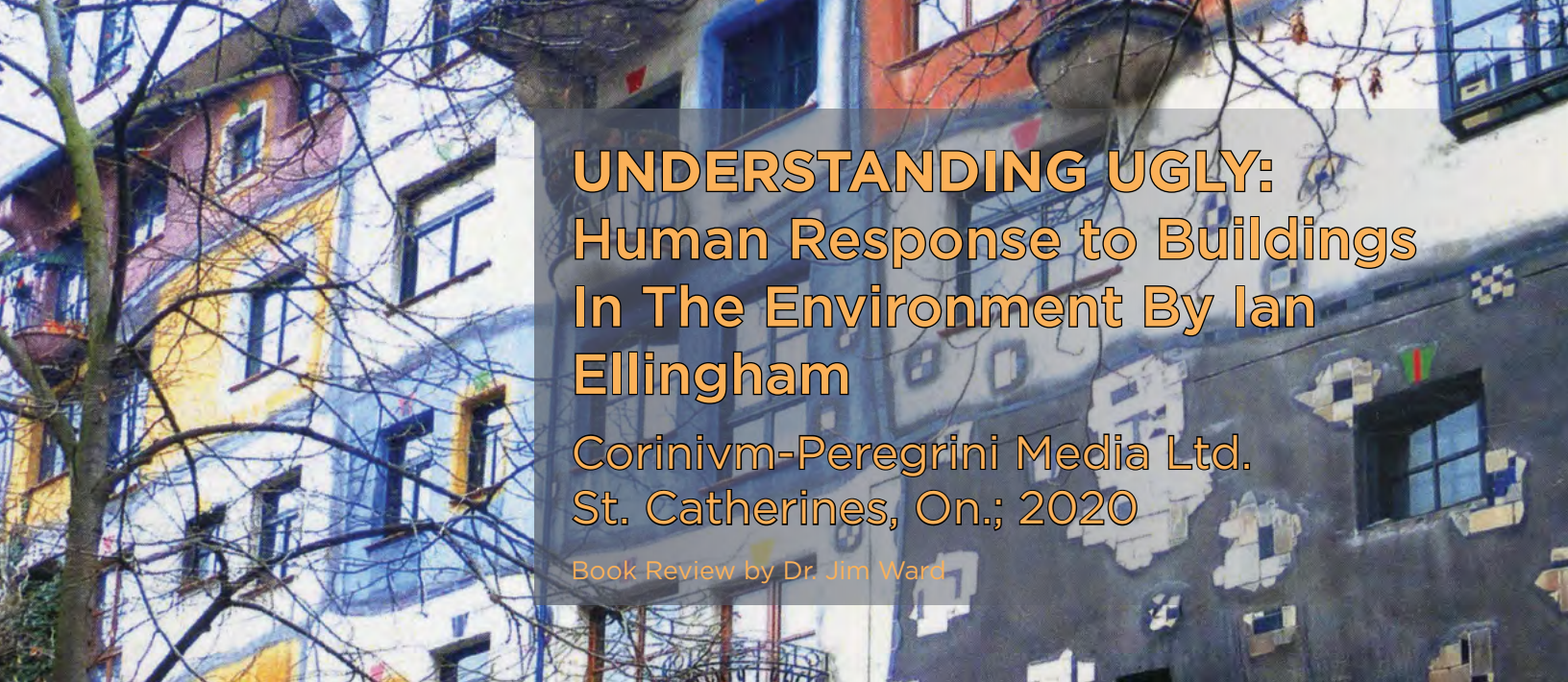
Stonehooker Pub. Photo: By Pat Brennan.

The bar in his pub is composed of hundreds of flat stones that Noel gathered from shallow waters along the Lake Ontario shore. The stone bar weighs more than one ton.

Noel learned about the stonehooker history from plaques erected along the shore of Port Credit Harbour by [Heritage Mississauga](#). His pub now tells the stonehooker history.



Mississauga Heritage Foundation has published an interesting booklet called the Legend of the Stonehookers, a colorful cartoon tale that although fictional gives the reader an idea about how perilous a life being a stonehooker was. [Read Digital Booklet](#)

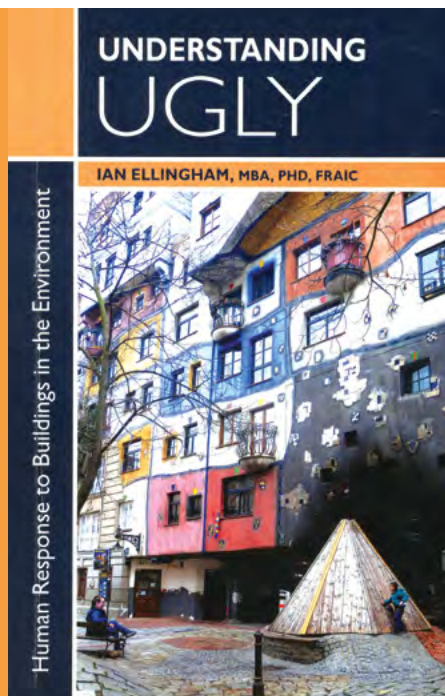


UNDERSTANDING UGLY: Human Response to Buildings In The Environment By Ian Ellingham

Corinivm-Peregrini Media Ltd.
St. Catherines, On.; 2020

Book Review by Dr. Jim Ward

The Hundertwasserhaus, Vienna, designed by Friedensreich Hundertwasser and Joseph Krawina. Photo by Ian Ellingham.



To say the author, Ian Ellingham has substantial experience in the worlds of land economics and architecture would be an understatement. This quickly becomes obvious to the reader and, in addition, the frequent referrals to the psychology of human perception of the physical surroundings, specifically the built environment, brings together a whole panoply of potential explanations of how that built environment is seen and understood in many, many ways. And, Ellingham argues, that those perceptions change over the lifetime of individuals, depending largely on their personal experiences, which may be affected by social class, levels of education, working experience, age and ethnicity. My takeaway from reading this highly complex and detailed book is that architects need to understand this complexity if they are to work towards designing buildings that understand this complexity.

The book is packed with details on what people believe makes an attractive, even beautiful, building. My sense, on reading the book is that a more appropriate title might have been *Understanding Beauty*. Perhaps Ellingham was being ironic when he chose the title.

Ellingham takes the reader on a world-wide tour of building types and discusses what kinds of buildings are most often approved of by a variety of observers and what kinds of buildings are considered unremarkable, if not just plain ugly.

The short introductory chapter, entitled *Architecture: An Art and a Science?* Prepares

the reader to ponder his question throughout the following 21 chapters of the book.

Throughout the book the author addresses the question "What do 'they' think of a particular building?" And he delves into the question of who 'they' are and how that affects their particular perception. As much as anything else, this book is about the personal world in which an individual lives. What kind of an education and life experience has she or he (or they) have? Do perceptions change over time? Are people in general more educated now than they were in the past? Is perception of a piece of architecture affected by class background and is there less class effect of perception than there was in the past?

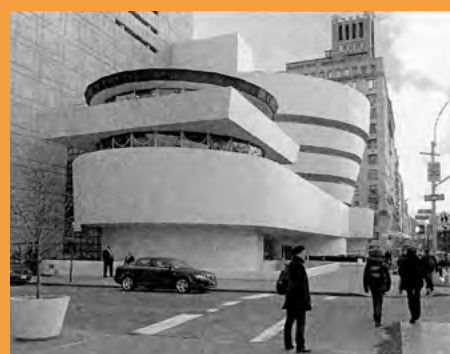
In Chapter 8, *Understanding People - Four Exploratory Experiments*, Ellingham describes four studies that question samples of people of different backgrounds, regarding their perception of built forms. He writes (p. 91) "*Philosophers, psychologists and neuroscientists have shown that there are reasons for our preferences. A few are innate - things that seem to come with our genetic inheritance - but others are acquired.*" In these experiments, carried out in the U.K., the participants were asked to rate photographs of houses. Respondents were asked to rank the houses in terms of how they would like them as places they would like to live on a seven point scale. A major finding was that there were variations in responses by socio-economic class and by age of the respondents. The style of windows and whether or not the houses had sloping rooves appeared to be major factors affecting rankings. Also noted as a major

influence in the responses was whether or not the respondent was an architect or not. At this point Ellingham refers to the classic psychological study by Daniel Kahneman *Thinking Fast and Slow*, wherein Kahneman argues that we humans often act irresponsibly, we often make the wrong decision because we don't think sufficiently analytically before acting.¹ And, says Ellingham, architects may be less vulnerable to the quick-think decision in perceiving a building because of their extensive experience in the field.

Later in the book Ellingham poses the question: What kinds of characteristics do most of us like, regardless of class, status, ethnicity, gender and age. He lists these characteristics as SYMMETRY, NATURALNESS, and ORNAMENTATION.



Photos of some typical house types used in the survey. Photo by Ian Ellingham.



The Henry Taylor House, St. Catharines, Canada, c.1924. The architects Nicholson & Macbeth created many fascinating houses, many built in the 1920s. Pantheon, Rome, c.126 AD. A building still in high regard, 2000 years after construction. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City. Completed 1959. Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect. Photos by Ian Ellingham

And then goes on to briefly describe examples of these characteristics.

In Chapter 21, the final chapter of the book, entitled *Final Thoughts*, Ellingham states again, as he has done throughout the book, that perceptions and preferences change over time, he writes (p.286) *"Research does not guarantee that a design will be accorded with great esteem, but the likelihood of it being perceived as ugly will be reduced."*

In this final chapter, the author provides an 'Esteem Check List' at the head of which he writes: *"When in doubt consider the following design approaches that have been shown to be associated with esteemed buildings."* He goes on to briefly list 20 design approaches.

In sum this book is a treasure chest of information that should be required reading for architects and others involved in the design and construction of buildings that work and that delight. ➤

Esteem Checklist:

When in doubt, consider the following design approaches that have been shown to be associated with esteemed buildings:

- Familiarity
- Naturalness
- Ornamentation – preferably naturalistic
- Symmetry – reflected and translational
- Not too many materials – two or three plus glass is probably enough
- Careful use of novelty (it should not conflict with familiarity)
- Mystery is good, but not too much
- Reproductions are not to be feared
- Consider the practical aspects of human scale
- Strive for buildings that might be perceived as warm
- Remember the contexts in which a building will exist, including geographical, cultural and personal
- Try to provide 'programme notes' to help people understand the building
- Remember that materials and styles carry meanings for people
- Use a pitched roof, or suggest it, whenever possible
- Make sure the entrance is visible
- Think about curved forms (but be careful about cost)
- Some rules and guidelines (such as the above) are meant to be broken, but there should be very good reasons for doing so
- Very importantly – pull it all together through unity/coherence/balance/order/elegance/harmony
- Keep in touch with your market – and that means ongoing understanding of the population being addressed
- Design decisions should be based on solid evidence, not guesses or assumptions. If in doubt, get out there and do some research – it is cheap compared to the costs of construction.

Checklist source: page 286 of the book.



Dr. Jim Ward

Dr. Jim Ward holds a PhD in Social Geography from the University of Maryland. He has taught Urban Sociology in universities in the United States, Australia and Canada and has published two books on urban homelessness in the United States, Canada and Australia as well as a book on small town life in Australia and a book on the geography of Yellow Fever in Latin America. For 20 years he was a consultant on social issues that led to projects in Canada, the USA, Armenia and Russia.

1. Kahneman won the Nobel Prize for his work. Interestingly Malcolm Gladwell's bestseller of some years ago, *Blink*, argued that decisions based impulses are frequently effective.

First Nation Band Co-Owner Of Canada's Largest Wind Farm

By Pat Brennan



Henvey Inlet Wind Turbines. Photo courtesy of Patten Energy.

Georgian Bay has been a vital source of prosperity, culture, and life itself since time immortal for Ontario's indigenous peoples.

And now a small Indian band on the eastern shores of Georgian Bay has found a way to seize the bay's notorious winds to bring needed vitality to its reserve.

