LANDLOCKED: POLITICS, PROPERTY,
AND THE TORONTO WATERFRONT, 1960-2000

by

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Abstract

Dozens of major cities around the world have launched large-scale waterfront redevelopment projects over the past fifty years. Absent from this list of noteworthy achievements, however, is Toronto, a case of grand ambitions gone horribly awry. Despite three extensive revitalization plans in the second half of the 20th century, Toronto’s central waterfront, an area roughly double the city’s central business district, has remained mired in political gridlock for decades. The purpose of this dissertation is to explain why this came to pass. Informed by extensive archival and interview research, as well as geospatial data analyzed using Geographic Information Systems software, the thesis demonstrates that above and beyond political challenges typical of any major urban redevelopment project, in Toronto, issues of land ownership — specifically, public land ownership — were pivotal in defining the scope and pace of waterfront planning and implementation. Few, if any, waterfront redevelopment projects around the world have been attempted amidst the same degree of public land ownership and jurisdictional fragmentation as that which plagued implementation efforts in Toronto. From 1961-1998, no less than 81% of all land in the central waterfront was owned by one public body or another, dispersed across a patchwork of public agencies, corporations, and special purpose authorities nestled within multiple levels of government. Such fragmentation,
specifically across public bodies, added a layer of complexity to the existing intergovernmental dynamic that effectively crippled implementation efforts. It created a “joint-decision trap” impervious to conventional resolution via bargaining, problem solving, or unilateral action. This tangled political history poses a considerable challenge to conventional liberal, structuralist, and regime-based theories of urban politics derived from US experiences. It also highlights the limits of conventional implementation theory in the study of urban development, and calls into question longstanding interpretations of federal-provincial-municipal relations and multilevel governance in Canada.
Acknowledgments

To those under the impression that completing a PhD is a strictly individual achievement, know this: nothing could be further from the truth. I could never have come this far without the help and encouragement of so many colleagues, friends, and family.

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Gabriel Eidelman
Toronto, Canada
October 2012
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ iv  
List of Tables .................................................................................................................... x  
List of Figures .................................................................................................................. xi  
List of Abbreviations ....................................................................................................... xii  

**Chapter One: Introduction** ....................................................................................... 1  
Study Area ....................................................................................................................... 3  
Three Eras of Modern Waterfront Planning ................................................................ 6  
Unlocking the Puzzle ..................................................................................................... 9  
Theoretical Considerations ............................................................................................ 11  
The Structure of the Argument ....................................................................................... 15  

**Chapter Two: Urban Waterfront Development: Theory and Practice** ....................... 17  
Toronto in Theoretical Perspective ............................................................................... 18  
Theorizing Urban Development ................................................................................... 18  
Theorizing Waterfront Development ......................................................................... 20  
Toronto’s Waterfront and the Limits of Urban Development Theory ......................... 22  
Theoretical Reflections .................................................................................................. 25  
Toronto in Comparative Context ................................................................................. 26  
Vancouver ...................................................................................................................... 26  
Chicago ......................................................................................................................... 29  
New York: Battery Park City ....................................................................................... 32  
London: Docklands ....................................................................................................... 34  
Cape Town ..................................................................................................................... 37  
Empirical Reflections .................................................................................................... 40  
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 41  

**Chapter Three: 1960-1972: Modernism and Mega Projects** ...................................... 43  
An Exploitable Asset ....................................................................................................... 44  
The Metro Plan ............................................................................................................... 45  
A Bold Concept ............................................................................................................. 47  
Enter the Province ......................................................................................................... 49  
‘It’s Nothing but a Bloody Takeover’ ........................................................................... 51  
Harbour City, Take Two ............................................................................................... 53  
The Province Reverses Course ..................................................................................... 56  
Metro Centre Transforms the Railways ....................................................................... 59  
The Rise of the Reformers ........................................................................................... 61  
Marvo and the Foot of Yonge Street ............................................................................ 64  
Campeau Steps In ....................................................................................................... 66  
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 68
Chapter Four: 1972-1988: Incrementalism and Indignation ........................................ 72
The Promise of an Urban Park ............................................................................. 73
Consultation by Committee .................................................................................. 75
Harbourfront: From Council to Corporation ....................................................... 78
A New Development Framework ..................................................................... 82
Central Waterfront Plan in Sight? ..................................................................... 85
A ‘Battalion’ of Buildings .................................................................................... 88
Three Freezes and a Moratorium ..................................................................... 92
Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 96

Crombie’s Vision ............................................................................................... 99
Return of the Province ....................................................................................... 101
New Agency, Same Results ............................................................................. 105
Battle for the Port ............................................................................................... 108
From Harbour Commission to Port Authority ................................................. 112
Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 114

Chapter Six: Land Ownership and ‘Aspirational’ Policy-making ....................... 117
Explaining the Toronto Case ........................................................................... 118
Real Property, Real Politics ............................................................................. 119
Assets, Not Jurisdiction .................................................................................... 127
Land and Decision Traps .................................................................................. 130
Insights from the Toronto Case ....................................................................... 132
Programmatic vs. Aspirational Policy-making ............................................... 132
The Influence of Time: Path Dependence and Sequencing ............................ 136
Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 140

Chapter Seven: Institutional Inertia and the Pathology of Multilevel Non-governance 142
Federalism and Multilevel Governance: An Urban Perspective ..................... 144
Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations ................................................... 144
Multilevel Governance ...................................................................................... 146
The Limits of Multilevel Governance ............................................................... 148
Insights from the Toronto Case ....................................................................... 150
‘When Everyone is in Charge, No One is in Charge’ ...................................... 150
The Harbour Commission: An ‘Extraordinary’ Authority .............................. 153
Toward a Pathology of Multilevel Non-Governance ...................................... 157
Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 160

Chapter Eight: Conclusion: Even the Best Laid Plans ..................................... 162
Revisiting the Three Eras of Modern Waterfront Planning ............................. 163
When Property Trumps Jurisdiction .................................................................. 165
The Practical Implications of Public Ownership .............................................. 169
The Literature and its Limits ............................................................................. 171
Concluding Thought ......................................................................................... 174
Appendix A: Methods........................................................................................................... 175
The Logic(s) of Case Study Research..................................................................................... 175
The Limits of Case-oriented Research..................................................................................... 177
Data Collection ..................................................................................................................... 180
   Archival Materials .............................................................................................................. 180
   Interviews........................................................................................................................... 181
   Census and Employment Data ........................................................................................... 187
   Geospatial Data.................................................................................................................. 188

Appendix B: Glossary............................................................................................................. 192
   Waterfront District Profiles............................................................................................... 192
   Agency Profiles.................................................................................................................. 194

Appendix C: List of Waterfront Plans, 1960-2000............................................................... 200

Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 202
List of Tables

Table 6.1. Conceptions of Historical Change. ................................................................. 137

Table A.1. Variable-oriented vs. Case-oriented Qualitative Research. ...................... 176
Table A.2. Waterfront Districts by Census Tract. ............................................................ 187
List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Toronto’s ‘Central Waterfront Area’ ................................................................. 4
Figure 1.2. Geographic Evolution of Toronto’s Shoreline ...................................................... 5
Figure 1.3. Total Cargo Passing through Toronto’s Port, 1960-90 (in Metric Tons) ............... 6
Figure 1.4. Three Eras of Waterfront Planning in Toronto .................................................. 7
Figure 2.1. Vancouver’s Waterfront ..................................................................................... 27
Figure 2.2. Chicago’s Lakefront .......................................................................................... 30
Figure 2.3. New York’s Battery Park City ............................................................................. 32
Figure 2.4. London’s Docklands .......................................................................................... 35
Figure 2.5. Cape Town’s Victoria and Alfred Waterfront ...................................................... 38
Figure 3.1. Design Concept for the Central Waterfront Area, 1967 ....................................... 46
Figure 3.2. Harbour City, as Proposed by the Toronto Harbour Commission, 1968 ............. 48
Figure 3.3. Provincial Harbour City Concept, 1970 ............................................................. 55
Figure 3.4. Model of Metro Centre as Presented to the Media, 1968 ...................................... 60
Figure 3.5. Campeau’s Harbour Square Proposal, 1969 ....................................................... 66
Figure 3.6. Campeau’s Harbour Square, c. 1977 ................................................................. 67
Figure 4.1. Harbourfront, c. 1978 .......................................................................................... 74
Figure 4.2. Concept Drawing from Harbourfront Development Framework
  Depicting Mid-rise Development at John Quay ................................................................. 83
Figure 4.3. Harbourfront, the Concrete Curtain ................................................................... 90
Figure 4.4. Huang and Danczay’s HarbourPoint Condominiums ....................................... 91
Figure 4.5. Proposed Harbourfront Developments as of 1987, Looking East from
  Exhibition Place (left), and West from York Quay (right) ................................................. 93
Figure 5.1. Toronto’s Regional Watershed .......................................................................... 103
Figure 5.2. Proposed Lands Subject to THC-TEDCO Land Sale, November 1991 ............. 110
Figure 6.1. Distribution of Land Ownership, Central Waterfront Area, 1961-1998 ............ 121
Figure 6.2. Geographic Distribution of Land Ownership, Central Waterfront Area,
  1961-1998 ...................................................................................................................... 122
Figure 6.3. Distribution of Land Ownership, Harbourfront and the Railway Lands,
  1961-1998 (Corresponding to Census Tract 012). ............................................................. 124
Figure 6.4. Distribution of Land Ownership, Port Lands, 1961-1998 (Corresponding to
  Census Tract 001). .......................................................................................................... 124
Figure 6.5. Distribution of Land Ownership, East Bayfront and West Don Lands,
  1961-1998 (Corresponding to Census Tract 017) ............................................................. 125
Figure 6.6. Distribution of Land Ownership, Central Bayfront, 1961-1998
  (Corresponding to Census Tract 013). .......................................................................... 125
Figure 6.7. Distribution of Land Ownership in Six “High Potential” Districts, 1961-1998
  (Corresponding to Census Tracts 001, 012, 013, 017) ................................................. 126
Figure 6.8. Illustration of Path Dependent versus Reactive Sequences ............................... 138
**List of Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPCA</td>
<td>Battery Park City Authority</td>
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<td>LDDC</td>
<td>London Docklands Development Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTRCA</td>
<td>Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNE</td>
<td>Canadian National Exhibition</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNR</td>
<td>Canadian National Railways</td>
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<tr>
<td>CORRA</td>
<td>Confederation of Resident and Ratepayers Associations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Canadian Pacific Railways</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWPC</td>
<td>Central Waterfront Planning Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLG</td>
<td>Multilevel governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSUA</td>
<td>Ministry of State for Urban Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>OMB</td>
<td>Ontario Municipal Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEDCO</td>
<td>Toronto Economic Development Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>THC</td>
<td>Toronto Harbour Commission(ers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPA</td>
<td>Toronto Port Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>V&amp;AW</td>
<td>Victoria and Alfred Waterfront</td>
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Chapter One
Introduction

“Make no little plans,” intoned the great American architect Daniel Burnham.
“They have no magic to move men’s blood.” In Toronto, however, the bigger they start, the smaller they end up.

— Christopher Hume (2010a)

The appeal of waterfront redevelopment has become an international phenomenon. Whether branded as reconstruction, renewal, regeneration, or revitalization, dozens of major cities around the world have launched large-scale redevelopment projects over the last fifty years, hoping to convert huge tracts of abandoned industrial port and manufacturing lands into commercial, residential, and recreational areas.\(^1\) Absent from this list of noteworthy waterfront achievements, however, is Toronto, a case of waterfront ambitions gone awry.

Over a thousand acres of Toronto’s Lake Ontario shoreline remain vacant, underutilized, and in the worst cases, dangerously contaminated by industrial pollution. Such neglect is long-standing, spanning decades. “What happened to the dreams of just a few years ago of a revitalized harbour,” lamented one local columnist back in 1972, “with apartments, parks, restaurants, and taverns to replace the factories and muddy vacant lots of today?” (Urquhart 1972a). Frustrations have only intensified with time. For many Torontonians, the waterfront now serves as a “monument to civic dysfunction” (Hume 2007). The Project for Public Spaces, a New York-based non-profit urban planning and design organization, recently went so far as to add the area to its international “Hall of Shame” (McGinn 2006).

Things were supposed to have turned out differently. Between the years 1960 and 2000, at least three comprehensive waterfront redevelopment plans were devised by

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\(^1\) For more on these projects, see Bruttomesso (1993), Malone (1996) and Rybczynski (Rybczynski 2010, Chp. 7). The specifics of waterfront development in New York, London, Chicago, Vancouver, and Cape Town will be discussed in Chapter Two.
municipal planners: Metropolitan Toronto’s 1967 *Waterfront Plan for the Metropolitan Planning Area* (hereafter, the Metro Plan), released alongside the Toronto Harbour Commission’s 1968 *Bold Concept for the Redevelopment of the Toronto Waterfront*; a plan produced by the City of Toronto Planning Board in 1984, entitled *Central Waterfront: Final Recommendations* (hereafter, the Central Waterfront Plan); and the 1994 *Metropolitan Waterfront Plan* (hereafter, the Metro Waterfront Plan), which codified the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront (1988-92), better known as the Crombie Commission.\(^2\)

As we shall see, some of these plans involved mega projects, others incremental measures. All were developed in consultation with numerous stakeholders and were ultimately approved as part of the city’s Official Plans — a formal term for municipal land use policies in Ontario — as voted on by city and Metro councils.\(^3\) Yet ultimately, each fell noticeably short of achieving its primary objectives. The purpose of this dissertation is to explain why this came to pass. Why have successive federal, provincial, and municipal governments generally failed to deliver on waterfront redevelopment plans in Toronto? Why have so many proposed projects not been substantially followed through? Why has so little come from decades of committees, commissions, and consultations?

To be clear, the goal of this study is not to evaluate the success or failure of any particular planning program. As Howlett and Ramesh (2003, 208) rightly point out, “labels such as ‘success’ and ‘failure’ are inherently relative and will be interpreted differently by different policy actors.” Whether the policy goals outlined in these plans have (or could have) resulted in economic, social, or environmental benefits is not my central concern. I leave the normative task of evaluating the quality or appropriateness of a given plan to my colleagues in the fields of architecture, urban design, and urban

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\(^2\) It goes without saying that waterfront planning and development in Toronto did not begin in 1960, nor end in the year 2000. Indeed, the waterfront has been subject to dozens of redevelopment plans dating back to the early 1800s (see Merrens and Lemon 1987). My focus, however, is on the modern, post-1960 era, a period in which port cities around the world began reinventing their waterfront landscapes. Cutting my analysis off at the year 2000 has the added benefit of providing my interview participants with a historical buffer of sorts, which I found encouraged respondents to speak more freely and openly about their experiences in the field.

\(^3\) For a sampling of project-specific plans published during the same time period, see Appendix C.
planning, as well as the politicians and community members potentially affected by them. The focus here is rather on illuminating the political actors, relationships, (non-) decisions, and events that have contributed to subsequent policy outputs and outcomes, beneficial or otherwise, including the mechanisms which have fed political inertia and policy stagnation over time.4

Study Area

To begin, let us familiarize ourselves with Toronto’s waterfront, which comprises one portion of a much larger regional watershed spanning some 250 kilometres of Lake Ontario shoreline.5 For the purposes of this study, I restrict the geographic scope of my analysis to what is known as the “central waterfront area.” Although the boundaries of this area are seldom applied uniformly across planning documents, the label generally refers to waterfront lands south of Front Street and Eastern Avenue, between the Humber River in the west, and Woodbine Avenue in the east (Figure 1.1, below). Notable destinations and neighbourhoods include: the Western and Eastern Beaches; the Canadian National Exhibition and Ontario Place; the Railway Lands; Harbourfront; the Toronto Islands; the Port Lands and Leslie Street Spit; the East and Central Bayfronts; and the West Don Lands (see Appendix B for full district profiles). Altogether, the area encompasses some fifteen square kilometres, or approximately 3,700 acres within the city core — roughly double the size of Toronto’s central business district.

4 A note to clarify the difference between policy outputs and outcomes. According to Weale (1992, 45), “policy outputs comprise the laws, regulations, and institutions that governments employ in dealing with policy problems,” whereas “policy outcomes comprise the effects of those measures upon the state of the world.” Policy outputs, in other words, refer to specific measures put in place to address a policy problem in the short term, while outcomes refer to the impacts of these measures over the long term. An example of a policy output in the context of urban development would be a zoning provision intended to increase the number of multi-use residential buildings in a given neighbourhood, while the outcome, or impact, associated with this output might be an increase in density and transit use, or the perceived appropriateness of ensuing development projects by the community.

5 Not to mention seventeen local municipalities, four regional municipalities, and six conservation authorities.
The majority of the central waterfront as it exists today is man-made, the physical remnants of large-scale lake filling going back to the early 19th century. At the time of Toronto’s incorporation in 1834, the city and lake converged at the fringes of Front Street, some 1,000 metres from its current location. Gradually, with the growth of railway transport in the 1850s and 60s, the shoreline was extended southward in order to create new rights of way (Mellen 1974). Provisional plans for a public promenade and gardens progressively gave way to an assortment of rail lines, docks, wharfs, and piers. Businesses began relocating to take advantage of the new transport facilities, forcing the water’s edge further south, first to the Esplanade, then to Lake Street, known today as Lakeshore Boulevard (see Reeves 1992; Goheen 2000).

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6 In geological terms, the formation of Toronto’s waterfront can be traced back even further, the product of thousands of years of hydrological forces, erosion, and littoral drift.

7 The province’s first lieutenant governor, John Graves Simcoe, began setting aside lakefront land between Garrison Reserve and the Don River for public purposes as early as 1793. Though formalized under the authority of a Walks and Gardens Trust in 1818, the promenade was eventually forgotten at the behest of industrial interests (see City of Toronto 2001).
By the turn of the 20th century, local business groups such as the Toronto Board of Trade began lobbying authorities to revamp the central waterfront for further industrial uses, including manufacturing plants, warehouses, and expanded port facilities. The ensuing 1912 *Waterfront Development Plan*, drafted by the newly established Toronto Harbour Commission (THC), spurred the conversion of more than 1,300 acres of marshland around Ashbridge’s Bay into today’s Port Lands district (Desfor 1993). By 1969, nearly half of Toronto Bay as it existed in 1834 had been filled in, resulting in a complete transformation of the city’s original shoreline (Figure 1.2).

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8 Together with its only major revision in 1949, the 1912 Plan shaped the course of Toronto waterfront development for more than half a century (Merrens 1988, 93). For more on the plan, see Lemon (1990), Reeves (1992; 1993), and Desfor, Vesalon, and Laidley (2011).
At around this time, changes in shipping technologies, particularly the rise of containerization, were beginning to impact Toronto’s position as a major commercial harbour. Despite the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, total cargo passing through the port peaked in the late 1960s, never to be reversed (Figure 1.3). Local industries previously attracted by the waterfront’s shipping infrastructure began relocating to suburban locations. Meanwhile, citizens began showing interest in reclaiming the water’s edge for parks and recreational uses. Conditions, in other words, were ripe for a dramatic rethink of the waterfront’s potential. And so began the modern age of waterfront development.

**Three Eras of Modern Waterfront Planning**

The three comprehensive plans guiding this study are representative of three distinct eras of modern waterfront planning and implementation between 1960-2000 (Figure 1.4). The first era, spanning 1960-1972, revolved around the 1967 Metro Plan and 1968 Bold

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*Figure 1.3. Total Cargo Passing through Toronto's Port, 1960-90 (in Metric Tons)*

Source: Compiled from Toronto Harbour Commission Annual Reports, 1960-1990.
Concept, which inspired modernist visions of a new “Harbour City,” a high-density neighbourhood expected to accommodate some 50,000 new residents in the western harbour, or roughly 7% of Toronto’s population at the time. This was complemented by plans for Metro Centre, a massive commercial and transportation hub along the Railway Lands, as well as Harbour Square, a marquee, multi-million dollar residential and hotel complex to be constructed at the foot of Yonge Street. As we will see, in the end, each project was either cancelled outright, or only partially implemented, as legal challenges and changes in political leadership brought each project back to the drawing board.⁹

Figure 1.4. Three Eras of Waterfront Planning in Toronto.

Source: Composed by author.

The second era, encompassing 1972-1988, centred on the city planning department’s decade-long struggle to produce and carry out the 1984 Central Waterfront Plan. Far from endorsing the grandiose mega projects of the previous era, the 1984 Plan focused instead on incremental improvements to the public realm, including new walkways, boardwalks,

⁹ As one wry editorialist put it at the time “Models were built, drawings done, debates begun, plans made and then… zap, the whole project was obliterated” (1972d).
and parklands, as well as efforts to encourage job growth in the eastern harbour via industrial intensification. It was also meant to complement plans for Harbourfront, a federal project first announced during the 1972 election campaign, which began as an urban park, then was restyled as a mixed-use community and cultural centre. Again, though, development sputtered, crippled in part by a laborious consultation and review process. Some fifteen years after work on the Central Waterfront Plan first began, the bulk of the shoreline remained closed off to the public, the East Bayfront and Port Lands home only to a scattering of industries. Meanwhile, Harbourfront strayed so far from original plans, and set off such a political firestorm in the process, that it triggered the establishment of a joint federal-provincial Royal Commission on the matter. To this day, the Crombie Commission, as it came to be known, remains the only joint federal-provincial commission of inquiry dedicated to an issue of general public policy in Canadian history — an extraordinary fact given the list of prominent policy issues (health, education, and so on) involving similar intergovernmental considerations.

The third era, from 1988-2000, involved deliberations held as part of the Crombie Commission leading to publication of the 1994 Metro Waterfront Plan, which sought to codify many of Crombie’s key conclusions. Planning efforts during this era emphasized the integrity of existing ecosystems, including the clean-up of contaminated industrial lands and adjacent aquatic areas, and support for mixed-use development in areas not already reserved for industrial uses. Once more, however, results were disappointing. Under prevailing conditions of fiscal restraint, city and Metro officials were ill equipped

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10. Technically speaking, four other inquiries have been established as joint federal-provincial initiatives since confederation: the Joint Indian Reserve Commission (1876-81), tasked with allocating aboriginal land titles in British Columbia; the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia (McKenna-McBride Commission, 1913-16), created to settle differences between the federal and provincial governments respecting Indian lands; the Royal Commission on the Ocean Ranger Marine Disaster (1982-85), convened to investigate the events leading to the sinking of an oil rig and its crew off the coast of Newfoundland; and the Commission of Inquiry on the Blood System in Canada (Krever Commission, 1993-97), charged with evaluating the safety of Canada’s blood system after more than 30,000 Canadians were infected with the HIV and Hepatitis C viruses through blood products and transfusions in the 1980s. Unlike the Crombie Commission, however, all four of these inquiries were established as adjudicative bodies intended to ascertain culpability and/or resolve specific legal conflicts, not address broader issues of public policy.

11. To this day, Toronto’s central waterfront continues to face a “staggering number of challenges” related to ecosystem health and the degradation of terrestrial and aquatic resources (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority 2009, iii), and remains listed as an “Area of Concern” by Environment Canada and the International Joint Commission (Environment Canada 2010).
to see the revised Metro Plan through to fruition. The Waterfront Regeneration Trust, a provincial agency established to coordinate implementation across the bioregion, was improperly positioned to assume the role of land developer. Meanwhile, the Toronto Harbour Commission, pestered by calls for its dissolution, was interested only in its own self-preservation.

Unlocking the Puzzle

That waterfront development in Toronto could have proved so elusive for so long is particularly puzzling given prevailing theories of urban politics and governance. Despite marked differences in their analytical approaches, the field’s most influential theoretical paradigms — pluralism, public choice, growth machines, and urban regime analysis — all share a common assumption: that local politics largely revolve around the pursuit of economic growth, and therefore, to a large extent, property development (Pagano and Bowman 1995, 20).\(^\text{12}\) In light of this fundamental consensus, one is left to wonder how such a massive expanse of real estate long recognized as an area with immense redevelopment potential could have contravened such a fundamental tenet of urban development theory, left relatively unexploited by government, private enterprise, or some combination thereof.

As we will see in Chapters Three through Five, the reasons underlying each episode of implementation failure are complex, often contingent on events specific to each planning era. In some cases, projects were out of sync with prevailing investment conditions, including fluctuations in property and credit markets. In others, implementation challenges were the by-products of electoral turnover, or short-term political thinking. When we turn our attention to broader patterns of policy-making, however, as we will in Chapter Six, we can identify one defining obstacle that pervaded

\(^\text{12}\) Such a focus on growth manifests itself to different degrees within each theoretical pedigree. For instance, Dahl’s (1961) early pluralist work is less concerned with issues of urban renewal and development than, say, electoral considerations. That said, Dahl still accepts the pursuit of growth as a central component of urban power. Indeed, in New Haven, Dahl observes that redevelopment policy exhibited a “nonpartisan aura” among local decision makers ([1961] 2005, 118).
planning efforts across all three eras: the fragmentation of land ownership, specifically public land ownership.

From 1961-1998, no less than 81% of all land holdings across the central waterfront were publicly owned. Yet historically, these assets were dispersed across a maze of public agencies, corporations, and authorities nested within four levels of government — or in the unique case of the Toronto Harbour Commission, operating almost completely outside the governmental hierarchy. Few, if any, waterfront redevelopment projects around the world have been attempted amidst the same degree of public land ownership and jurisdictional fragmentation as that which plagued implementation efforts in Toronto. Such fragmentation, specifically across public bodies, added a layer of complexity to the policy process that, I will argue, fundamentally paralyzed redevelopment efforts over the four decades in question. With so many ownership interests involved, each having a clear financial stake in protecting its waterfront assets, the fate of successive redevelopment plans was predisposed to political stalemate — what Scharpf (1988; 2006) refers to as a “joint-decision trap” — pitting the property rights of one government actor against the jurisdictional authority of another. Indeed, no single actor could assert direct influence in the development process without running up against the veto power of rival owners.

Ownership figures were calculated by digitizing and georeferencing land survey maps originally produced by the Toronto Harbour Commission, former City of Toronto property data maps available through the University of Toronto Map and Data Library, municipal property assessments from the City of Toronto Archives, land transfer agreements from the Archives of Ontario, as well as several data sources generously provided by Waterfront Toronto and the Toronto Port Authority. The years 1961 and 1997/98 constitute the maximum range of verifiable data available. For more figures and a full discussion of ownership implications, see Chapter Six; for further methodological information, see Appendix A.

While recognizing that metropolitan and municipal governments in Canada are generally considered a single order of government by federalism scholars, I distinguish between the former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the former (pre-amalgamation) City of Toronto based on a careful reading of their respective policy decisions over the course of my study period.

A full inventory of international waterfront projects is far beyond the scope of this study. Still, a relatively recent study prepared for the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force in 2000 — covering cities such as Dublin, London, New York City, Baltimore, San Francisco, Cape Town, and Cardiff, Wales — appears to confirm that projects involving collaboration between more than two levels of government are exceedingly rare (Urban Strategies Inc. 2000).

For some readers, this depiction calls to mind Tsebelis’ (1995; 2002) “veto player system”, where the number and nature of veto players influence the likelihood of policy change, or equally, Immergut’s (1992) discussion of “veto points” in health care policy. While no doubt valuable frameworks, I prefer to employ Scharpf’s conception of a joint-decision trap because I believe it places greater emphasis on questions of shared authority and their impacts on the broader policy process, as opposed to legislative change alone.

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For most urban scholars, the Toronto case would seem an aberration. The relatively small number of political scientists who study Canadian cities have largely been guided by American models of urban political analysis dominated by the works of Paul Peterson (1981), John Logan and Harvey Molotch (1987), and Clarence Stone, whose seminal book *Regime Politics* (1989) has preoccupied North American urbanists for the better part of two decades (Mossberger and Stoker 2001). These frameworks generally emphasize either the political economic context in which urban governance operates, or the localized political coalitions that influence decision making at the city or neighbourhood level. Oddly, the influence of multiple levels of government in processes of urban development is generally discounted within the literature (Frisken 2007, 29). Attention is instead placed on the dominance of private business interests in the development process. Together, the conclusions reached over the course of this dissertation — informed by extensive archival and documentary analysis, as well as interviews with past and present politicians, political staff, and bureaucrats at all levels of government, urban planners and designers, architects, journalists, and community representatives long involved in waterfront politics (for a full list of participants, see Appendix A) — provide a compelling counter-point to this accepted narrative. As will be demonstrated, Toronto’s waterfront has been dominated by public, not private, interests for decades — a scenario which holds important lessons for an urban politics literature that struggles to appreciate the full array of institutions that drive policy-making at the urban scale.

**Theoretical Considerations**

The following analysis utilizes the conceptual tools of new institutionalism (Hall and Taylor 1996; Lecours 2005), particularly historical institutionalism, which despite being

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17 This, despite mounting evidence that urban development, and particularly waterfront development, is often driven by the public sector. A recent study of Philadelphia Penn’s Landing project, for example, suggests that private sector involvement in waterfront development has been negligible compared to public investments, going back to the mid-1950s (McGovern 2008, fn. 13). Likewise in Chicago, a growing number of special purpose authorities has further empowered public, not private, sector actors in recent waterfront redevelopment efforts (Smith 2010).
ingrained in a large portion of urban research over the last twenty years, has seldom been applied explicitly to the study of urban governance (Lowndes 2001; 2009; Davies and Trounstine 2012). Historical institutionalism refers to a school of thought that emphasizes the historical role of institutions — whether formal, as in organizations of government, or informal, as in the rules, procedures, norms, and conventions embedded in political practice — in determining political outcomes. Institutions, by this account, progressively shape or constrain political interaction, both functionally and normatively, based on the historical footprint of past social and political relations.

The relevance of the institutionalist approach is clear. As O'Toole (2000, 274) explains, “virtually all policies and programs depend on institutional action, and the institutional forms now increasingly common for policy implementation embrace characteristics that extend far beyond the traditional focus on bureaucracy or market.” The urban political arena provides a rich foundation for institutional investigation, as urban policy-making demands active coordination across multiple policy communities, networks, and scales. The historical entanglement of public and quasi-governmental institutions involved in Toronto waterfront development is one such proving ground; as are the institutional implications of land ownership conditions, which as we will see, created a political decision-making environment that constrained the ability of waterfront authorities to carry out successive redevelopment plans.

I also draw from a rich, yet often marginalized, literature on policy implementation. Kickstarted by Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky ([1973] 1979), whose seminal study examined how a politically popular federal employment program in the Oakland area failed to live up to public expectations, studies of implementation have since made considerable empirical and theoretical contributions to the field of public policy (Goggin et al. 1990; O'Toole 2000; Pülzl and Treib 2007). Generally speaking, though, political

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18 The astute reader will notice that whereas earlier I criticize Canadian scholars for relying too heavily on US-based theories of urban politics, this section now builds from mainly American contributions to the field of public policy. In my opinion, this apparent contradiction is justified in that unlike the field of urban politics, where the links between the Canadian and American experiences appear to merit theoretical distinctions (see Garber and Imbroscio 1996; Eidelman and Taylor 2010, 313-15), the conceptual tools and frameworks utilized in the American policy literature — such as policy windows, agenda-setting, punctuated equilibrium, and advocacy coalitions framework — have indeed been shown applicable to the Canadian context (Lertzman, Rayner, and Wilson 1996; Howlett 1998; 2002; Eidelman 2010).
scientists engaged in implementation research have focused their efforts in areas of health policy, education, economic development, and the environment (Saetren 2005). Apart from a select group of geographers and urban planners (Talen 1996; Laurian et al. 2004; Berke et al. 2006), few scholars have studied the implementation of urban development policies writ large. Fewer still have studied the implementation of waterfront development plans (Gordon 2004).

My objectives go beyond merely probing the extent of institutional gridlock plaguing implementation efforts in Toronto. Asking which institutions matter and how, as Pontusson (1995) insists, is no doubt an important task; but we must go further by asking when institutions matter. As Goggin (1986, 335) points out, “we cannot escape the fact that one of implementation's most enduring features is that it is a process: it is an action-oriented phenomenon that, within the context of public bureaucracies, unfolds over time” (emphasis added). My contribution to the policy literature thus lies in investigating the influence of time on processes of policy implementation, a concept that has garnered scant attention across three generations of implementation research (Goggin 1986; O'Toole 2000, 269; Winter 2006, 160) — even less so in studies of urban governance (Rast 2012). In short, I seek to explain how the institutional characteristics of waterfront development in Toronto evolved to obstruct policy implementation in the second half of the twentieth century. Particular attention is paid in Chapter Six to two apparent causal mechanisms — path dependence (Pierson 2004) and sequencing (Haydu 1998) — that help illuminate the largely unexplored policy dynamics involved in processes of urban development.

Finally, the Toronto case forms an intriguing laboratory from which to consider recent advances in the fields of federalism and multilevel governance, the latter of which has begun to gain particular prominence within Canadian urban research as a challenge to the long-standing assumption that local and municipal politics are subordinate to, and

19 This trend is particularly apparent in Canada, where studies of urban public policy are noticeably rare. Exceptions include Fowler and Siegel (2002), Andrew, Graham and Phillips (2003) and Leo (1977; 2002).

20 A surprising revelation given that, as Robert Millward put it to me, “there is no part of the city more political than the waterfront.” Interview, November 15, 2010.
derivative of, federal and provincial dynamics. First coined to describe patterns of decentralization and diffusion of authority evident in 1980s Europe (see Hooghe and Marks 2003; Bache and Flinders 2004a), the study of multilevel governance has since been translated to myriad settings, including Canada’s federal system (Young and Leuprecht 2006; Horak and Young 2012). At the heart of many urban-oriented studies employing the term is a normative assumption that shared authority among multiple governments and non-governmental actors necessarily leads to improved policy outcomes. Several Canadian scholars, such as Bradford (2004; 2005) and Leo (2006), for example, have praised multilevel governance as a promising framework for urban policy-making in Canada. In what follows, however, we will see that there is just as much reason to expect that multilevel systems might instead lead to wholly dysfunctional governing arrangements — what I describe in Chapter Seven as instances of multilevel non-governance. In Toronto, upwards of twenty different departments, agencies, boards, and other special-purpose bodies, spanning all levels of government, held some authority over central waterfront lands at any given time (see Appendix B for a summary list), with only limited results. By exploring the complexities involved in policy coordination among such diverse interests, I hope to add my voice to a small, but growing, group of scholars that draws attention to the limits of multilevel governance as a normative ideal (Peters and Pierre 2004; Papadopoulos 2007).

In all, Toronto’s waterfront provides a dramatic backdrop to explore the political goals, resources, and normative frameworks that have defined each level of government’s urban agenda over time. Why, for example, did the federal government choose to maintain a strong presence on Toronto’s waterfront despite its historical indifference to urban development across the rest of Canada? Conversely, why did the Government of Ontario, which by constitutional right held undisputed authority over urban and municipal affairs, regularly refrain from demonstrating a clear provincial interest in

\[21\] From the 1960s through at least the 1990s, questions of Quebec nationalism and constitutional reform dominated scholarly discourse on federalism (Cameron and Krikorian 2002; Vipond 2008).


\[23\] This total swells to 100 or so across the entire regional waterfront (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1992, xxi).
waterfront regeneration in its largest and most prosperous city? As we will see, the answers to these questions fundamentally challenge prevailing interpretations of federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdiction in Canada.

The Structure of the Argument

“The difficulty in cataloguing the woes of Toronto’s [waterfront],” once noted an incisive editorialist, “is not in finding material, but in knowing where to start” (Globe and Mail 1981). Here, we shall begin by setting the Toronto case in comparative context. Chapter Two situates Toronto’s anomalous characteristics in both theoretical and empirical perspective. We will learn why prevailing theories of urban politics and governance provide such unsatisfactory accounts of the Toronto experience, as well as, briefly, how Toronto’s waterfront compares to model developments in Vancouver, Chicago, New York, London, and Cape Town.

Chapters Three through Five form the empirical core of the dissertation, tracing the waterfront’s history across the three eras of planning noted earlier. Chapter Three reviews the development trajectories of two major planning exercises, the 1967 Metro Plan and 1968 Bold Concept, and three redevelopment projects, Harbour City, Metro Centre, and Harbour Square. Chapter Four illuminates two intersecting story lines at the heart of waterfront planning during the 1970s and early 1980s, the federal government’s Harbourfront project, and the lengthy city-led consultation process culminating in the publication of the 1984 Central Waterfront Plan. Finally, Chapter Five looks back at the establishment and aftermath of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, the early successes and hasty demise of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, and the various political and legal obstacles that inevitably thwarted the 1994 Metro Waterfront Plan.

From there, we take a step back, expanding our field of vision, to consider the fundamental causal conditions underlying implementation failure across all four decades in question. Chapter Six probes the staggering degree of land ownership fragmentation across the central waterfront in as yet uncharted detail. Reflecting on this unique reality, I
argue that conventional implementation research suffers from an excessively programmatic outlook on the policy process, which makes few allowances for what I refer to as the aspirational nature of urban development. I conclude by suggesting that urban development policy constitutes a peculiar sub-species of public policy, subject to an intriguing confluence of path dependent and sequence-driven policy dynamics.

Chapter Seven zeroes in further on the notion of jurisdictional gridlock, investigating the historical influence of multiple orders of government in the waterfront’s turbulent development, and demonstrating how prevailing institutional dynamics defied the standard conception of intergovernmental relations and multilevel governance in Canada. After challenging the temporal and conceptual limits of the multilevel governance framework, I go on to propose a set of defining characteristics that might help describe intergovernmental dysfunction in multilevel systems, what I refer to as a pathology of multilevel non-governance. Finally, in Chapter Eight, I conclude with a brief review of evidence presented, before discussing the practical and theoretical implications of my analysis.
Chapter Two
Urban Waterfront Development: Theory and Practice

[Toronto] is the kind of place that should be a world leader in urbanism... But it chronically fails to build the city that it plans, knows is possible, and even sees built elsewhere.

—Jeb Brugmann (2009, 160)

Why set our analytical sights on Toronto’s waterfront? What is its theoretical significance? What sets it apart in national and international perspective? This chapter seeks to answer these questions in two parts. Part one briefly reviews the urban subfield’s canonical works, their longevity over the past two decades of research, and their application to the study of waterfront redevelopment. Ultimately, I argue that prevailing theories of urban (re)development, most notably the growth machine thesis (Logan and Molotch 1987) and urban regime analytical framework (Stone 1989), are of little value in explaining the Toronto case. Studies of waterfront redevelopment which draw from the literature’s foundational works noticeably fall short of providing a satisfactory account of the Toronto experience. In Toronto, the influence of a pro-growth coalition or dominant urban regime held together by influential private interests was negligible; public rather than private sector actors dominated political contestation.

Part two magnifies these theoretical blind spots by positioning the Toronto case in comparative context. Here, I present five case vignettes of redevelopment efforts realized in Vancouver, Chicago, New York, London, and Cape Town — all cities commonly cited by practitioners and media observers as important waterfront success stories (Brijbassi 2010; Gillespie 1983; Heiman 2008; Hume 2010b; Marshall 2001; Prittie 1999). In Vancouver, an explosion of new residential construction has been achieved over the past two decades in the Coal Harbour and False Creek districts. Chicago’s sterling waterfront park system has cemented its place as a darling of the international planning community. New York’s Battery Park City has turned an empty site on the edge of Lower Manhattan
into a bustling community of 9,000 residents. London’s Docklands has stimulated billions of pounds of economic development in London’s east end. And Cape Town’s Victoria and Alfred Waterfront has become South Africa’s most successful tourist destination. As will be discussed, though, not one of these projects has been completed amidst the same degree of public land ownership fragmentation and associated jurisdictional obstacles as that which plagued redevelopment efforts in Toronto. In short, many of the lessons drawn from so-called model waterfront developments have only limited use in the Toronto case.

**Toronto in Theoretical Perspective**

Many scholars would be surprised to learn that, as one local politics textbook solemnly concludes, “we do not have home-grown theories of local government in Canada” (Graham, Phillips, and Maslove 1998, 19). The reasons for this remain unclear. Perhaps it is a factor of limited scholarly interest in Canadian cities (see Eidelman and Taylor 2010); perhaps it is simply emblematic of the Canadian discipline’s larger aversion to theoretical introspection in general. Whatever the case, Canadian scholars have had to rely on theories of urban development largely derived from US experiences.

**Theorizing Urban Development**

At its core, the study of urban politics and development, like so much of social science, fundamentally revolves around debates over structure versus agency — that is, the theorized causal influence of systemic constraints versus individual or collective political choice (Pierre 1999, 383). At the risk of oversimplifying the diversity of approaches present in the literature, urban political theory can be reduced into three general camps along this continuum: liberal, structuralist, and regime-based analyses (Fainstein 2001, 10).

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24 Consider that the latest textbook on Canadian local government, produced by one of Canada’s leading urban scholars, Andrew Sanction (2011), intentionally excludes, by the author’s own admission, any discussion of urban political theory.
Liberal accounts, most closely associated with pluralist theories (Dahl 1961; Polsby 1963; Wildavsky 1964), and derived mainly from US cases, suggest that urban political power is inherently decentralized among citizens and businesses, who, depending on their material interests and potential resources (finances, access, legitimacy), are capable of mobilizing and influencing local decisions-makers. At times, this may result in elite-dominated decision making; at others, coalitions of leaders representing diverse interests; at others still, complete political fragmentation.

Structuralist approaches, by contrast, suggest that broader socio-economic forces impose significant and far-reaching constraints on local political contestation. Somewhat paradoxically, such economic determinism is manifest in both public choice and neo-Marxist forms. Peterson’s (1981) study of inter-municipal competition, for example, suggests that local politics is rather trivial in the face of persistent economic imperatives. Cities, on account of overwhelming fiscal constraints, are left with little (rational) choice but to actively pursue developmental policies in order to maintain or increase their revenues.

In principle, Logan and Molotch (1987) come to a similar conclusion, albeit from completely different philosophical grounds. For Logan and Molotch, the capitalist system privileges those who, in Marxian terms, pursue property development (collective production) for its exchange value as opposed to its use value. As a result, the local political sphere is dominated by alliances of private developers and public officials that push for development at all costs — what Logan and Molotch label “growth machine” coalitions.25 The urban political economy literature inspired by Logan and Molotch’s analysis, often dubbed the “New Urban Politics,” took flight in the late 1980s and 1990s as scholars began observing a discernible shift in the strategic priority of city governments away from public service provision toward the imperatives of economic competitiveness (Gotham 2001; MacLeod and Jones 2011).

Straddling the line between liberal and structuralist theories is regime analysis (Stone 1989), which has come to form the dominant paradigm in the study of urban politics for

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the better part of two decades (Mossberger and Stoker 2001). At its core, regime analysis stresses the significance of informal relationships between private interests and city governments in overcoming structural or legal constraints. But unlike the growth machine thesis, it does not presuppose the dominance of private capital. Coalitions may indeed be dominated by business interests, but not necessarily so. Different configurations of local governing arrangements can result in different governing agendas (Stoker and Mossberger 1994). It is the persistence of a shared governing agenda over time that signals the presence of a governing “regime” in a given policy domain.

**Theorizing Waterfront Development**

Although variations in the size and scale of redevelopment efforts have made it difficult to discern a reliable and predictable pattern of waterfront revitalization, particularly in North America (Tunbridge 1988, 88), the few theoretically informed studies of waterfront development which have been conducted are noticeably motivated by liberal, structuralist, and regime-based understandings of urban development. Gordon (1997a), for instance, a Canadian planner and historian, implicitly forwards a pluralist analysis of New York’s Battery Park City, a 90-acre residential redevelopment located at the southwestern tip of Manhattan island, to which we will return in greater detail shortly. Gordon, who also studied redevelopment efforts in London, Boston, and even a small section of Toronto’s waterfront known as Harbourfront (to be discussed in Chapter Four), suggests that Battery Park City’s success was contingent on group mobilization across party and class lines — what Keating (1991) describes as “development coalitions” — rather than Logan and Molotch’s growth machine alliance between property developers and governing elites (Gordon 1997b, 78). Waterfront development is thus said to be driven by a consensus, however shallow, between political elites, elements of the private sector, labour, and civil society groups (Gordon 1997b, 65).

McGovern (2008) offers a similar pluralist interpretation of Philadelphia’s recent waterfront revitalization efforts. After examining forty years of planning and political history related to Penn’s Landing, a 35-acre site adjacent to the city’s historic district,
McGovern concludes that the form of waterfront development in Philadelphia has consistently been defined by the core political ideas, values, and beliefs of elected officials. These elite ideologies, as McGovern describes them, were at different times forged from either the strength of various grassroots, community-driven political mobilizations or from the preferences of powerful downtown business interests. Although the latter dominated more often than not, the form and pace of waterfront redevelopment was determined by the organizational clout of these competing camps.

For structuralists such as Malone (1996), waterfronts are better understood as spatial “frontiers” in which macro-level structural forces take form. The same processes of economic restructuring that define the broader political economy of the city invariably operate within the realm of waterfront development. Although the particularities of a given local political system, and the interests operating therein, may mediate the influence of capital from one project to the next, development is ultimately bound by the parameters set by these structural forces (Desfor, Goldrick, and Merrens 1988; 1989). Thus, in instances where planning processes fail, or perhaps operate in a policy vacuum, waterfront development proceeds according to the dominant interests of major landowners — that is, in the interest of private capital. Baltimore’s Inner Harbor revitalization is often mentioned in this regard (Levine 1987).

Those who have embraced the urban regime framework in their analyses of waterfront development seek to reconcile the notion of interest group contestation with structural accounts by acknowledging the boundaries of political decision making defined by economic circumstances. As Fainstein (2001) concludes in her study of property development in London and New York — a decidedly modest endorsement of Stone’s framework — which includes examinations of Docklands and Battery Park City projects discussed below, economic forces alone cannot explain patterns of waterfront development. Given conditions of extreme uncertainty, Fainstein explains, real estate developers act as proactive agents in local politics; rather than merely react to economic signals, “developers participate in a dynamic process in which they sell themselves to governments, financial institutions, and renters, combat their opponents, and estimate their competitors’ intentions” (25). Such political engagement is not inherently rational or
uniform; only specific developers prosper under certain conditions, and many operate contrary to the long-term interests of their industry. The character of the urban regime — its composition, ideological disposition, and the political-economic context in which it operates — therefore restricts the range of political activities and policy alternatives.

*Toronto’s Waterfront and the Limits of Urban Development Theory*

The Toronto case defies conventional liberal, structuralist, and regime-based theories of urban development in three respects. First, each theoretical framework anticipates that at least one form of development coalition, growth machine, or urban regime will likely coalesce into a functional governing paradigm. From a liberal perspective, for instance, one would have expected that, despite predictable contestation, local decision makers in Toronto would have eventually converged on a single planning vision for implementation. This is what scholars such as Gordon (1997b, 66) have observed in cities like Boston, where despite delays, a development coalition ultimately came together at a certain point based on general agreement among those involved that “something had to be done” to redevelop the harbour.

Of course, common sense alone tells us that the mere recognition of a policy problem is hardly enough to inspire its constructive solution. In this regard, the growth machine thesis and regime analysis offer far more realistic accounts of when and how governing coalitions form. But this is only the case where such coalitions actually materialize. All three approaches struggle to explain cases mired by long histories of political dysfunction, such as Toronto, where impediments to development carried on for decades without a clear resolution. Put bluntly, if an urban regime is defined as a sustained governing relationship held together over a long period of time (Stone 1989, 181), then Toronto’s waterfront experience may well be best described as a case completely devoid of a functioning regime.

Second, liberal, structuralist, and regime frameworks consistently undervalue political institutions operating outside the local arena. All too often, American urban political scholars discount the role and influence of multiple levels of government in urban affairs,
instead stressing the importance of specifically local alliances between private sector elites and local government officials.²⁶ With few exceptions (Pagano 2009), the US subfield has given short shrift to questions of federalism and multilevel governance, particularly as they pertain to property development.

Of the three approaches in question, regime analysis is perhaps most vulnerable to this line of criticism, especially in the Canadian context. Simply put, one cannot speak of urban politics and policy in Canada without immediately invoking the spectre of provincial power over local affairs. The history of local governance in Canada is fundamentally connected to political events and decisions made at the regional, provincial, and even national levels. Likewise, waterfront politics in Toronto have always involved political considerations that stretch well beyond city limits; the influence of all four levels of government (prior to 1998) is evident throughout Toronto’s waterfront history. To overlook this simple fact, intentionally or otherwise, severely weakens the utility of the regime framework in Toronto (and perhaps Canada more generally).²⁷

This brings us to the third and final critique of mainstream theories derived from the US experience: that all three literatures share a common weakness with respect to the role and influence each ascribes to private sector interests in the development process. This liability is particularly pronounced in the growth machine literature, which presumes that the benefits of growth are nearly always skewed in favour of landowning elites, known as rentiers (Holupka and Shlay 1993, 180). Again, the Toronto case clashes with such accounts. From the structuralist’s point of view, one would have expected waterfront redevelopment to be driven by private developers eager to exploit an area ripe for

²⁶ Neil Brenner (2009) provides a version of this critique when suggesting that the study of urban governance suffers from a form of “methodological localism.” For Brenner, treating the city as an isolated political entity prevents us from understanding the city in the context of larger political forces, such as globalization. Brenner’s point is that national or extra-local considerations are often inappropriately and unjustifiably taken as self-evident background conditions in urban politics, rather than suitable subjects of study in themselves. My point is rather different: that urban theory has historically had little to say about federalism as an institutional structure despite its important influence on urban development.

²⁷ This is not to say that Stone’s pioneering work in Atlanta completely neglects the intergovernmental context in which the informal governing regime operated. Regime Politics (1989) does speak to the federal government’s role in empowering Black Atlanta via civil rights legislation and court-ordered school desegregation, as well as occasional financial support from the State of Georgia for mega projects, such as the Georgia World Congress Center. Still, it is fair to say that Stone does not emphasize the importance of federalism as a constraint to urban politics.
potential profit. The powerful ideology of “value-free” development which underpins the growth machine should have driven both governments and the private sector to move quickly. As we will see below, this was evident in several marquee international cases, such as Cape Town, but curiously, not Toronto. The “place entrepreneurs” identified by Logan and Molotch were for long stretches of time conspicuously absent from the political storyline in Toronto.

The extent of public land ownership across Toronto’s waterfront severely undercut the potential influence of private interests. Local developers — to say nothing of foreign interests — had little leverage to insert themselves into ongoing political negotiations. To therefore suggest, as we might expect from a structuralist interpretation, that all public actors involved in Toronto’s waterfront development were somehow at the mercy of capital seems rather far-fetched. Perhaps in cases such as London’s Docklands development, where public land was essentially handed over to private developers by the Thatcher government in one fell swoop, this line of reasoning holds water. But in cities like Toronto, where land ownership was — and continues to be — so highly fragmented across public agencies, with so little private sector influence, structuralist explanations leave much to be desired.

The regime framework, which emphasizes the importance of informal relationships between public officials and the private sector, similarly falls victim to this bias, albeit to a lesser degree. As Kantor and Savitch (2005, 140) explain, regime analysis “assumes a large role for private sector interests and business in urban decision making.” In order to achieve anything beyond straightforward policies, goes the argument, city leaders need the support of powerful private interests — most often business groups, but in some cases labour organizations or community leaders — and must court them accordingly. While the regime framework acknowledges that local regimes may have diverse agendas (Stone 1993), the viability of these regimes is said to depend on private sector capacity. At the very least, the Toronto experience suggests this premise should not be taken for granted.
**Theoretical Reflections**

Many of the limitations inherent in theories drawn from the American experience outlined here are not new revelations. European applications of the growth machine and regime concepts, in particular, have raised similar concerns. Without doubt, the strongest critiques come from Britain, where growth machines and urban regimes attracted attention during the 1980s, a period when Prime Minister Thatcher’s political reforms led many observers to believe that the UK was heading toward a system of urban governance more typically found in the US. These appraisals fall into two camps. First are those which accept the utility of US frameworks in principle, so long as scholars expressly acknowledge the contextual differences between British and American urban politics. This means accounting for the unique composition and limited influence of business interests in the British development process, the lack of local autonomy in terms of land-use planning and fiscal capacity, as well as the historical extent of central government intrusion in local decision making (Ward 1996; Harding 1999; Harding, Wilks-Heeg, and Hutchins 2000; Sellers 2002) — all characteristics at least partly relevant to the Canadian context. Others reject their utility outright (Bassett 1996; Davies 2003; Wood 2004). For these critics, theories which draw abstractions from the political, economic, and social aspects of the American city have, as Pierre (2005, 450) describes it, “come to the end of the line” in terms of helping to explain urban governance dynamics in other parts of the world.

Curiously, while European investigations have spawned a relatively robust collection of comparative research, Canadian perspectives on this debate are few and far between. The regime literature, for instance, has found little purchase in Canadian urban political science (Taylor and Eidelman 2010, 971). The only published exchange debating the utility of regime analysis in the Canadian context was brief and ended without resolution (Cobban 2003a; Leo 2003; Cobban 2003b). The growth machine model, for its part, has inspired a richer repertoire of Canadian political scholarship. The growth-at-all-costs

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28 Though Kristin Good’s (2009) recently acclaimed study of immigrant integration policies in Canadian municipalities suggests that the concept of urban regimes may finally be gaining greater traction.
agenda scrutinized by Logan and Molotch is clearly evident in the policies and practices of many Canadian municipalities, and has accordingly been raised in the development literature (Leo and Anderson 2006). But its uptake has been limited, overshadowed by a focus among critical scholars on urban neoliberalism (for example, Boudreau, Keil, and Young 2009).

Of course, the Toronto case alone is not enough from which to begin building a general theory of urban politics in Canada. But as an “extreme” or “deviant” case (Gerring 2007, 89), it does suggest new avenues for theoretical reflection. One such line of inquiry centres on the influence of public ownership in urban development. As the following section describes, Toronto is rather exceptional in national and international context regarding the degree to which control over waterfront land was concentrated across an array of public ownership interests.

**Toronto in Comparative Context**

Those who lament the state of Toronto’s waterfront invariably point to numerous national and international examples of waterfront cities that seemingly “got it right.” Depending on one’s architectural taste, the list is endless. That said, five cities in particular — Vancouver, Chicago, New York, London, and Cape Town — stand out as useful comparators to illustrate the distinctiveness of Toronto’s waterfront experience.

**Vancouver**

Apart from Toronto, the largest waterfront revitalization project in Canada over recent decades has taken place in Vancouver, concentrated in three downtown areas known as False Creek North, Coal Harbour, and False Creek South (Figure 2.1), which together total approximately 550 acres (225 hectares). Proposals for False Creek North were first submitted in 1969. At the time, the land was owned entirely by Marathon Realty Corporation, the property arm of the privately owned Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway, which decided to move its rail yards out of the city centre, east to Port Coquitlam.
Negotiations between Marathon and the city, which had to approve of any new development, remained stalled for nearly a decade; the two sides could not agree on a specific vision for the site. In 1978, provincial Premier Bill Bennett (Social Credit) stepped in and purchased the land from Marathon to build a large sports stadium and recreational facilities for Expo ’86. Reports at the time suggested Bennett was motivated by his government’s low standing in the polls and the prospect of electoral gains in the Vancouver area (Punter 2003, 188).

Figure 2.1. Vancouver’s Waterfront.

Source: Composed by author.

BC Place Stadium and Expo ’86 facilities were completed shortly thereafter in the eastern section of the district, but not without raising the ire of local community groups. Sensing public discontent, and cognizant of the financial risks involved in overseeing further redevelopment, the province sold the remaining lands to Li Ka-shing, a wealthy Hong-Kong-based developer, in 1987. Li reportedly paid $320 million for the properties,

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29 Interesting aside: Marathon’s chief negotiator at the time was Gordon Campbell, future Vancouver mayor (1986-1993) and provincial premier (2001-2011).
based on a $50 million downpayment, annual payments of $10 million between 1995-2003, and a final payment of $180 million in 2003, all without interest charges (Gutstein 1990, 136; Olds 1995, 1723). Just three years later, in 1990, when official plans for the area, dubbed Concord Place, were formally approved by city council, the site was already worth more than $1 billion. With such impressive profit potential, development proceeded quickly. The Yaletown, Roundhouse, and Beach neighbourhoods were largely completed in just over a decade, thanks in part to favourable market conditions at the time, a pro-development council, and the leadership of Mayor Campbell, whose past experience as a representative for Marathon Developments helped establish good ties between Li’s Concord Pacific group and the city.

Similar to False Creek North, plans for Coal Harbour, located along the shore of the Burrard Inlet on the northern edge of Vancouver’s downtown peninsula, were also approved in final form in 1990. Here, Marathon managed to retain majority ownership of the area while coming to agreement with the city on planning objectives. Despite being only one-third the size of False Creek North, development in Coal Harbour was slowed by poor demand for top-end residential condominiums. Nevertheless, by 2003, False Creek North and Coal Harbour had together added 12,200 units and roughly 20,400 new residents to the downtown core, making the areas “among the most successful large-scale redevelopment projects anywhere in North America” (Punter 2003, 232).

The same, however, cannot be said for False Creek South. Lands here were entirely owned by the City of Vancouver, which due to the high cost of land remediation, was hesitant to move forward with redevelopment plans without the help of other levels of government. Unfortunately, with the exception of the 1970s refurbishment of Granville Island, led by the federal Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, senior governments generally refrained from asserting themselves in the area. The federal government’s experimentation with the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs ended quickly in 1979 (see Oberlander and Fallick 1987), and as mentioned, the province stepped away from the waterfront in the late 1980s. With the city left to its own devices — that is to say, without

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30 It should be noted that certain parcels in the area were in fact owned by the federal port authority and the Greater Vancouver Regional District, but these properties did not conflict with the scope of Marathon’s development proposals.
the fiscal capacity to spearhead such a large capital project — revitalization came to a crawl. Not until the promise of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, and the firm commitment from provincial and federal governments to invest in the area, did efforts ramp up once more. The recently completed Olympic Village located in the South East portion of the area is expected to house roughly 4,000 residents once unit sales are completed in the next couple of years.

**Chicago**

For years, Torontonians have viewed their waterfront in light of Chicago’s perceived successes. As early as 1964, Toronto planners lauded Chicago’s lakefront (Figure 2.2), spanning some 800 acres (320 hectares), as “one of the better waterfronts on this continent” (Edmunds 1964). Like Toronto, the majority of Chicago’s central lakefront is in fact lake fill. But the build out of this area began much earlier than in Toronto. This was enabled by federally funded infrastructure improvements in the mid 1800s at the mouth of the Calumet River, 20 km south of downtown Chicago, which helped lure various steel, chemical, and petroleum industries away from the downtown core, sparing the central lakefront from the type of heavy cargo operations envisioned for Toronto’s Port Lands in the early 1900s.
Figure 2.2. Chicago’s Lakefront.

The jewel of Chicago’s modern lakefront remains Grant Park, a lush and enjoyable green space in the heart of the city whose genesis has become part of local folklore. The tract of land that would eventually become Grant Park (called Lake Park in 1847) was originally deeded to the State of Illinois and the Michigan Canal Commissioners in 1835 (Grinnell 2004). The surveyors charged with facilitating the land transfer designated the shallow waters which would later form the area as “public ground—a common to remain forever open, clear, and free of any buildings, or other obstruction whatever” (qtd. in Wille 1991, xxi). For nearly forty years, it remained home only to various squatters, littered with refuse as gradual lake filling continued. Beginning in the early 1870s, however, the Illinois Central Railroad began lobbying the state for permission to use a small stretch of lake fill adjacent to Grant Park to connect to the city’s central terminal. What seemed like a trivial request soon turned into a legal saga.

Aaron Montgomery Ward, founder of the world’s first mail-order business, worked in offices on Michigan Ave., which overlooked Grant Park. Frustrated by years of neglect toward the park, Ward initiated legal action against both the state and local authorities, demanding that it be cleaned up and preserved in perpetuity, in keeping with the original
surveyors’ intentions. Ward spent roughly US$50,000 (over $1 million in today’s dollars) in legal fees to protect the park (Wille 1991, 72). In 1911, after twenty years of appeals and countersuits, the Illinois Supreme Court reached its final decision: in keeping with the original deed, the land in question was to remain forever open to the public, clear and free of any development. Ward was vindicated. The state was forced to transfer complete authority and title over lakefront land and water lots to the local parks commissions (Wille 1991, 76).

With ownership and authority firmly entrenched at the local level, Chicago’s pre-eminent urban visionary, Daniel Burnham, moved forward with his now famous Chicago Plan. The plan called for the creation of a belt of islands, lagoons, and peninsulas with playgrounds, bicycle paths, and gardens connecting Lincoln Park, in the north, and Jackson Park, in the south, including a “great meadow” with sports facilities. The city approved the plan and issued a lakefront ordinance in July 1919 to begin construction. Unfortunately, the impact of the Great Depression spoiled much of Burnham’s original vision: the string of park islands was started — paid for by a $20 million bond issue approved by voters — but never completed; the meadow intended for sporting events ultimately ended up as Soldier’s Field, an awkward venue with poor sight lines, surrounded by acres of parking lots.