The [Ojibwe First Nation at Henvey Inlet](#) has created one of Canada's largest wind farms on their rugged land and the electricity generated by North America's tallest wind towers is now powering 100,000 homes in Southern Ontario.

The wind farm is pumping \$10 million a year in revenue into the Henvey Inlet community of 160 residents.



Henvey Inlet wind farm.

The Ojibwe had the wind and [Pattern Energy](#) had the know-how to capture that wind. [The two became 50-50 partners on the wind farm.](#)

The team had to cut 60 kilometres of roadways onto the rugged Georgian Bay shore midway between Parry Sound and Sudbury to bring in and erect 87 huge wind turbines.

The roads had to accommodate the largest mobile cranes in North America required to install the 132-metre-tall generators.



Prep For Hub Install. Photo courtesy of Patten Energy.

At least 15 percent of the 200 workers erecting the generators were indigenous Canadians.

Pat Brennan (no relation to me), a deputy chief at Henvey Inlet, is responsible for ensuring the reserve's wild life and environment are not harmed by the installation of the wind generators, which will be removed in 20 years.

Two years ago, Highway 400 was extended north from Parry Sound towards Sudbury, and it cut through some of the Henvey Inlet reserve.

Within the reserve the four-lane highway became the site of Ontario's first and only animal overpass.

The \$3.5 million bridge is finished like a meadow in the woods. Motion-detection cameras are photographing users of the bridge, which include bears, moose, wolves, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, etc., even wild turkeys, pheasants, and other winged creatures.

Before construction began on the highway the first employees hired were two Labrador Retrievers sent out to sniff along the proposed route and find hidden turtle nests that could be moved out of harm's way.



Henvey Inlet Wind Turbines. Photo courtesy of Patten Energy

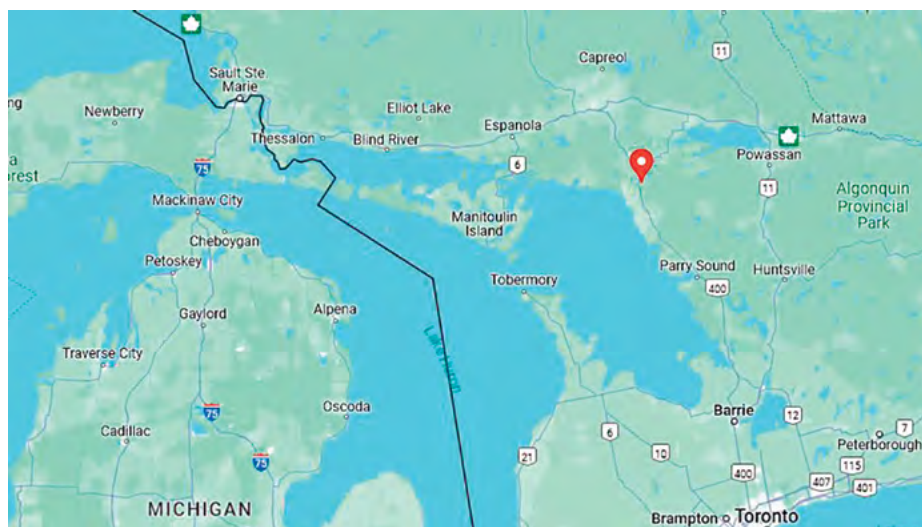
The Henvey Inlet First Nation became equal partners with New York-based Pattern Energy after a significant change in the federal government's Indian Act in 2002. It now allows First Nations absolute control over the land, environment, and natural resources of First Nation Lands.

A 104-kilometre-long high-tension line was strung over various First Nation communities to connect the wind generators with the provincial power grid in Parry Sound.

Brennan said the income revenue from the sale of electricity to the province will improve living conditions on the reserve and finance a number of new business ventures proposed by the community council.

He said there are plans to create a recreation resort and marina at the mouth of the Henvey Inlet with Georgian Bay. Also the village residents will be building waterfront cottages for sale and for rent.

There is an interesting one minute CBC News video about the wind farm



Location of Henvey Inlet: Source: Google Maps -Map data © 2024 Google Canada

BILLIONS IN BURIED TREASURE IN ONTARIO'S NORTH. OBSTACLES & SOLUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT.

By Mike O'Dwyer



Drift of Harrachov Mine by alarch is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 and "Antique ornate treasure chest" by sebilden is licensed under CC BY 2.0

A REMINDER

Ontario's Ring of Fire is a 5,000 square kilometre crescent-shaped area in the James Bay Lowlands, 400 kilometres or so north of Thunder Bay. Since its discovery in 2007, the area has been estimated to contain up to a trillion dollars in important mineral resources – chromite, nickel, copper, zinc, and platinum – all essential in the production of stainless steel, electric vehicles and renewable energy products.



As reported to *The Land Economist*:

"The Ring of Fire is one of the most promising regions for mineral deposits in Canada. It has the potential to play an important role in developing innovative technologies for high-growth sectors such as batteries, electric vehicles and cleantech. Development of the region will also bring multigenerational opportunities to northern and Indigenous communities."

**George Pirie, Minister
Ontario Ministry of Mines**

When the Ring of Fire ignites will its mineral wealth fly high, drone on, or hit the road?

In the [previous issue of *The Land Economist*](#), we took a deep dive into the Ring of Fire (metaphorically, of course), Ontario North's potential source of billions of dollars in mineral wealth. Potential is the operative word here because the Ring of Fire is in a remote location currently (and for the foreseeable future) with no effective means of transport to and from the area.

In that story, we quoted James Franklin, a former chief geologist with the Geological Survey of Canada involved in the initial Ring of Fire discoveries, who said, "... no one's worked out how we're going to get this stuff out of there... It's not clear just how much it will cost to exact resources."

So, in our previous story, we took an extensive look at one possible solution to the Ring of Fire supply chain conundrum: airships. In this issue, we're further exploring the airship solution as well as others including drones and the most likely, yet most expensive and complex solution: roads.

We'll also visit what will undoubtedly be the first – but definitely not the last – destination for the Ring of Fire's mineral wealth: The City of Thunder Bay.

Here we go ...

THE CASE FOR AIRSHIPS?

Going down, down, down and the flames are getting higher – so let's get above it all

The main hurdle to the economic development of the Ring of Fire's mineral wealth is transportation access to that remote and geographically challenging region. Road access seems to be the favoured transportation option – but road construction is extraordinarily expensive and will take years to develop.

In the previous issue of *The Land Economist*, we made the case for

an alternate approach – airships – that featured Dr. Barry Prentice, a strong airship advocate, who postulates that because airships are pretty much immune to weather and can stay aloft for a lot longer than drones, they are the best choice not only for northern Canadian resources transport but also for access to Indigenous Communities and even for military uses.

In a recent update to our interview with Dr. Prentice, he offered these additional points about the suitability of airships in northern Canada:

For transport in the north:

Airships are heavy-lifters – up to 30 tonnes -- ideal for mining and delivery applications in remote areas. They are not efficient as a small-scale cargo vehicle. Drones are better for that. A combination of airships and drones, in various configurations for specific applications, would work well.

Airships would promote the expansion of mining operations and economic development in remote areas, like much of Northern Canada. But mining companies are not interested in investing in an airship solution for the transportation of minerals, even though the cost of building roads for trucking supplies in an ore out is often cost-prohibitive.

“We dig rocks out of the ground and know nothing about flying things through the air.”
-Mining Executive

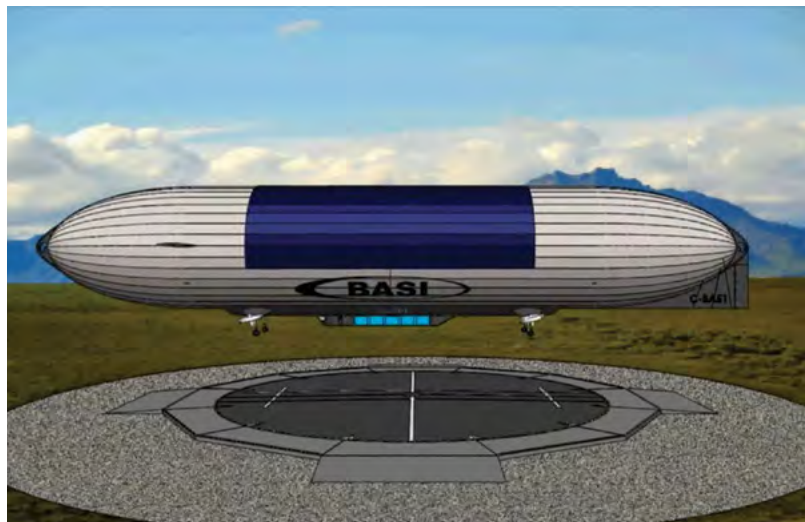
The Ring of Fire has been sitting idle for 17 years. They could already have been mining there for a decade if airships were available.

Isolated Northern communities would certainly benefit from low-emission cargo airships able to operate regardless of ground conditions. Freight by water or ice-road would no longer be ‘weathered out’. Airships also have the capacity to move building materials, fuel, vehicles, groceries, motors and boats to communities in need.

There are a number of dedicated airship companies that would like to serve the North but the federal government needs a clear policy statement about airships that codifies their support for airship use in the North.



A Flying Whales diagram showcases a concept airship.



Europe has embraced airships; France has invested in airships; the United States has regulations in place for small airships and hangars available in existing WWII-era airship manufacturing facilities – but Canada lags. The airship industry in Canada needs government help.

Canada used to do big things – the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Avro Arrow and so on – but nothing much in the last 50 years. It's not often you get to witness the birth of an industry and that usually happens every 50 years or so: Steam power, rail, the telegraph, the internal combustion engine, the interstate highway system in the US, aviation—the jet age, the container industry. By leading the airship revolution, Canada can help define the next 50 years of zero-emission, low-cost transport that opens up our country just as rail and road have done through the past two centuries.

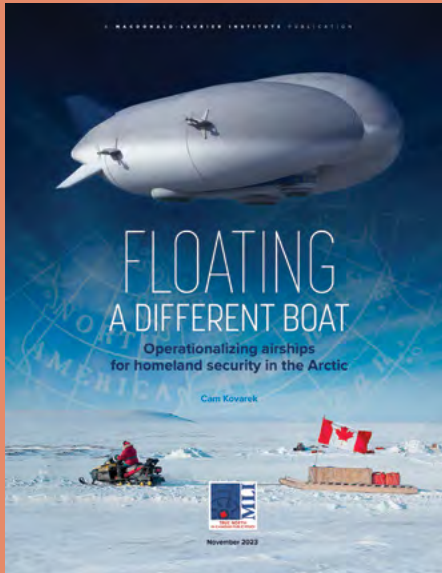
We have a treasure chest of mines in the North that we can develop and we have communities living in third-world conditions. It's all about transportation, so this is a technology whose time has come.

For military use:

Airships are a good option as a military surveillance platform in the North. Ice, water, subzero temperatures have no effect on them. They have sufficient fuel to stay aloft for a week or two.

AND SPEAKING OF MILITARY USE FOR AIRSHIPS ...

Cam Kovarek is a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy. As a graduate student at the University of Alaska, specializing in studies on Arctic Security and Disaster Management, Cam authored the paper [Floating a Different Boat – Operationalizing airships for homeland security in the Arctic](#) (November 2023), published in Canada by [the MacDonald-Laurier Institute](#) (a national public policy think tank).



Airships offer innovative solution for Arctic security

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute (MLI)
November 27, 2023

In the last decade, Arctic Sea routes have become increasingly attractive for maritime shipping and, consequently, more contested.

In [Floating a different boat: operationalizing airships for homeland security in the Arctic](#), Cam Kovarek argues for the adoption of lighter than air (LTA) platforms by the United States and allies to improve their defensive posture in the Arctic.

“The inherent capabilities (of airships) coupled with technological advances of the last half century make airships a viable solution (to countering maritime threats),” notes Kovarek.