Despite these stumbling blocks, the legal and planning precedents set by Ward and Burnham, respectively, established a strong and enduring foundation for future development. The Lakefront Plan of 1972, for instance, was clear in re-affirming the principle that “the entire Chicago shoreline should be publicly owned, *locally controlled*, and devoted to public purposes to the greatest extent possible” (Chicago 1972, 17; emphasis added). This is not to say that local ownership guaranteed successful waterfront outcomes. Three separate mayors, for instance, failed in various efforts to redevelop Navy Pier between 1979-89 (Smith 2010, 436). Only that it made it possible for the city to pursue its own planning priorities free from state or federal incursions. The recent rebirth of both Navy Pier and Millennium Park (adjacent to Grant Park) in the 1990s (see Gilfoyle 2006; Bukowski 1996), for instance, was initiated by Mayor Richard M. Daley with little state or federal involvement.
**New York: Battery Park City**

Battery Park City, a 92 acre (37 hectare) site located at the southwestern tip of Manhattan, was built on empty, city-owned landfill excavated during the construction of the World Trade Center in the 1960s (Figure 2.3). Plans for the area, roughly equivalent in size to Toronto’s West Don Lands district, were initially negotiated between the State and City of New York beginning in 1966 at the behest of then Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Talks centred on the proportion of low income housing units, the distribution of financial returns, and the most fundamental sticking point, whether the state should have control over city-owned property. A deal was struck and approved in 1969: the state would take over development of Battery Park City in exchange for financial guarantees that the state-led development agency would pay the city ground rents and payments in lieu of taxes, as well as surplus revenues should the project ever show a profit.

*Figure 2.3. New York’s Battery Park City.*

Source: Composed by author.
The original plan included a 500,000 sq. ft. shopping centre, 5 million sq. ft. of office space, and over 14,000 apartments, with an even split of low-, middle-, and high-income (market rate) units (Gordon 1997a, 33). Site improvements were expected to be complete by 1978, with new buildings set to rise soon after. The process, however, stalled just a few years into the implementation schedule due to poor market conditions and a troubling fiscal climate at city hall and the state legislature. Office and residential property markets collapsed during the recession of 1972-75. After failing to balance its budget, the city soon found itself shut out of bond markets. The state stepped in to assume emergency powers over city finances, but it too was forced to default on various debts. Without sufficient public or private investors capable of assuming the risks involved, Battery Park City sat vacant until the late 1970s, a blank canvas of sand and soil.

In 1979, with fresh administrations at both levels of government, and with signs of economic recovery on the horizon, a new master plan was initiated. The plan recommended a phased residential development, paid for with bridge financing from the state and expected future rents, that better integrated into Lower Manhattan’s surrounding street grid and public realm. This catered to demands from local planners concerned with the immense scale and architectural grandeur of the previous design. With such assurances, the city formally transferred ownership of the land to the state-owned Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) and agreed to cooperate in the design of various property tax incentives and streamline approval processes (Gordon 1997a).

The BPCA was mandated to facilitate property development through various tax abatement incentives, expedited planning processes, and favourable lease arrangements. When public and private capital freed up in the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s, the BPCA was able to quickly move the project ahead as planned. By 1999, Battery Park City was home to over 9,000 residents and 39,000 jobs (Hugh L. Carey Battery Park City Authority 1999, 15). The Authority’s push to maximize profits did ultimately undermine many of the social benefits originally promised by political leaders. What was initially planned as a low- and middle-income community eventually evolved into an “overwhelmingly wealthy, white enclave in an otherwise diverse city” (Kohn 2004, 154). Nevertheless, revenues generated from long-term leases in the area have at least been
directed to affordable housing projects in other neighbourhoods, such as the Bronx and Harlem. In fact, a deal struck between the city and the BPCA in 1999 dedicated a further $600 million in revenues to fund the preservation, rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing across New York (Hugh L. Carey Battery Park City Authority 1999, 36). All in all, as Susan Fainstein, an expert in New York development issues and a highly regarded urban scholar, concludes: “Within the constraints of New York’s political and economic situation [at the time]… it is hard to imagine an alternative strategy for the site that would have resulted in a more desirable outcome” (Fainstein 1994, 185).

**London: Docklands**

London’s Docklands are located on the shores of the Thames River in the city’s east end. Roughly 3,800 acres (1,500 hectares) in size, the area includes districts known as The Isle of Dogs, Surrey Docks, Wapping, and The Royal Docks (Figure 2.4). Much like Toronto, these neighbourhoods experienced severe declines in industrial activity beginning in the 1960s. Manufacturing and port-related jobs in the area dropped from a high of 148,000 in 1951 to just 47,000 in 1981, when the last shipping dock shut down operations (Fainstein 2001, 266). The closing of the docks and related facilities left vast amounts of land either empty or unused, making available the largest area of developable inner-city land in all of Western Europe.

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31 Imrie and Thomas (1999a, 14), among others, suggest the Docklands comprise up to 5,000 acres, or over 2,000 hectares. The methods by which they make this calculation, however, are unclear. In order to maintain consistency between city comparisons, I use my own calculations.
Competing renewal plans for the Docklands were first initiated in the 1970s by successive Conservative and Labour governments. Each envisioned new uses for the area in line with their authors’ ideological predispositions. Under the Heath-led Conservatives (1970-74), plans revolved around massive commercial and private residential projects; under the Wilson and Callaghan Labour governments (1974-79), emphasis was placed on social housing, parks, and manufacturing employment. Both visions, however, required enormous public expenditures. The 1976 Strategic Plan, for instance, developed under the auspices of the Docklands Joint Committee, called for at least £1.1 billion in public money (Foster 1999, 50). With inflation hovering around 20% in the aftermath of a two year recession (1973-75), neither plan fit the political and practical imperatives of fiscal restraint at the time.

Enter Margaret Thatcher, whose election victory in 1979 brought a range of market reforms aimed at alleviating inflation concerns and rising unemployment via a programme of economic liberalism. No area of public policy was left untouched by Thatcher’s laissez-faire turn, not least urban development. The Docklands, home to a population of roughly 40,000 at the time (Imrie and Thomas 1999a, 14), presented an unparalleled opportunity to showcase the power and potential of free market forces for the purposes of economic revitalization. The result was the establishment of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in 1981, the first urban development
corporation in the United Kingdom, and the flagship of Thatcherite urban policy until its dissolution in 1998.

The LDDC’s primary mandate was to promote economic growth based on an ideological commitment to private enterprise. Private sector-led property development was championed as the most effective means of addressing the problem of area-specific deprivation (Edwards 1992, xi). Specific “enterprise zones” were created to entice potential investors with tax exemptions and relaxed planning controls. The 1980 *Local Government, Planning, and Land Act* gave the LDDC the authority to acquire or expropriate whatever land it deemed necessary to accelerate capital investments within its specified jurisdiction (Great Britain 1980, Sec. 142). Emboldened by this unprecedented statutory power, the corporation quickly took possession of lands owned by local councils, consolidated assets from various other public authorities with ownership interests in the area, such as the Port of London Authority, British Rail, and British Gas, and acquired additional, privately owned parcels through “compulsory purchase” (expropriation). These lands were later systematically sold to private developers at values well below market rates in order to stimulate immediate investment.

By all accounts, the LLDC delivered on its primary objectives, producing over 40,000 housing units and attracting £14 billion of private sector capital (Imrie and Thomas 1999a, 25). Canary Wharf, a huge office and retail project hailed as “Wall Street on water” — incidentally designed by Canadian developers Olympia and York — helped London solidify its position as Europe’s premier financial capital. That said, the corporation’s sole emphasis on property development, not social welfare or democratic engagement, came with substantial drawbacks. The project’s reliance on private-sector investment led to excessive speculation and exposure to property market boom and bust cycles. Olympia and York, for instance, was forced into bankruptcy when the property market collapsed in the early 1990s, and Canary Wharf went into receivership. Perhaps more importantly from a policy perspective, the LDDC was also heavily criticized for consistently undermining the legitimate role of local officials and community groups in planning efforts. Public meetings, activity reports, and consultation were rarities, as state intervention and public oversight measures were considered toxic to development. For
several critics, the Docklands project thus symbolized nothing less than the neoliberal demolition of the welfare state (Brownill 1990). But few can dispute that the Docklands underwent dramatic change.

_Cape Town_

The physical history of Cape Town’s waterfront has much in common with Toronto. Major landfill operations completed in the 1940s and 50s and the construction of an elevated waterfront highway in the 1960s effectively cut off the city centre from the water’s edge. By the early 1970s, the historic harbour, known as the Victoria and Alfred waterfront (V&AW, Figure 2.5), “was a no man's land. It was not accessible, it was not visited, and it simply did not hold much meaning for most Capetonians” (Ferreira and Visser 2007, 240). Although partial redevelopment plans surfaced as early as 1971, it was not until the mid-1980s that the city, prompted by the extent of industrial decline in the area, took action. In 1984, Mayor Sol Kreiner struck a Waterfront Steering Committee to consider options for redeveloping the original 220 acre (88 hectare) stretch of fishing docks and heritage buildings (roughly equivalent in size to Harbourfront and the Railway Lands combined), and mounted a campaign to persuade the national government to release ownership control of the Victoria and Alfred Docks, and the Granger Bay area to the north.
Figure 2.5. Cape Town’s Victoria and Alfred Waterfront.

The city’s renewed interest in waterfront redevelopment emerged at an opportune time. It coincided with a nation-wide effort by Transnet (formerly South African Transport Services), the state-owned operator of South Africa’s air, road, rail, and port facilities, which owned a large majority of waterfront lands, toward commercialization and privatization. Increasingly open to the idea of releasing their ownership stake due to ongoing fiscal constraints, the Ministers of Transport Affairs and Environmental Affairs and Tourism, charged Arie Burggraaf, chief engineer for South Africa Harbours, to examine the potential for commercial redevelopment and privatization of South Africa’s major ports in 1985. The Burggraaf Committee, as it came to be known, ultimately endorsed the city’s position that the V&A W should be opened to non-port uses. His final report, released in 1987, recommended a mixed-use redevelopment program for the V&AW, with a focus on retail, tourism and residential development alongside a working harbour, to be realized through a new corporate vehicle acting as both developer and property manager.
V&AW Ltd. thus began operations as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Transnet Ltd in early 1989. It promptly signed planning, financing, and servicing agreements with the City of Cape Town and Transnet in August 1991, and began construction on retail and entertainment facilities at Pier Head precinct soon after. With a national government keen to divest land in the middle of a hot property market, development flourished. By the time a comprehensive memorandum of agreement between the three partners was signed in July 1993, the project had already become Cape Town’s largest shopping and recreation destination (Ferreira and Visser 2007, 233). Phased construction brought further residential, commercial, hotel, and leisure amenities over fifteen years, creating some 11,000 permanent office, retail, and entertainment jobs, and nearly 16,000 temporary construction jobs, while protecting 4,500 jobs in the fishing industry. By 2005, the V&AW was South Africa’s most visited tourist attraction with over 21 million visitors, popular among foreign, domestic, and local visitors alike (Ferreira and Visser 2007, 236-7).

For its proponents, the V&A waterfront is a commercial success story, “fully deserving of its iconic status” (de Tolly 2006, 20). The project relied almost exclusively on private capital — V&AW Ltd. was never offered national or municipal government subsidies — and was explicitly devised to drive development based on market demand (and for that matter, property speculation), not capital expenditure planning. All but R205 million (approx. CAD$300 million) of the R1.88 billion total cost of the project came from private sector investment.\(^\text{32}\) As of 2005, V&AW was the largest individual ratepayer in Cape Town, annually contributing R30 million (almost CAD$6 million) to municipal tax rolls (van Zyl 2005; Ferreira and Visser 2007, 236). Return on investment for its private shareholders was equally dramatic. In September 2006, Transnet (and its pension

\(^{32}\) Such high levels of private investment have not come without drawbacks. Even supporters acknowledge that the Docks represent an up-market destination (de Tolly 2006). One critic has gone so far as to describe the area as a white man’s playground disconnected from “the reality of the city in which it is based” (Worden 1994, 38). Indeed, early stakeholder consultation involved only white organizations and interest groups, such as the chamber of commerce and various tourism associations, and revolved around a romanticized version of cultural heritage that struck many as highly exclusionary toward the city’s black population (Kilian and Dodson 1996).
funds) sold V&AW Ltd. to a UK-Dubai consortium of investment companies for R7.04 billion, or roughly CAD$1.08 billion (de Tolly 2006, 19).

**Empirical Reflections**

Taken together, the five waterfront cities encapsulated above have all avoided the degree of political sclerosis which plagued redevelopment efforts in Toronto due in no small part to favourable, yet distinct, land ownership conditions and jurisdictional circumstances. In all five cases, such considerations were relatively straightforward compared to Toronto, where ownership was so highly fragmented across public actors that coherent planning and development was never completely feasible.

In Vancouver’s Coal Harbour and False Creek North districts, land was historically consolidated in private hands. As such, development proceeded in relatively routine fashion: the developer approached the city, the two parties negotiated certain public benefits, approvals were issued, and with time, construction cranes were erected. Where implementation problems arose, they were generally the product of market dynamics (poor demand for certain housing types) or planning disagreements (provisions for social housing and public amenities), not ownership or jurisdictional concerns. In False Creek South, lands were instead consolidated in local hands. Surprisingly, such local control impeded rather than enabled redevelopment, but only because the city scarcely had the financial resources required to pay for environmental remediation and servicing.

Waterfront lands were also owned by local authorities in New York and Chicago. In New York, however, the city was left with little choice due to fiscal woes but to hand over ownership of Battery Park City to the state. Like Vancouver, it simply could not afford to move forward on its own; transferring title to the state was its only option. Today, the state-controlled BPCA continues to own all of the land in the area. By contrast, in Chicago, the legal precedent established by A. Montgomery Ward’s personal crusade to protect Grant Park in the early 1900s cemented local ownership and authority

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33 The Transnet pension fund took over three-quarters of the company shares in the early 1990s. Exchange rates were estimated using historical data accessed via the Bank of Canada’s online currency converter.
over waterfront lands such that today the city remains the driving force behind lakefront improvements.

In London and Cape Town, redevelopment efforts rested on the acquisition and distribution of land assets by the central state, which in turn either granted or sold these properties to private interests. In Cape Town, the national government elected to transfer its exclusive hold on waterfront assets to a corporate subsidiary, V&AW Ltd., which was then expected to consult with local authorities like any other private developer. In London, an area that began as a scattering of publicly and privately owned properties was consolidated by the Thatcher government under the auspices of the LDDC before being resold to major international developers, such as Olympia & York. Note that such powers were never available to the federal government in Toronto. With constitutional responsibility for local affairs resting solely at the provincial level, the federal government was never able to unilaterally acquire province- or city-owned assets. In fact, the opposite was more often the case: when the city or province tried to move forward on various plans, it was the federal government — or most often, agencies with federal ties, such as the Toronto Harbour Commission or Harbourfront Corp. — that stood in the way.

In sum, what sets Toronto apart from this list of notable waterfront projects is not that so much of Toronto’s waterfront was publicly owned, but that such ownership was so highly fragmented across levels of government and their respective agencies. The degree of land ownership fragmentation and associated jurisdictional obstacles, detailed in Chapter Six, was simply exceptional in comparative perspective. To my knowledge, no other major waterfront project in the developed world involved more than two levels of government owning the lion’s share of property in the area.

**Conclusion**

All told, Toronto’s waterfront is unique from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. With regard to theory, neither liberal, structuralist, or regime-based accounts are particularly germane to the Toronto case, for three reasons. First, each assumes that at least one form of governing coalition, growth machine, or urban regime will likely
coalesce into a functional governing paradigm. This overlooks cases of political
dysfunction, as witnessed in Toronto. Second, all three approaches undervalue political
institutions operating outside the local arena. Each exhibits an overt bias towards local
politics without paying much attention to the intergovernmental context in which these
dynamics take place. Toronto’s waterfront history, on the contrary, necessarily involved
all four levels of government. Lastly, all three literatures privilege the role of private
sector interests in the development process. Yet in Toronto, business had very little
influence in shaping redevelopment efforts on the waterfront. Together, these theoretical
shortcomings call into question the limits of these frameworks and highlight the need for
a more nuanced application of US-based scholarship to the Canadian context.

From an empirical perspective, comparisons with notable international waterfront
projects initiated in Vancouver, Chicago, New York, London, and Cape Town further
underscore the Toronto case’s anomalous qualities. The sheer diversity of public interests
with an ownership stake in the waterfront generated an intractable intergovernmental
scenario which inevitably frustrated progress on the ground. The following three
chapters, which offer an in-depth account of redevelopment efforts in Toronto over a
forty year period, explore the characteristics and consequences of this distinctive political
history in greater detail.
Chapter Three
1960-1972: Modernism and Mega Projects

Everyone conscious of Toronto’s location on the shore of Lake Ontario must from time to time regret the amount of separation between the lakeshore and the urban hinterland, and be concerned with the lack of public access to the shore both from the built up area and from the as yet undeveloped lands.

— Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board (1961, 1)

Toronto at the dawn of the 1960s was a city on the rise, a city of dreams.34 The legacy of Fred “Big Daddy” Gardiner, Toronto’s answer to Robert Moses and Metro’s inaugural chairman from 1954 to 1961, was alive and well (see Colton 1980). Expressways, skyscrapers — these were the symbols of progress. Modernism and mega projects pervaded the planning ethos.35 And the waterfront, long considered “a disgrace” (Toronto Daily Star 1962b) and Toronto’s “most embarrassing asset” (Wood 1963), was next in line for a remake.

Two major planning exercises, the 1967 Metro Plan and 1968 Bold Concept, and three redevelopment projects — Harbour City, Metro Centre, and Harbour Square — emerged during this era, all promising to transform a huge swath of derelict industrial land into a modernist paradise of clean, geometric towers. Yet in the end, not one of the plans or projects was ever fully realized. Harbour City, a 500-acre residential community in the western harbour expected to house up to 50,000 people died at the provincial cabinet table in 1971. Metro Centre, a billion dollar commercial and transportation hub destined for the railway lands, fell prey to a reform-minded council and was only partially completed. Harbour Square, a $250 million apartment and hotel complex at the

34 How golden were these years? The Toronto Maple Leafs, led by Dave Keon, Frank Mahovlich, Red Kelly, Johnny Bower, and the now immortalized Tim Horton, won four Stanley cups between 1962 and 1967. The Leafs have yet to win a single championship since.
35 Some of Toronto’s most iconic modernist landmarks — the Eaton Centre, First Canadian Place, Commerce Court, Scotia Plaza, and the Toronto-Dominion Centre — were all designed during this era.
foot of Yonge St., set off a firestorm of criticism, forcing its developer, Robert Campeau, to abandon the project after completing just one of three phases originally proposed.

**An Exploitable Asset**

The genesis of modern waterfront redevelopment efforts in Toronto beginning in the 1960s can be traced to the release of a report entitled *Towards a Waterfront Plan* in June 1961 (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1961). The report marked the first detailed examination of existing uses, needs and possibilities for the waterfront. For its authors on the Metro Planning Board, the waterfront was a natural asset ripe for exploitation in the pursuit of continued metropolitan growth. “A town which has by nature certain gifts should exploit and display them to advantage,” noted the board. “Toronto has the ravines, the river valleys and above all the lake. Not to use these gifts is wasteful, to spoil them is extravagant” (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1961, 3).

Steeped in the intellectual ambitions of high modernism and the Corbusian ideal (see Hall 1988, Chp. 7; Scott 1998, Chp. 4), city planners sought a new comprehensive plan to capitalize on Toronto’s most valuable asset. Yet with few staff or resources available to the Planning Board to undertake such a complex task alone, the report recommended the establishment of a Metro-wide committee to receive input from all institutional parties with an interest in the area (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1961, 48-49). The new Metropolitan Waterfront Technical Committee, as it came to be known, drew participation from many quarters when it launched in December 1961. The diversity of interests represented by its membership, however, rendered the committee unwieldy and ineffective from the start. It was thus further reorganized into two bodies: an advisory

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36 For an expert overview of waterfront plans prior to the 1960s, see Reeves (1992; 1993).
37 Functionally, the committee involved restructuring the existing Toronto Waterfront Committee, a relatively ineffectual forum established in 1959 to discuss waterfront concerns. Original members included Metro, the city, the province, the Harbour Commission, CN Rail, CP Rail, and the Toronto Civic Historical Society.
committee to generate political support for the plan; and a technical committee of experts responsible for producing a coherent plan and implementation framework.  

The separate Waterfront Advisory and Technical Committees began their work in January 1963. The advisory committee, formally intended to muster political support for the technical committee’s work, met on occasion to follow progress, but contrary to its label, rarely advised. The technical committee instead directed the overall work program, with manpower from the private consulting firm Proctor, Redfern, Bousfield & Bacon. The job of developing a new master plan and coordinating relationships between and among relevant public agencies, departments, and intergovernmental committees fell squarely to the consultant team, which, in keeping with the times, treated the waterfront as an engineering problem rather than a visioning exercise. Port capacity projections, lake fill procedures, soil testing, and fiscal management issues overshadowed any semblance of public input in this endeavour (see Proctor, Redfern, Bousfield & Bacon 1963).

The Metro Plan

After four years of study, the Waterfront Plan for the Metropolitan Area (hereafter the Metro Plan) was released in December 1967. Initial findings and recommendations were based on interviews with 48 officials across 30 different agencies and four municipalities, previously reported as a waterfront “appraisal” in 1963 (Proctor, Redfern, Bousfield & Bacon 1963). Further consultations were conducted with 15 government agencies and departments and eight consulting firms. The research program also included site visits to international waterfront success stories, such as Hamburg, Rotterdam, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Seattle, San Francisco, and Vancouver (Edmunds 1964).

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38 Metro council endorsed the administrative revamp in October 1962 (Metropolitan Toronto 1962). Advisory Committee members included political representatives from Metro area councils, as well as high ranking officials from several public and private agencies such as the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, CN Rail, CP Rail, the Metro Board of Trade, the Community Planning Association of Canada, and the Conservation Council of Ontario. The Technical Committee was comprised of the commissioners of Metro Public Works, Parks, and Planning, the Director of the Metropolitan Conservation Authority, the Harbour Commission’s chief engineer, the Department of Municipal Affairs’ chief planner, and the General Manager of the Ontario Water Resources Commission.
The purpose of the plan was to set out clear goals for the waterfront’s development and to delegate specific implementation responsibilities by geographic sector. The central sector, a close approximation of the central waterfront area on which this dissertation focuses, included lands south of the Gardiner from the CNE grounds to Ashbridge’s Bay. Planning would be led by the Harbour Commission and the experienced hands of THC chief engineer Jack Jones, with advice from the Metro Parks Department. The eastern and western beaches fell to the City Planning Board. Remaining areas beyond the city limits were left to the Metro Planning Board and commissioned consultants (again, Proctor, Redfern, Bousfield, and Bacon).  

Figure 3.1. Design Concept for the Central Waterfront Area, 1967.  

Source: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board (1967).

39 With the formation of the regional municipalities of York (1971) and Durham and Peel (1974), Metro’s general planning jurisdiction was reduced to the boundaries of Metropolitan Toronto, thus impairing its ability to coordinate regional waterfront development across the larger watershed. Implementing authority for the waterfront plan in areas outside the central sector was therefore eventually charged to the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA) via provincial legislative amendments and an agreement signed between Metro and the MTRCA (Metropolitan Toronto 1970; Ontario 1970; 1971).
In each sector, responsible parties were asked to think big, to consider dramatic proposals that would “fire the imagination” and “stimulate the drive to proceed” (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1967). The physical design concept for the central sector (see Figure 3.1), considered “by far the most complex” planning district, included three broad proposals: the creation of a new downtown airport southwest of the main islands to better serve the business community and accommodate inter-city travel using the latest generation of jet aircraft, the DC-9 and Boeing 737; the relocation of shipping and industrial facilities in the western harbour to an expanded eastern port and new, 2.5 km long outer harbour headland expected to double port capacity; and with this relocation, the creation of a showcase Harbour City, a 400-acre high-density residential neighbourhood along the western lakefront. In all, the eastern portion of the inner harbour (today’s East Bayfront and Port Lands) would “retain its present [industrial] character for a considerable period of time,” while the western portion (today’s Harbourfront, Garrison Common, and sections of the Toronto Islands and Central Bayfront) would “undergo radical changes” (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1967, 31; emphasis added).

A Bold Concept

Further details for the central sector were outlined by the Toronto Harbour Commission in a report entitled A Bold Concept for the Development of the Central Waterfront, released on the heels of the Metro Plan in January 1968 (Toronto Harbour Commissioners 1968). The commission’s lead role was only natural, having served as de facto waterfront authority since its establishment in 1911. Its 1912 Waterfront Development Plan, for instance, literally created much of the waterfront we know today. The 1967 Plan was considered the lineal descendant of the 1912 Plan, and therefore emphasized the commission’s central role in redevelopment efforts.

The timing of the institutional endorsement was no accident. By the late 1960s, the commission was falling on tough times. Changes in port operations and technology,

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40 The basic tenets of the plan were first presented to Metro planning staff in 1966 (Fish 1974, 44).
including the shift from bulk cargo to containerization, consolidated trade routes in the world’s largest ports, leaving secondary ports like Toronto behind. The opening of the St. Lawrence seaway in 1959 did little to stem the tide. The impact on THC finances was dramatic. Annual operating balances which had reached over $600,000 in 1960 turned into a loss of $730,000 just ten years later, in 1970. For an organization with a shaky outlook on port growth, a fledgling airport, and little to no access to public subsidies (port operations were financed from shipping and cargo charges and rents alone), the Bold Concept was to be the Harbour Commission’s ticket to financial security.

_Figure 3.2. Harbour City, as Proposed by the Toronto Harbour Commission, 1968._

Source: Toronto Harbour Commissioners (1968, 24).

The success of the Bold Concept rested on the commission’s two greatest assets: the land it already owned, and crucially, the land it could _create_. Harbour City, a high density neighbourhood with expansive green spaces (see Figure 3.2), was explicitly imagined to exploit this strategic advantage. Constructed almost entirely from lake fill, the project

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41 Figures derived from Toronto Harbour Commissioners Annual Reports, 1960-1970.
could be built at a fraction of the cost of conventional developments. This, coupled with expected lease revenues from upwards of 50,000 residential tenants, meant that the commission could finance its new airport (including a fixed link bridge), double port operations, and assemble hundreds of acres of new parkland at virtually no net expense. Projected earnings would easily recover the cost of land reclamation and relocation of industries along the western harbour to the eastern port.

Initial reaction to the commission’s plans were congratulatory. A summary of comments received by the Metro Planning Board noted that the plan was generally “well received” by all solicited stakeholders, including the Community Planning Association of Canada and the Board of Trade (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1968). Even elements of the city bureaucracy typically wary of large-scale development expressed cautious endorsement. Dennis Barker, the city’s chief planner, described the concept as “imaginative and unique” (Toronto 1968, 1996). Support from city council’s powerful old guard — the likes of Mayor William Dennison and aldermen Fred Beavis and David Rotenberg, all of whom held strong ties with the development industry (Sewell 1972, 76; Goldrick 1982, 269) — was almost automatic. Council briskly endorsed the proposal, subject to preparation of secondary plans, in September 1968 (Toronto 1968). Metro council followed suit a month later (Metropolitan Toronto 1968). Everything was on track — that is, until the province caught wind of the plan.

Enter the Province

The Canadian National Exhibition (CNE), a recreational landmark west of the harbour famous for its annual fairs, parades, and entertainment events, was looking for ways to expand its appeal as a destination. In early 1968, the CNE approached the province for assistance. As a project with economic significance for the region, the file landed on the desk of Stanley Randall, Minister of Trade and Development (1968-1971). Randall was the consummate salesman, a tireless promoter of the province and its interests. As Bill

42 Council at the time was extremely friendly to developers. As one indication, not a single major development application was rejected during the following 1969-72 term (Caulfield 1974, 56)
43 Quite literally. Randall began his career selling washing machines.
Davis recalled to me, he was “the kind of person that if he thought something was worth pursuing he went after it.” And so it was with the waterfront. With memories of Montreal’s successful Expo ’67 fresh in mind, Randall convinced then provincial Prime Minister Robarts to construct a new extension to the CNE as a showcase for Ontario.

While investigating legal title to the lands proposed for the Ontario pavilion — known today as Ontario Place — lawyers from the provincial Attorney General’s office stumbled upon a surprising revelation: not only did the province own the land and water lots necessary to move ahead with Ontario Place, it also held a strong ownership claim over lands proposed for the construction of Harbour City (Ramsay 1969). For decades, the Harbour Commission had operated under the assumption that it rightly owned the 600-650 acres of land and water south of Lakeshore Blvd., from Dufferin St. in the west to Bathurst St. in the east. These properties, it claimed, had been properly deeded to it by the federal government as part of Toronto’s “public harbour,” considered within the constitutional ambit of federal jurisdiction. Several land transactions, such as the 1937 federal transfer of 186 acres of land west of the island airport to the commission, rested on this legal premise.

The province now avowed otherwise. In the words of Marshall Pollock, the province’s senior counsel at the time, transactions stemming from the federal government’s perceived jurisdiction in the area were, quite simply, “invalid and without effect” (Ontario 1969, 12). The original Dominion lands granted to the Harbour Commission in fact lay outside the “public harbour” as would have been defined at the time of Confederation. On the basis of actual geography, prevailing statutes, and the terms of a 1962 Canada-Ontario Harbour Agreement, argued Pollock, Toronto’s legal harbour did not in fact include the lands (and water) west of Bathurst St slated for Harbour City. As such, it was the province, not the THC, which held “absolute and undisputed” claim to about 40 percent, or 250, of the 600 acres in question, and “substantial” legal claim to another 200 acres. This would leave just 150 acres to the

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44 Interview, December 22, 2010.
45 Before the election of Bill Davis in 1971, the Premier of Ontario was known as the Prime Minister of Ontario.
commission and the federal government, and only a small strip of land to Metro and the city (Ontario 1970b).

‘It’s Nothing but a Bloody Takeover’

For the first time in over fifty years, the Harbour Commission’s authority over Toronto’s waterfront was being openly challenged. Not surprisingly, the commission was “less than pleased” (Osbaldeston 2008, 56). As one unidentified THC official put it to the press, the province’s stake was “nothing but a bloody takeover” (Toronto Daily Star 1969e). There was little, though, the commission could do to stave off the legal advance. For one, it lacked the financial resources necessary to dispute the province’s claim in court. More importantly, it lacked the political resources necessary to persuade the province to ease its position. The commission had made it clear in meetings with Ontario’s Minister of Lands and Forests, Rene Brunelle, that regardless of the legitimacy of the province’s legal claims, the federal government ultimately bore the responsibility of settling such disputes (Brunelle 1969). But no one from the federal government ever stepped up to defend the commission’s interests.

The Harbour Commission had miscalculated the situation. Department of Transport officials in Ottawa had little interest in the Bold Concept or any of the commission’s plan. They were instead preoccupied with plans for a new regional airport in the area, the Pickering International Airport, intended to alleviate air traffic at Pearson International Airport (then known as Malton).46 The department had considered locating the new airport south of the Toronto Islands, as presented in the Bold Concept, as well as a site east of the eventual outer harbour and Leslie Street Spit, but remained wary of the capital costs involved relative to on-shore locations (Heming 1969). Also concerning were signs of community opposition in the middle- and working-class neighbourhoods potentially affected by any such relocation.

Metro officials, who had already spent $1.5 million on waterfront planning through the Planning Board, were understandably concerned that years of work would go to

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46 Ironically, Pickering International became yet another project that never saw the light of day
waste. Chairman William Allen described the incursion as having a gun pointed at his head. He decried the province’s ploy as “an astounding attempt to grab land that the federal government gave Toronto a century ago” (Toronto Daily Star 1969d). In retaliation, Allen temporarily halted all dump trucks headed to Ontario Place, then under construction (Toronto Daily Star 1969b). The show of strength, however, only ramped up the rhetoric. Randall went one step further, musing that the province's legal case was so strong that it was considering staking a claim to all 5,200 acres of waterfront land from Pickering to Port Credit, an area valued at $1.3 billion, or more than $7.5 billion in today’s dollars (Toronto Daily Star 1969b; 1969d).

The city, realizing that it lacked the wherewithal to get involved in a spat with the province, chose to stay out of the fray. Mayor Dennison went on record to say that Chairman Allen was blowing the issue out of proportion. From the city’s perspective, “as long as someone has the cash and the determination” to develop the lands in question, it did not matter who owned what (Toronto Daily Star 1969d). Given the city’s trivial ownership stake in the proposed development area, what mattered to council was that the lands in question would be subject to municipal planning control and zoning. Federal transport officials had already routinely ignored municipal officials during their operational review of the island airport; the city was worried the province would do the same.

Despite these apparent hostilities, Randall was in fact keen to build consensus around the project. He made it clear through the media that the project would only proceed with support from all parties (Toronto Daily Star 1969c). He also convened at least eleven meetings with the city, Metro, and the Harbour Commission throughout 1969 to work out a mutually agreeable development strategy (Ontario 1969). Characteristically optimistic, Randall was “very excited” about the prospect of reaching a tentative agreement on implementation (Toronto Daily Star 1969a). There is no documentary evidence, however, to suggest that such an agreement was ever reached. Ernie Griffith, then general manager

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47 Requests by the city planning department for further information and direct meetings with relevant federal staff were turned down on several occasions, as evidenced in a series of letters exchanged in the summer of 1969 between Ron Spaxman and Dennis Barker on the city’s end, and D.R. Heming, Director of the Department of Transport’s Air Planning and Research Division. Available at the Archives of Ontario, RG 3-26, B292470, Folder ‘Metro Toronto Waterfront Plan. Municipal Affairs. June-July 1970’.
of the Harbour Commission, denied signing any such deal, telling reporters that he had “no idea what [Randall] was talking about” (Toronto Daily Star 1969e).

A key stumbling block was the establishment of a Harbour City Corporation jointly controlled by the province, the city, and the THC. The exact make-up of this investment vehicle was a topic of considerable contention. Seeking leverage against a dominant provincial government, the city and Harbour Commission forged an informal alliance, producing a joint statement of its expectations and recommendations for the new corporation.48 The province, though, was adamant that as the principal landowner, it should have majority control. Draft legislation upholding the province’s position was circulated in late April 1970, confirming an 11-member board of directors, six appointed by the province, two by the Harbour Commission, two by the city, and one by Metro (Ontario 1970a). If Harbour City was to proceed, it would have to be led by the province. Notice had been served.

Harbour City, Take Two

On May 20, 1970, almost two years after becoming involved in the project, Randall called a press conference to announce the province’s final concept plan, a major revamp of the original THC proposal (Toronto Daily Star 1970d).49 Drawn up by a range of high profile urban thinkers, including Hans Blumenfeld, a well known international planner,

48 The joint city-THC draft position paper, presented to the premier and provincial officials on February 23, 1970, included ten proposals (City of Toronto and Toronto Harbour Commissioners 1970). Key recommendations included: that (1) no single owner should hold majority control of the corporation; (2) the province should own 50% of the shares, the city 25%, and the commission the remaining 25%; and (3) as majority landowner, the province should incur all associated costs of redevelopment — what provincial officials estimated at $500 million (roughly $3 billion in 2012 dollars, adjusted for inflation). Once complete, the lands would be subject to municipal taxes and zoning by-laws.

The province, by contrast, offered a counterproposal recommending a 55% provincial ownership stake (majority control) and a burden sharing arrangement based on proportion of land ownership intended to protect the province from assuming all the risks despite sharing all the potential profits (Ontario 1970b). 49 Coincidentally, on the very same day that Randall took to the microphone in Toronto to publicly announce the province’s Harbour City plan, in Ottawa, Don Jamieson, federal Minister of Transport, rose in the House of Commons to inform Parliament that there would “be no possibility that a new commercial airport [would] be built on the waterfront in the foreseeable future” (qtd. in Toronto Daily Star 1970b). Jet operations simply could not be accommodated at a waterfront location. The timing of Jamieson’s announcement, it turns out, was mere happenstance (Interview, James Ramsay, November 24, 2011). If anything, it simply confirmed that the federal government had had no substantive discussions with the province about plans for the waterfront.
Murray Jones, a planning consultant and former Metro planning chair, and Ontario Place architect Eberhard Zeidler (Craig, Zeidler, & Strong Architects), the plan covered some 1,035 acres of land and water. The Venetian canals and Amsterdam-esque lagoons of the previous design remained, but building heights were dramatically lowered, none exceeding eight storeys (see Figure 3.3). Strict zoning was “liberated” to encourage adaptive uses based on the community’s emerging needs, in keeping with Jane Jacobs’ urban philosophy (Jacobs 1970). It accommodated more families and provided a greater mix of incomes and housing tenure and type (single family, row houses, duplexes, and apartments). And in a dramatic step, neighbourhood streets were to be cut off to cars. With transit no more than a five minute walk away, residents and visitors would have to park either on the mainland or off arterial roads. If all went well, construction would begin in late 1971, with a 12-15 year timetable for construction.
Like the Bold Concept before it, initial reaction to the province’s vision among planners, city officials, and local politicians was encouraging. Jane Jacobs, who had just moved to Toronto from New York and was brought into the design process as a consultant, was naturally exuberant about the proposal, calling it “one of the most interesting and remarkable city districts anywhere in the world,” and “probably the most important advance in planning for cities that has been made in this century” (Jacobs 1970). Mayor Dennison was positively “beaming” according to one news report, confidently declaring that Toronto would soon be “the Venice of North America.” The city’s chief planner, Dennis Barker, called the plan “very attractive… very imaginative…[and] an improvement upon the original plan proposed for the area” (Louttit 1970). Even reform alderman William Kilbourn described the concept as holding “tremendous potential” (Toronto Daily Star 1970e).
According to provincial polling, though, support among the public was mixed, likely influenced by media skepticism. The *Toronto Daily Star* (1970a) described the plan as “seductive,” but loaded with unanswered questions. The *Globe and Mail* (1970) praised the proposal as “admirable” and “unlike anything we’ve come across before,” but lacking in transparency. The sharpest critique came from James Lorimer, a well-known local author and intellectual. According to Lorimer (1970), the project sold by Randall was about more than just a new neighbourhood; it was about “selling power to the province.” From a governance perspective, control would rest firmly in provincial plans:

This is the heart of the contradiction that exists in the Harbour City proposal. Radical, experimental, innovative architecture and planning are being proposed, but the structure which is to implement this plan is exactly the opposite. Although the scheme is described as a great benefit to the city, control over the project is to be taken out of the hands of the city government, taken even farther than it otherwise would be beyond the reach of the citizens (ibid.).

Lorimer’s concern was well-placed. Despite provincial statements to the contrary, Randall was indeed poised to take substantial control of future development in the area. What Lorimer did not realize, however, is that the minister was hardly in a position to actually follow through on his commitments. Unbeknownst to him, Harbour City was on the verge of becoming a non-issue.

**The Province Reverses Course**

Contradictions in government policy are not uncommon. Competing departmental interests and poor information sharing practices often produce conflicting policy priorities. It is hardly surprising, then, that just days before Randall began publicly promoting Harbour City, Prime Minister Robarts, along with Darcy McKeough, then

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50 Interview, James Ramsay, November 24, 2011.
51 Randall made clear to Mayor Dennison in an August 1969 letter that the province’s advance was not meant as an affront to municipal authority over local land use planning. The provincial interest, insisted Randall, was in housing and the promise of adding thousands of family-oriented, middle-income housing units to the city. “Our interest,” noted Randall, “is the same as your own — namely that we achieve the maximum development of the city and maximum benefit for the citizens of the City of Toronto” (Randall 1969, 3).
Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Charles MacNaughton, Minister of Treasury and Economics, released a policy statement which would directly contradict the province’s waterfront vision.

The *Toronto-centred Region Plan* was a land-use strategy for the Greater Toronto Area devised to guide development toward the Toronto region’s eastern municipalities (Ontario 1970). Its goal was to channel investment and balance expected population growth in the region across designated growth nodes. Harbour City, by contrast, sought to centralize an entire year’s population growth in the downtown core.\(^{52}\) Hence the predicament: move forward with Harbour City and endanger a key plank of its regional economic development policy; do the reverse, and jeopardize two years of study, $371,000 in planning expenses, and an opportunity to lead a marquee project in vote-rich Toronto (Ontario 1971).

Timing and electoral imperatives were the deciding factors. After nearly ten years in office, John Robarts was showing signs of fatigue, both physically and politically. The “Chairman of the Board” image which helped Robarts lead three consecutive majority governments had lost its appeal. Ontarians saw Robarts as increasingly “aloof” (McDougall 1986, 276) and “out of touch” (Paikin 2005, 112), leaving his successor, Bill Davis, to take the reins. One of Davis’ first acts after taking office in March 1971 — apart from officially changing his title from Prime Minister to Premier of Ontario — was to commission American pollster Robert Teetor to help define a successful governing strategy. Teetor’s polling was indisputable: Ontarians “were in the mood for something different” — a more decisive, modern leadership style (Hoy 1985, 221). The Progressive Conservative dynasty was then three decades old. To recapture the imaginations of Ontarians, Davis would have to show that he was not afraid to chart his own course.

By most accounts, Davis delivered with a single decision taken in late 1972: cancelling the Spadina Expressway. Planned in the 1950s and 60s as part of a Metro-wide network of highways, the expressway would have bisected several neighbourhoods in the western end of the city known for their historic homes and leafy ravines. Reversing a

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\(^{52}\) An internal memo from the Treasury Department brought this apparent conflict to Prime Minister Robarts’ attention (Macdonald 1970).
decade of provincial endorsements, Davis killed the expressway once and for all. The move was deemed a “political masterstroke” (White 2002), a demonstration of Davis’ “remarkable political acumen” (Paikin 2005, 154). By heeding the call of a small, yet highly organized, group of reform-minded activists and local community members, Davis immediately transformed his “Establishment image into that of the modern sophisticate, a man for all trendies, ready to break with the past” (Hoy 1985, 224). The symbolism was clear. The growth agenda spurred by Robarts, and Gardiner before him, was a thing of the past; the days of the mega project were over.\(^{53}\)

Truth is, the winds of change had reached Queen’s Park well before Spadina. A closer look at provincial cabinet files reveals that it was Harbour City, not Spadina, which marked the first mega project abandoned under Davis’ watch. Indeed, cabinet had moved to formally scrap Harbour City in December 1971 (Ontario 1971), nearly a year before Spadina was even debated. Key to this determination was the departure of Randall as Minister of Trade and Development in March 1971, after deciding not to run in the fall election. Without Randall at the cabinet table, enthusiasm for the project waned.\(^{54}\) As Bill Davis recalled to me: “I had a lot of time for Stanley. But some things weren't totally realistic, and I think there was always this underlying feeling that this could be exciting, but probably wasn't going to happen.”\(^{55}\)

Cabinet was pleased that Randall had secured new land assets for the province. But pursuing the project further would have entailed drawn out political battles — at the very least, with Metro, the city, and the Harbour Commission — that provincial leaders had no appetite to instigate. There was simply no political benefit for the province to move ahead on the file. As one high ranking provincial official expressed to me, unless cabinet was “really prepared to get in there and fight, why bother?”\(^{56}\) And so, in March 1972, Darcy McKeough, appointed provincial treasurer after Davis’ first cabinet shuffle, rose before the legislature to pronounce Harbour City officially dead. The existing island airport

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\(^{53}\) For more on Spadina, see Sewell (1993, 178-80).

\(^{54}\) James Ramsay, Executive Director of the Ministry of Trade and Development’s Special Projects and Planning Division, and Randall’s right-hand man on waterfront issues, vividly recalls cabinet’s pessimism about the project: “I don't think beyond Ontario Place there was any drive by anybody in the government except Randall to really get moving.” Interview, November 24, 2011.

\(^{55}\) Interview, Bill Davis, December 22, 2010.

\(^{56}\) Interview, James Ramsay, November 24, 2011.
would continue operations for “short take-off and landing” (STOL) aircraft, making any further development of Harbour City impossible. This “precludes a Harbour City,” declared McKeough. “Finishes it. Strikes it dead” (Ontario 1972, 48).

**Metro Centre Transforms the Railways**

Around the same time as Harbour City was meeting its demise, another waterfront mega project was making headlines. Metro Centre, encompassing 187 acres in the heart of the downtown core, was originally proposed by a consortium of Canadian National Railways (then a federal crown corporation) and Canadian Pacific Railways (a private corporation) in 1966. The $1 billion project, to be built atop a large rail corridor slicing through the central waterfront, was monumental in scale (see Figure 3.4). Among its many components: the demolition of old Union Station to make way for a new multi-modal transportation hub; the construction of a soaring 1500 ft. transmission tower; a series of octagonal commercial towers accommodating some 50,000 office workers; a hotel and convention centre; and new broadcasting headquarters for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).57

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57 As one might expect, Metro planners were especially enthusiastic about the project, noting its compatibility with the ongoing work of the Waterfront Advisory and Technical Committees and the 1967 Metro Plan (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1970, 12). Metro council subsequently approved the project in December 1970 (Toronto Daily Star 1970c).
Unlike Harbour City, where land ownership was consolidated in provincial hands, all four levels of government had a partial stake in Metro Centre. The majority of the lands were owned by the two railway companies, or leased to Canadian Pacific by the Harbour Commission (City Hall 1971). Plans for the new CBC building and transmission tower were subject to federal approvals from the Departments of Industry and Heritage. Key to the project, though, were 13 acres of land owned by the City of Toronto. The site, home to Union Station, was considered “absolutely necessary for the success of the development” (Sewell 1971b, 75). As such, the city held substantial leverage in the negotiation process.

Formal discussions between the railways and municipal, Metro, provincial, and federal stakeholders began in Summer 1967, at which time the name Metro Centre was
first proposed. The plans weren’t made available to public, however, until December 1968, and only officially presented to city council in March 1969 (de Tolly 1979). At first, the pro-development council saw no need to flex its political muscles, driving the project through Executive Committee with little controversy. The site, after all, was not home to any real local political constituency. The area was a wasteland; even critics agreed it should be redeveloped in some fashion. How that process should proceed, and to what end, however, was another matter altogether.

The Rise of the Reformers

The sheer scale of the Metro Centre proposal created several complications. For one, Toronto’s 1969 Official Plan added the requirement that a “Part II” study be undertaken for the central waterfront (designated in planning documents as the “central harbour area”) before any approvals were handed out. With so many components to the plan, this was sure to create delays. Metro planners, for instance, raised concerns about the cost of extending the subway loop southward to Queens Quay Blvd. The railways then proposed enlarging the existing Union subway stop instead. This, in turn, raised the ire of provincial officials worried about connections to the provincial commuter train system (GO Transit), thus forcing further technical amendments. By the time city council pushed through the necessary approvals in late 1971, three years had gone by.

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58 In attendance at this first meeting were: William Allen, Chairman, Metro Toronto; Margaret Campbell, Controller, City of Toronto; W. Q. Macnee, Deputy Minister of Transport; S. M. Andrews, Project Director for CN/CP Study; R. A. Farrell, Prime Minister’s Department; and W. H. Palmer, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs. Meeting minutes, dated July 12, 1967, available at the Archives of Ontario, RG 3-48, B397411, Binder ‘Meetings No. 4’.

59 Statistics Canada (1973; 1974) reported just twelve inhabitants in the area in 1970.

60 For readers unfamiliar with the planning process in Ontario, a clarification. Official Plans are often approved in two parts. A Part I Official Plan generally defines a municipality’s overarching objectives for a specific planning district, such as the central waterfront. A Part II Official Plan (known as a secondary plan) supplements these objectives by defining specific policies and zoning restrictions on a neighbourhood, site-by-site, or parcel level. Both Part I and II Official Plans require approval from the Minister of Municipal Affairs — and in the case of appeals, the Ontario Municipal Board or cabinet — to obtain full legal status.

61 Council approved the necessary land transfers in May 1971, and subsequent Official Plan amendments in December 1971. The process would have taken longer if not for a meeting convened in October 1971 between Metro Centre representatives and Mayor Dennison, along with the city’s chief planner, solicitor,
Throughout this time, as technical considerations were hashed out, the development remained shrouded in secrecy. Discussions were generally limited only to proponents of the project. Left-of-centre politicians and critics shut out of talks were none too pleased, and made a point to publicly express their displeasure with the process. Some deplored the project as a “downtown commercial extravaganza” concocted by development insiders at the expense of public input (Caulfield 1974, 5).

The most vocal objections came from the new cohort of “reformers” on council — the likes of David Crombie, Karl Jaffary, William Kilbourn, and particularly John Sewell — a group elected, at least in part, to challenge the influence of developers at city hall. The reformers held little formal power in council chambers. What they did possess, however, was a flair for the dramatic. Sewell, considered by many as the *enfant terrible* of city hall at the time, spoke for nearly three hours against Metro Centre at one council meeting, accusing the parties involved of contributing to “the biggest swindle” in Toronto’s history (qtd. in Urquhart 1971). The tactic was grandiose, but deliberate, designed to draw media attention to the lack of transparency and accountability among the project’s supporters. “Our only real power was to expose the bankruptcy and incompetence of the politics used by people like [David] Rotenberg, [William] Dennison, and [Fred] Beavis,” explained Sewell, reflecting on his first term on council in his book, *Up Against City Hall*. “[A]nd I think that was done with some force” (Sewell 1972, 97).

Slowly, but surely, the public began to take notice. Ongoing theatrics surrounding the Spadina Expressway certainly helped. Both projects, after all, were conceived from on high with little citizen involvement. But beyond this general sentiment, the issue which rallied the most attention was the proposed demolition of Union Station. Opened in 1927 and designed in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts style, Union Station had become a cultural landmark close to the hearts of many Torontonians. The threat of it becoming just another afterthought in Toronto’s shameful legacy of heritage destruction mobilized many to the cause. In the spring of 1972, eight groups, including the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, the Confederation of Resident and Ratepayers Associations (CORRA), and a

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and commissioner of development, wherein an agreement was reached to exempt the development from further Part II Official Plan reviews for the central harbour area (*City Hall* 1972a; 1972b; Sewell 1971a).
collection of preservationists calling itself Save Union Station, launched a formal appeal against the development before the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). The OMB serves as a provincial tribunal responsible for adjudicating municipal land-use planning disputes. Importantly, it has the power to overturn development approvals in cases where it can be demonstrated that municipal or provincial planning laws and guidelines have been violated (see Moore 2012).

The preservationists’ effort to avoid demolition rested on the argument that Union Station represented one of Toronto’s greatest historical monuments, on both architectural and cultural grounds. CN and CP, meanwhile, maintained that demolition was crucial to the financial viability of a project which would benefit the city’s transportation infrastructure. They insisted that the necessary returns from office developments could only be achieved by clearing and repurposing the old station. After hearing arguments from both sides, the OMB sided with the railways, endorsing demolition. But strangely, the board elected to withhold outright approval. The rush to push the project through council had brought the plan into conflict with the city’s own guidelines for residential park amenities. The board thus ordered the railways to increase the amount of land dedicated for parks to 30 acres and return for subsequent hearings to reconsider the modifications (Urquhart 1972b).

On paper, the preservationists had suffered a crushing defeat. The board had no apparent qualms about demolishing Union Station. On the ground, though, the decision proved immaterial. The delay generated by the hold order meant that construction — or better said, demolition — could not start as planned. The board rendered its final ruling in October 1972 (Ontario Municipal Board 1972). By the time the developers made the necessary modifications to the original parks plan and were ready to head back to the board, the pro-development council that had initially approved the project was no more. A wave of reform aldermen elected in December 1972 on anti-development platforms, alongside new Mayor David Crombie, had taken their place. No further amendments proposed by CN/CP ever made it through council. The project was eventually withdrawn in 1975. Only the convention centre and transmission tower (better known today as the
CN Tower) were ever completed. Ironically, the tower now serves as Toronto’s most iconic landmark.

Marvo and the Foot of Yonge Street

The third noteworthy mega project to emerge in the 1960s was Harbour Square. Although officially launched in November 1968, the roots of the plan stretch back six years earlier, to the spring of 1962. With the Metro Planning Board engaged in planning studies set to redefine Toronto’s waterfront ambitions, several industries located in the central harbour, such as Victory Soya Mills and the Canada Malting Co., had begun rethinking their long-term futures in the area. Industries previously reliant on port-related clients were fleeing to suburban locations, enticed by lower taxes, cheap land (with plenty of room for expansion), and the prospect of fewer conflicts with neighbouring communities.62

Canada Steamship Lines (CSL) was the first to relocate, selling nine acres of land at the foot of Yonge Street to private developer Leslie Marlowe, president of Marvo Construction, for $3 million in October 1962. The deal was considered a steal by local real estate observers, coming in at less than 1/10 the cost of a similar parcel just a few blocks northward in the financial district (Toronto Daily Star 1962d). It also caught city hall by surprise. Neither council nor planning staff were consulted before Marlowe went public with his intentions. The city’s planning commissioner at the time, Matthew Lawson, admitted that he “knew nothing more about it than what he had read in the newspapers” (Toronto Daily Star 1962a).63

The Marvo plan called for a 60-storey office tower (to be the tallest in the British commonwealth), a 40-storey hotel, and two 30- and 24-storey apartment buildings

\[62 \text{ City-wide, approximately 2,000 firms and 80,000 jobs migrated to the suburbs between 1951-1971 (City of Toronto Planning Board 1974).} \]

\[63 \text{ Marlowe’s timing was intentional. For the very next day, the City Planning Board released its own waterfront proposal without notice, titled The Core of the Central Waterfront. The plan included a “space-age” complex of hotels, elevated plazas and pedestrian skyways, emphasizing the importance of public access and open spaces, as well as entertainment and recreation facilities. Crucially, it also specified that residential and commercial uses that obstructed lake views, such as those presented by the Marvo project, should be considered “harmful” to successful redevelopment (City of Toronto Planning Board 1962, 9). Clearly, Marlowe had been tipped off and felt the need to get ahead of the city on the issue (Globe and Mail 1962).} \]
Though the lands purchased from CSL were freehold — Marlowe could do with them as he wished — the proposal also involved two parcels under perpetual lease from the Harbour Commission. Marlowe would thus need the THC’s permission to proceed. Like the city, though, the commission was taken aback by this sudden interest in its lakefront assets. It initially declined the proposal, citing reservations about the role of residential uses in what was then an almost exclusively industrial district.

Marlowe was undeterred. First, he hired Walter Gropius, a famous Harvard architect, and Kevin Lynch, an equally high-profile professor of city and regional planning at MIT, to offer endorsements. Second, recognizing the commission’s fiscal vulnerability, he reworked the building plan, boosting the budget to $85 million. In order to demonstrate the potential windfall the commission would be passing up, the revised proposal included four 23- to 28-storey apartment buildings, a 35-storey office tower, and 22-storey hotel. But Marlowe did not stop there. To sweeten the pot, he even threw in a shiny new 10-storey headquarters for the commission.

Lured by the prospect of a new home and new revenues, the commission quickly changed its tune, approving the proposal in November 1963. Two years of legal negotiations with the commission, Metro, and Canada Steamship Lines ensued. Ownership details and requisite property exchanges were secured by the fall of 1965, with construction set to begin in 1966. Yet, in a familiar refrain, shovels never did touch the ground. Delays in the approval and negotiation processes had stretched Marvo’s finances. One of the project’s key lenders, the Atlantic Acceptance Corporation, had declared bankruptcy (Globe and Mail 1968). Desperately hoping to restructure his debts, Marlowe requested, and received, emergency financing from the Harbour Commission. But by December 1967, time had run out. The commission initiated foreclosure proceedings. The project was on the ropes.

64 Lynch’s support was expressed in comments to the Harbour Commission dated Feb. 28, 1964, in which he asserts that the Marvo plan “would be a decided benefit to the city, as a support to the central business district, an increment to the tax base of the city, a decided improvement of public access to and enjoyment of the water and the islands, and as a very special and desirable place to live and work” (qtd. in DeLeo 1997, 3.15).
Campeau Steps In

As one of Canada’s largest private developers, Robert Campeau had deep pockets. Various reports valued his real estate portfolio at more than a billion dollars, with holdings such as Chateau Maisonneuve and Place de Ville — downtown office-hotel complexes in Montreal and Ottawa, respectively — as well as thousands of housing units across Canada (Globe and Mail 1968; Lorimer 1978, 23). With this long line of successes behind him, Campeau took over the Marvo project in November 1968, purchasing all rights and title to the land from Marlowe’s creditors (see DeLeo 1997).

Figure 3.5. Campeau’s Harbour Square Proposal, 1969.


Campeau’s $250 million plan for the site envisioned a complete overhaul of the Marvo proposal (see Figure 3.5). Dubbed Harbour Square, it called for a series of 30-storey cruciform apartment towers expected to house 15,000 residents. These would be flanked by a set of high-rise office towers, a luxury hotel, and a new pedestrian mall
leading to a redesigned Island ferry terminal. So confident was Campeau that the project could start right away that he offered a $500,000 performance bond in the event that construction on phase one did not begin within 30 days of the city signing off.

As it turned out, Campeau’s promises fell on deaf ears. The project languished on the drawing boards for several years waiting for a new round of local approvals. Now that the lands in questions were secured in private hands, it fell to city hall to issue appropriate permits and zoning amendments for the new plan. An agreement between the city, Metro, the THC, and Campeau was signed in November 1969 to press ahead. Yet two years on, in 1971, work had yet to begin. Campeau cited high interest rates at the time, which complicated the business plan. What of the half-million dollar bond Campeau guaranteed the city in such circumstances? As Campeau put it to reporters, that “has all gone by the wayside now. That's all past” (Toronto Daily Star 1971b). The bond was apparently conditional on the city approving the project within six months.

*Figure 3.6. Campeau’s Harbour Square, c. 1977.*

Source: City of Toronto Archives, Series 1465, File 41, Item 8.
Eventually, the project did break ground. With Premier Davis and Mayor Dennison on hand, construction finally began in June 1972 (Toronto Star 1972a). Phase one included a luxury apartment building, completed in June 1974, and the Harbour Castle Hotel, opened in April 1975. Phases two and three, though, never made it past the drawing board. Much like Metro Centre, the anti-growth movement that had swept city hall in 1972 set its sights on Campeau. A Harbour Square Review Committee, chaired by John Sewell, was struck in September 1973 to renegotiate design details based on local concerns. As delays mounted, it became clear that little else would be accomplished under existing political conditions. The project had run its course. By 1977, fifteen years after Marlowe’s initial proposal for the site, and nearly a decade after Campeau had taken over the project, only two buildings were complete (see Figure 3.6).

Conclusion

With the promise of attracting upwards of 100,000 new residents to the waterfront — a 15% jump in Toronto’s population at the time — the Harbour City, Metro Centre, and Harbour Square mega projects epitomized the optimism which permeated city planning in the post-war era. Together, they formed a vision, as one critic put it, of “a vast sterile make-believe city on the water’s edge” (Greenberg 1969) — make believe, not because it could not come true, but because it rested on a naive assumption: that a good plan and a team of engineers was all one needed to turn dreams into reality.

The original design concept for the central waterfront presented in the 1967 Metro Plan involved three key elements: the relocation and expansion of the island airport to accommodate jet traffic; the creation of a new outer headland harbour to double port capacity; and the creation of a residential neighbourhood dubbed Harbour City. Not one of these priorities was fully achieved. The downtown airport was snubbed by federal transport officials because of cost concerns. Construction of an eastern headland — better known today as the Leslie Street Spit — did proceed apace, but ended up as a construction dumpsite, not a breakwater for new port operations envisioned for the outer
Sitting empty for years, the Spit has since evolved into an urban wilderness, host to a remarkable array of flora and fauna — an ecological wonder, certainly, but far from its original conception.

What went wrong? Only a handful of historians and planners have attempted to deconstruct the downfall of Harbour City. In an unpublished thesis, Sanderson (2003) suggests that the Bold Concept failed because it conflicted with public expectations for the waterfront. This is echoed by Malcolm (1981, 19), who cites pollution concerns and community resistance to the island airport’s potential expansion. Osbaldeston (2008, 56) offers another rendition of events, pointing to the lack of cooperation between provincial and municipal officials as the straw that broke the camel’s back.