For Kovarek, many potential applications exist for airship employment by the US Coast Guard and other relevant organizations: by NORAD to support its maritime surveillance missions, by NATO to

support air policing missions, as well as in support of assured logistics to current and future military installations.

Disaster response organizations could also benefit, improving emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations in the Arctic, addressing food insecurity, medical access, insufficient housing, and other material shortages related to human security.

Kovarek concludes that LTA platforms have “immediate application toward persistent surveillance and stand to drastically increase maritime domain awareness around Alaskan (and Canadian) littoral waters.”

“Should the United States military decide to operationalize airships, they may yet outmaneuver their strategic competitors with one slow, steady, and lighter-than-air solution.”

Here are some highlights from Cam’s paper:

- Blimp, dirigible, aerostat, and zeppelin are variations of airships comprising the family of systems called ‘lighter than air’ (LTA) platforms.
- Airships today are more versatile than their historical counterparts:
 - They can be piloted by a crew or operated unmanned by remote direction.
 - They are inherently safe.
 - They can lift and transport weight much more efficiently than airplanes or helicopters.
 - They are capable of vertical take-off so do not require long runways and can take-off or land on nearly any surface, including ice, snow and water.
 - They are now driven by alternative power sources making them cheaper and ‘greener’.
- Airships could be ready for a comeback in the commercial and military sectors as a viable solution for many situations – and especially as a means of addressing North American Arctic security.
- Arctic defence faces the considerable challenges of geography, climate and weather that undermine the reliability of logistics, infrastructure and communications.
- Warming temperatures seasonally destabilize Arctic terrain, render overland travel hazardous.
- The inconsistent supply of food, medical supplies, and building materials further undermines the stability of the High North.
- The US and Canada are hindered by a dearth of icebreakers

and deepwater port facilities in the Arctic – limiting access for military and economic purposes.

- Versatile, capable airships (could be the answer):
 - They can maneuver beyond the range of small-arms fire while incapacitating a hostile vessel.
 - They can land on water in up to eight-foot seas and so can deploy small boats for law enforcement purposes.
 - They are physically stable even in dangerous weather conditions, can maneuver at low speeds and hover to minimize risk during migrant interdiction or search and rescue missions.
 - They can be used as reconnaissance platforms to assess environmental disasters such as oil spills.
 - They can expand intelligence collection when outfitted with equipment to detect, track, monitor and report against adversary activity.
 - And they are much more affordable than operating conventional aircraft.

When I spoke with Cam, she expanded on her case for airship use in the North:

In addition to their use for military/surveillance purposes, and depending on their design, airships are well-suited to various logging, mining and construction applications.

Airships could also support the energy sector by flying in infrastructure material.

You ask about drones as an alternative or adjunct to airships. I think they would be a great addition to airships. Why not launch drones or smaller, remotely-operated airships from a ‘mother ship’ to expand the range of surveillance – kind of a marsupial situation?

ONE MINING COMPANY IS AIRING IT OUT (AND BACK)

Canadian-owned **Torngat Metals** is developing a rare earths mine (**Neodymium**, **Praseodymium**, **Dysprosium** and **Terbium** – essential for the production of electric vehicles, wind energy, robotics and drones) at its property in Nunavik, on the Quebec-Labrador border.

The mine site is over 300 kilometres from the closest railway line, through rough terrain, river crossings, **muskeg** and permafrost soils.

As an alternative to building a road to the proposed mine site, Torngat has committed to using airships to fly ore 240 kilometres south to Schefferville for transshipment to rail and water and on to Bécancour, a burgeoning centre for metals processing.

On return trips from the Schefferville transshipment point, the Torngat Metals airships would also have the capacity to transport goods to remote communities before returning to the mine – a complementary use that would lower freight costs to the serviced communities.

It is estimated Torngat will need at least six 30-ton lift airships to serve their projected 200,000 tons of concentrate per year.



Torngat map of transport system and mineral deposit in Quebec landscape.



LockheedMartin P-791 AMIRAAZAM16, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

The rare earths will be mined in a totally environmentally sustainable manner using wind power as much as possible and using the **Lockheed Martin hybrid airships** to transport the rare earth concentrate.

THE CASE FOR DRONES?

On the updraft – but weight!

From weddings to war: Drones, also known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are everywhere, these days. In fact, they've become indispensable tools in many commercial sectors from military and law enforcement applications to mapping and surveying.

It is forecast that drone business will generate \$500 billion in revenue by 2030.

So ... why are they not considered a prime transportation option for mining operations in the Ring of Fire and remote communities across Ontario North?

That's a heavy question – as in, currently available drones do not have the heavy lift capacity to meet the needs of mining operations.

Until drones can lift and carry much heavier payloads, for extended periods of time, over much longer distances, they can't be considered a viable transportation option for mining applications, generally, and Ring of Fire operations, specifically.

That said, smaller drones capable of lifting lighter payloads over shorter distances can be useful delivery mechanisms for some remote communities (Your Amazon parcel has arrived!?!). In fact, lighter lift cargo drones are currently being used in the North.

Different drones may travel at different heights and distances. Close-range drones can often go up to three miles and are generally utilized by amateurs. Close-range unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have a range of about 30 miles. Short-range drones, which can go up to 90 miles, are mostly employed for espionage and intelligence gathering. Mid-range unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have a 400-mile range and could be utilized for intelligence gathering, scientific studies, and meteorological research. The longest-range drones are known as "endurance" UAVs and they may travel over 400 miles and up to 3,000 feet in the air.

DRONES ARE HIGHLY INDUSTRIOUS

Drones have become an indispensable tool for many industries and sectors:

Agriculture

Used for spraying fertilizer, pesticides or herbicides. Can also be equipped with technology to conduct field surveys, monitor livestock, crops and water levels.

Construction/Engineering

Used for surveying and mapping, to inspect/improve infrastructure, monitor building site progress, provide surveillance and inspections, and improve the safety of construction sites.

Disaster Response

Used to provide real time intelligence on areas hit by natural disasters and to bring communications, urgent supplies of food, fuel, water, medicine, and even electricity to affected areas.

Forestry

Used to scan forests and forest floors for harvest planning, drop

seeds, fertilizers and nutrients to regenerate burnt-over and harvested areas, for forest fire detection and monitoring via thermal/infrared scanning, to monitor wetlands draining and erosion, and to track wildlife populations.

Infrastructure Inspections

Used for maintenance inspections on bridges, power lines, oil and gas infrastructure, nuclear plants, wind and solar farms.

Insurance

Used to map and survey insured areas, to assess and document damage, to conduct pre-loss risk assessments.

Professional Photography

Used to take aerial photos and videos of landscapes, cityscapes and ... weddings.

Real Estate

Drones add marketing pizzazz by delivering high-quality aerial, external and internal visuals of properties.

Resources Industry

Used for oil and gas exploration and production and to inspect oil and gas pipelines.

Road and Highway Construction

Used to provide geographic information, accurate land surveys, topographic and [orthomosaic maps](#).

Search and Rescue

Used for locating missing persons, monitoring hazardous environments, providing real-time situational awareness to emergency personnel.



GRIF Aviation 300 - Extra large drone that can carry 500 lbs. Designed with an 8-propeller, the Griff Aviation 300 is the heaviest lift drone that can carry a payload weight of approximately 500 pounds (226 kg) and sustain 31 minutes of flight time. The modular design enables rapid swapping of payloads and batteries in seconds.

Shipping and Delivery

This is the fastest-growing application for drones. For remote communities they can be vital aerial lifelines for the delivery of medical supplies, food, construction and other essential supplies.



[Jouav Heavy Lift Drone](#)

Telecommunications

Used to inspect towers and power lines, to conduct signal strength/coverage testing. Can also be equipped as temporary cell towers or to provide internet access in remote areas.

Weather Forecasting

Used as mobile weather stations, for storm tracking and forecasting hurricanes and tornadoes.

Mining and Drones

And that brings us to the mining industry where drone use is flying ever higher. [A 2022 survey](#) found that 65 per cent of mining operations had invested in drone technology, up from 44 per cent in 2018.

Drones are currently used in the mining industry for exploration, surveying, route logistics and planning, asset inspection, terrain mapping, stockpile estimation, security and surveillance, and improving operational efficiency and safety.

What they are not used for is heavy-lifting ore from mine sites to transshipment destinations.

The good news for mining companies (and drone manufacturers): Drones capable of lifting heavier payloads over longer distances are apparently just around the technological corner.

While meandering across the infinity that is the internet, I came across this blurb for what is purported to be the heaviest lift drone (not) currently available. It's being tested so maybe soon ...



[Sabrewing Aircraft Company's RH-1-A "Rhaegal" Prototype](#)

In tests, the [Sabrewing Aircraft Company's](#) RH-1-A "Rhaegal" prototype lifted a record-breaking 374 kg payload during a vertical take-off. The company says the drone can carry a weight of up to 2000 kg during a conventional take-off from a runway.

The Rhaegal aircraft uses a turbo-electric drivetrain using 50% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and turns an electric generator producing nearly 1 megawatt of electric energy, which then powers electric motors in each of the four ducted fans. The company expects the engine to use Hydrogen as fuel in a few years.

The not-so-good news for mining companies wanting to use drones as heavy lift cargo haulers: Some experts say military-type drones are the class that is required to lift those very heavy payloads effectively over long distances – and drones in that class are currently cost prohibitive.



Jouav Heavy Lift Drone

Military heavy lift drones have improved military capabilities around the world in many ways; they are used for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and transporting materials such as explosives and heavy weapons. They can also deliver equipment to areas that are too dangerous for manned flight, such as resupply in frontline areas, and casualty evacuation.

Here's what the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) reported to *The Land Economist* about the status of regulations governing drones as their capabilities expand – heavier loads over longer distances, for example – making them more suitable as cargo and delivery systems for mining operations and remote communities in northern Canada:

The federal government, through Transport Canada, is responsible for the legislation and regulation of drone and other advanced air mobility technologies.

MTO continues to monitor developments in the sector as Transport Canada continues to develop regulations for this technology and collaborates with international certification bodies, to identify opportunities to safely test, pilot, and operate drone technologies.

Cargo drones have already been tested in Ontario and are currently being deployed to transport goods to several First Nation communities.

So ... while heavy lift drones for hauling ore out of the Ring of Fire may be just down the road, we aren't there yet.

And speaking of roads ...

THE CASE FOR ROADS?

Fire starter? Maybe – but when?

Constructing all-season, multi-use roads connecting the Ring of Fire mining development area and two First Nations communities to the Ontario highway network and, by extension, to manufacturing centres in the south, is a work in 'progress' – long, drawn out 'progress'.

Several years of Environmental Assessment (EA) work have already been done but First Nations representatives at the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) convention this March reported that three more years of comprehensive EA activity lies ahead of them. And after that, the need for project design and engineering – leading to a probable (and optimistic) construction start in 2029.

Then there's this: A group of First Nations has formed the First Nations Land Defence Alliance to defend against resource extraction in their territories and the construction of roads that could damage the lands and culture of First Nations in the Ring of Fire region. The Ontario government and the Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations, who support Ring of Fire development, continue to negotiate with the dissenting First Nations in attempt to resolve their concerns. 'Progress' on this front also appears to be slow.

The Ontario Ministry of Mines is responsible for overseeing Ontario's mineral sector, providing geoscience information and supporting sustainable development in the Ring of Fire.

Here's how the Ministry of Mines responded to *The Land Economist* on behalf of Minister George Pirie regarding proposed road construction and Indigenous involvement in Ring of Fire development:

The Ring of Fire is one of the most promising regions for mineral deposits in Canada. It has the potential to play an important role in developing innovative technologies for high-growth sectors such as batteries, electric vehicles and cleantech. Development of the region will also bring multigenerational opportunities to northern and Indigenous communities.

It is important to note that Ontario's mining sector has one of the highest proportions of Indigenous workers of all industries in the province and through targeted investments in the industry, the government is creating more careers in northern and Indigenous communities.

If approved, all-season, dependable road access would increase economic development opportunities for First Nations, improve access to health care services and bring the cost of living down by connecting these communities to the provincial highway network.

Ontario continues to support Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations as they continue to move forward with preliminary engineering design for three road projects and are nearing release of their draft Environmental/Impact Assessment studies for the Marten Falls Community Access Road and Webequie Supply Road. They are also making progress on the Environmental Assessment for the Northern Road Link.

These assessments will support the shared understanding of not only the benefits and opportunities all-season roads would bring to the area, but the challenges and impacts as well, so we can work together to manage them properly.

Ontario also supports Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations as they do the studies, engage and consult with their own communities and neighbouring First Nations, and make informed decisions on how best to move forward in their traditional lands.

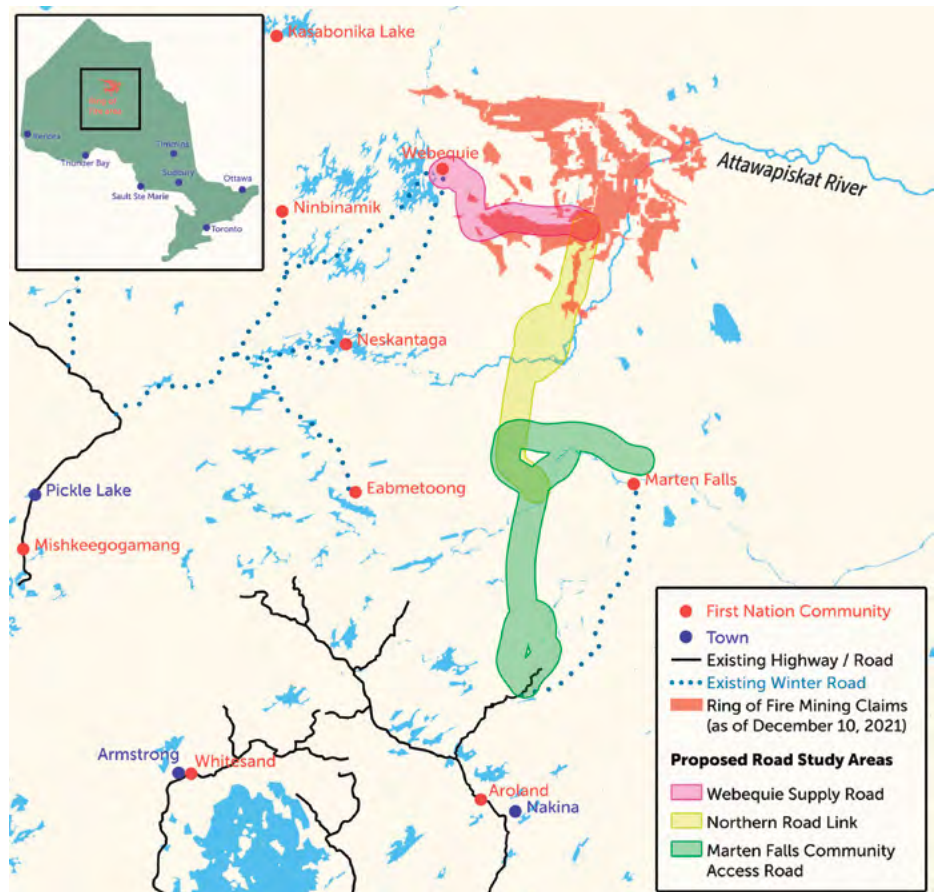
The province is committed to meeting its Duty to Consult, and to working with First Nation communities, supporting them to reach their goals, including all-season access to their communities and the Ring of Fire.

Ontario continues its outreach in efforts to consult on potential impacts, including cumulative impacts, on Aboriginal and treaty rights across all three proposed road projects, resulting from concerns heard about multiple individual Environmental Assessments proceeding concurrently.

At the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) convention this past year, Minister Pirie signed a Community Development Agreement with Chief Bruce of Marten Falls First Nation and Chief Cornelius of Webequie First Nation. This agreement is the next major step in building the corridor to prosperity, connecting the communities to the highway network and the mining opportunities in the Ring of Fire.

The agreement will support shovel-ready infrastructure projects and will be based on the individual needs of each community. Projects like new health and training facilities that will create more jobs, and recreation facilities and grocery stores that improve the well-being of communities are all eligible for funding and will help prepare communities for roads and mineral development in the region.

Any proposed development will be subject to Ontario's world-class environmental standards and regulatory requirements.



The Ontario government is currently pursuing plans for three roads leading to the Ring of Fire. The billion-dollar-plus project involves three all-season segments — the Northern Road Link, which depending on its configuration could be between 117 kilometres and 164 kilometres in length; the Marten Falls First Nation Community Access Road, which would provide direct access to the Ring of Fire in the James Bay lowlands; and the Webequie Supply Road.

[Map: Shawn Parkinson / The Narwhal](#)

STUCK IN THE MUD?

**Globe and Mail says Ring of Fire must be ignited
END THE RUNAROUND ON THE RING OF FIRE**

Excerpts from a Globe and Mail editorial, January 25, 2024

More than 16 years have passed since a small mining company discovered a rich nickel deposit in a remote part of northern Ontario and christened the region with a name that has stuck: the Ring of Fire.

Successive governments and companies have touted the potential of the region, entranced by [optimistic estimates](#) of tens of billions of dollars of minerals – including those critical to electric vehicle battery production – buried in the wetlands.

The promise of prosperity for Ontario, and much-needed economic benefits to the First Nations who live in the Ring of Fire area, remains on the distant horizon.

While the First Nations continue to live in unacceptable circumstances, the gulf between the federal and provincial governments over potential development has only grown.

A decade ago, an American mining company had spent hundreds of millions of dollars trying to develop the Ring of Fire before it bailed out and complained that plans for a required road and rail moved at a snails' pace. Now, the [biggest proposed project](#) is owned by Australia's Wyloo. But the same snail's pace of reviews is unchanged. Two First Nations [are working](#) on two years-long reviews of potential roads and Ottawa [is conducting](#) a regional environment assessment.

There is still not a single assessment for mining in the Ring of Fire, and such a process can also take years. Wyloo understandably is waiting for decisions on roads before launching an application.

It is not good for industry, and it isn't fair to the First Nations whose standard of living lies in the balance, to let this continue to drag out. Both levels of government need to agree to a streamlined assessment process.

THE ROAD (INCREASINGLY) LESS TRAVELLED

Winter roads are getting iffy-er

For many years, winter roads have been slashed through bush and plowed across frozen muskeg, lakes, rivers and creeks to temporarily connect remote regions and communities to food, fuel, construction and other materials during the few weeks each year when they are open.

In Northern Ontario and Manitoba, over 5,000 kilometres of winter roads are built each year – that's equivalent to building a road from Montreal to Vancouver each winter.

But climate change leading to increasingly milder conditions, later freeze-ups and earlier thaws, could soon sink winter roads.

Then what?

At an estimated cost of \$3 million per kilometre, constructing permanent gravel roads to serve Northern Ontario/Manitoba communities would cost upwards of \$10 billion and take many years to complete.

So where does that highly improbable road deliver us? Right back to airships and drones.

How else do you deal with the fact that in 70 per cent of Canada's landmass, there are no roads and no hope of getting roads?

Barry Prentice



Thunder Bay

THE CASE FOR THUNDER BAY

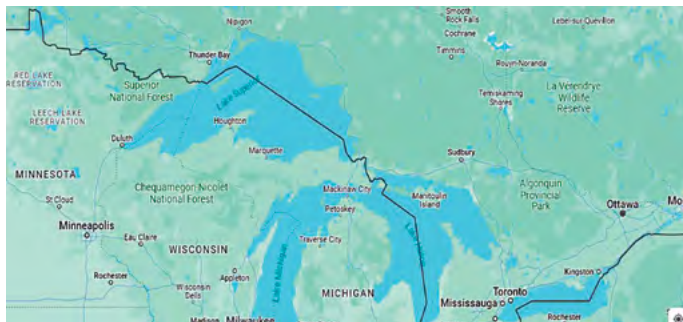
Ignition?

The city of Thunder Bay, Northwestern Ontario's largest urban hub, boasts a diversified economy, and strong air, road, rail and water transportation links. With these attributes, the city should have strong prospects for growth – but it has stagnated in recent years.

Will its proximity to the Ring of Fire and the other resource wealth of Northwestern Ontario re-ignite Thunder Bay?

When those Northern Ontario miners finally get busy and chromite, nickel, copper, zinc, and platinum start roaring out of the Ring of Fire by whatever transportation method, it's a solid bet that most of those precious mineral resources will be headed for the City of Thunder Bay – and for good reasons both geographically and historically.

Thunder Bay is located on the north shore of Lake Superior, at the centre of Canada, 50km from the Minnesota border and 400km east of Winnipeg, Manitoba, on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe (a group of culturally related First Nations concentrated around the Great Lakes).



Thunder Bay location: Source: Google Maps -Map data © 2024 Google Canada

With a population of approximately 114,000 (according to the 2023 Canadian Census), Thunder Bay is the largest community in Northwestern Ontario and the hub for the region.

And, of course, because of its location at the centre of Canada and extensive supply chain infrastructure, Thunder Bay is a prime provider of air, rail, sea and road access to markets across North America and around the world



Port Arthur Harbor about 1895.

The City of Thunder Bay was formed by the merger of Port Arthur, Fort William and the townships of Neebing and McIntyr in 1970.

THUNDER BAY – A TIMELINE

17th Century

European contact begins as French fur traders push into the north and west.

1803

The North West Company builds Fort William on the shores of the Kaministiquia River, the first permanent European settlement on Thunder Bay -- a crucial link between east and west and a base for fur trader forays into the North.

1821

The North West Company amalgamates with the Hudson's Bay Company as the fur trade begins to slow and mining for copper and other natural resources begins.

1850

First Nations concerns about mining activity on Indigenous territory result in the signing of the Robinson-Superior Treaty and the establishment of the Fort William Reserve that exists to this day adjacent to the city of Thunder Bay.

1870s

The forest products industry expands.

1875

The Canadian Pacific Railway arrives, increasing the flow of grain from west to east.

1890-1920s

The area economy booms.

1909-17

Canadian Car and Foundry (Can Car) begins manufacturing boxcars; switches to building minesweepers during WWI. Shipbuilding declines precipitously after the war.

1924

Great Lakes Paper Company establishes pulp mill. Grows to employ 4,000 in Northern Ontario.

1930s

Local economy cools.

1937

Manufacturing resumes when the Can Car plant re-opens to build British fighter planes. Now run by [Alstom](#), the plant has remained a mainstay of the post-war economy, producing forestry equipment and railcars, passenger trains and equipment for urban transit systems, such as the Toronto Transit Commission and GO Transit.

1960

Trans-Canada highway completed as the only east-west route through the area – all Canadian east-west road traffic must still pass through Thunder Bay.

1970s

Thunder Bay's economy takes a hit. Great Lakes grain shipping declines as transport moves to Pacific Coast ports. Shipping of other goods and railway traffic also diminish as highway trucking becomes the dominant transportation option.

TODAY: REBOUND

Because of its fortuitous geographic placement, Thunder Bay has long been the go-to location for moving people and goods across North America – and still is, with better prospects ahead.

As well, in recent years, the city has diversified to a knowledge economy in a variety of sectors including mining, aviation, health sciences, education and advanced manufacturing. It is also the Northwestern Ontario regional services centre for most provincial departments



During the First World War, the Canadian Car and Foundry plant switched to building minesweepers, with its ships sailing off to France where they cleaned up the English Channel and nearby waterways.
CITY OF THUNDER BAY ARCHIVE



Ken Boshcoff is the current mayor of Thunder Bay and previously served as mayor from 1997 to 2003. He also served as a member of parliament for Thunder Bay-Rainy River from 2004 to 2008. He has had careers as an insurance executive, a Federal Government District Planner for Indian and Northern Affairs and a consultant in Business Development and Government Navigation.