The political storyline illuminated here pours water on these accounts. While community opposition was certainly real, as evidenced in the anti-growth movement against Spadina, cabinet’s decision to kill Harbour City was not a direct response to public pressure. What’s more, intergovernmental bickering was not a major factor. True, the city “was not enthused” with Harbour City as details were being worked out. But council’s old guard, which dominated the city’s Executive Committee, was certainly ready to support Harbour City without public consultation. It even killed a Special Committee to Study Waterfront Development, chaired by newly-minted reform alderman David Crombie, which had expressed reservations about the project (Crombie 1970).

The demise of the Bold Concept and Harbour City can instead be attributed to two factors: the importance of consolidated land ownership and the impact of Bill Davis’s provincial election victory in 1971. The Bold Concept began as a creation of the Toronto Harbour Commission. But the centrepiece of the plan, Harbour City, was unsuspectingly located on land and water lots technically owned by the provincial government. The province, once it took wind of this, moved to assume control of the project, thus

65 Located far from shore off a little-visited section of the city, construction of the headland attracted virtually no public attention through the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Yet it added hundreds of acres of lakefront property. For more, see Merrens (1988, 100).
66 And those who have, it should be said, too often conflate the THC and provincial versions.
67 Interview, Darcy McKeough, September 15, 2010.
68 Crombie’s version of events, as reported by the Toronto Star: “We were making recommendations that the executive aldermen got upset about. The recommendations included one for careful study of the Harbour City project. It was obvious that the executive aldermen did not want more study because they had already agreed to approve Harbour City” (Urquhart 1972a).
confiscating the Harbour Commission’s only self-financing asset, around which the entire concept for the central waterfront envisioned in the Bold Concept revolved. The provincial takeover, however, came at a politically inopportune time. The Robarts administration was on its way out — Stanley Randall, Harbour City’s only true political champion, along with it. With no champion steering the project through Queen’s Park, the project was abandoned. Premier Davis had other priorities to pursue, and the waterfront was not one of them.69

Metro Centre and Harbour Square succumbed to somewhat different political wounds, but issues of land ownership and political leadership were equally consequential in both cases. With Metro Centre, ownership was highly fragmented across various public and private actors. Though the railways held a majority stake, the city’s sole ownership of Union Station left the project vulnerable to electoral turnover. Technical concerns and coordination issues forced several delays, by which time city hall was overtaken by reformers hell-bent on protecting Union Station from demolition, thus scuttling any further headway. The completion of Harbour Square was similarly hampered by bureaucratic obstacles imposed by council. But only because its developer, Robert Campeau, and particularly Leslie Marlowe before him, endured several years of legal and financial headaches while consolidating the necessary land holdings.

In sum, as one astute commentator put it at the time, the waterfront was seen as “a motherhood issue that everyone favours as a means of reclaiming Lake Ontario as a precious Toronto resource” (Urquhart 1972a). The province had staked its first claim with Ontario Place, which opened to large crowds and rave reviews (Toronto Daily Star 1971c; 1971a). Harbour City, however, was a more complicated project with fewer returns, political and otherwise. The lack of incentives discouraged provincial engagement on the waterfront for another decade, setting an important precedent. For in October 1972, just six months after the demise of Harbour City, and days before the municipal election which brought Mayor Crombie and the reformers to the forefront of local politics, the federal government announced that plans were afoot to purchase and expropriate approximately 100 acres of land for a new development project, dubbed

69 Interview, Bill Davis, December 22, 2010.
Harbourfront — a project so controversial, that it would end up dominating waterfront politics for the next fifteen years.
Chapter Four
1972-1988: Incrementalism and Indignation

Exactly what went wrong behind the Concrete Curtain otherwise known as the Gardiner Expressway might take years to document and 800 pages to analyze.
— Adele Freedman (1987)

October 17, 1972. Federal election season. The ruling Liberals, led by Pierre Trudeau, are struggling through a tough campaign. In search of a high profile project to help shore up local support, Mitchell Sharp, Minister of External Affairs, and well-known Toronto-area MP (Eglinton), assembles the media for an important announcement. The federal government, declares Sharp, is ready to purchase and expropriate 86 acres of waterfront land, from the Terminal Warehouse at York St. to the former site of Maple Leaf Stadium at the foot of Bathurst St (Figure 4.1). The goal: to create an urban park on the water’s edge, a new landmark along the lakeshore for all Torontonians to enjoy.

Few could have predicted the political drama that would ensue. Harbourfront, as the park project came to be known, would go on to consume waterfront politics in Toronto for the next decade and a half, culminating in the creation of a Royal Commission to investigate the controversy. Caught in the crossfire was the 1984 Central Waterfront Plan, a product of nearly twelve years of public consultation intended to improve pedestrian access to the waterfront and remove physical and psychological barriers between the city and the lake. In the end, few of the Plan’s objectives were ever achieved. By the time it was finally approved by city council in 1988, the Harbourfront saga, and the Royal Commission it inspired, had hijacked the process, undercutting the city’s ability to decide its own waterfront future.

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70 The full list of properties pegged for expropriation was not finalized until several years later (Poetschke 1977, 26). The final tally included another 17 acres of water lots.
The Promise of an Urban Park

At the time it was first announced in late 1972, Harbourfront was home to a smattering of port-oriented industries, such as grain mills, warehouses, and truck terminals — an area ripe for redevelopment, certainly, but one few had imagined was of any interest to the federal government. Electoral ambitions, however, had altered the political calculus. In 1968, Trudeau’s Liberals had nearly swept Toronto, taking 18/21 seats in the area, including four of six ridings along the waterfront, en route to a majority government. Just four years later, Trudeau was struggling to maintain his foothold.71 And so, hoping to seize on the anti-development sentiment of the day, senior Toronto-area ministers such as Sharp, Donald Macdonald and Alastair Gillespie hatched a plan to protect Toronto’s long-neglected waterfront from the spectre of unchecked development.72

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71 The Liberals would go on to lose several seats in 1972, holding just 9/21 ridings across Toronto, and three of six on the waterfront, leading to a minority government (Parliament of Canada 2010).
72 The government was quite clearly playing on people’s fears. Across the city, development was flourishing, true. But not at the water’s edge. Of the 11,384 buildings permits issued by the City of Toronto in 1971 — totalling some $325 million in projected investments — only one, a temporary ticket booth for sightseeing boat tours, involved construction on the central waterfront (Urquhart 1972a).
The announcement was timed mere hours before the prime minister’s appearance at a campaign rally at Maple Leaf Gardens. Trudeau had demonstrated increasing concern for urban issues during his first term in power, which spawned a new Ministry of State for Urban Affairs (MSUA) and a Ministry of Public Works more active in land development than in the past (Moore 1974). The regeneration of Granville Island in Vancouver, for example, was one of many high profile projects spearheaded by Public Works at the time. Still, local officials were stunned. Toronto never appeared to be on the federal government’s radar.

The papers ran roughshod over the idea, calling it a “gimmick”, a “goodie,” “candy” for the voting masses. The Liberals, of course, pleaded innocent. “This is not buying votes,” insisted Sharp. “This is a good thing... We saw the opportunity and seized it.”

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73 Secret negotiations to buy the Terminal Warehouse property, the centrepiece of the project, began several months earlier, in May 1972. But the initial search for land titles undertaken by William Teron, head of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, was completed just days before the public announcement.
Industry Minister Alistair Gillespie echoed the thought: “I can't conceive there wouldn't be a warm response to this proposal.” Surely, though, the ministers must have known the city would object to the scheme. The federal government was unilaterally jumping into the waterfront game without consulting the local community. As David Crombie, then battling candidates David Rotenberg and Tony O’Donohue for the mayor’s office, put it to the press: “it's just not good enough for the federal government to come along and play Santa Claus” (Toronto Star 1972c).

Consultation by Committee

The Harbourfront announcement came at a time when the City Planning Board was already reevaluating development in the central waterfront as part of the Official Plan process. Back in 1969, with the province still keen to move ahead with Harbour City, and the railways concentrating on Metro Centre, the board was asked by council to devise a set of overarching objectives to help guide future redevelopment efforts. The board, in its wisdom, kicked the issue back to council, concluding that the task of formulating a vision for the waterfront should instead fall on elected representatives in consultation with the local community. Planners could collect facts, identify important issues, and present various alternatives for consideration, but any final recommendation, argued the board, should come from local residents and representatives from the variety of organizations, agencies, and governments at all levels that had a stake in the area.

The board jump-started the process of community input and stakeholder consultation on waterfront issues in April 1970, when it released a report entitled Objectives for the Development of the Central Waterfront for public comment. Feedback collected was summarized in The Central Waterfront: Alternatives and Conclusions, released in November of the same year, which presented alternative development paths for further

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74 The conclusion was both principled and pragmatic. The city was in the process of hiring numerous planners with strong convictions about community-based decision making. Practically speaking, though, the Planning Board also realized that it was a relatively weak actor within the city bureaucracy. As one observer put it, the board had consistently played “second fiddle” to the Development Department, run by Commissioner Graham Emslie, a product of council’s pro-development leanings at the time (Fish 1974, 66).
The third published study, entitled *The Central Waterfront: Proposal for Planning*, followed a year later. Its central recommendation: the formation of a formal consultation mechanism for the waterfront, known as the Central Waterfront Planning Committee (CWPC).76

The CWPC “was a very strange animal,” recalls Peter de Tolly, the city’s lead waterfront planner at the time.77 Its stated purpose was to help coordinate the multitude of waterfront projects underway and reach consensus on planning objectives for the area that could be enshrined in the city’s Official Plan. In this respect, the process was refreshingly open to new ideas and perspectives. Twenty-six organizations were represented at the CWPC’s first meeting in July 1973, an unconventional mix of political leaders, mid-level bureaucrats, and business associations. Members were drawn from groups as disparate as the Toronto Board of Trade and the Field Naturalists’ Club.78

On paper, the CWPC marked the first genuine attempt to encourage cooperation among the four levels of government. Keep in mind that at the time, the city was considered nothing more than a junior partner in waterfront development. The province’s unilateral flirtation with Harbour City was a clear example of how little power the city held relative to its governmental counterparts. Yet despite their different waterfront visions, all parties agreed that an intergovernmental approach was essential. The city, as ultimate recipient of any eventual redevelopment, was well positioned to coordinate these efforts. The CWPC thus seemed like a logical vehicle for such collaboration, particularly if its recommendations could be formalized in the city’s Official Plan.

75 The two options revolved around the future of the island airport: whether to move ahead with residential redevelopment along the lines of the Harbour City concept, or to extend the islands’ recreational areas.
76 A complementary Technical Committee (CWTC) was also envisioned, consisting of officials from: the City Planning Board, Metro Planning Board, Toronto Harbour Commission, Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Metro Parks Department, and appropriate ministries from provincial and federal governments.
77 Interview, November 22, 2010.
78 The full list of representatives included: the City Planning Board, Ministry of State for Urban Affairs (or local federal MP), the Harbour Commission, Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Toronto Transit Commission, Metro Police, Toronto Board of Trade, Conservation Council of Ontario, Metro Centre Developments Ltd., Metropolitan Toronto Industrial Commission, Toronto Area Boating Council, Community Planning Association of Canada, Confederation of Residents’ and Ratepayers’ Associations (CORRA), ForWARD 9 (residents association), Toronto Citizens for a Better Waterfront, Toronto Island Residents’ Association, Toronto Redevelopment Advisory Council, Ontario Association of Architects, Ontario Sailing Association, Toronto Field Naturalists’ Club, Association of Women Electors, and the Ontario Aviation Council (Fish 1974).
In practice, however, the CWPC was undeniably cumbersome, at times completely unworkable. Beyond the difficulties of managing such a diverse range of actors, the committee suffered from inappropriate levels of representation from government partners — that is to say, few actual decision makers. Political delegates simply reported back to their governing boards or principals at nearly every turn when reviewing committee recommendations. And those agencies that did send people of influence showed little interest in sincere collaboration. The Harbour Commission, true to form, resisted any threats to what it perceived as its statutory authority. Representatives from Metro council and the Metro Planning Board also initially declined participation, citing their commitment to the aforementioned 1967 Metro Waterfront Plan.

Confusion and frustration pervaded committee proceedings at every turn. The reports that did make it out of committee, such as *The Central Waterfront Programme for Planning* (1974), and *Planning Issues* (1974), each informed by a set of exhaustive “Base Reports” (1974-77), were devoid of any actionable items. In a word, they were “toothless.” 79 Committee deliberations should have propelled both Part I and Part II Official Plan amendments, but consensus at the Planning and Technical committee levels proved impossible. 80 Over eight years, the committees would eventually spend a combined $870,000 without ever agreeing to a secondary plan (Wilson 1978, 14).

With every blunder, the waterfront dropped down the city’s list of political priorities. 81 Crombie had campaigned on a new plan for the downtown, the Central Area Plan, that would protect low-rise neighbourhoods, and had little political capital to spare on the waterfront. 82 It was a simple political calculation: now was not the time. “There was enough going on at the waterfront,” recalls Crombie, “and I had enough on the counter.” 83 De Tolly’s waterfront team soon found itself with minimal support. 84 The

79 Personal communication, Peter de Tolly, November 1, 2010.
80 For a recap of differences between Part I versus Part II Official Plans, see note 60, in Chapter Three.
81 The strongest indicator being Crombie’s resignation as CWPC co-chair in March 1974.
82 Although the Central Area Plan did not pertain specifically to the central waterfront, it did include an important stipulation. The plan specifically discouraged large scale redevelopment projects in the city core that did not first go through a secondary plan process, that is to a say, a neighbourhood level study. This would have bearing later on for the CWPC process as well as developments at Harbourfront.
83 Interview, December 6, 2011.
84 In de Tolly’s words, “we lacked the full-frontal political focus given to the Downtown and Neighbourhood processes.” Personal communication, November 1, 2010.
Central Area Plan absorbed nearly all of the planning department’s attention. Those resources not devoted to downtown and neighbourhood planning would soon shift back to Harbourfront.

Harbourfront: From Council to Corporation

Harbourfront had gotten off to a rough start. Implementation was proving tricky. The bulk of the lands in question (47 of 86 acres) was conveniently under federal control via the Harbour Commission. The Ministry of Public Works could strike a deal to acquire the commission’s holdings in exchange for port improvements in the eastern harbour rather easily. The remaining lands, however, were owned by several private firms, including Maple Leaf Mills, Canada Malting Co., and Loblaws Groceteria, and would require expropriation. The initial bill was pegged at $30 million, based on the assumption that several firms were already open to relocation (Canada 1972). But that assumption proved wrong: the final tally came closer to $52 million (Poetschke 1977, 23).

The site sat empty for two years as the expropriation process wore on. Public Works officials made sure to clear the trash and take down various fences, but did little to actually improve the site until it became clear, in 1974, that another election was on the horizon. Almost overnight, a new footpath was built, play areas and craft shops popped up, and a summer program of cultural events was launched. Still, the long-term future of the project was unclear. No one yet had an idea what an “urban park” should actually look like.

“Right from the start,” recalls then alderman and future mayor Art Eggleton, “people had different images of what [was] meant by a ‘park.’” Some envisioned something similar to Chicago’s Grant Park, a lush expanse of grass and trees. Others preferred a more communal, interactive space. City planners, increasingly influenced by the teachings of urban guru Jane Jacobs, were adamant that the area should be planned for

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85 Conveniently, the THC’s leases in the area, to companies such as F&N Yachts, Great Lakes Helicopters, and the Harbour Brick Co, were set to expire in 1974. The Canada Malting Co., which had a lease to 1981, was the only exception (Poetschke 1977, 25).
86 Interview, September 23, 2010.
mixed uses. Their idea was to preserve the area’s industrial character while introducing commercial and recreational facilities. Meanwhile, federal bureaucrats, who had carelessly hired outside planners from Halifax and Montreal to consult on the project — rubbing more salt on the wounds of residents upset with the lack of community consultation — were wary of the costs involved in such a scheme. It was much easier, after all, to clear the land and create a passive park space, à la Chicago. But this would mean handing control to local authorities, which would negate any potential credit if things turned out well.

Whatever the plan, it was becoming increasingly clear that directing the program from Ottawa alone was making matters worse. An Intergovernmental Waterfront Park Committee was formed in April 1973 to reach consensus on Harbourfront’s mandate, but the principals rarely met. The real decisions were still being taken back in Ottawa; the committee was nothing more than a smokescreen. “They [the federal government] don’t tell you anything until you read it in the papers,” complained Metro Chair Paul Godfrey (qtd. in Pappert 1975). Already frustrated by previous waterfront failures (chronicled in Chapter Three), the province permanently pulled out of Harbourfront discussions in 1975.

Harbourfront was becoming a political black eye. Minister of State for Urban Affairs Barney Danson admitted as much, acknowledging that the federal government had not initially taken consultation seriously. The decision to create Harbourfront was taken “in the dying days of the desperate 1972 federal election,” conceded Danson. “At the time we were concerned about secrecy needed to acquire the land,” and so “there wasn't the normal pre-consultation that should have taken place” (Toronto Star 1975). Danson described the project as “a good decision made in an unfortunate situation in an

87 Meetings were supposed to be held between Barney Danson, Minister of State for Urban Affairs, Mayor Crombie, Metro Chair Paul Godfrey, and John White, Ontario’s Minister of Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs. Instead, attendance was more often limited to respective deputies and aides — namely: André Saumier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of State for Urban Affairs; Susan Fish, advisor to Mayor David Crombie; and Tommy Thompson, Metro Parks Commissioner — as part of a complementary steering committee.

88 An excerpt of Darcy McKeough’s letter to Minister Danson explaining the province’s decision was published in the Globe and Mail (Pappert 1975). “Ever since the project was first announced by your government,” wrote McKeough, “there have been a succession of committees that have tried to resolve difficulties as they arose and I feel they have demonstrated that these attempts have not been effective.”
unfortunate way” (Kirkland 1976), and “one of the most valuable white elephants ever acquired” (Globe and Mail 1976).89

Hoping for a fresh start, Danson disbanded the Intergovernmental Waterfront Park Committee in July 1975, replacing it with a new advisory body, dubbed Harbourfront Council. The council comprised fifteen citizen members selected from the community, in addition to the three governmental leaders.90 It was expected to produce a long-range plan for the park by March 1976, a deadline imposed by Treasury Board. More importantly, as Danson (1975) put it to his ministerial counterpart at Public Works, it was also expected to take “a rather heated political situation and make it as non-partisan as possible.”

After just six months of study and deliberation, the council presented its final report to Danson, Metro Chair Godfrey, and Mayor Crombie in January 1976, well ahead of schedule. The basic concept called for a mix of leisure, recreational, cultural, and complementary commercial activities that would enrich and celebrate the “individual identities and creative energies from which the city and Canada draw their strength and character.” Chief among its recommendations was the delegation of development authority to a new Harbourfront Corporation, to be established as a federal crown corporation under Part I of the Canada Corporations Act.91 Short-term financing for baseline infrastructure and landscaping improvements would come from direct federal investment (estimated at $36 million spread over five years). Crucially, medium- and long-term funds would be based on a gradual self-financing model, with the end goal of operational self-sufficiency (Harbourfront Council 1976).

89 Prime Minister Trudeau offered a similar assessment in later years, admitting that the entire idea was “contrived, as I remember the expression, as the ‘blockbuster’ in an area of Toronto where we felt we were weak and where we were losing votes… It was, with hindsight, almost pitiful the way we sort of husbanded these dollars together and we’d gotten some real estate people to put the package together, and how we managed to scrape a few millions here and a few millions there… I think it rebounded on us, and it certainly wasn’t part of my campaign” (qtd. in Radwanski 1978, 263-64).
90 Harbourfront Council members included: James Walker (chair), MP York Centre; Robert Butler, Chairman, Eaton Co.; Joseph Cusimano, Global Television; Robert Doty, Canadian National Railways; Mary Eberts, Assistant Professor of Law, University of Toronto; Gloria Heller, Metro Toronto Library Board; Grant Henderson, Chairman, Metro Toronto and Regional Conservation Authority; Sheila Kieran, Royal Commission on Violence; Ian Macdonald, President, York University; Albert Mercury, Execusearch; Benson Orenstein, Consolidated Hotel Management Ltd.; Walter Pitman, President, Ryerson Polytechnic Institute; Morton Smith, QC; Wendy Willmot, St. Lawrence Centre.
91 An interim board of governors was expected to direct the incorporation process and oversee necessary consultations until March 31, 1978.
Cabinet considered the plan in a series of meetings in Spring 1976. The Ministry of State for Urban Affairs explicitly approved the program, advising that “it is in the federal government's best interests to remove itself from the position of running an urban park” in order to share at least some of the costs with other governments (Ministry of State for Urban Affairs 1976, 12). The province had made clear to MSUA officials that the federal government should hand over the land to Metro, rather than a new bureaucratic entity. But a simple transfer to Metro, or the city for that matter, involved the federal government apportioning corresponding capital grants. Ottawa would be expected to pay for the park, yet have no control over how the funds would be spent. Worse yet, they would not even be able to take credit for the end product.

Heeding the ministry’s original advice, cabinet unceremoniously established Harbourfront as a separate corporation in June 1976. Initial enthusiasm was low. The site was practically deserted for most of the year. Security guards often outnumbered visitors in the main terminal building, even in summer. There was much to be done, but few willing to make things happen. The city was in no rush to proceed, worried by the prospect of turning over a small pocket of land to a federal body that it might never get back (Pappert 1976). The CPWC was still focused on its continuing consultations. Metro’s attention was on the Toronto islands, where it was threatening residents with eviction. Even MSUA officials seemed uninterested, tied up with preparations for the Olympic Games in Montreal. As one headline in the Globe and Mail (Fraser 1976) read: “Are there more than 30 people who really care about Harbourfront?”

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92 Technically speaking, the organization operated under the name 207 Queen’s Quay West Ltd. until its articles of incorporation were amended in July 1978.
93 Metro Toronto assumed control of city-owned sections of the Islands in 1956 with the intention of knocking down some 3,000 homes and cottages to create new park and recreational space. Demolition began at Hanlan’s Point in the 1960s and moved easterly as existing leases expired. By the mid 1970s, only 254 homes remained, concentrated in Ward’s and Algonquin Island. Those still not displaced eventually mounted a spirit public campaign to defend their community (Caulfield 1974, 84-91). A number of court proceedings followed, as well as the establishment of a provincial inquiry to look into the matter (Swadrom 1981). Eventually, provincial legislation was drafted in 1981 protecting the island community from further evictions. For a full account, see Gibson (1984).
A New Development Framework

The turning point for Harbourfront came with the selection of a new board of directors. Benson Orenstein, a holdover from the previous Harbourfront Council with strong Liberal ties, was made chairman. Orenstein represented the only selection that could be described as a simple patronage appointment. The rest of the nine-member board of directors were chosen based on feedback from all four levels of government, the first sign of the federal government’s stated commitment to greater openness. Appointees included Stephen McLaughlin, a key advisor in the mayor’s office, and Barbara McCormick, special assistant to Paul Godfrey. This gave both leaders a direct voice at the board, and helped calm local concerns.

One of the board’s first orders of business was to begin formulating a new long-term strategy to achieve operational self-sufficiency. Key to this endeavour was Howard Cohen, recruited to take over as general manager in July 1978 (Shepherd 1978). An architect by training, Cohen had spent the last eight years as a city planner, making a name for himself confronting urban renewal in Trefann Court, a working class neighbourhood in the city’s east end (see Fraser 1972), and later, as chief of the Planning Board’s community and neighbourhood division. For Cohen, who had never balanced a corporate balance sheet, let alone directed cultural programming events, the challenge of jumpstarting a crown corporation was daunting. Treasury Board was already threatening to cut off funding if not presented with a new business plan. So he surrounded himself with people he could trust, people who had strong reputations for working well with the community — people like Frank Mills and John Doyle, who had earned accolades for their work in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood — and quickly set to work.

94 This is partly why Cohen took the job in the first place. The city’s planning commissioner at the time, Dennis Barker, was suffering from chronic health problems. Cohen had been filling in for Barker on an interim basis, albeit without title, knowing that he would likely be tapped for promotion should Barker step down. Exactly when this might happen, though, remained a mystery. Covering his bases, Cohen applied for the Harbourfront position. Little did he know that Harbourfront would call the very same day Barker finally resigned. “I couldn’t believe it,” remembers Cohen. “It literally happened on the same day. And I agonized [over the decision].” In the end, after seeking advice from friends and colleagues, including Michael Dennis, then Commissioner of Housing, Cohen chose to leave for Harbourfront. The new position offered him room for growth that wasn’t available to him at the city. Looking back, Cohen maintains that “it was the best thing that ever happened to me.” Interview, November 25, 2010.
After only a couple of months together, the new management team presented a Harbourfront Development Framework to the federal government in October 1978. Keeping with Cohen’s community-minded ethos, the framework sought to bring Harbourfront into the existing urban fabric. It proposed a set of flexible principles “responsive to the Toronto context — sensitively scaled open spaces and buildings, and people-oriented planning” (Harbourfront Corporation 1978, 8). It also emphasized a broad mix of uses (including affordable housing), public spaces, and year-round recreational and cultural opportunities. A new street system would help make the area more accessible and pave the way for a range of mid-rise residential buildings, cafés,
restaurants, and boutiques along Queen’s Quay and the water’s edge — in other words, a real, vibrant neighbourhood (Figure 4.2). 95

Cohen spent the early part of 1979 pitching the concept to federal officials. Reaction was positive, but a bizarre electoral drama bogged down approvals for another year. 96 Eventually, he was able to secure cabinet approval for the plan in June 1980 (Canada 1980). The federal government would commit $25.53 million over seven years as seed capital for further infrastructure improvements (Toronto Star 1980). 97 In turn, a “master agreement” outlining a construction schedule and provisions for housing and park space was fast-tracked through city hall by new Mayor John Sewell, who had personally taken an interest in the project (Harbourfront Corporation and the City of Toronto 1980). 98

With only seven years to achieve self-sufficiency, Cohen and his team sprung to action. Despite tense relations with city staff, a number of important milestones were achieved in short order. 99 Olympia & York was selected to oversee the $60 million restoration and renovation of the old Terminal Warehouse building in October 1980, with plans to convert the sterile space into a hive of specialty shops, offices, and condominium residences. 100 Blueprints were completed for an accompanying water’s edge promenade and outdoor amphitheatre along York Quay, paid for by Harbourfront Corporation. And Rampart Enterprises and VKS Developments were selected as lead developers for Spadina Quay.

95 The Framework was vague in terms of population projections, but estimates suggested that the area could house up to 10,000 new residents.
96 Joe Clark’s Progressive Conservatives managed to snatch victory away from Trudeau’s Liberals in the May 1979 federal election, only to lose it seven months later, in December, after the minority government fell on a motion of non-confidence. Trudeau was returned to the Prime Minister’s Office with a majority government in March 1970 and named Paul Cosgrove the new Minister of Public Works.
97 A deadline for self-sufficiency was set for March 1987.
98 Mayor Crombie had resigned in August 1978 to enter federal politics, running as a Progressive Conservative in the riding of Rosedale — which as it happens, included the Harbourfront site. He was elected to the House of Commons in October. Sewell, who had a close relationship with Cohen from their time working together in Trefann Court, was elected mayor in November.
99 Mayor Sewell did not see eye to eye with Stephen McLaughlin, who was made commissioner of the newly amalgamated Planning and Development Department after Cohen turned down the position. In fact, Sewell made it clear to Cohen that, should the need arise, he could always go over McLaughlin’s head to the Mayor’s office. Not surprisingly, relations between Harbourfront and the planning department soured as a result.
100 Olympia & York, the reader might recall from Chapter Two, was owned by the hometown Reichmann family, which would go on to work on London’s Canary Wharf and New York’s Battery Park City.
Leverage was the key concern throughout. As Cohen put it to me, “if you were going to try and develop revenue, you had to do it by using the value of the land.” The corporation had a paltry annual budget averaging less than $4 million. Proceeds from development were the only way to deliver top-calibre event programming and offset the costs of new art galleries and public venues. Only by selling air rights to private developers or drawing revenues from long-term leases could Harbourfront achieve its double mandate — that is, if the market was willing.

Unfortunately, Cohen could not have predicted the rather deep recession that befell Toronto’s economy from 1982-84. Real estate development across the city came to a standstill. Apart from the Terminal Warehouse, which officially opened its doors in June 1983, private sector investment dried up completely. The King’s Landing and Harbour Terrace Condominiums, slated for construction west of Spadina Ave., shut down altogether until the market picked up again in 1985. Regardless, the corporation kept busy, laying the groundwork for later rounds of construction. Agreements were finalized detailing housing provisions, utilities, and a schedule for park construction. Precinct plans were approved for both Spadina and Bathurst Quays. And funding for a waterfront streetcar line across Queens Quay was secured. Hoping for the best, the corporation was prepped to hit the ground running as soon as the economy rebounded.

Central Waterfront Plan in Sight?

The city’s Official Plan process for the central waterfront, meanwhile, was still stuck in neutral. The eight-year long experiment known as the Central Waterfront Planning Committee had run its course. It was a noble idea, but the task of reaching consensus among so many interests proved impossible. Exhausted, de Tolly resigned in May 1979,

101 Two details are important here. First, Harbourfront’s letter of incorporation dictated that title to land held by the federal government could never be sold off to private interests. Second, many of the development agreements were structured to allow deferred payments. The alternative arrangements not only served as an incentive for developers to commence construction as quickly as possible, but also accumulated future revenues to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of cultural programming (Ferguson 1987a).
leaving behind a completed draft of Part II Official Plan amendments for his successor, Simon Chamberlain.  

After several administrative delays — the planning department was being reorganized at the time — the draft plan was finally published in April 1982. Entitled *The Central Waterfront: Proposals*, the 85-page report marked the city’s first comprehensive vision for the waterfront, outlining neighbourhood-level development priorities on a district-by-district basis. The section on Harbourfront reiterated development guidelines previously adopted by council. The rest was completely novel.

Unlike the 1967 Metro Waterfront Plan, the new city plan stressed incremental improvements over dramatic mega projects. Its primary objective was to maximize public uses and access through improvements to the public realm “that benefit the public and bring the city and its waterfront closer together” (City of Toronto 1982, 13). Proposals for the Central Bayfront were a natural extension of plans already approved for Harbourfront, calling for intensification of commercial and residential redevelopment north of Harbour Square (for example, sites along Harbour St.), better pedestrian routes and road improvements, and new park spaces to create lively sidewalks and a more attractive urban environment. More surprising, however, was the suggestion to permit housing development in the East Bayfront (Figure 4.3). With links to Parliament, Sherbourne, and Jarvis Sts., the area boasted easy access to the downtown core and had few heavily polluting industries. It therefore seemed sensible to open it up to residential and commercial uses. Politically, though, the idea was a non-starter, alienating both right- and left-leaning constituencies worried that re-zoning might eliminate or displace many of the estimated 2,300 jobs in the area.

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102 De Tolly would later return to his native South Africa to lead waterfront redevelopments in Cape Town, detailed in Chapter Two.
103 Point of clarification: the *Proposals* report did not include policies for the Railway Lands, which for planning purposes were considered separate.
104 The CWPC had purposefully stayed away from Harbourfront. “What we were interested in were the governing principles behind Harbourfront,” explains de Tolly. And with Cohen at the helm, de Tolly was convinced that the project would complement the city’s interests. Interview, November 22, 2010.
105 Together with the Port Lands, the East Bayfront constituted one of only three remaining industrial districts within city boundaries, and the only area with a substantial quantity of vacant or underutilized land.
The highest profile industrial operation in the district, Redpath Sugar Ltd., emphatically condemned the plan: “There seems to be an irrational compulsion to install residences in the East Bayfront,” exclaimed Tom Chandler, vice-president of manufacturing, in his comments to the city. “We will fight this foolish proposal at every opportunity and with all the forces we can muster” (City of Toronto 1984, 201). Chandler’s concerns were echoed by a long list of detractors, including: the Toronto Board of Trade, the Harbour Commission, CN and CP Rail, and all of Redpath’s industrial neighbours, such as the Toronto Star, Canada Malting Co., Victory Soya Mills, and CanPar Express. The Toronto Labour Council and its affiliated unions were equally perturbed. Since 1951, at least 2,000 industrial firms and 80,000 manufacturing jobs had left the city for suburban locations (City of Toronto Planning Board 1974, 2). The recession was only adding to these totals, with more than 1,000 manufacturing jobs lost each year (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1989, 15). Any rezoning would further decimate the rank and file.

With city council dominated by left-leaning politicians who depended on organized labour for electoral support, aldermen who ordinarily would have been more open to a flexible development strategy were hamstrung. Together, industry and organized labour had “cauterized” the land. The shift to a service economy was well on its way, but few were willing to admit it. “It was like a surreal movie,” recalls David Crombie. “It really was.” The city — both staff and council members — were in complete denial. They simply could not come to terms with the city’s industrial decline. Ken Greenberg, former city planner and urban designer, sums up the mindset: “the intention was honourable — that if we reserve lands for [industrial] uses, or well-paid union jobs in industrial areas, we will get them… but those ideas died really hard.”

106 A less influential list of those supporting new residential redevelopment included: the St. Lawrence Residents Association, the Toronto Island Residents Association, Alderman Jack Layton, and a community group calling itself Stop Contaminating Our Water.
107 In many ways, conditions at the time mirrored those in London’s Docklands, which saw its manufacturing base shrink with economic restructuring that took place through the 60s, 70s, and 80s (see Fainstein 1994, 232).
108 Interview, David Crombie, December 6, 2011.
109 Interview, December 6, 2011.
110 Interview, August 19, 2010.
The final version of the Central Waterfront Plan, released in 1984, removed all mention of housing for the East Bayfront, reaffirming what was essentially an obsolete vision of the local economy. Rather than introduce mixed uses, the plan promised to “encourage and assist the intensification of industrial use[s]” in the eastern harbour and withstand pressures for residential redevelopment (City of Toronto 1984, Sec. 5.A.31). This would complement existing policies intended to stem jobs losses in portions of the Garrison Common district near the Exhibition grounds, and attract new industries to the Port Lands, where plant shutdowns and relocations to suburban locales were already underway. In the end, nothing of the sort actually transpired. Between 1983-2001, manufacturing and related employment declined 44% in the central waterfront area, contributing to a 62% decline across the city.\(^{111}\)

A ‘Battalion’ of Buildings

Back at Harbourfront, Cohen and his team now had a strong mandate to proceed. At city hall, Art Eggleton, who replaced John Sewell as mayor in 1980, was a strong supporter, helping the Harbourfront (Part II) Official Plan breeze through council in September 1981.\(^{112}\) Meanwhile in Ottawa, Brian Mulroney and the Progressive Conservatives finally unseated the ruling Liberals, winning a majority government in the 1984 federal election. The victory brought sweeping changes to Harbourfront’s board of directors. Gone were a balanced mix of federal and local representatives; in were a phalanx of patronage appointees with a penchant for private partnerships. Left untouched, though, was the corporation’s mandate to deliver cultural programming paid for by new development.\(^{113}\)

Such stability made for smooth sailing when the economic skies finally cleared in late 1984. Harbourfront quickly became the the fastest growing neighbourhood in the


\(^{112}\) Alderman Tony O'Donohue registered the sole dissenting vote (Laver 1981).

\(^{113}\) The decision came as a complete surprise to Cohen and company. “We were quaking in our boots” when the Conservatives took office, remembers Cohen. The corporation did everything it could to win over its new keepers, arranging site tours, performances, and lunches with resident artists. Management even added Conservative blue to the corporate logo. “There was no way anyone was going to touch [us].” Interview, November 25, 2010.
city, attracting some $250-300 million in private sector capital (Hurst 1986). By the end of 1986, half of the 30 buildings planned for the area (both new and renovated) were either completed or substantially underway. Successful projects included: King’s Landing, a luxury condominium with more than 100 units ranging from $180,000 to $1 million; Harbour Terrace, with 73 condos priced up to $500,000; and Hotel Admiral, with 157 rooms and 62 luxury condos priced up to $400,000. At least a dozen other buildings were slated for construction over the next decade, with private investment projected to reach $600 million by 1990 (Simon and Simon 1986).

The building bonanza was a boon to Harbourfront’s balance sheet. The corporation declared itself self-sufficient in April 1986, a full year ahead of schedule. Forecasts projected annual income from development revenues to reach $8.4 million by 1990 (York 1986). Officials in Ottawa were naturally impressed. One ministerial assistant went so far as to declare Harbourfront “the most successful crown corporation in Canada” (Corelli 1986).

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114 As a point of reference, the average price for a Toronto home in 1986 was $138,925 (Toronto Real Estate Board 2012).
Such success, however, came with pitfalls. What had originally been pitched as a medium density neighbourhood instead evolved into a “battalion” of high-rise buildings with few public amenities and little park space (Shiner 1986). The push for self-sufficiency had necessitated certain compromises. The economic return on “affordable” housing projects (geared to either low- or middle-income groups) was not viable at low densities — a calculation made even worse in recessionary times. Delays caused by the economic downturn also forced the postponement of public infrastructure improvements.

Critics alleged that the corporation’s preference for high-rise construction was also dictated by a private agreement signed with Marathon Realty, the development arm of CN Rail, which at the time was in the process of reviving development plans for the railway lands north of Harbourfront. Documents obtained by the press indicated that Marathon was working with Harbourfront to ensure that tall, narrow buildings would not obstruct sight lines to the water, thus protecting potential property values (Ferguson 1987c).
Development was effectively proceeding in reverse: buildings were being erected before public amenities.\textsuperscript{116}

*Figure 4.4. Huang and Danczkay’s HarbourPoint Condominiums.*

As construction intensified, public grievances mounted. The original concept illustrations presented in the *Development Framework* had depicted housing complexes in the 8–12 storey range set amidst lush park spaces (Figure 4.2). Somehow, things had “gone a little screwy” (Stein 1987c). A concrete curtain was now rising along the water’s edge (Figure 4.3), best exemplified by HarbourPoint, a $30 million condominium project at John Quay (Figure 4.4). Conceived by local developers Michael Huang and Bela Danczkay, the complex included one 19-storey and two 31-storey towers. Financially, the project was a hit, selling out in just 72 hours (Corelli 1986), and delivering $14.8 million in development revenue to Harbourfront (Harbourfront Corporation 1988). It also met all

\textsuperscript{116} Standard practice is to construct amenities such as parks before building residential units, thereby raising land values and feeding market demand.
the social objectives laid out by councillors and local planners worried that Harbourfront might become a playground for the rich. Its 576 residential units were all moderately priced between $77-98,000 — a rarity for downtown living.

Architecturally, however, HarbourPoint was a lightning rod for discontent, drawing almost universal disdain for being “too big, too ugly, too downtown” (Hurst 1986). Even incoming residents to the Harbourfront area were appalled by the precedent set by the Huang and Danczkay buildings (Taylor 1987b). But little could be done to reverse course. The developers were well within their legal rights. Unlike most zoning regulations, the Part II Official Plan for Harbourfront passed by council back in 1981 included no height restrictions for the north side of Queen’s Quay. Density limits were applied in gross terms to entire quay areas, not individual buildings. As Planning Commissioner Stephen McLaughlin explained to the press: “Flexibility was to be the saving grace of the whole scheme… We believed it would allow quality design and development. But that flexibility was based on vision and trust.” As the results became apparent, that trust evaporated. “The saving grace,” lamented McLaughlin, had “become our nemesis” (qtd. in Hurst 1986).

Three Freezes and a Moratorium

For years, Torontonians had complained that nothing was happening on the waterfront. Now the opposite was true: too much was happening, and too fast. By 1987, Harbourfront had all the makings of a “political soap opera” (Stein 1987a). The corporation had repeatedly defied the city’s development rules — including starting construction without building permits — and refused to make public its development agreements. Allegations of shady deals and financial improprieties made front page news (Ferguson 1987b).

Overwhelmed by the backlash, the city moved to freeze any further approvals for six months until a full review of the Part II Official Plan for Harbourfront was reopened. Meanwhile, the Parks Department sought to make good on Harbourfront’s original

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117 Eventually, Harbourfront board members such as John Tory also admitted that the project was an eyesore (Taylor, Fagan, and Fine 1987).
118 This initial freeze affected four condominium buildings (see Figure 4.5), one housing co-op, and one commercial building.
promise to yield 40 acres of parkland and public space (Stein 1987b; Kerr 1988a). When negotiations led by Parks Commissioner Herb Pirk reached an impasse, council imposed a second, two-year development freeze (known as “Interim Control By-law 209-88”) to exert further pressure on the corporation to comply (Taylor 1988).¹¹⁹

Figure 4.5. Proposed Harbourfront Developments as of 1987, Looking East from Exhibition Place (left), and West from York Quay (right).

Note: Proposed buildings labelled with a letter were those hit by the city’s first development freeze. Buildings labelled with a number were proposed but never completed due to the Harbourfront review process.

Such extreme measures were precipitated by a slew of resignations and re-assignments at various levels of government. Commissioner of Planning and Development Stephen McLaughlin resigned in October 1986, leaving Deputy Commissioner Robert Millward at the helm. McLaughlin had been plucked by federal Treasury Board president Robert de Cotret to undertake a comprehensive review of federal land management not just at Harbourfront, but across the Toronto region.¹²⁰ Two months later, in January 1987, Howard Cohen resigned from his post as Harbourfront’s general manager, replaced by Frank Mills (Schiller 1987). While at Queen’s Park, Liberal David Peterson was now firmly entrenched in the Premier’s Office, after a dramatic

¹¹⁹ The bargaining tactic was successful. Cash-strapped, Harbourfront acquiesced in June 1988, giving up on two condominium projects and committing to a re-alignment of Queen’s Quay Blvd. west of Spadina Ave. to create extra park space. Harbourfront’s General Manager Frank Mills summed up his thoughts to the press: “I feel like someone who is leaving a poker game in their underwear” (Kerr 1988b). Council formally approved the compromise plan two months later.

¹²⁰ Given McLaughlin’s well-documented distaste for Harbourfront during his tenure at city hall, the appointment was widely seen as a barometer of the federal government’s diminishing support for the project.
sequence of parliamentary gamesmanship leading to a stunning election victory in the Fall of 1987.\textsuperscript{121}

In Ottawa, David Crombie was on the move once again, shuffled in June 1986 from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to Secretary of State and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism, and a seat in cabinet’s influential Policy and Priorities Committee. As the only committee member familiar with Toronto’s complicated waterfront history, Crombie was asked to take a closer look at the Harbourfront controversy, which was beginning to unnerve some Toronto-area MPs. The Conservatives had gained eleven new seats across Metro Toronto in the previous election. With another vote looming on the horizon, the last thing the Conservatives were looking for was more bad press. Another dozen high-rise projects were in various planning stages across the central waterfront, many on federal land, and officials in Ottawa were hoping to avoid further negative attention.

In April 1987, Stewart McInnes, Minister of Public Works, announced a moratorium on further development at Harbourfront pending a full review of the corporation’s mandate. Although Public Works was privy to the financial details of Harbourfront’s development agreements, Crombie was concerned that its books were not being adequately scrutinized and due process was not being followed. Three buildings set for construction — a housing co-op in Bathurst Quay, a rental housing building already under construction on Queen’s Quay West, and a water’s edge condominium proposed for Spadina Quay — were subsequently frozen during the review.

The ministry released its final report six months later, delivered in a letter to Harbourfront chairman Con di Nino. The letter affirmed Harbourfront’s dual programming and development functions, but ordered changes to the corporation’s development objectives, including a reduction in building densities and corresponding height restrictions, as well as the provision of increased parkland and open space.

\textsuperscript{121} Former Progressive Conservative Premier Bill Davis had announced his retirement in 1984. His successor, Frank Miller, won a minority government in May 1985, but was sent packing just a month later after the New Democratic Party, which held the balance of power in the legislature, toppled the government on a non-confidence motion. An agreement between Peterson and NDP leader Bob Rae was struck to support a Liberal minority government for two years. In September 1987, when the public was finally asked back to the polls, Peterson won a resounding majority.
requirements in order to “reflect a desire on our part [the Government of Canada] to strive to accommodate the city’s concerns” (McInnes 1987, 3). A high-level Intergovernmental Waterfront Committee was convened to clear the air. Premier Peterson and Mayor Eggleton were joined by Metro Chair Dennis Flynn and David Crombie, who was now the federal government’s lead representative on the waterfront file. The trust forged in these meetings proved important months later.

During this time, Crombie had quietly made it known to the prime minister that, for personal reasons — Crombie was tired of life in Ottawa — he would not be seeking re-election (the next vote was slated for the Fall 1988). This was a blow to the Progressive Conservatives. Crombie was a valuable spokesman in vote-rich Toronto, well-liked in his influential Rosedale riding. No matter the reason, the resignation of such a prominent cabinet minister a year before the next election would reflect poorly on the government. Recognizing the complexity of the waterfront file and its potential electoral ramifications, the prime minister sat down with Crombie and worked out a creative solution: the creation of a Royal Commission on the matter. This way, Crombie could get the independence and resources needed to clean up the mess of jurisdictional actors complicating real waterfront progress, while Mulroney could clean his hands of any potential controversy by maintaining good relations with one of Toronto’s most beloved sons. All Crombie had to do was agree to stay in cabinet until a suitable replacement was found, and retain his seat in the House of Commons long enough to avoid a by-election.

The Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront (better known as the Crombie Commission) was thus born in June 1988. As his first act, Commissioner Crombie ordered an immediate halt to all federal operations on the waterfront. The province followed suit a year later, instituting a blanket ban on development across the central waterfront until the commission completed its investigation. “That was the

122 The ministry’s assessment was informed by Harbourfront Corporation’s own internal strategic review efforts as well as outside analyses conducted by hired consultants, such as Arthur Andersen & Co. Chartered Accountants, Gary Hack, and the aforementioned Stephen McLaughlin.

123 Crombie officially relinquished his cabinet post on March 31, 1988, replaced by Lucien Bouchard. Bouchard, an emerging star in Conservative circles, would of course go on to abandon the federalist cause and lead the Bloc Quebecois in the early 90s.
beginning of the end,” recalls Howard Cohen.124 Crombie would go on to recommend the dissolution of the crown corporation, siphoning off its cultural programming activities to a not-for-profit foundation. It also, coincidentally, extinguished whatever hope there was of actually implementing the Central Waterfront Plan. As it turned out, city council ended up adopting the plan in final form the very same month as the commission began its work. The ensuing provincial land freeze, which by constitutional right superseded all city by-laws and regulations, nullified any potential progress. After eighteen years of debate informed by at least twenty separate background reports, the plan was effectively dead on arrival.

Conclusion

If 1960s waterfront development had been defined by the product — mega projects, skyscrapers, and the like — then the 70s and 80s were defined by the process. Community input, public engagement, local consultation — these were the pillars of the new planning paradigm. Though honourable in principle, when taken to an extreme, as was often the case over two decades of waterfront planning, such worthy intentions led to several perverse outcomes.

Consider Harbourfront. What began as a straightforward election pledge to win votes in crucial Toronto ridings soon morphed into a paralyzing political saga. The federal government’s initial expropriation of the site infuriated local onlookers from the outset. It then took over eight years to finally agree on a basic concept for the area that satisfied both federal and local officials. Once this was achieved, the focus quickly shifted to the process — consultation mechanisms, review procedures — ignoring the fact that the end goal was never adequately formalized. On paper, the process was working.125 Every building initiated by Harbourfront had at some point received formal approval from city council. But the end goal was forgotten. Handcuffed by a seven-year deadline to achieve

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124 Interview, November 25, 2010.
125 As Crombie put it in his interim report: “after some rocky beginnings, the Harbourfront Corporation… had an esprit de corps — a sense of leadership, of knowing where the corporation was going and how to get there” (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1989, 56).
financial self-sufficiency, the corporation was forced to eschew earlier design guidelines to maximize revenues. The resulting high density projects enraged residents in every corner of the city. But with ownership of Harbourfront’s land assets strictly in federal hands, the city could do little more than hold back building permit approvals to secure marginal concessions.

The 1984 Central Waterfront Plan was similarly stonewalled, the victim of a tortuous CWPC process that Peter de Tolly, the committee’s architect, confesses “was too involved and took too long,” and which never truly addressed the existing ownership situation head on. The process had trumped the product to the point that nothing could get done; every decision became a labyrinthine exercise. A troublesome amalgamation of the city’s planning and development departments under Mayor Sewell, unlikely opposition from both industry and labour groups, and a deluge of distractions created by the Harbourfront saga only complicated matters further. In hindsight, de Tolly’s genuinely regrets the approach taken: “I should not have designed a process which laid such emphasis on the need for a well-informed (and so heavily and continuously involved) public… But I was fixated on doing the process correctly, as I then saw it. I was wrong.”126 By the time the plan was finally approved, two decades after deliberations first began, it had become irrelevant, easily overshadowed by the establishment of the Crombie Commission — an inquiry which would go on to inspire a paradigm shift in waterfront planning through the course of the 1990s, albeit with equally disappointing results.

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126 Personal communication, November 1, 2010.
Chapter Five

1988-2000: Of Royal Commissions and ‘Regeneration’

With no long-term physical plan and no overall financing strategy this endowment [the waterfront] is steadily being frittered away through a succession of expedient transactions to satisfy short-term demands.

— Duncan Allan (1987)

The establishment of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront in June 1988, better known as the Crombie Commission, came at a chaotic time. Development was certainly on the march, but in a form noticeably at odds with public expectations, and contrary to original plans. Harbourfront, the federal government’s decade-long foray into mixed-use (turned high-rise) development was being met with fervent opposition from the local community. In nearby Central Bayfront, projects were being approved at densities up to five times greater than even Harbourfront. Meanwhile, authorities at all levels were working at cross-purposes. City hall was consumed by efforts to extract park land from Harbourfront Corporation, which was itself too preoccupied with self-preservation to cooperate, while the Harbour Commission refused to cede control of its holdings in the eastern harbour. Across the central waterfront, it seemed that progress was being stymied by short-term institutional imperatives.

The $9.3 million Crombie Commission was established to finally straighten out this fractious political landscape, to end the bitter turf wars that had for so long thwarted collaboration. The result was a veritable industry of professional waterfront research — over 1,800 people contributed to Crombie’s three summary reports, thirteen detailed monographs, six working papers and technical analyses, and dozens of newsletters — a new provincially-incorporated coordinating agency, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, and a fresh Metro Waterfront Plan. What began, though, as an exercise concentrated on Toronto’s central waterfront, soon evolved into a much larger regional endeavour,
leaving the city and the Harbour Commission to resume hostilities over the right to control waterfront land assets.

Crombie’s Vision

Enabled by powers set out in the federal *Inquiries Act*, the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront was given the full array of financial and legal tools necessary to conduct a far-reaching and exhaustive investigation. Its principal mission, set out in terms of reference devised by Crombie and his chief of staff, Ron Doering, was: “To ensure that, in the public interest, federal lands and jurisdiction serve to enhance the physical, environmental, legislative, and administrative context governing the use, enjoyment and development of the Toronto Waterfront” (Canada 1988). Special consideration was to be given to the role and mandate of the THC, the future of the island airport, and issues relating to federal land management, namely, Harbourfront.

The commission was met with initial hostility by local officials. Several Metro councillors publicly suspected that Crombie was helping the federal government usurp municipal authority over land use planning (Taylor 1987a; Byers 1988). The city solicitor complained directly to the prime minister that the inquiry amounted to an “unwarranted and unnecessary interference in a matter of local jurisdiction” (Perlin 1989).127 Crombie acknowledged that trust was in short supply, but insisted his intentions were benign: “There’s no question that, directly or indirectly, federal ministries and departments control a great deal of waterfront property and activity in Toronto,” granted Crombie at the first of several public hearings held in 1989. “But I can assure you that the federal government has no desire whatsoever to play any sort of directive role. And as far as its holdings and activities are concerned, they will be fully scrutinized by this commission, just like everyone else’s” (Crombie 1989).

With these assurances and the direct support of Metro Chairman Dennis Flynn and Mayor Art Eggleton, both of whom had worked with Crombie as part of an earlier

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127 If the commission was to proceed, the city requested that it at least be granted the option of appointing a co-commissioner to join Crombie, as means to ensure a fair hearing. City lawyers even contemplated legal action to this effect.
initiative known as the Intergovernmental Waterfront Committee, Crombie proceeded to select five expert panels to prepare reports summarizing current conditions and opportunities for greater waterfront coordination in five thematic areas: mobility and access; environment and health; neighbourhoods and housing; jobs and economic growth; and parks and public amenities. A total of 30 planners, architects, economists, academics, consultants, and administrators associated with various waterfront-related agencies and departments were recruited as contributing authors, representing a cross-section of professional perspectives and political viewpoints.\(^{128}\) Findings from the working groups were supplemented by over 20 days of public hearings conducted between January and June 1989, which elicited more than 300 submissions from community representatives and individual citizens (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1989, 3).

Preliminary conclusions derived from both the working groups and public hearings were collected in the first of two interim reports, released in August 1989. Organized into four chapters, *Interim Report, August 1989* articulated four core recommendations. First, that despite a poor financial track record and declining usage, the island airport should continue operating in its current form, serving general aviation purposes (training and small charter flights) and limited commercial passenger traffic, as dictated by a tripartite agreement originally signed by the city, the THC, and Transport Canada in 1983 (Transport Canada 1983).\(^{129}\) Second, that Harbourfront Corporation should be disbanded and further federal involvement in the project be phased out in favour of a more “normal” institutional arrangement whereby development objectives and cultural programming

\(^{128}\) Gene Desfor, who participated in the “jobs, opportunities, and economic growth” working group, contends that such diversity ultimately limited the full potential of the exercise: “They [the Royal Commission] were careful how they composed each working group. Representatives from a broad range of interests were selected with the aim of balancing the left and right so that it became difficult to find common ground.” According to Desfor, the Environment and Health Group was the only exception in this regard. Interview, January 9, 2012.

\(^{129}\) The island airport first began operations in 1939. At the time, the airport was controlled by the city but operated by the Harbour Commission. By 1967, it represented Canada’s fourth busiest airport, serving 240,000 training and charter flights a year (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1989, 18). Twenty years later, though, the number of flights had dropped to 156,000, carrying just 47,000 passengers (Canada 1985, 1:22). Operating deficits mounted accordingly. The 1983 Tripartite Agreement was meant to ensure the financial viability of the airport going forward. The Harbour Commission secured financial subsidies from the federal government, while the city negotiated a ban on jet-powered aircraft and a fixed-link bridge/tunnel, thus prohibiting direct vehicular access from the mainland.
activities would be left to local devices. Third, that the Harbour Commission should continue to oversee port functions, but its jurisdiction should be limited only to that task; authority and title over lands that have no discernible port uses should be turned over to the city. Finally, that the province should declare a formal interest covering the entire Toronto watershed, including the river valley systems, headwaters, and wetland areas that make up the broader regional waterfront so that policies can be enacted to permit redevelopment with little or no risk to the environment or public health (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1989). The latter two conclusions would have specific bearing on waterfront events throughout the decade.

Return of the Province

The commission’s interim conclusions were “welcomed” by Treasury Board President Robert de Cotret, who expressed “substantial agreement” with the report’s findings (Treasury Board of Canada 1989). This was hardly surprising. Having no intention of seeing his report sit on a shelf collecting dust, Crombie had made sure to pursue only those recommendations that he knew would be well received by his political masters. He approached each aspect of his work with a strategic eye. Critical in this regard was the decision to establish the inquiry as an advisory rather than investigative body. With Ottawa ruled by a Progressive Conservative federal government, a Liberal provincial government at Queen’s Park, and a left-wing council running city hall, it was imperative that Crombie tailor his conclusions in a way that transcended partisan differences. Any attempt to pin blame for past mistakes, or shame past offenders, would have jeopardized the goodwill needed to move forward.

The solution? To frame waterfront development as an environmental dilemma. One often forgets that during the late 1980s and 90s, the environment dominated political

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130 Crombie’s perspective on Harbourfront was further elaborated by a subsequent federal policy review led by Darcy McKeough (former Progressive Conservative minister under Premiers Robarts and Davis), which outlined specific recommendations to guide the corporation’s dissolution, including the sale of its assets through a land endowment to fund future programming (McKeough 1990). In the end, the endowment never materialized. A deep recession in the early 1990s negated any chance of decent returns, leaving Harbourfront to live off annual grants from Ottawa (Vaughan 1995).
discourse. Across the country, a “second wave” of environmental consciousness not seen since the late 1960s had hit the mainstream (see Harrison 1996). Headlines depicting the perils of ozone depletion, acid rain, and water pollution were everywhere. All levels of government, no matter their ideological leanings, felt pressure to respond, the province being no exception.

And so, in October 1989, Premier David Peterson directed John Sweeney, Minister of Municipal Affairs, to declare a “Provincial Interest” in the lands encompassing the East Bayfront and Port Lands in order to undertake a comprehensive environmental audit of the area, as recommended in Crombie’s *Interim Report*. Peterson then went one step further, requesting that Crombie expand the scope of his original federal mandate to include the entire southwestern basin of Lake Ontario, from Durham to Halton Regions — what the commission referred to as Toronto’s regional watershed (Figure 5.1) — to report on the appropriate allocation of waterfront land uses, regional transportation options, housing and community development considerations, and employment and job creation opportunities (Ontario 1989).131

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131 While the request seems, in retrospect, to have smacked of “mission creep,” the impulse of provincial officials to think in regional terms is customary and long-standing. The sudden rise of environmentalism in the late 1980s further justified this regional outlook.
The combined federal and provincial mandate authorized by Peterson marked “an innovation in the machinery of federalism” and a Canadian first (Andrew 1994). To this day, the Crombie Commission remains the only joint federal-provincial commission of inquiry dedicated to an issue of general public policy in Canadian history. It also marked a dramatic return of the province to the waterfront game. Recall that previously, Premier Davis had paid only sporadic attention to the lakeshore during his 14-year tenure. Premier Peterson, by contrast, was far more engaged in the file. The 1987 throne speech, for instance, which articulated his government’s priorities for the new legislative session, specifically mentioned Toronto’s waterfront as an important driver of economic and social development (Ontario 1987). This was followed by the appointment of Duncan Allan as special advisor to the premier on waterfront issues. By the time the commission had released its second interim report, entitled Watershed, in August 1990 (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1990), the province had even announced a billion dollar housing project in the West Don Lands known as Ataratiri— a
Huron name meaning village by the river built on clay — which promised to transform derelict and contaminated lands into a vibrant mixed-income residential community following the successful redevelopment model employed next door in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood.  

While Crombie praised the province for recognizing the waterfront as a natural asset worthy of provincial protection, he also made clear that day-to-day responsibility for redevelopment — land use planning and approvals — should remain shared between the 17 local municipalities and four regional municipalities across the region. As he put it in his final report, *Regeneration: Toronto’s Waterfront and the Sustainable City*, published in April 1992:

> After close and careful consideration of public administration of the waterfront, the Royal Commission has concluded that no single level of government can or should be in control of it. The issues are too complex, cut across too many boundaries, involve too many scales and levels: local, provincial, national, and international; they cannot be left in one pair or even in several sets of hands... [T]he waterfront is a shared responsibility and should remain so, each government—federal provincial, and local—performing its role within its jurisdiction in partnership with others (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1992, 460).

Determining how these jurisdictional partners could come together in the spirit of actual collaboration was thus critical. The interconnectedness of natural and built environments along the entire regional watershed, from Burlington to Newcastle, required a new, more holistic approach to planning and development — an “ecosystem” approach, in Crombie’s words — that recognized the continuous interaction between social, economic, political, and ecological systems in the region. Crombie’s recommended solution was the creation of a new coordinating agency, known as the Waterfront Regeneration Trust.

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132 Originally known as St. Lawrence Square, the 80-acre project was eventually scrapped in 1992 by the following Bob Rae-led NDP government, as environmental clean-up and land remediation estimates soared from $30 to $160 million, with a projected deficit of $893 million by the year 2001 (Kerr 1992; McInnes 1992).

133 Previously, there were rumblings that the province might appoint a Robert Moses-style waterfront “czar” to spearhead redevelopment (Kerr 1982; Welch 1987).
New Agency, Same Results

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust was incorporated under provincial legislation in June 1992. Its mandate was to advise the provincial environment minister on waterfront matters and inform corresponding provincial policies and programs based on public consultation (Ontario 1992). Importantly, the trust was given few, if any, direct powers to spearhead redevelopment on its own. It held no authority, for instance, to acquire or dispose of waterfront property, nor borrow money to pay for capital projects. Its mission was rather to facilitate the integration of ecosystem planning into waterfront land use plans across the bioregion. The trust’s only direct development function was to oversee the construction of a continuous greenway along 250 kilometres of Lake Ontario shoreline, known as the Waterfront Trail. But even this project was to be realized through local partnerships, not direct implementation.