THE MAYOR SPEAKS ...

Thunder Bay Mayor Ken Boshcoff is optimistic about the city's future. In his [annual state of the city address](#) last March, Boshcoff said, "I truly believe Thunder Bay and our entire region are in a resurgence. Mining is real, population growth and new citizens are real, the economic opportunities are real."

"We are poised to become a mining powerhouse, positioned to become a rising force in the mining industry. "Figuratively and literally, all roads lead to Thunder Bay."

In a recent question and answer interview with The Land Economist, the mayor had this to say about issues surrounding the Ring of Fire and its potential impact on Thunder Bay:

Edited for clarity and length.

The Land Economist: Why is Thunder Bay the ideal nexus/transshipment point for material coming out of the Ring of Fire?

Mayor Boshcoff: The geographical nexus of water (Thunder Bay is connected through the St. Lawrence Seaway System to the Atlantic Ocean) means transshipment by seafaring vessels connects us directly to the rest of the world. This will save (mineral) producers multi-millions and they are well aware of this factor.

The Land Economist: What have you done and what do you have planned to better position Thunder Bay for this role?

Mayor Boshcoff: Our planners, especially our Economic Development officers have been outlining the multitude of advantages as a nexus for air sea and land connectivity.

I am truly confident our meetings and communications are thoroughly professional and indeed quite convincing as the facts only need to be presented to confirm the advantages.

(And, of course) as needed I make myself available to assist with direct meetings.

The Land Economist: Are you in favour of the road building plans for accessing the Ring of Fire?

Mayor Boshcoff: This will be the decision of the First Nations. I will support the Chiefs in their decisions.

The Land Economist: What effects – positive and negative – do you think the new road(s) will have on First Nations communities and culture?

Mayor Boshcoff: Having worked in the upper North as a professional environmental planner I do believe the communities know what impacts are ahead for them-both positive and negative.

The Land Economist: How will providing better access to and egress from the Ring of Fire aid in Thunder Bay's development?

Mayor Boshcoff: In this sea change that is happening before our eyes. I am optimistic that the Northern communities will choose well. The expression "When the tide rises, all ships sail higher" confirms there are lots of benefits for many communities. My view is that their success means we will all prosper in some way.

The Land Economist: It would seem that all current planning regarding Ring of Fire access involves ground transportation. In our most recent story about the Ring of Fire we focused on the potential for, and reasons why, airships might be a viable alternative. Others have mentioned that drones might work. Is Thunder Bay in favour of a roads-only solution? Have you looked at the alternatives?

Mayor Boshcoff: My understanding is that that with this major transmogrification several sets of transporting raw materials can be operated -- not necessarily exclusivity to single form of transportation. So, I believe we will indeed see such solutions as airships.



The Port of Thunder Bay.

THUNDER BAY – A CRITICAL SUPPLY CHAIN LINK FROM THE RING OF FIRE TO THE WORLD

Air Travel – Thunder Bay International Airport offers flights across Canada as well as to communities across Northwestern Ontario and communities in far Northern Ontario. In 2022, Thunder Bay International Airport averaged between 7,000 and 9,000 aircraft movements per month.

Water Travel – The Port of Thunder Bay is the prime shipment hub between Western Canada and Europe, handling nine million tonnes of cargo annually, including grain, steel and forest products. It is the Western Canada terminus of the St. Lawrence Seaway System, the

largest inland waterway in the world and the main marine highway between the Atlantic Ocean and the centre of North America.

Rail Travel – Thunder Bay has both Canadian National and Canadian Pacific freight rail lines carrying goods to major markets in Canada and the United States.

Road Travel – Thunder Bay is directly connected to the Trans-Canada Highway which spans Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific and to Highway 61, a direct connection to the USA via Minnesota.

SUPPORT FOR THE THUNDER BAY/ RING OF FIRE CONNECTION

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation is responsible for transport infrastructure in the province. When we asked the Ministry if the government has any plans to better position Thunder Bay for its role in the transshipment of minerals and goods to and from the Ring of Fire, we received this response on behalf of Prabmeet Sarkaria, Ontario Minister of Transportation:

As part of Connecting the North: a draft transportation plan for Northern Ontario, we identified over 67 actions to improve Northern Ontario's transportation system, including the critical role of the highway network in supporting goods movement and broader economic development.

Thunder Bay plays a critical role in the North and work is underway to help improve transportation options in the region, including the four laning of Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon.

To date, more than 50 percent of the 106 km corridor has been four-laned. Construction on two additional projects is currently underway. Once completed, the total length of four lane highway will be nearly 80 km. Another three projects are currently in the design phase which will support the expansion of the entire corridor.

Dr. Barry Prentice is, of course, an avowed airship advocate, viewing them as perhaps the most appropriate transport solution for the Ring of Fire and, more broadly, Canada North. He also says Thunder Bay could have a multifaceted role in an airships-supported northern supply chain system:

Thunder Bay is the largest city on the Shield and an existing multimodal facility – air, ships, rail, roads – all it needs to complete the picture is airship facilities.

In fact, it is the most logical place to manufacture airships. Components could effectively be brought in by water or rail and assembled in the city.

The completed airships could be used locally and sent to other parts of Canada and the world.

If Thunder Bay is the first place to build hangers, it will get the airships industry.

Dr. Barry Prentice

WHERE THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO STANDS

When we asked the Ontario Ministry of Mines about the government's plans for mine and infrastructure development within the Ring of Fire and, more generally, for mining development in Ontario North, **we received this response on behalf of Mines Minister George Pirie:**

The Ring of Fire is a generational critical minerals opportunity, and Ontario is committed to unlocking the region's mineral wealth to create opportunities for employment, economic development, and to share benefits with Indigenous partners.

The government has committed \$1 billion to support critical infrastructure in the Ring of Fire area, which includes developing the all-season road network, investing in high-speed internet, road upgrades and community supports.

Developing the resources in the Ring of Fire region is important to building an integrated supply chain from mining to manufacturing of electric vehicles and other innovative technologies in Ontario. However, there are 20 critical mineral projects that make Ontario a great place to invest in the minerals we need for the technologies of tomorrow, including electric vehicles.

Doug Ford is fired up

Premier Doug Ford is emphatic: Ontario is committed to the development of mining in the James Bay lowlands – and especially in the Ring of Fire

“Global investment is watching and we need to move forward with the Ring of Fire.”

“We’re building the Ring of Fire ... The world is watching, and we need to perform.”

“If I have to hop on a bulldozer myself ... we’re going to start building roads to the Ring of Fire.”

Doug Ford

- [Avalon Advanced Materials](#) plans to convert a former Abitibi Pulp and Paper Mill site in Thunder Bay to a lithium processing plant. [Read Article](#)
- [Green Technology Metals](#) is doing a feasibility study to create two Lithium mines and a Thunder Bay refinery. [Read Article](#)
- [Rock Tech Lithium](#) and [BMI Group](#) plan to convert a former paper mill to a lithium refining plant in Red Rock Ontario. [Read Article](#)
- [Frontier Lithium](#) is proposing to develop an open-pit and underground mine, with a total mine life of 16 years on Crown Land north of Red Lake Ontario. [Read Article](#)
- The company has also received \$2 million in grant funding from the Ontario government for lithium processing research. [Read Article](#)

A critical global economic race Canada must win

[According to a recent Globe and Mail opinion article](#), Canada is in a global race to secure critical minerals essential to power the next generation of civilian and military technology and to electrify the future – and we are losing.

The article is authored by Canadian military members Lieutenant-Colonel (Hon) George Salamis and Navy Lieutenant Commander Mike St-Pierre who write:

... we have witnessed rampant vulnerabilities in global supply chains, made worse by (Canada's) reliance on foreign sources – particularly raw materials and critical minerals ...

We must recognize the power of our resource-driven economy as a key pillar to Canada's future prosperity, and security for itself and key allies.

We have the potential for robust self-reliance to reduce our dependency on foreign sources ...

Although Salamis and St-Pierre do not reference specific Canadian minerals/metals discoveries or developments, it is clear the Ring of Fire could be essential to winning the resource -driven economic war the authors describe. ➤

AND IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

A critical element powers up

Lithium is in high demand for EV batteries, mobile devices, laptops, solar power storage and other uses but it is not thought to be abundant in the Ring of Fire. It is, however, currently being mined in various Northern Ontario locations with more mines and lithium refining plants planned for the near future that could further fuel the resurgence of Thunder Bay and other northern communities.

Here are some recent developments in Northern Ontario lithium production:



Michael O'Dwyer has had careers as a writer and editor – newspapers, magazines, radio, television, websites, marketing/advertising – and as a senior communications practitioner/manager/partner in both government and industry. His film/TV productions have won numerous international awards and have been shown on all major Canadian networks and on television and in theatres around the world.

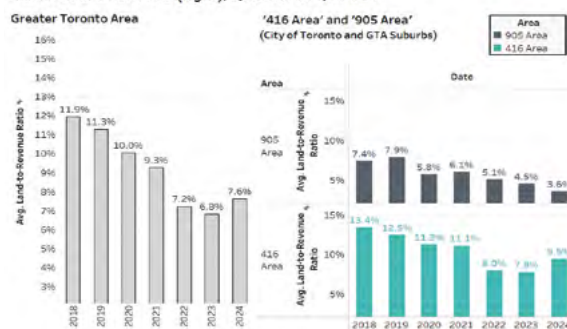
Q3-2024 GTA High-Rise Land Insights Report

Reprinted Courtesy of Ben Myers, Bullpen Consulting

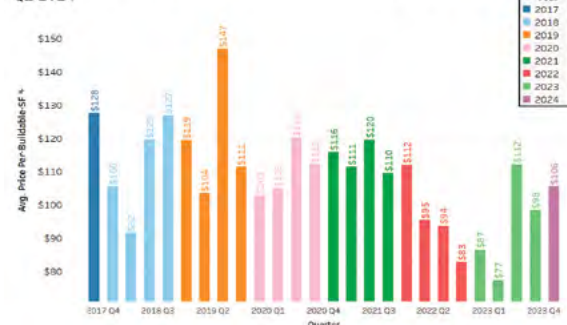
Report Highlights

- GTA Land Prices Up 22% Annually:** In Q1-2024, the average estimated land price in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) was \$106 per-buildable-sf (pbsf), representing a 22% increase compared to Q1-2023, where the price was \$87 pbsf. This increase is partially attributable to a smaller average property size in the first quarter.
- Divergence Between 416 and 905 Areas:** In Q1-2024, the average land price in the '416 Area' (City of Toronto) was \$135 pbsf, which is more than three times higher than the '905 Area' (GTA suburbs), where the price was \$42 pbsf.
- Rising Land-to-Revenue Ratio:** The overall land-to-revenue ratio (LRR) in the GTA increased to 7.6% in Q1-2024 from 6.8% in 2023 overall. The LRR had trended downward over the past five years from a high of 11.9% in 2018. Part of the reason for the increase is Bullpen's conservative revenue estimates in Q1-2024 (based on soft new condo sales activity).
- Decreasing Property Size and Value:** Properties transacted in the first three months of 2024 averaged 0.83 acres in size, nearly half the long-run average of 1.62 acres. This reduction in property size contributed to a lower average sale price of \$17.1 million in Q1-2024, compared to the long-run average of \$24.7 million. The market uncertainty and higher carrying costs have led developers to shy away from larger, multi-phased projects.
- Market Correction and Developer Hesitation:** Developers are increasingly hesitant to launch new projects due to market uncertainty and a lack of confidence in reaching their pre-construction sales targets. There were several major developers closing on high-density lands in the first quarter, but many of those were land assemblies started during more favourable market conditions that have holding income. Lastly, a couple of the major land sales in Q1-2024 are sites earmarked as future rental apartments.

Average Estimated Land-to-Revenue Ratio by Year in the GTA (left) and the 416 Area and 905 Area (right), Q1-2018 to Q1-2024



Average High-Density Land Price Per-Buildable-SF by Year, GTA, Q4-2017 to Q1-2024



High-Density Land Prices Per-Buildable-SF, 416 Area versus 905 Area (City versus Suburban), Q1-2019 to Q1-2024



There is a comprehensive Quarter 1 GTA High Rise Land Rise Report with detailed data plus additional graphs accessible through the link below.

Click the image for the Report



Report Sponsor



The Land Insights Reports are Prepared by Bullpen and Batory



Welcome New Members

Evan Acs
MA, MSc, RPP, MCIP, PLE
Development Expeditor
City of St Catharines
eacs@stcatharines.ca

Antony Lorius
RPP, CMC, MRICS, PLE
Associate
Dillon Consulting Limited
alorius@dillon.ca

Peter Simcisko
BA (Hons.), MBE, PLE
Managing Partner
Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.
simcisko@watsonecon.ca

Adam Fischer
BA, MA, PLE
Manager
Watson & Associates Economists Ltd
adam.fischer@watsonecon.ca

Jack Neal
MPIA, PLE, LEED GA
Senior Urban Planner
Arcadis
jack.a.neal.64@gmail.com

Mark Steffler
MAES, EcD, BBA, PLE
Corporate Strategic Lead, Burlington
Lands Partnership
City Of Burlington
mark.steffler@burlington.ca

Margot Hayward
PLE
Senior Analyst
NBLC
margot@nbcl.com

Alexander Pitt
AACI, P.App., PLE
Senior Consultant
Cushman & Wakefield
alex.pitt@cushwake.com

Michael Sullivan
RPP, MCIP, PLE
President | Founder
LandPro Planning Solutions Inc.
mike@landproplan.ca

Daryl Keleher
MCIP, RPP, PLE
Principal
Keleher Planning & Economic Consulting Inc.
daryl@kpec.ca

Tyler Raytek
AACI, P.App., PLE
Associate Vice President
Cushman & Wakefield
rayt2610@mylaurier.ca

THE COMPANY WE KEEP

As a marketing benefit designed to assist our members in promoting their companies, we are introducing periodic ebasts that will highlight various member's activities.

Should you want to take advantage of this promotion opportunity, please send an email to admin@aole.org





ASSOCIATION
OF ONTARIO
LAND ECONOMISTS

The Association of Ontario Land Economists
Proudly Presents Its

Annual General Meeting with the Hon. Lisa Raitt

Taking the Right Steps Toward More and Better Housing

Monday June 17, 2024

5:45 PM to 9:30 PM

Royal Canadian Yacht Club – Island Club House

(City Station Launch – 150 Cherry Street)

Toronto, Ontario



Hon. Lisa Raitt, PC

Vice-Chair Global Investment Banking at
CIBC Capital Markets

Event Details

Join us for our Annual General Meeting at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club Island Clubhouse with the Hon. Lisa Raitt, who will discuss some of the key conclusions from the new Blueprint for More and Better Housing published by the Taskforce for Housing and Climate. Lisa will also share data from a recent report from the Coalition for a Better Future showing that persistent economic weakness is undermining Canada's prosperity and why it is time to take proactive measures to ensure Canada's future prosperity.

Agenda

5:45 PM - 6:00 PM City Station Launch

6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Networking

7:00 PM - 7:30 PM AGM

7:30 PM - 8:30 PM Dinner

8:30 PM - 9:30 PM Keynote Address

Please register at:
<https://aole.org/events>

Contact Organizer

AOLE Holiday Mixer

A great time was had by all at our AOLE Holiday Mixer which was held on Dec 7th at the RCYC City Clubhouse, Toronto.

Photos by John Blackburn



Larissa Klepatch, Michael Cane & Jameson Chee-Hing



Rosanna Bullock, AOLE Administrator



Stefan Krzczunowicz & John Blackburn



Matthew Cory & Jameson Chee-Hing



Andy Manahan & Stefan Krzczunowicz



Ian Ellingham, Stefan Krzczunowicz & Sridhar Lam



Andy Manahan & Stefan Krzczunowicz



Lori Cane



Bonnie Bowerman, Ian Brown & Judi Frost



John Glen & Pam Mallindine



Andy Manahan, Jameson Chee-Hing, Stefan Krzczunowicz, Michael Cane, Christina Kalt



Christina Kalt, Craig Binning & John McDermott



Michael Cane & Stefan Krzczunowicz



Christina Kalt & Matthew Cory



Lis Blackburn



Rosanna Bullock & John Blackburn



Paula Green & Jason Schmidt-Shoukri



Ian Ellingham & Clarence Poirier



Michael Cane & Kari Norman



Sridhar Lam & John Blackburn



Lori Cane & Lis Blackburn



NEWS BLASTS

Researched by **John Blackburn**, AIHM, PLE

Alex Nordstrom/Wikimedia Commons, License: CC-by-sa

MUST WATCH: PMA | CIBC Summit:

PMA | CIBC SUMMIT SERIES: SPRING BUILDER SUMMIT— LOW-RISE, HIGH STAKES

Webinar Recorded on April 4 2024. Some of the GTA's leading low-rise builders discuss the challenges and trends that make the market go 'round! Don't miss watching this riveting discussion between some of the biggest names in GTA real estate

GUEST SPEAKERS

Brad Carr Chief Executive Officer of Mattamy Homes Canada

Fred Losani Chief Executive Officer of Losani Homes

Shawn Keeper, P.Eng., President and CEO of Dunsire Developments

Lee Koutsaris Vice President Sales and Marketing Canada of Empire Communities

[Watch Video](#)

MUST WATCH: AOLE Speaker Series:

Development Charges -Who Should Pay?

Webinar Recorded on March 21 2024.

Hear from a distinguished panel of experts on the future of development charges in Ontario. Panelists include David Amborski (Centre for Urban Research and Land Development) and Adam Found (City of Kawartha Lakes). The event was moderated by the Association's President, Stefan Krzeczunowicz.

[Watch Video](#)

PMA|CIBC SUMMIT: SEASON KICKOFF WITH BENJAMIN TAL

Recorded Webinar on Feb 2 2024

Returning guest Benjamin Tal of CIBC Capital Markets is featured in the 2024 submit season premier episode! Ben and Andy Brethour take a deep dive into the annual outlook, discuss the January 24th Rate Update, and see what's in store for another new year! Webinar Recorded on Feb 2, 2024

[Watch Video](#)

Altus Group: Taking The Guesswork Out Of CRE Valuations In 2024

Webinar Recorded on Feb 28 2024

How leading Canadian CRE investors are using benchmarking to create transparency and efficiency in quieter markets.

A panel discussion with top industry experts from Aimco, Epic Investment Services and Manulife where they will discuss some of the valuation challenges they've had to confront, and how benchmarking has been a "game changer" for dealmakers.

[Watch Video](#)

Altus Group Outlook For Global Construction Costs

Recorded On Demand Webinar-Contact information required for access to the Webinar

We bring our Development Advisory experts from around the globe together again to break down the issues impacting property development in 2024.

[Watch Video](#)

Toronto Under Constructions Podcasts

A residential real estate podcast hosted by Bullpen Consulting's Ben Myers and co-hosted by Steve Cameron. This monthly podcast will dive into the nitty-gritty of Toronto Real Estate, with a specific focus on housing policy and economics

[Access Podcasts](#)

Altus Group: The 2024 Canadian Cost Guide

Altus reports that "2023 marked yet another turbulent year for the Canadian construction and development industry. There is reason for cautious optimism as we head into 2024, as heightened interest rates help to curb inflation, moderating equipment and materials costs are counteracting cost increases in other areas. On balance, it appears that the scales are tilting towards more moderation of construction costs over the next 6 to 12 months; however, this equilibrium may be short-lived. During this phase of relative stability in construction costs, it is crucial for building development and construction companies to stay agile and well-informed."

[Download The Cost Guide](#)

Centre For Urban Research And Land Development (CUR) Reports & Articles:

The Housing Affordability Benefits of Commutershed Land Use Planning: A Case Study of the Ottawa and Toronto Metropolitan Areas

This paper authored by CUR Senior Research Fellow, Frank Clayton, addresses why since the mid-2000s housing affordability in Ontario's largest metropolitan area, Toronto, has deteriorated much more than in the province's second-largest metropolitan area, Ottawa

[Read Report](#)

Statistics Canada Vacant Residential Land Estimates for Toronto and Ottawa Metropolitan Areas: A Baby Step Forward

Frank Clayton, assesses the credibility of the recently released Statistics Canada vacant residential land acreage data.

[Read Article](#)

Differentiating Housing Demand, Housing Needs, and Housing Requirements

Report prepared by Frank Clayton

[Read Report](#)

Toronto CMA Renters Increased Spending On Public And Private Transportation 2010-2019

Report prepared by Frank Clayton

[Read Report](#)

Q4 2023 INNvestment Canada Hotel Report

[Read Report](#)

The Misunderstood U.S. Office Market

Brookfield provides their insights about the U.S. office market, and vacancy rates. They report that, "90% of all U.S. office vacancies are contained in the bottom 30% of building, largely characterized by older buildings with limited amenities and reduced functionality. By contrast, the top quartiles of office buildings are experiencing

record -high rents and stable vacancy rates.”

[Read Report](#)

Canadian Urban Institute: NEW REPORT: A Case Study Of Thorncliffe Park

How Has Construction Affected Your Life, Work, Or Community?

The Thorncliffe Report explores the impact of Ontario Line subway construction on main street establishments and highlights the experience of Toronto's Thorncliffe Park community.

[Read Case Study](#)

Ontario Dominates List Of Most Expensive Infrastructure Projects In Canada

[Read Article](#)

Ford Government Issues Order That Could Sideline Many Huge Toronto Developments

[Read Article](#)

New Planning Rule Slowing Ont. Housing Construction

A provincial directive forcing cities to fast-track housing has actually made the approval process more expensive and slower, according to building industry sources as reported in the Toronto Star on Feb 6, 2024.

[Read Article](#)

Toronto's New Condo Development Charges Could Hurt Affordability (Even More)

On May 1, development charges on Toronto condos will increase 20.7% from their current rates, meaning the average one-bedroom and bachelor unit will now cost \$44,774 in development charges (up from \$37,081) according to an article in Storeys on April 15, 2024,

[Read Article](#)

In Other News, Toronto Sees Second- Highest Building Cost Increase In The World!

[Read Article](#)

Condo Market Faces 'Significant Slowdown': Urbanation

[Read Article](#)

CRE Sector Set For Major Shift: Premise Properties

[Read Article](#)

State Of Good Repair Lags In City Of Toronto

[Read Article](#)

Next in Line For Review: Toronto's Tall Buildings Guidelines

[Read Article](#)

Slate Unveils New Details For 805-Acre Hamilton Steelpoint

[Read Article](#)

Master-Planned iConnect in Hamilton 'A City Within A City'

A master -planned community is being planned in Hamilton and named the iConnect Community. The development is a collaboration between Burlington-based Krpan Group and Toronto's The Remington Group and spans 400 acres according to an article published in RENX on March 6 2024.

[Read Article](#)

Ford Government Announces Largest GO Train Expansion In Over A Decade

[Read Article](#)

Arcadis IBI Unveils Proposed Innisfil Orbit GO station

Arcadis IBI Group has released new Innisfil GO images of the proposed station, an infill station on the Barrie GO line south of Barrie, Ont. that is intended to serve as the anchor of the new Orbit community.

[Read Article](#)

Starbank Proposes 15-Tower Community In Brampton

The proposal is to redevelop Brampton's Bramrose Square with 15 towers ranging in height from 24 to 68 storeys. The community would include 6,629 housing units, 49,159 square feet of retail and 104,388 square feet of office space

[Read Article](#)

Seven New 'Supertall' Buildings Are Coming To Toronto

Toronto could soon have the fifth highest number of mixed-use residential supertalls in the world, alongside cities like NYC and Hong Kong according to an article published in the Toronto Star on April 25, 2024.