Within its limited mandate, the trust garnered several achievements. Its work to encourage municipalities across Ontario to begin integrating ecosystem planning into their land use approval processes sparked over $40 million of infrastructure improvements in dozens of waterfront communities, including Niagara Falls, Hamilton, Burlington, Pickering, Belleville, Bowmanville and Cobourg (Barrett 2000). It was also certainly instrumental in easing jurisdictional tensions among participating groups. Nearly all respondents I spoke with praised Crombie and his team for helping to break down feelings of mutual distrust between governmental actors. Such success was partly a product of Crombie’s personal charm; he was, and still is, an exceptional communicator.134 But it also stemmed from Crombie’s strong conviction, and key element of the trust’s *modus operandi*, that long-term progress could only be achieved

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134 It speaks volumes about Crombie’s character that a Progressive Conservative federal government, a Liberal provincial government, and then its New Democratic successors, were all so comfortable with his leadership. As Suzanne Barrett, former head of the Regeneration Trust’s greenway strategy and director of environmental studies for the Royal Commission, recalls: “We used to joke that he must put magic dust in the air conditioning system, because people would go into a meeting at loggerheads, and they would come out agreeing to work together.” Interview, August 24, 2010.
through broad-based consultation. As Leslie Woo, a longtime observer of Toronto’s waterfront history in numerous professional capacities, recalls, the trust’s greatest achievements came from the fact it “was never threatening to anyone. It was there [only] to help other people do their work.”

For all the goodwill generated, such altruism also proved to be one of the trust’s greatest shortcomings, at least on the central waterfront. It managed to lead several technical studies regarding brownfield remediation in the East Bayfront and the Port Lands, which resulted in important new sediment guidelines and environmental performance standards concerning lake fill and shoreline erosion problems. But it offered few specific recommendations as to what should be built, by whom, where, and at what cost. Apart from spearheading a new pedestrian bridge spanning the Humber River and a wetland reclamation project at Spadina Quay, the trust rarely engaged in actual redevelopment. Crombie readily admits this point, noting: “The trust was not constructed for land development purposes. It was for hearings, the development of policies, the beginning of implementation — but it was not a land development [agency].” As a result, redevelopment efforts across the central waterfront fell well short of expectations.

Consider the case of the 1994 Metropolitan Waterfront Plan, first conceived in March 1990, as Metro planners began translating the Crombie philosophy of a clean, green, and accessible waterfront into its Official Plan process (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department 1994). The plan was the product of four years of study and community consultation, intended to formally replace Metro’s last waterfront planning exercise completed nearly thirty years prior, the 1967 Metro Waterfront Plan (discussed in Chapter Three). Unlike the ’67 Plan, which called for a large-scale lake fill and

135 Crombie referred to this as the “roundtable” approach — employed heavily during the commission’s work — whereby all interested parties are invited to come together publicly and openly to debate options and resolve potential conflicts. The concept was reminiscent of the city’s previous efforts in the 1970s to engage multiple stakeholders in the planning process through the Central Waterfront Planning Committee. Much like the CWPC, which brought 26 different stakeholders to the same table to discuss ways forward, Crombie envisioned a deliberative forum to air concerns and build trust between recalcitrant waterfront authorities.

136 Interview, October 22, 2010.

137 Interview, January 19, 2012.

138 A draft plan was completed in May 1993 under guidance of a Metropolitan Waterfront Committee, comprised of politicians from local city councils, a Technical Steering Committee, serving as an intergovernmental staff liaison group, and a Waterfront Trail Working Committee, consisting of city,
development program, this edition, presented to and approved by Metro council in January 1994, concentrated on protecting the integrity of existing ecosystems, including the clean-up of contaminated industrial lands and adjacent aquatic areas, and the restoration of buried or channelized creeks and streams. It also supported mixed-use development in areas not already reserved for industrial uses, the establishment of a continuous greenway allowing public access to the water’s edge, and the continued rehabilitation of contaminated soils (Metropolitan Toronto 1994).

Collectively, the Plan’s seventy-four policy statements formed a natural extension of both the city’s priorities set out in the unfulfilled 1984 Central Waterfront Plan and those outlined by the Crombie Commission. It was chock full of abstract ambitions balancing development and conservation interests, industrial and recreational activities, and social and environmental considerations. A program to translate these good intentions into practice, however, was never fully elaborated. The plan hinted that implementation could be achieved through Metro-led capital investments, but conspicuously neglected to point out whether Metro should undertake these initiatives on its own, or instead seek partnerships with its federal or provincial counterparts, the city, the Harbour Commission, and regional authorities such as the MTRCA. Presumably, secondary plans would have been required to work out such implementation details. But again, these plans were never committed to, nor acted upon, by council or staff.

Such dithering was provoked by political events taking place both within Metro Hall and Queen’s Park. Locally, the plan had little buy-in. The city, and even some members of Metro’s own bureaucracy, refused to rally behind it. Meanwhile, at the provincial level, Mike Harris’ Progressive Conservatives rolled into power in June 1995 on a platform of smaller government, lower taxes, and deregulation. Key here was Harris’ announcement that Metro and its six lower-tier municipalities would be merged into a new, amalgamated City of Toronto, beginning in January 1998. The decision ignited a

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Metro, and provincial representatives. The plan was then mailed out to 2,250 citizens and community groups for comment.

139 Examples include the seemingly contradictory goals of constructing a waterfront heritage centre to celebrate the waterfront’s natural and cultural heritage, while at the same time enhancing the regional transportation functions of the Gardiner Expressway.

140 Interview with Leslie Woo, October 22, 2010.
firestorm of public opposition (see Boudreau 1999; Sancton 2000, Chp. 5), not to
mention bureaucratic bedlam. The six municipalities involved were left scrambling to
harmonize organizational structures to meet new service and program requirements. As
the product not only of a previous administration, but a wholly extinct form of
government, the 1994 Metro Waterfront Plan was quietly abandoned during the
transition. Adding insult to injury, Harris went on to dissolve the Waterfront
Regeneration Trust in 1999.

Battle for the Port

Notwithstanding these events, one must keep in mind that several of Crombie’s original
recommendations could conceivably have been implemented despite the institutional
trauma inflicted by the Harris regime. Think back to one of the central recommendations
of the Royal Commission’s two interim reports: that the THC hand over lands no longer
needed for port purposes to the city-owned Toronto Economic Development Corporation
(TEDCO). TEDCO was established in 1986 as an arm’s-length subsidiary of the Toronto
Parking Authority with a mandate to attract industrial jobs to under-utilized or surplus
lands. Importantly, it also survived amalgamation unscathed. Making good on
Crombie’s recommendation, in other words, had little to do with Premier Harris’
tumultuous tenure.

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141 The challenge of integrating Metro and city planning departments was particularly acute. As Robert
Millward, the city’s chief planner from 1987-96 explained to me, in the years approaching amalgamation,
city planners spent up to twenty percent of their time evaluating (mostly criticizing) reports generated by
the Metro planning department. Interview, November 15, 2010.
142 The decision was brought on by a “conscious and fundamental rethinking” of provincial and municipal
service responsibilities central to Harris’ so-called Common Sense Revolution (White 2002, 30). In 1997, a
provincial task force was appointed to explore the privatization of provincial services and agencies. Seeing
little value in the trust’s work, the Government Task Force on Agencies, Boards, and Commissions
recommended converting the crown agency into an independent charitable foundation (Ontario 1997). Ever
the optimist, Crombie embraced the transition, insisting that the trust had laid the groundwork for an even
greater vision: Toronto’s bid for the 2008 summer Olympic Games. As originally envisioned, all but three
of the 28 proposed Olympic venues were to be situated along the six kilometre stretch of Toronto’s central
waterfront, with many of the principal attractions, such as a new Olympic stadium, destined for the derelict
Port Lands (Toronto 2008 Olympic Bid Corporation 2000).
143 TEDCO was modelled on similar urban development corporations (UDCs) found in the US and UK. For
more on these cases, see Imrie and Thomas (1999b).
The driving idea behind the proposed land transfer was that TEDCO was best positioned to preside over the construction of a new waterfront “industrial park” that would bolster employment prospects in the eastern harbour. Toward this end, city council called on its representatives on the THC’s board of directors — Councillors Betty Disero, Nadine Nowlan, and Martin Silva — to direct THC staff to facilitate the orderly transfer of relevant land assets (City of Toronto 1990). The move was wholly unprecedented. Technically, the city held majority control of the THC board; but for more than 80 years, it had hesitated to directly exploit this procedural power. When Councillors Disero, Nowlan, and Silva forced through a resolution urging the immediate divestiture of non-port related holdings in a closed-door meeting of the THC board in August 1991, the move was seen by their minority counterparts, federal appointees Frank Smith and Charles Parmelee, as an act of treason. Smith went so far as to sue the offending members for conflict of interest, albeit to no avail (Tyler 1991).

144 The THC board consisted of five commissioners: three appointed by city council; one by the federal government; and one by the federal government in consultation with the Toronto Board of Trade, as outlined by its original enabling legislation, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners Act, 1911.

145 Only after witnessing what it considered to be a reckless sale of waterfront assets in April 1987 did council first begin appointing aldermen to the THC board as representatives of the city’s interests (Monsebraaten 1987). Although the reasons underlying such reluctance remain something of a mystery — many respondents were completely bewildered when asked for comment — much of this sentiment is connected to the THC’s unique governance structure, which granted it virtual autonomy (discussed further in Chapter Seven).
A purchase and sale agreement was signed by the two parties on January 22, 1992. The deal entailed the transfer of approximately 312 acres (126 hectares) of THC land to the city (Figure 5.2) in exchange for a nominal sum of $10 as well as $6.5 million in annual operating subsidies capped at $25.6 million over five years (Tassé 2006, 16). The city would also be responsible for any operating losses going forward. Federal cabinet approved the agreement in principle in August 1992 (Canada 1992).

And that is when things took a strange turn. During its due diligence, the city began having second thoughts, sparked by a concurrent federal review of THC finances which suggested that the agency was headed for bankruptcy (Macaulay 1992). Mayor Rowlands was concerned that the city would be on the hook for the THC’s unpaid debts. TEDCO also expressed concern over the potential cost of land remediation — the lands in question were believed to be highly contaminated — which public works department estimates pegged as high as $328 million (Reid 1993). Council refused to formally

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146 The value of the subsidy was determined by Booz-Allen and Hamilton Inc., a professional consulting firm agreed upon by both parties. In addition to calculating appropriate compensation, Booz-Allen also concluded that the THC’s existing organizational structure was “inefficient and unwieldy,” and recommended the reductions of up to 53 staff positions (Booz-Allen and Hamilton 1992, I-3).

147 The Minister of Transport, Doug Lewis, had directed Robert Macaulay, lawyer and former Progressive Conservative provincial cabinet minister, to carry out the review in order to assess any potential federal liability in any proposed land transfer agreement. As it turned out, the liability rested with the city.
approve the agreement until a second, independent audit of THC finances could be completed.\footnote{148}{The agreement was originally set to close on June 30, 1992. TEDCO requested two extensions as estimates were revised.}

The Harbour Commission, for its part, also did a complete about-face. The three councillors who had originally exerted their majority powers at the THC board had since completed their terms. Three new city councillors — John Adams, Steve Ellis, and Michael Walker — had taken their place. And unlike their predecessors, all three took a completely different view of their role as harbour commissioners. Having sworn an oath to serve in the organization’s best interests, all three felt compelled to defend a deal which at least gave the THC a steady stream of future revenues.\footnote{149}{Of course, as councillors, these same members had also sworn an oath to serve in the best interests of the city and its residents. But such is the murky world of public accountability and special purpose authorities (see Siegel 1994).} With the very survival of the Harbour Commission at stake, none were willing to “commit corporate suicide” (Walker qtd. in Deverell 1993). True to form, the councillors proceeded to filibuster all debates on the deal at council, eventually forcing arbitration, where it was determined that the original $6.5 million annual subsidy was both properly calculated and fair (\textit{Globe and Mail} 1993b).

Incredulous, Mayor Rowlands refused to accept the arbitrator’s decision. In June 1993, she brought a motion to council to replace the three dissident commissioners for failing to represent the city’s interests. The motion passed by a slim 8-6 vote (City of Toronto 1993). Three municipal department heads — Property Commissioner Virginia West, Parks Commissioner Herb Pirk, and Arthur Stevenson, Executive Director of Management Services — were to be installed in their place.

Once more, the THC took the city to court. But again, the verdict was clear: city-appointed board members served at the pleasure of council, and council alone (\textit{Globe and Mail} 1993a). The THC was left with little choice but to concede defeat. A revised agreement was drafted that offered annual payments of just $1.5 million, and was approved in July 1994 (City of Toronto 1994). A second agreement transferring an additional 300 acres for another $1.25 million subsidy was signed shortly thereafter (Toronto Harbour Commissioners and the Corporation of the City of Toronto 1994; see
also Tassé 2006, 17-18). When all was said and done, the THC was left with just 100 acres or so to sustain port operations, a mere one-tenth of its portfolio back in 1961. The Harbour Commission’s decades-long stranglehold on the central waterfront appeared destined for collapse — that is, until several opportunistic members of parliament caught wind of the situation.

**From Harbour Commission to Port Authority**

In December 1994, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transportation, chaired by Stanley Keyes (Hamilton West), initiated a study to develop a national legislative framework for the management of Canada’s marine transportation sector, including the roughly 500 ports overseen by Transport Canada and over 2,200 local ports and harbours under the purview of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. His report, entitled *A National Marine Strategy* (1995), prompted Minister of Transport David Anderson to introduce Bill C-44, the *Canada Marine Act*, in the House of Commons two years later, in June 1996. Among its many stipulations, the bill called for the divestiture or closure of harbours and ports deemed to be inefficient or redundant, the commercialization of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the termination of the Canada Port Corporation, and importantly, the dismantling of any existing Harbour Commissions created under individual legislation, including Toronto. Authority over ports and harbours deemed to be of national significance would instead be streamlined under separate Port Authorities. Those ports which did not meet the definition of a national port — based on four criteria: self-sufficiency; strategic significance; links with major rail or highway infrastructure; and diversified port traffic — were to be devolved to municipal authorities.

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150 Herb Pirk, one of the three civil servants appointed to the board in 1993, considers the city’s stand against the THC as one of his greatest achievements, and a victory for the public interest: “I was a city employee for 30 years. In those two years [as a harbour commissioner], I probably earned my salary as a bureaucrat for 60 years.” Interview, December 14, 2010

151 Based on author calculations. Methodological details noted in Appendix A.

152 The Canada Port Corporation oversaw port operations in St. John's, Halifax, Saint John, Quebec, Montreal, Vancouver and Prince Rupert.
By both these criteria and any other objective measure, Toronto in no way qualified as a national port. Indeed, a Nesbitt Burns consultant report commissioned by Transport Canada had confirmed that the Port of Toronto did not generate sufficient revenues from commercial operations to qualify for the designation (Canada 1996). It was thus no surprise that Toronto was not included in the bill’s original Schedule of Port Authorities in October 1996, when the House Standing Committee on Transportation sent it back to the House for third reading without amendment.

When the House resumed debate on April 14, 1997, though, a slew of amendments suddenly appeared — chief among them, the inclusion of eight additional cities to the list of national ports, including Toronto. The surprise inclusion was brought forward by Dennis Mills, MP for the Toronto riding of Broadview-Greenwood, and close confidante of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. When called to speak to the bill in the House of Commons, Mills noted unanimous support from fellow Liberal MPs across the Greater Toronto Area, who praised the amendment as a demonstration of the government’s renewed commitment to the city (Parliament of Canada 1997b, 9689). Those at city hall, of course, saw things differently — nothing less than a “heist,” as one columnist put it at the time (Barber 1997). Once more, argued local officials, the federal government was reneging on its promise to stay out of municipal affairs. Jack Layton, then a city councillor, decried the government’s actions, accusing it of “engineering the largest land grab probably since the white man came over to Canada” (Moloney 1997).

Mills went on to publicly thank THC board members Charles Parmelee, Harold Peerenboom, and Howard Joy, as well as general manager Gary Reid for their encouragement. Howard Joy’s involvement was particularly noteworthy. Along with David Hutcheon and Martin Silva, Joy was one of three city councillors then serving new terms on the THC board. While Hutcheon and Silva opposed the creation of a new port authority, Joy was firmly in Mills’ camp, telling the media, “It’s a tremendous deal which Toronto doesn’t yet appreciate” (Vienneau and Moloney 1997). Once again, one of the city’s own representatives was directly challenging council’s wishes.

A letter from Barbara Hall and eleven other councillors presented to a Senate committee on April 23, 1997, contends that the city had been assured by officials in Ottawa that the federal government had no intention of delving into municipal affairs (Senate of Canada 1997). Mills’ vehemently denied the accusation in the House of Commons: “That statement is false. These lands are Government of Canada lands. It is not selling these lands. It is the Government of Canada presence being reinvigorated in the city of Toronto. It is not the Government of Canada on the eve of an election selling lands, terminals and other things. It is the reverse of that. It is the Government of Canada saying it is there to be a full partner in the economic renewal of the city of Toronto” (Parliament of Canada 1997a, 1705). Not once, however, did Mills address the fact that Toronto’s port did not meet the legislation’s stated eligibility criteria.
Why the sudden change of heart? A spring election was on the horizon, and local Liberal MPs — who had swept all 22 Toronto ridings in 1993 — were searching for an opportunity to galvanize their support. Mills had mused for some time about the need for the federal government to make a splash on the waterfront. One report suggested that he imagined the waterfront as a prime location for multiple casinos and a tourism corridor (Spears 1994). Resurrecting the Harbour Commission, this time under strict federal control, was one way forward.

The Toronto Port Authority (TPA) was thus formally reborn in January 1999. Emboldened by its new lease on life, the TPA immediately moved to retake control of all lands ceded to TEDCO in what its lawyers believed to be an illegal seizure of federal assets (Stein 1999; DeMara 1999). The agency hired a private investigator to probe the TEDCO deal, and eventually sued the city for $1 billion, arguing that the board members who had handed its land portfolio over to the city had violated their fiduciary duties (Lakey 1999; Monsebraaten 2001). It was as if things were back at square one. After nearly a decade of infighting and legal disputes, the fate of the central waterfront, and particularly the East Bayfront and Port Lands, was no clearer.

Conclusion

Conventional wisdom in Canadian politics has it that if a government is struck with a problem, it appoints a Royal Commission in the hope that the problem will simply disappear — whether in reality, or better yet, from the headlines — by the time the inquiry completes its work (Wolfe 2003, 9). The establishment of the Crombie Commission in 1988 was supposed to finally put to rest decades of jurisdictional conflict, which all parties agreed was suffocating collaboration. Yet twelve years later, the central waterfront remained largely unchanged. What went wrong?

156 Not everyone, of course, will agree with this assessment. In Senate hearings, Charles Parmelee attributed the timing of the amendment, almost comically, to good luck: “I had no part in writing the bill, but I must say that at least as far as the Toronto Harbour Commission is concerned — maybe it is good luck — the bill fits what we need in Toronto and what we need to go ahead” (Senate of Canada 1997).

157 Prime Minister Chrétién dissolved Parliament before Bill C-44 could receive royal assent. Five months later, after another Liberal victory at the polls, the new Minister of Transport, David Collenette, re-tabled the legislation (this time as Bill C-9), which was adopted with little resistance in June 1998.
In one of the few academic examinations of Toronto’s waterfront politics during the 1990s, Sanderson and Filion (2011) suggest that, among other factors, implementation efforts were severely hampered by fiscal realities, prompted by the lingering effects of an economic recession. The high cost of environmental remediation — not to mention the financial liabilities involved with “brownfield” redevelopment — restricted the potential for substantial investment. Under prevailing conditions of fiscal restraint, public and private sector capital dried up, as witnessed with the province’s failed Ataratiri housing project.

Be that as it may, Toronto’s economic woes were hardly unique. Recessionary pressures were being felt across the country. Yet in cities like Vancouver, waterfront redevelopment somehow carried on (see Chapter Two). The False Creek North community, for instance, involved clean up costs estimated as high as $60 million and still proceeded apace (Matas 1990). In other words, fiscal challenges alone do not tell the whole story. A more convincing account focuses on two important factors: the functional inadequacies of the Crombie Commission and its organizational offspring, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust; and perennial roadblocks created by fragmented land ownership.

Those involved in the Crombie Commission can boast many accomplishments, but progress on the central waterfront would not be high on the list. As the inquiry’s scope widened to address broader regional issues, the impetus for action on the central waterfront, burdened by political roadblocks far more complicated than those in neighbouring municipalities, naturally waned. The Waterfront Regeneration Trust, for its part, was never truly intended to assume the role of land developer. It existed to facilitate, not dictate; to coordinate, not initiate. It had neither the tools nor the mandate to properly address the complex power relations involved along the central waterfront. Crombie admits as much upon reflection: “There needed to be a land development company, [but]

158 Oddly, estimates of environmental remediation costs in Toronto are hard to come by. Most were privately commissioned and are not easily accessible via public records. One can infer, though, based on news reports related to the failed Ataratiri project in the West Don Lands that projected costs were on par with the Vancouver case, at least initially. The 80-acre project’s $30 million remediation price tag was commensurate with False Creek North’s 166-acre totals. Though it should be noted that this number apparently soared to $160 million after factoring in flood protection measures (Kerr 1992; McInnes 1992).
it was not us;” adding, “We were just not equipped. If we became a land development company on the Port Lands [or] the central waterfront, we might as well just have given up all the other stuff… That was not our mission.”

The Metro Waterfront Plan, which took its cues from Crombie’s ecosystem approach, was at best a token exercise never truly taken seriously by politicians or bureaucrats alike. Premier Harris’ controversial decision to proceed with municipal amalgamation in 1998 served only to seal its fate, bookended by the demise of the Regeneration Trust a year later. Meanwhile, in areas such as the East Bayfront and the Port Lands, where improvements could have been achieved without fear of provincial intrusion, ownership disputes between the city and Harbour Commission, punctuated by institutional infighting and political opportunism of the worst sort, nullified any hope of development, however modest. As we will see in the following chapter, such disputes were characteristic of property concerns spanning all three eras of waterfront planning.

159 Interview, January 19, 2012.
Chapter Six
Land Ownership and ‘Aspirational’ Policy-making

_The whole history of the waterfront [is] littered with aspiration as opposed to accomplishment._

— Peter de Tolly\(^{160}\)

Matland (1995, 171) reminds us that “policies are almost never self-executing.” Government action in any policy realm requires ongoing effort, and anticipated results are by no means guaranteed. Understanding the space between what is expected and what is ultimately achieved is the purpose of implementation research, long considered the “missing link” in the study of public policy (Hargrove 1975; Hjern 1982; DeLeon 1999; Robichau and Lynn Jr. 2009). This chapter investigates the political history of waterfront development in Toronto in light of this established literature, drawing empirical conclusions about the enduring features of implementation failure in Toronto before reflecting on the theoretical implications of this “deviant” case (Gerring 2007, 89).

My analysis proceeds in two parts. I begin by probing the causal conditions that, time and time again, curtailed waterfront redevelopment in Toronto between 1960-2000.\(^{161}\) I argue that over the four decades in question, one key condition stands out as the defining obstacle preventing orderly implementation: the relative fragmentation of land ownership — and specifically, _public_ land ownership — across the central waterfront area. Such fragmentation helped produce an intractable intergovernmental scenario burdened by multiple veto points.

Part two considers the implications of these findings for implementation theory and the study of long-term policy processes. I argue, first, that conventional implementation models employed in the core disciplines of political science, public policy, and public administration, rest on idealized notions of the policy-making process that fail to

\(^{160}\) Interview, November 22, 2010.

\(^{161}\) Here, I follow Steinberg’s (2007, 183) critical insight that causal outcomes constitute “an emergent property of a set of interacting conditions,” not discrete variables.
adequately capture both the nature of waterfront development in Toronto, and the
temporal dimensions of urban development writ large. These shortcomings are indicative
of what I refer to as an excessively programmatic outlook on the policy process, which
makes few allowances for the aspirational features of urban development (land use)
policy that can only be realized over long periods of time. Recognizing the critical
influence of time and timing in the process of city-building, I suggest that urban
development, as witnessed in the Toronto case, is subject to both “path dependent” and
“reactive sequence” policy dynamics.

Explaining the Toronto Case

Good implementation research should do more than simply measure conformance
between outputs/outcomes and declared intentions. It should investigate the origins of
non-conformance, asking “why subsequent decisions, actions, and/or outcomes were
different from what was intended” (Mastop and Faludi 1997, 825, emphasis added). Of
course, this creates certain empirical challenges. The list of variables that might explain
any given case of implementation failure is practically endless (Goggin 1986). General
factors highlighted in the policy literature include competing departmental mandates and
agendas, the composition of a given policy community/network, and information
asymmetries within a policy system, to name just a few (Weale 1992, 48). With respect to
urban development policy, specifically, scholars have pointed to the quality of a given
land use plan, the scale of development projects, the capacity of planning agencies
involved, as well as buy-in from the local constituency and development community as
key determinants of successful implementation (Laurian et al. 2004, 560).162

The Toronto case undoubtedly presents several impediments along these lines. For
one, bureaucratic impasses were readily apparent across all eras. Given that at least 21
different departments and agencies at different levels were involved in waterfront
planning since the 1960s (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1967, Appendix F), the

162 To avoid normative debates, I leave the task of evaluating the quality of waterfront plans to my
colleagues in the fields of architecture, urban design, and urban planning (see Berke and Godschalk 2009;
Laurian et al. 2010; Oliveira and Pinho 2010).
likelihood of trouble-free coordination among so many stakeholders was dubious at best. Periodic waves of electoral interest, followed by prolonged lulls in political attention, were certainly also a factor. The rise of the municipal reform movement in the early 1970s, for example, coupled with Bill Davis’ ascent to the premier’s office in 1971, helped bury plans for the Harbour City and Metro Centre projects; it also simultaneously opened the door for the federal government to present Toronto with Harbourfront as a surprise election “gift” in 1972. One might also point to the sheer cost of redevelopment, which certainly contributed to the failure of environmental remediation efforts in the Ataratiri district (now known as West Don Lands); or finally, the absence of a local (and vocal) waterfront constituency, particularly apparent during the 1970s, when the waterfront “didn't register” as an electoral issue at city hall.163

No doubt, different waterfront planning efforts succumbed to discrete combinations of political afflictions.164 Notwithstanding the peculiarities of each distinct planning period, however, I would argue that it is still possible to isolate certain fundamental causal conditions that had an extraordinary impact across all three successive eras of waterfront redevelopment.

**Real Property, Real Politics**

Searching for the “real” origins of an outcome requires a metric of causal importance. Short of such measurement criteria, one’s causal explanation will invariably suffer from “indiscriminate pluralism” (Fischer 1970, 175). How, then, might we distinguish the relative importance of different causal conditions at work in the Toronto case? Steinberg (2007, 200) offers three particularly useful approaches: outcome-based, antecedent-based, and process-based evaluation criteria. To make these distinctions clear, he draws attention to the events of 9/11 as an instructive reference case.

163 Interview, John Sewell, December 8, 2011.
164 The possibility that similar outcomes can result from wholly different sets of causal conditions is referred to in the methodological literature as multiple causal pathways or equifinality (George and Bennett 2005, 157).
Depending on each analytical approach, argues Steinberg, three separate researchers investigating the cause(s) of 9/11 would inevitably reach three different conclusions. Outcome-based approaches centre on one particular dimension of a given outcome — for example, the timing of the result, or frequency with which it was observed — and assess the degree to which a given antecedent condition (or pattern of conditions) influenced this characteristic outcome. With respect to 9/11, an outcome-based researcher might therefore point to circumstances in 2001 that were not apparent, say, ten years prior, when such attacks did not take place. Using covariance as the primary ordering principle, this researcher would thus likely rank the rise of al Qaeda as the most significant causal condition. Contrast this to antecedent-based approaches, which rank the influence of causally relevant conditions based on attributes particular to the antecedents themselves, such as susceptibility to manipulation. Using this narrower analytical lens, the antecedent-based researcher might instead argue that the attacks were principally enabled by a lack of on-board federal marshals, a condition which, unlike the prospect of curbing the proliferation of foreign terrorist cells, could easily have been rectified. Finally, process-based evaluation ranks causal conditions based on their logical impact on intervening, or “downstream,” events in the causal chain. The process-based researcher might call attention to the various points at which information exchange between government agencies could have thwarted the attacks. By this logic, neither the rise of al Qaeda (an obvious, yet unpreventable, cause) nor the lack of federal marshals (which could have prevented only the final stages of the attack) would be considered as important as the critical failure of government security agencies to share vital intelligence information on the developing plot.

The following analysis adopts a process-based decision criterion in keeping with the method of inference employed throughout this study, that of causal process tracing (for further discussion of my methodological approach, see Appendix A). Doing so allows us to isolate one defining obstacle that, over time, progressively undermined four decades worth of waterfront planning and development efforts in Toronto: namely, the relative distribution of land ownership across the central waterfront area.
Toronto is exceptional in that the overwhelming majority of land across its central waterfront is, and always has been, publicly owned. To my knowledge, no other major waterfront redevelopment project around the world has been attempted amidst the same degree of public land ownership. From 1961-1998, no less than 81% of all land in the central waterfront was owned by one government body or another (Figure 6.1). Title to these lands, however, was dispersed across a patchwork of public agencies, corporations, and authorities, including the Toronto Harbour Commission, the Canada Lands Company (federal), and even the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (provincial) (Figure 6.2).
Figure 6.2. Geographic Distribution of Land Ownership, Central Waterfront Area, 1961-1998.

Source: Compiled and composed by author.
In percentage terms, the City of Toronto’s land assets (coloured blue in all figures) comprised approximately 5% of all waterfront property, scattered widely across the geographic area, until TEDCO’s acquisition of substantial assets in the Port Lands in the mid 1990s. Metro Toronto’s share (coloured green), ranged from a low of approximately 27% to a high of 33%, concentrated around the Canadian National Exhibition and Toronto Islands. Federal departments and agencies (coloured yellow), such as CN Rail and Canada Post, controlled approximately 6-10% of waterfront lands. The Harbour Commission (coloured red) controlled as much as 37% of waterfront assets in 1961, thanks to holdings in the inner harbour, before dropping to a low of 6% upon its restructuring as the Toronto Port Authority in 1998. The province’s share (coloured purple), by contrast, grew steadily along with construction of the Outer Harbour Headland (Leslie Street Spit), from a low of 3% to a high of nearly 17%. Finally, the proportion of private land holdings remained relatively stable over time, between 14- 17%.