[Read Article](#)

Canada's New Tallest Building Will Break Records

Pinnacle Developments' One Yonge Street Toronto development will soon be home to a 105 story condo tower. This tower, part of a Hariri Pontarini designed development will be the highest building ever constructed in Toronto or anywhere else in Canada according to an article published in the Daily Hive on March 7, 2024

[Read Article](#)

Toronto Skyscraper Makes List Of Most Exciting Projects Set To Complete in 2024

[Read Article](#)

Massive 85-Storey Skyscraper About To Launch Into Toronto Skyline

Construction of the 85-storey Concord Sky development now rises above street level at the southeast corner of Yonge and Gerrard,

[Read Article](#)

Toronto Slaps Down Proposal For Enormous 85-Storey Skyscraper

[Read Article](#)

Pencil-Thin 62-Storey Skyscraper One Step Closer To Rising Above Old Toronto Buildings

A 2021 proposal to build a soaring pencil-thin skyscraper above preserved buildings dating back to the late 1800s on Toronto's Yonge Street is one step closer to reality following a nod of approval from heritage planners.

[Read Article](#)

Freed Plans Striking 63-Storey, \$800M Downtown T.O. High-Rise

[Read Article](#)

Nearly \$800 million For New Hospital Tower In Toronto

The province says a new 15-storey tower at University Health Network's Toronto Western Hospital will have 82 patient beds and 20 operating rooms. The project is to be built by 2028.

[Read Article](#)

YI Resubmission Proposes 70-Storey Mixed-Use

A revised submission for 619 Yonge Street in downtown Toronto now proposes a mixed -use condominium tower of 70 stories. This development is designed by Core Architects for YI Developments Ltd.

[Read Article](#)

New Tower Reflects Latest In Toronto's Lost Parking Lots

With the new Cadillac Fairview skyscraper at Front and Simcoe streets, Toronto has lost one of its last remaining downtown surface parking lots.

[Read Article](#)

Choice, Daniels To Transform Scarborough's Golden Mile

Choice Properties and The Daniels Corporation are teaming up to transform

the 67-year-old Golden Mile shopping centre into a mixed-use transit-oriented community. Phase one will include two condominium towers, a purpose-built market rental building, ground floor retail uses, institutional uses and office spaces. [Read Article](#)

Madison Group Plans Four 58- and 61-Storey Toronto towers

RENX Reports that the Madison Group plans to develop four mixed-use towers on two Eglinton Avenue East sites in Toronto that would stand 58 and 61 storeys, combine to provide 2,364 homes, and offer over two million sq. ft. of space. [Read Article](#)

Office Space Reduced in Proposed 63-Storey Tower

A revised plan for the redevelopment of 350 Bloor Street East has been resubmitted now reducing the amount of office space for more residential space, including the addition of affordable housing units. The site is located at the northeast corner of Bloor Street East and Mt Pleasant Road and was a six story office building owned by Rogers which is now vacant. [Read Article](#)

Ontario, Toronto Work On Exhibition Stadium TOC Proposal

The province, in consultation with the City of Toronto, is working on a Transit Oriented community (TOC) development proposal that would transform Exhibition Station into a connected transit hub with new housing, office and retail space according to an article published in Daily Commercial News on March 25, 2024. [Read Article](#)

The \$421-Million Reimagining Of The St. Lawrence Centre

New details announced of the \$421 Million plan to redevelop the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts. [Read Article](#)

T.O. To Spend \$37M On BMO Field Upgrades for World Cup

[Read Article](#)

Government Of Ireland Commits \$2-million To Irish Cultural Centre On Toronto Waterfront

[Read Article](#)

Republic, T.O. agree to 14-tower Scarborough Junction

[Read Article](#)

Pusateri's Location To Be Demolished For Huge Toronto Condo

An evolving development proposal could soon spell the end of a Pusateri's location that has served Toronto's Avenue Road and Lawrence area for almost four decades. [Read Article](#)

Court Appointed Receivership Sale - 301-317 Queen Street East - Berkeley Church and Development Lands

OLT approved, high density development at Queen Street East and Berkeley Street, It was the former home of the Berkeley Church event venue In-place zoning allows for a maximum height of 64.7 metres and permits a mixed-use residential condo with a GFA of approximately 129,716 SF [Website](#) [Download Investment Summary](#)

T.O. Mayor Backed MZO For Etobicoke Mixed-Use

The owners of 65 Rexdale Blvd. want to rebuild an existing mosque on site, as part of a new mixed-use development that would include 220 rental units. Mayor Olivia Chow backed a request for a minister's zoning order at an Etobicoke property late last year despite city planning staff's objections to the plan as reported by the Toronto Star on Feb 8, 2024. [Read Article](#)

56-Acre Life Science, Tech Park Proposed North Of Toronto

The owner of a 56-acre plot of land acquired 43 years ago for a hobby farm in Georgina, Ont., about an hour's drive north of Toronto, is seeking to turn it into the Canadian Life Science and Technology Park (CLSTP) according to an article published in RENX on March 28,2024 [Read Article](#)

Ottawa Committee Approves Three Mixed-Use Towers

As reported in the Ottawa Business Journal on Jan 31, 2024, "the proposal filed by local developer Theberge Homes includes plans to build two 24-storey towers and a 32-storey tower at 780 Baseline Rd., the site of a strip mall." [Read Article](#)

Toronto Developers Put New Spin On The 'Company Town' In Prince Edward County

[Read Article](#)

Retrofits And Conversions, Not New Buildings, Needed For Sustainable Future,

[Read Article](#)

Demand For Sustainable Buildings Outstrips Supply In 20 Major Cities!

[Read Article](#)

Modular Building Offers Solutions For Canada's Housing: CSA

[Read Article](#)

London Endorses Downtown Conversion Incentives

A proposed office-to-residential conversion incentive program for downtown London Ontario was announced by Mayor Josh Morgan in January and was unanimously endorsed. by the city council's planning and environment committee [Read Article](#)

Benjamin Tal: Two More Fixes For The Housing Crisis

[Read Article](#)

Regular Families Will Never Again Be Able To Buy A House In Toronto - But We Can Still Fix The Housing Crisis. Here's How

[Read Article](#)

Dream Will Be Retrofitting 19 Buildings Across Ontario And Saskatchewan To Net Zero Standards With \$136 million In Financing From The Canada Infrastructure Bank.

[Read Article](#)

The Geothermal Maestro Strikes Again!

Diverso Energy Co-Founder and CEO, Tim Weber, spoke at the Toronto Real Estate Forum, where he hinted at what could be the 'cure-all' for building decarbonisation [Watch Video](#)

Geothermal For High-Density "Pencil Buildings"

recorded webinar on March 27,2024 Diverso Energy's expert panel discusses the vertical heating and cooling potential of geothermal, and hybrid solutions being used to reach 50+ storey heights. [Watch Video](#)

Building A Geothermal Empire, From The Ground Up- Video

A behind-the-scenes look at Diverso Energy's Co-Founder and CEO Tim Weber's entrepreneurial journey. [Watch Video](#)

Subterra, Enercare Partner To Provide Geothermal For Housing

[Read Article](#)

Creative, LWLP To Partner On District Energy Communities

Low-carbon district energy firm Creative Energy and real estate developer Live Work Learn Play (LWLP) will partner to create sustainable communities according to an article published in Sustainable Biz Canada on March 22, 2024.

[Read Article](#)

Greenbelt Developer Being Sued Over Land Sale

As Reported in the Toronto Star on Feb 2, 2024, "a developer who stood to benefit from the Ford government's ill-fated plan to remove his property from the Greenbelt is facing allegations that he duped a business partner into selling his share of an unrelated property that was set to explode in value".

[Read Article](#)

Sam Mizrahi Files Lawsuit Against Edward Rogers RE Fund

The lawsuit was filed against Edward Rogers and Constantine Enterprises Inc and the fund that Mr. Rogers owns in regards to a condo project in Toronto's Yorkville at 128 Hazelton.

[Read Article](#)

Toronto Rental Company Whose CEO Became Internet Villain Bought for \$ 3.5 Billion

[Read Article](#)

Blackstone's Takeover Of Tricon Residential Gets Final OK

\$ 3.5 Billion takeover was scheduled to close on May 1st.

[Read Article](#)

Rogers To Sell Data Centres, Other Real Estate To Pay Debt

Rogers Communications is listing its data centres for sale in an effort to raise a billion dollars as the company moves to pay off debt related to the Shaw merger, CFO Glenn Brandt told analysts on a Q1 earnings call in an article by The Canadian Press that was published on BNN Bloomberg.

[Read Article](#)

Receivers Appointed To Last Of Vandyk's Projects

As reported in the Globe and Mail on January 31 2024, "The collapse of the Vandyk group of companies appears total now after a court-appointed receiver seeking to recover more than \$350 million owed to lenders has been installed on all the significant properties of the troubled builder"

[Read Article](#)

Equifax Testing Rental Payment Data For Credit Scores

[Read Article](#)

Doors Opening For Women In Construction Sector

[Read Article](#)

Appraisers At Centre Of CRE's Price Reckoning

Commercial appraisers find their work at the center of one of the largest real estate stories of the moment: the fate of the office market. Their decisions of value will have enormous sway on when properties sell, how and when transaction volume restarts and even who controls key assets. According to an article published in Biznow on March 11, 2024.

[Read Article](#)

Smith Financial To Merge Fairstone Bank, Home Trust

Billionaire financier Stephen Smith is merging recently acquired Home Trust Co. with Fairstone Bank of Canada in a deal he values at about \$5-billion to \$6-billion as reported in the Globe & Mail on March 26, 2024

[Read Article](#)

Top-10 Hotel/Motel And Shopping Centre Projects

The Daily Commercial News has published tables showing the top 10 major upcoming Hotel/Motel and Shopping Centre construction industry projects in Canada .

[Read Article](#)

CREA's New 'Duty Of Cooperation' Policy Raises Questions Over Enforcement, Penalties

The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) put a new 'Duty of Cooperation' policy into effect this year, and in essence, it requires member agents to put residential listings on the MLS within three days of public marketing according to an article in Storeys on April 15, 2024

[Read Article](#)



John Blackburn, AIHM, PLE

President,
CRU Communications and Broadcast Productions Inc.
John has over 50 years' experience in marketing, sales and public relations, both in the E.U. and North America. Winner of numerous marketing and public relations awards, including BILD's Top Awards, two Grand SAMs, the very prestigious Riley Brethour Award, The Sales and Marketing Manager of the Year Award, the Canadian Home Builders' Association Award of Honour and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal, in recognition of contributions to Canada.



The Legislative Beat Spring Update

By Andy Manahan, PLE

Provincial budget (includes “carbon tax” sloganeering):

Finance minister Peter Bethlenfalvy delivered his fourth budget, *Building a Better Ontario*, in late March. With a spending plan of \$214 billion, Ontario is projecting a nearly \$10 billion deficit for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, blaming sluggish growth, declining tax revenues and high Bank of Canada interest rates. Ontario’s real GDP growth is expected to be 0.3 per cent in 2024.

In his pre-budget announcements, the minister made clear that there would be no tax increases in the upcoming year. On budget day, he confirmed that the Province would not be raising taxes, tuition, tolls or fees.

One of the populist measures focusing on drivers is an extension of the [provincial gas tax cut](#) (representing 5.7 cents per litre), with Premier Ford pointing out that since the cut was introduced it has saved a typical household \$320. One of my astute friends noted that the “gas tax deferral adds to our provincial deficits and debt, while saving me a fraction of the federal carbon levy program’s net payout to me, even before we consider the climate benefits of the much criticized carbon tax.” Curiously, the federal “carbon tax” is mentioned (in a critical way) 11 times in the Minister’s budget speech.

In the past, conservatives such as [Preston Manning touted the benefits of market-based mechanisms](#) to effectively influence behaviour and reduce GHGs. By contrast, Premier Ford is attempting to portray Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie as the “queen of the carbon tax.” In this [video clip](#) Crombie states that if she topples Ford’s PCs in the 2026 election, there will not be an Ontario carbon tax. Instead, she will invest in public transit and electric vehicle infrastructure, as well as help households become more energy efficient.

Budget reactions (good):

The Ontario Real Estate Association commended the Province for its ongoing long-term infrastructure plan of \$190 billion over the next decade. In its [press release](#), OREA highlighted three initiatives:

- (1) support for housing-enabling municipal water systems infrastructure,
- (2) investment in a ‘site preparation pilot program’ to repurpose surplus government properties for attainable housing and social infrastructure, and
- (3) a commitment to continue supporting key solutions such as transit-oriented communities and modular construction.

While the government is investing more than \$1.8 billion in housing-enabling infrastructure programs, the Province has not followed up on its promise to municipalities to make them whole re. revenues that were removed from previous legislation. Unless this commitment is followed through on, the [Association of Municipalities of Ontario has said that there will be increases to property taxes and user fees, or service level reductions](#) (see also [Leg. Beat, Vol. 53, No. 1, under Development Charges](#)).

[The Province will also allow single- and upper-tier municipalities to impose a vacant home tax](#), with permission to set a higher rate for foreign-owned vacant homes. Currently, only Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton have that authority.

[In Toronto the roll out has been terrible](#), with 62,000 property owners receiving bills for thousands of dollars even though the home has been occupied by taxpayers. For example, many residents made a declaration last year but did not realize that a form would have to be filled out every year. Similarly, senior citizens have had difficulty filling out forms where long property roll numbers have to be submitted online.

Implementation guidelines from Queen’s Park would be helpful to prevent further messy situations in the vacant home tax milieu.

Budget reactions (mixed):

York University will open a new medical school in 2028 to address the doctor shortage. According to the Ontario College of Family Physicians, 2.3 million Ontarians do not have a family doctor, and that number is expected to double in two years.

The new school will be located adjacent to the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital, with [Premier Ford declaring that it will be open to Ontario-born students only](#). [NDP leader Marit Stiles slammed the Premier](#) saying that his statement is “wildly disrespectful to the thousands of students and internationally trained physicians ... waiting for a residency spot.”

Budget reactions (bad/ugly):

NDP finance critic Catherine Fife criticized the budget for not having sufficient funding increases for community service agencies despite warnings during pre-budget consultations that these agencies could close without more assistance.

Similarly, Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie said that the 1.3 per cent increase to health care spending is below the rate of inflation and accused the Premier of “choosing to undercut our public institutions so that he can further his privatization agenda.”

Due to wildfires and other extreme weather events, Green leader Mike Schreiner called for more resources to address climate change. [Base funding for forest firefighting, for example, is budgeted to be \\$135 million or \\$81 million less than what was spent in 2023.](#)

Ford 'disappointed' with Ford:

This tongue in cheek subheading appeared in *Queen's Park Today*, a daily tracker of provincial politics, based on a Ford Motor Company announcement that there would be a delay of two years in the start of electric vehicle and battery pack production at its Oakville plant. Premier Ford said that he is "disappointed" and called on the automaker to "retool as quickly as possible" and to "get workers back to work."

Ford's president and CEO Jim Farley announced that the new opening date for the EV plant would be 2027. Unifor president Lana Payne piled on saying that the decision was frustrating because management made no mention about a possible delay when there were contract negotiations only a few months prior, adding that the 2025 start date was first agreed to in 2020.

Queen's Park and Ottawa contributed \$295 million each to transform the Oakville facility for EV production. Automotive analyst Edmunds released a [survey](#) which found that consumers are reluctant to buy EVs for reasons such as high prices, limited battery range and lack of charging stations.

In a TV interview, Flavio Volpe, president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association thought that getting access to critical minerals necessary for producing batteries might be a reason for the delay. [Northern Ontario's Ring of Fire contains deposits such as chromite and has been on the provincial government's radar since 2007](#) or, in political terms, when Dalton McGuinty was premier.

[Completing road projects will still take up to 10 years once all the environmental assessments have been finished.](#) Here is an excerpt from finance minister Peter Bethlenfalvy's budget: "Ontario has dedicated \$1 billion to support critical legacy infrastructure such as all-season roads, broadband connectivity and community supports for the Ring of Fire region. Currently, there are no all-season roads connecting the Ring of Fire to the provincial highway network." In advance of the budget, [Bethlenfalvy noted how important it is to secure supply of critical minerals and declared that "we have great partners in the First Nations."](#)

Housing Targets:

Will Ontario be able to achieve its 1.5 million

housing units target over the next decade? To date, housing starts have been in a slump, but this has not stopped the Province from encouraging municipalities to build more housing through the three-year, \$1.2 billion *Building Faster Fund*. The Premier, Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Paul Calandra, his Parliamentary Assistant Robert Flack, along with other MPPs, have been crisscrossing Ontario to hand out cheques to municipal leaders where provincial housing targets have been met or exceeded (municipalities that have reached at least 80 per cent of the provincially assigned target are eligible).

Top achiever Toronto received a cheque for \$114 million for exceeding its target by 51 per cent with over 31,000 housing starts in a year. However, some municipalities are not receiving provincial funds because of "measurement" issues [as this TVO segment demonstrates](#). Even though Waterloo and Burlington have approved enough new housing to meet the target, developers are not pulling permits due to market conditions. This compelling [submission](#) from the City of Waterloo calls on the Province to change the parameters by which municipalities can access the *Building Faster Fund*.

On the other side of the coin, a [study](#) commissioned by BILD and the Ontario Home Builders Association finds that there is a disparity between reported inventories and actual shovel-ready lots. In his weekly [column](#), BILD president and CEO David Wilkes disputes the notion that developers and builders are deliberately sitting on land and concludes that additional "Use it or Lose it" policies would be an overreach.

New Math:

Beyond CMHC's traditional definition of a housing start (foundation poured), Queen's Park has determined that new and upgraded long-term care beds can be considered in the total housing supply count. Global News [reports](#) that 22 per cent of Markham's total "housing starts" of 1,472 were LTC beds, for example. Here is a [CMHC report](#) that indicates how ground-oriented housing declined significantly in 2023, while the apartment segment (purpose built rental and condo) rose in select Canadian metropolitan market areas (e.g., single detached housing declined 25 per cent in Toronto CMA and 45 per cent in Ottawa, 2022-2023, with apartment starts gaining 15 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively). It is highly doubtful that the "new math", which also counts additional residential

units such as secondary suites and laneway housing, will be enough to achieve the housing targets that the Province hopes to achieve. Marit Stiles had the wittiest line: "what are they going to count next, jail cells?"

There are numerous reasons for the curtailment of housing supply that are, of course, beyond the control of any government, including the overarching reason of unaffordability caused by higher construction costs and prohibitive interest rates (for both consumers and developers seeking financing). Construction labour shortages are exacerbating the difficulties.

In this [article](#), Rescon president Richard Lyall cites an Altus Group study that found it takes 25 to 30 per cent longer to complete a project than it did five or six years ago. In addition to bolstering domestic recruitment of skilled trades, Lyall recommends that the federal government prioritize immigrants with specialized skill sets to help reach our housing targets.

Bill 185 / MZOs:

Late in 2023, MMAH minister Paul Calandra started a [review](#) of Minister's Zoning Orders to find out from municipalities whether projects were proceeding or not. In his latest housing bill announced on April 10, the focus is ostensibly on cutting red tape to build more homes.

In the new MZO process, proponents must align with [provincial policy](#) and there must be public consultation, with Indigenous groups specifically mentioned. MZO applications must now be posted on the public ERO registry for 30 days.

In terms of the "Use it or Lose it" policy mentioned above, the Province will not impose a deadline on developers to begin construction but expands "the scope of lapsing provisions for subdivision and site plan control."

Opposition Leader Marit Stiles says that this omnibus bill lacks the ambition and urgency that is required to address Ontario's housing crisis. [Martin Regg Cohn declares that the Premier's "hopes for a housing boom have gone bust"](#) and says that this "bill attempts to restore order to the controversial minister's zoning orders that brought disorder to the planning process during peak Greenbelt madness, transforming a legacy of opacity, belatedly, into transparency."

Self-described policy nerd John Michael McGrath of TVO contends that “the Tories are fiddling with the dials of housing policy, seemingly unsure of what they’re doing – or even what they’re trying to do.” [McGrath writes](#) that there is good stuff in the bill (such as the elimination of parking minimums around major transit stations), but that there is “nothing in the bill ... that’s going to fundamentally alter the trajectory of the housing shortage in Ontario.”

Modifications to already approved OPs:

The Ford government also hopes to expand housing supply through the omnibus [Get It Done Act](#) which would amend Official Plan boundaries for a dozen municipalities (primarily single tier but also upper tier). In this [Waterloo Region Record article](#), new Green MPP Aislinn Clancy says that she ran into a brick wall during committee hearings on the expansion of the region’s

boundaries, with PC MPPs not considering any of the proposed amendments to Bill 162. Clancy predicts that there will be 7,000 acres opened for suburban development in the region even though there has been no public consultation on the OP boundary expansions.

Task Force report:

Finally, for those interested in reading a [“Blueprint” report](#) on solutions to build 5.8 million affordable, low-carbon and resilient homes across Canada, the Task Force on Housing and Climate Change co-chaired by the Hon. Lisa Raitt and Don Iveson contains 10 recommendations and 140 individual policy actions directed at all orders of government.

Here is a nugget in the section aimed at provincial governments under the heading ‘Where We Build’: “Legalizing density makes more efficient use of land, lowering both

greenhouse gas emissions and per-unit land costs. It keeps municipal property taxes low through more efficient use of infrastructure while producing housing more quickly and at lower cost while also creating homes that are greener and more resilient to the impacts of climate change. As such, legalizing density is the single most significant multi-solution opportunity for getting housing right.”

April 17, 2024. ➤



Andy Manahan is President of Manahan Consulting Services and a member of AOLE’s Board of Directors



Association of
Ontario Land Economists

WHAT IS AOLE?

YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO OVER **\$50 BILLION** IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The Association of Ontario Land Economists (AOLE) is a membership based group of real estate professionals that offers the opportunity to connect with other professionals in related fields, share knowledge, learn and network with potential clients, partners, mentors and more. Currently the group proudly represents most of the significant developments in Southern Ontario and its members are active in many various roles across the vast real estate industries.

You can make a difference today by joining AOLE. Members have the benefit of broadening and enriching their professional development ensuring high-ethical work standards and making submissions to the government for improvements in both the law and public administration in relation to land economics. This year, our members will be involved in over \$50 billion dollars in Ontario real estate initiatives.

[Read about membership qualifications](#)

[Apply for Membership](#)

What careers are represented within AOLE? To get an idea of the professionals that are members of AOLE, we have compiled a list of some of the most strongly represented professionals.

If you need more information email us at admin@aole.org.



Association of
Ontario Land Economists

What careers are represented within AOLE?

To get an idea of the professionals that are members of AOLE, we have compiled a list of some of the most strongly represented professionals below:

Architects

**Certified Property
Managers**

Economists

Lawyers

Land Use Planners

**Marketing
Consultants**

Financial Services

**Mortgage
Brokers**

**Municipal
Assessors**

**Ontario Land
Surveyors**

Engineers

**Property
Tax Agents**

Builders

**Quantity
Surveyors**

**Real Estate
Brokers**

**Real Estate
Appraisers**

**Land
Developers**

**Chartered
Accountants**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
CLICK HERE**

aole.org

The Association of Ontario Land Economists
30 St. Patrick Street Suite 1000, Toronto, ON M5T 3A3
admin@aole.org