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165 I treat the Harbour Commission as a category unto itself for both practical and analytical reasons. Practically speaking, THC lands were often designated as separate and distinct from other levels of government in the maps and assessment data used to compile the ownership information presented here. From an analytical perspective, some have argued that the THC in fact constituted a distinct level of government, given that the commission was not legally accountable to either federal or municipal governments. For more, see Chapter Seven.
Figure 6.3. Distribution of Land Ownership, Harbourfront and the Railway Lands, 1961-1998 (Corresponding to Census Tract 012).

Source: Calculated by author.

Figure 6.4. Distribution of Land Ownership, Port Lands, 1961-1998 (Corresponding to Census Tract 001).

Source: Calculated by author.
Figure 6.5. Distribution of Land Ownership, East Bayfront and West Don Lands, 1961-1998 (Corresponding to Census Tract 017).

Source: Calculated by author.

Figure 6.6. Distribution of Land Ownership, Central Bayfront, 1961-1998 (Corresponding to Census Tract 013).

Source: Calculated by author.
These aggregate totals, of course, mask variation across waterfront districts and neighbourhoods. In Harbourfront and the Railway Lands, for instance, the federal government’s ownership share reached as high as 70% in 1980 (Figure 6.3), before the restructuring of Harbourfront Corporation and sale of CN Rail land holdings to the city and private developers in the early 1990s. Alternatively, in the Port Lands, ownership was historically skewed towards the Harbour Commission (Figure 6.4). The East Bayfront and West Don Lands presented rare cases where assets were largely controlled by private interests (Figure 6.5), while in the Central Bayfront, assets were more evenly distributed among state and non-state actors (Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.7. Distribution of Land Ownership in Six “High Potential” Districts, 1961-1998 (Corresponding to Census Tracts 001, 012, 013, 017).

Source: Calculated by author.

Together, these six districts, spanning over 1,500 acres of vacant or unexploited land (excluding the Leslie Street Spit), offered the greatest potential for redevelopment. Yet again and again, the high degree of land ownership fragmentation in these areas (Figure 6.7) posed an almost insurmountable barrier to planned redevelopment efforts in these areas. Disputes over land title triggered a host of paralyzing political and legal sagas that either severely reworked or completely scuttled planned projects. The promising Harbour
City project, for example, part of the 1968 Bold Concept, was originally to be led by the Toronto Harbour Commission, only to have lawyers from the Attorney General’s office declare a provincial interest in the area based on legal technicalities dating back to the 1800s. Harbourfront was similarly plagued by tense legal and political negotiations concerning the conveyance of waterfront property to the city for recreational uses, leading to the establishment of a full-blown Royal Commission on the matter, the Crombie Commission, including an entire freeze on all waterfront redevelopment for four years. Likewise, the fate of 600 acres in the East Bayfront and Port Lands was mired in numerous lawsuits and court challenges between the city/TEDCO and the Harbour Commission through the 1990s.

**Assets, Not Jurisdiction**

Altogether, the connection between fragmented public ownership and the city’s disappointing history of waterfront redevelopment is unambiguous. According to Robert Millward, former Toronto planning commissioner (1987-96), ownership fragmentation was a “huge determinant” of the scale, pace, and feasibility of any proposed redevelopments.\(^{166}\) Adds Leslie Woo, former official with the Waterfront Regeneration Trust: “Land ownership is everything.”\(^{167}\)

Bear in mind that even the most contaminated stretches of waterfront property held (and still hold) immense real estate value. As far back as 1961, assessment roll figures compiled from City of Toronto records suggest that land values across the central waterfront ran upwards of $100 million, or $775 million in adjusted 2012 dollars (City of Toronto 1961).\(^{168}\) By 1980, the value of fully serviced industrial land in the Port Lands alone had grown to an estimated $175 million, or nearly $500 million in 2012 dollars.

\(^{166}\) Interview, November 15, 2010.
\(^{167}\) Interview, October 22, 2010.
\(^{168}\) Figures are based on aggregate data from eight ward divisions corresponding, as best possible, with the central waterfront boundaries utilized in this study. Unfortunately, fine-grained subdivision data was not available. The reader should also note that this estimate does not fully reflect actual market values as of 1961. Complete market value assessments were not introduced by the city until 1998.
A decade later, just 300 acres of property under negotiation by the THC and TEDCO were valued between $280 and $480 million, or approximately $400-$685 million in 2012 dollars (Nathwani 1993).

Given the financial stakes involved, it is no surprise that waterfront properties were treated by nearly all public landowners first and foremost as assets — as safeguards against future revenue shortfalls, or as collateral to leverage financing — not as building blocks for waterfront regeneration. A 1986 task force commissioned to study the extent of the federal government’s real property holdings and programs provides documentary evidence of this organizational imperative (Canada 1986). After reviewing 62 property management programs run by federal departments and arms-length agencies across the country, the task force found that in nearly all cases, property managers preferred to maintain land assets for organizational gain rather than proactively pursue redevelopment for public purposes. “The incentives in the system,” concluded the study group, are such that “it is easier to obtain maintenance funds for uneconomic property than to get the capital to sell, regenerate or replace properties” (ibid., 19). The cumulative effect is that government departments and agencies would rather serve as public landlords, earning stable rental and lease revenues while protecting the value of their holdings for future use, than public developers.

A subsequent report commissioned by the federal government the following year came to similar conclusions (McLaughlin 1987). Tasked with evaluating the management of federal property specifically in the Toronto region, the report’s author, Stephen McLaughlin, former Toronto planning commissioner (1979-85), pulled no punches. According to McLaughlin, federal departments, agencies, and corporations such as the

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169 Based on a minimum valuation of $175-$225,000 per acre (1980 dollars).
170 Admittedly, estimating current and potential land values is a precarious business based on numerous assumptions and uncertainties. That said, the professional estimates presented here do at least give a strong indication of the area’s vast redevelopment potential.
171 Government departments and agencies endowed with valuable property holdings inherently face a tension between utilizing these assets for their own institutional self-interest versus the broader public interest. In simple terms, “It's about land. It's about money. It's about potential development. And it's the underlying value of all of that… [Y]ou follow the money.” Interview, Herb Pirk, December 14, 2010.
172 Complicating matters further is the fact that government departments and agencies rarely pay property taxes. They instead make payments in lieu of taxes, which are especially difficult to calculate in high profile locations such as the waterfront, where current market values grossly underestimate speculative future values.
CBC, CN Rail, Harbourfront Corporation, Canada Post, and the Department of Public Works routinely dealt with property issues based on their own narrow institutional interests, demonstrating little, if any, regard for broader public goals. Each organization habitually acted to protect its own balance sheet, rather than engage in and contribute to the development objectives of its surrounding community. McLaughlin judged such “passive” land management as reprehensible, tantamount to nothing less than an “abdication” of each body’s obligation to the public good (ibid., 5).173

The Toronto Harbour Commission was perhaps the greatest culprit in this regard.174 Knowing that it could sell off land with impunity when circumstances dictated, the THC “just kept their head down and did the best they could to stay out of trouble.”175 That said, the THC was certainly not alone; the mindset pervaded all public ownership interests. Harbourfront Corporation, for instance, was quite explicit in utilizing its land portfolio as an organizational lifeline — indeed its business plan depended on it. Even the province, which tended to avoid direct engagement on the waterfront, demonstrated similar motivations while staking its claim to Harbour City.176

In all, “we had a situation,” as Ron Doering, former Executive Director of the Crombie Commission, recalls, “where almost nobody could do anything, but almost anybody could stop something.”177 Each ownership interest held only one clear power: veto power. Scharpf (1988; 2006) famously refers to this scenario as a “joint-decision trap,” wherein conditions of shared authority yield sub-optimal outcomes.

173 Not surprisingly, McLaughlin’s incendiary report sat on the shelf for nearly six months. Hoping that the holiday season would help it go unnoticed, the Mulroney government released the report just a few days before Christmas 1987.
174 One colourful columnist described the THC’s hold on the waterfront as analogous to a “private fiefdom” (Landsberg 1991).
175 Interview, Ron Doering, November 17, 2010. A spokesman for the East Bayfront Industry Group, representing Redpath Sugar, Victory Soya, Canada Malting, and Canpar, echoed these comments during consultations on the 1984 Central Waterfront Plan: “The Toronto Harbour Commission sees their lands merely as an asset — a means of eliminating their debt, not as a resource to stimulate industrial development in Toronto” (City of Toronto 1984, 208).
176 James Ramsay, the province’s lead official working on Harbour City, recalls the mindset at the time: “It was an asset, [a] valuable asset, for the province. We had to move out and secure it.” Despite cabinet’s ultimate unwillingness to move forward with project, “They felt they’d done their job. We’d secured the ownership.” Interview, November 24, 2011.
177 Interview, November 17, 2010.
Land and Decision Traps

How intractable was this decision trap created by ownership fragmentation? Scharpf outlines three basic strategies to resolve such predicaments: bargaining (an appeal to incentives), problem solving (an appeal to common utility), and unilateralism (an appeal to dominant power). Not one of these approaches proved capable of breaking Toronto’s waterfront deadlock.

Attempts at bargaining — such as negotiations between the city and Harbourfront Corporation, or between the city and the Harbour Commission, through TEDCO — most often broke down altogether or led to dramatic political upheaval.\(^\text{178}\) Compromise was dismissed at every turn. The financial viability of both the Harbourfront Corporation and Harbour Commission rested directly in their respective land portfolios. Any concession was seen by both parties as a threat to their very survival.

Problem solving approaches based on appeals to altruism, or common purpose, were equally ineffective. The comprehensive redevelopment plans around which this study is organized are but three of dozens of related waterfront planning exercises stretching back to the early 1960s, each slightly different than the last. A consensus vision, in other words, was never available. The Crombie Commission’s “ecosystem” approach to waterfront planning was the closest waterfront stakeholders came to a shared ideal. But this, too, was quickly forgotten as the scope of regeneration efforts inspired by the commission’s work widened to the larger regional watershed far beyond the immediate concerns of the central waterfront area.

Scharpf’s final resolution strategy, unilateral action, also proved impossible. The federal government generally refrained from playing a major role in urban land development, not only in Toronto, but across Canada.\(^\text{179}\) Indeed, federal leaders of all

\(^{178}\) As one example, the Harbour Commission’s board of directors was subject to a veritable merry-go-round of federal and municipal appointees, as successive mayors pushed to force the transfer of hundreds of acres of THC land to the city-owned Toronto Economic Development Corporation in the early 1990s.

\(^{179}\) For every federal success in urban renewal, such as Granville Island in Vancouver, or Montreal’s Vieux-Port, one can just as easily point to mistakes, such as LeBreton Flats in Ottawa and Downsview Park in Toronto. Such a spotty record can be attributed partly to the demise of the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs in the late 1970s, which failed to gain a foothold in the federal bureaucratic structure (see Oberlander and Fallick 1987). One might also point to the fact that, to this day, Canada remains one of the
stripes have historically avoided direct involvement in local affairs (Wolfe 2003; Stoney and Graham 2009; Young and McCarthy 2009). The likelihood that the federal government would have been willing to unilaterally assume control of such a large expanse of inner-city land, particularly after the political headaches created by Prime Minister Trudeau’s surprise expropriation of Harbourfront, was infinitesimally small.

At the municipal level, neither the city nor Metro owned sufficient land holdings to resort to unilateralism. And even if they did, neither would have had the financial wherewithal to actually build anything on their own. On paper, only the province was properly positioned to assume a true leadership role. By constitutional right, it held sole jurisdiction over municipal affairs and land development, and had available the fiscal resources required to act. But it too was hamstrung by ownership concerns. As Bill Davis, Ontario’s longest serving premier (1971-85), recalls, waterfront ownership issues were too complex, too controversial, to justify spending the political capital necessary to take charge. Keep in mind that powers of eminent domain (that is, the power to expropriate property for public uses) do not extend up the federal hierarchy. Just as the city had no power to assume control of provincial lands, the province had no power to assume control of federal lands (including those covered by federal statute, as was the case with the Harbour Commission).

All told, despite its clear regional and strategic importance, the waterfront’s intractable land ownership situation dashed nearly all hopes for sound implementation, whether by negotiation, consensus, or unilateral action. David Gordon, former project manager at Harbourfront Corporation and current director of the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen’s University, sums up the predicament: “An urban redevelopment project can be led by any of [the] three levels of government. But… it's few developed countries in the world without a national urban policy, which leaves federal engagement in cities as the product of election promises rather than thoughtful long-term planning.

180 As Ron Doering put it to me, “If you’re a federal politician, you’re concerned about federal jurisdiction… [The waterfront is] not up there with all the things the federal government has got to worry about.” Interview, November 17, 2010.

181 The irony, of course, is that municipal governments constitute the only level of government that can literally create wealth, not simply redistribute it, via the zoning process. As Jeff Evenson reminded me, “by upzoning, municipal councils can create vast fortunes.” Interview, November 22, 2010.

182 Interview, December 22, 2010.
absolutely essential that they own their land, fee simple… [I]f you don't have that in the end, the other people have the veto.”

**Insights from the Toronto Case**

To this point, the analysis has focused on specifying the causal conditions which led to implementation failure on Toronto’s waterfront. Admittedly, this can take us only so far. The idiosyncratic causal components of a single case study offer few opportunities for generalization — that is, unless we shift our focus to the *mechanisms* linking cause and effect. As Falleti and Lynch (2009, 1147) explain, “mechanisms tell us how things happen: how actors relate, how individuals come to believe what they do or what they draw from past experiences, how policies and institutions endure or change, how outcomes that are inefficient become hard to reverse.” In the Toronto case, this means turning our attention past the characteristic features of particular causal conditions, such as the relative distribution of land ownership, to the intersection of these conditions following a longer temporal trajectory. To do so, however, we must first pause and briefly review the foundations of implementation theory.

*Programmatic vs. Aspirational Policy-making*

Implementation research first gained notoriety in the early 1970s with the publication of Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky’s seminal work, *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland* ([1973] 1979), which examined why a politically popular federal employment programme in Oakland, California, failed to live up to public expectations. After following implementation efforts between federal and

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183 Interview, August 26, 2010.
184 There is no consensus definition of a causal mechanism. Mahoney (2001) identifies 24 separate definitions across the disciplines of sociology, political science, and philosophy. For my purposes, I take a mechanism to refer to the process that links causes to effects. In the policy literature, examples of causal mechanisms include social learning (Heclo 1974) and policy drift (Streeck and Thelen 2005).
185 Pressman and Wildavsky were certainly not the first authors to engage in implementation research. Saetren (2005, 569) has found evidence of implementation-related books, articles, and dissertations going
local officials, Pressman and Wildavsky came to a clear conclusion: the greater the number of links in the chain of implementation — meaning, the number of actors and decision points (“clearances”) involved in translating policy into action — the more complex implementation becomes, and the greater the likelihood of unintended consequences.

Pressman and Wildavsky’s study gave birth to a whole generation of implementation research. Subsequent works published in the 1970s rested on the normative assumptions implicit in Pressman and Wildavsky’s work, that implementation is best understood in Weberian terms, as both a hierarchical and rational process. By this account, implementation failure is considered a function of inadequate procedures or flawed bureaucratic practice. The more straightforward the lines of communication from top to bottom — the clearer the policy goals (Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983) and administrative consensus around these goals (Van Meter and Van Horn 1975) — the easier implementation.

Starting in the 1980s, a second generation of implementation research began challenging the assumptions upheld by these “top-down” analyses. Scholars such as Richard Elmore (1980) argued that real-world implementation centres on the actions of local agencies and street-level bureaucrats tasked with actually solving a given policy problem, not policy-makers on high. According to these “bottom-up” approaches, research should focus rather on the prevalence of bureaucratic intervention on the front lines of service delivery, as evident in local implementation networks across North America and Europe (see, for example, Lipsky 1980; Hjern and Porter 1981).

By the 1990s, sufficient evidence had accumulated partially validating both top-down and bottom-up approaches (O'Toole 2000, 268). Researchers thus began attempting to synthesize these debates (see Goggin et al. 1990; Palumbo and Calista 1990). Thanks to these efforts, most implementation scholars now agree that the bulk of cases tend to fall somewhere in between the two ideal types of hierarchical and network-based arrangements, that implementation is better understood as a continuum between

back well into the 1950s, and even as far back as the early 1930s. Their work, however, undoubtedly inspired a new and exciting era of implementation research within the mainstream discipline.
centralized control and local autonomy (Pülzl and Treib 2007, 100). But the consensus ends there. After years of debate, we are far from a comprehensive, yet parsimonious, theory of implementation (Saetren 2005, 573). As a result, some observers worry that the field has gone “dormant” (Schofield 2001).

In reality, implementation research has simply migrated elsewhere. The vast majority of the 7,000 English-language implementation studies (books, chapters, articles, and PhD dissertations) published since the turn of the 20th century is found not in the core disciplines of political science, public policy, and public administration, but rather in specialized venues dedicated to education, health, environmental, social, and economic policy research (Saetren 2005). Oddly absent from this list, however, is urban or local policy, which has attracted only scant attention across this diverse literature. Hill and Hupe (2002, 201-204), for instance, pinpoint just three urban-related implementation studies in their review of research published during the 1990s. One might surmise that urbanists have simply found a more inviting home in geography or urban studies. Yet here too, urban-oriented implementation studies remain rare. Only a handful of geographers and planners have risen to the challenge (Talen 1996; Laurian et al. 2004; Berke et al. 2006). Fewer still have studied the implementation of waterfront development plans (Gordon 2004).

Part of this has to do with the conceptual shortcomings of established implementation theory. For instance, implementation scholars have only recently begun to take seriously intergovernmental aspects of the policy process (DeLeon 1999, 318). Works inspired by the burgeoning field of multilevel governance (see Chapter Seven), which acknowledges that policies are quite often formed and administered at different (and multiple) political scales, are few and far between. This is particularly troublesome given that urban development policies are usually initiated at the municipal level, yet brought to fruition through the coordinated efforts of state and market actors often operating beyond the

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186 While true in principle, it should be noted that in practice the field is still very much dominated by studies of the top-down variety (Hupe 2011).
187 The term “urban” is of course a tricky label. Urban policy can encompass health, environmental, social, and economic concerns. Still, the fact that urban/local studies did not qualify as a category unto itself within Saetren’s codification is noteworthy.
188 Exceptions include Hill and Hupe (2003) and Conteh (2011).
local scale. As seen with Toronto’s waterfront, development is hardly indicative of a hierarchical process.

Beyond this shortcoming, I would argue that the greater challenge involves the disconnect between what scholars of political science, public policy, and public administration understand as the fundamental objective of public policy, in general terms, versus the specific intent of urban development (or land use) policies as understood by scholars and practitioners in urban planning. Whether formalized as a statute or regulation, or implied through policy statements, conventional public policy is treated in political science as a distinctly programmatic enterprise. By this I mean that in most cases, policies are expected to lead to the creation (or modification) of a specific policy programme — for example, a service centre to provide skills training, or an agency to regulate air pollution, or an office to coordinate foreign aid efforts, and so on. The study of policy implementation has therefore naturally concentrated on evaluating the efficiency or effectiveness of these programmes.

The urban planner, by contrast, assumes a different outlook. The intentions outlined in a city’s land use plans are decidedly aspirational. By this I mean that members of the intended policy audience (the implementers, if you will) are not mandated, nor strictly expected, to carry out a given policy’s stated objectives. Land use plans do not automatically have a proactive aspect to them; at best, they serve as basic “enabling structures” (Mastop and Faludi 1997, 817). Though they may include specific commitments to action, they offer few, if any, concrete tools to guarantee results. Moreover, they can only be realized over long time periods. By their very nature, land use plans — as policies — cannot compel private developers to construct new residential communities or employment districts; nor can they dictate exactly when such construction should take place.

The idea that municipal land use plans might serve as direct blueprints for development, along the lines of a conventional policy programme, is thus wholly misplaced. Urban development policies are nothing more than strategic documents whose applications are largely discretionary and conditional, subject to ongoing interactions between multiple interdependent actors. Prevailing implementation theory tends to
underappreciate this essential quality of land use planning: that urban development is a function of not only political or economic factors, but also time.

**The Influence of Time: Path Dependence and Sequencing**

The influence of time on political processes is a fairly recent subject of inquiry among political scientists and policy scholars. Traditionally, political research has focused on identifying sets of deterministic causes (independent variables) to help explain specific political outcomes (dependent variables). Recent advances in the fields of political sociology and the study of political institutions, however, highlight the importance of mechanisms linking cause and effect, including temporal dynamics (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Pierson 2004; Howlett and Rayner 2006; Pollitt 2008). Unfortunately, these insights have rarely been applied to questions of policy implementation (O'Toole 2000, 269; Winter 2006, 160), let alone urban governance (Rast 2012).

Two key concepts dominate the literature on temporality in social and political processes: path dependence and reactive sequences. Path dependence refers to a dynamic process whereby a given outcome is dependent on the particular order in which events unfold (Pierson 2004, 20). Path dependent arguments begin with a metaphorical fork in the road, where early decisions and events direct subsequent outcomes onto a distinct path. At least initially, potential trajectories remain wide open. But as early events become embedded along a particular path, self-reinforcing dynamics — namely, increasing returns, positive feedbacks, and lock-in (Pierson 2000) — ensure that, over time, the cost of reversing course becomes more and more prohibitive, narrowing the possibility of an alternative track. What may seem like a trivial early event may therefore have dramatic consequences on a given policy trajectory.
Table 6.1. Conceptions of Historical Change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin of Sequence</th>
<th>Direction of Sequence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Path dependence</td>
<td>Contingent/random</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive sequences</td>
<td>Conditional/conjunctures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Howlett and Rayner (2006, 8).

The concept of path dependence is not a causal theory; it does not provide hypotheses or a list of causal variables. It is instead an organizing concept to describe social processes that unfold over time, a mechanism which has shown itself particularly useful in explaining patterns of institutional emergence, persistence, and change (see North 1990; Thelen 2004), and the difficulties involved in policy reform (Hacker 1998; 2002). For all its analytical value, however, path dependence only accurately applies to a limited range of policy processes, particularly those instances where change seemingly happens by accident — the product of contingent, rather than purposive, events (Kay 2005).189 Haydu (1998, 354) and others therefore prefer to focus on sequences of events, emphasizing “the ways in which outcomes at a given switch point are themselves products of the past rather than historical accidents.”

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189 Contingency refers to the “inability of theory to predict or explain, either deterministically or probabilistically, the occurrence of a specific outcome” (Mahoney 2000, 513). This does not mean that a contingent event is truly random or without cause, but that there is no theoretical reason for believing that the event was any more likely to take place than any other. Examples of contingent events include the assassination of a political leader or unpredictable market fluctuations.
Figure 6.8: Illustration of Path Dependent versus Reactive Sequences.

These “reactive sequence” models (Mahoney 2000) follow a different logic than models based on path dependence (Table 6.1). Whereas path dependence relies on random or contingent initial circumstances, reactive sequences emphasize the importance of conditional events, or conjunctures, in defining a given policy trajectory (Figure 6.8). In reactive sequences, early events do more than simply foreclose future options — their only role in path dependent arguments — they also set in motion a chain of reactions and counter-reactions that allow for course reversals (Haydu 1998, 357; Mahoney 2000, 527). Here, clear temporal ordering may in fact lead to negative feedback effects (Howlett 2009).

When we apply these concepts to the case of waterfront redevelopment in Toronto, we see that land use policy and its implementation was subject to both sequence-driven and path dependent dynamics. In terms of policy development, the three major waterfront plans around which this dissertation is organized — the 1967 Metro Plan, the 1984 Central Waterfront Plan, and the 1994 Metro Waterfront Plan — all emerged in distinct temporal contexts. While few of these plans included any direct reference to previous proposals, each was in many ways a reaction to those that came before. The 1984 Central Waterfront Plan, for instance, articulated the planning community’s then widespread rejection of large-scale mega projects advanced in the previous Metro Plan, in favour of incremental improvements to the public realm. What appeared, on paper, to mark a clean break from the past, was instead a reaction to earlier misguidance. The 1994 Metro
Waterfront Plan, by the same token, was a direct translation of the principles and values underscored by the Crombie Commission, which sought to recast past planning paradigms in ecological terms consistent with the public’s growing environmental consciousness at the time.

Actual implementation, on the other hand, was highly constrained by path dependent feedback effects. As noted, initial land ownership conditions — artefacts of countless individual decisions by governments at all levels to either acquire, divest, or convey waterfront properties to or from any number of government departments, corporations, or arm’s-length agencies — progressively hampered comprehensive revitalization. Opportunities for course reversal were in short supply. Early events, such as Premier Davis’ decision to cancel Harbour City, over time cemented the strength of prevailing ownership interests, each with veto powers, leading to decades of frustrating political negotiation and unresolved legal disputes.

Briefly put, time and timing shaped separate stages of the policy process in different ways. Waterfront plans (land use policies) were formulated and re-formulated as planning ideas evolved, from modernist dreams of mega projects, to reform-minded calls for neighbourhood and community engagement, to post-modern principles of environmental sustainability — each a reaction to the shortcomings of previous planning eras. Actual implementation of these plans, however, was largely determined by historically contingent structural conditions, none greater than land ownership fragmentation, which were difficult to reverse. Development outcomes, in other words, were the product of both reactive sequence and path dependent policy processes. The existing policy literature, which portrays reactive sequences and path dependence as two distinct, independent models of policy change and stability, has difficulty reconciling this apparent symbiotic relationship.

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190 The “stages” metaphor underpinning many textbook definitions of the policy cycle — that is, from problem definition, to policy formulation, to implementation, to evaluation — should not be misconstrued as evidence of actual linearity in policy-making. I use it here merely as a heuristic device to help zero in on different elements of the policy process.
Conclusion

Leonard Poetschke, Harbourfront’s first general manager, recognized long ago that implementation revolves around one deceptively simple question, one which has plagued waterfront planning efforts in Toronto for decades: “how do you come up with something that will happen instead of just be?” (qtd. in Fulton 1975). There are, of course, no easy answers to this conundrum. That said, with respect to implementation in the Toronto case, one can at least point to a single causal condition that thoroughly obstructed waterfront revitalization. Economic cycles, property cycles, electoral cycles — no doubt, these all had some impact on redevelopment efforts. None of these factors, however, posed the same barriers to change — the same degree of coordination problems and veto points, the same self-reinforcing incentive structures — as the fragmentation of waterfront land ownership, which over time fundamentally paralyzed the process. Of course, this is not to say that public land ownership in itself is detrimental to urban development; only that such control must involve the consolidation of land assets under as few authorities as possible. Having at least half a dozen different public ownership interests involved in the process, as the case in Toronto, can only lead to political sclerosis.

Beyond questions of causality, the Toronto experience also highlights the limitations of conventional implementation theory, which I have argued does not adequately capture the temporal dimensions of urban development policy — what I refer to as an example of aspirational public policy — which can only be realized over long time periods. Thanks to the “historic turn” slowly taking place in the social sciences (McDonald 1996; Abbott 2001), we now recognize that a single variable’s impact cannot be fully ascertained without a complete appreciation of “when it appears within a sequence unfolding over time” (Pierson 2004, 67). Some events may happen too early, others too late, to ultimately impact outcomes. Applying this insight to the Toronto case, we see that unfavourable land ownership conditions in place at the outset of modern waterfront redevelopment efforts in the 1960s fundamentally obstructed subsequent implementation based on path dependent feedback effects. Such durability, however, did not pre-empt
formal policy change. Successive land use plans were revised in response to the perceived deficiencies of previous schemes. But none tackled questions of land ownership head on, thus leading to sustained institutional inertia — a topic to which we turn next.
Chapter Seven
Institutional Inertia and the Pathology of Multilevel Non-governance

In the ideal situation all governments would work together in harmony, within a consultative environment to achieve improved benefits, not only for themselves but for all the governments as a whole. The parts would be better managed and the whole would be better than the sum of all the parts. Analysis and experience dictates that this kind of harmony exists only in fairy tales.

— Stephen McLaughlin (1987, 45)

Scholars of urban governance in North America often discount the role and influence of multiple levels of government in local affairs. Many of the field’s canonical works, largely derived from the US experience, centre on the dominance of private development interests or local political alliances (Logan and Molotch 1987; Stone 1989). Fortunately, recent scholarly advances have slowly unhinged such parochialism. Several observers have actively investigated the nested characteristics of urban policy-making within the US federal system (Smith 2010; Krause 2011), while in Canada, the SSHRC-funded MCRI project on public policy in municipalities has helped spark numerous volumes of research more attuned to existing intergovernmental dynamics (see Public Policy in Municipalities 2005; Carroll and Graham 2009). Federalism scholars, meanwhile, have grown more comfortable abandoning the field’s classical models, both in Canada and abroad (Steytler 2009).

It is now generally agreed that urban policy-making cannot be understood as the sole domain of a single, distinct order of government. Coordination across different scales is now seen as both necessary and desirable as a normative goal. The thriving European literature on “multilevel governance” (Hooghe and Marks 2003; Bache and Flinders 2004a), while not explicitly concentrated at the urban scale, is a testament to this outlook, and has gradually been translated to the Canadian experience by a handful of urban scholars (see Young and Leuprecht 2006; Horak and Young 2012).
Despite the appeal of this burgeoning literature, many questions regarding the utility of multilevel governance for the study of urban politics and policy in Canada remain unanswered. This chapter focuses on two in particular. The first revolves around the temporal limits of the concept. The European literature suggests that multilevel governance (MLG) is a relatively new political phenomenon, the outgrowth of EU integration beginning in the late 1980s. Canadian applications often presume a similar storyline. But in truth, few scholars have directly examined the temporal aspects of multilevel governance in any great detail.\footnote{Papadopoulos (2005) hints at this gap in the European context, but leaves others to investigate further.} We are left to wonder, for example, whether the MLG framework has greater historical utility than currently accepted. When did it become appropriate in the Canadian context, one might ask, to reconsider urban governance within the ambit of MLG as opposed to strictly “intergovernmental relations”? It may well be that multilevel arrangements constitute a longstanding feature of Canadian federalism.

The second question concerns the literature’s foundational assumption that multilevel governance generates qualitatively better policy outcomes, particularly at the local scale (Marks and Hooghe 2004, 16). Internationally, such optimism is evident in studies focused, for instance, on multilevel responses to climate change and the role of cities in environmental policy-making (see, for example, Betsill and Bulkeley 2006; Betsill and Rabe 2009). While in Canada, scholars such as Bradford (2004; 2005) and Leo (2006; Leo and August 2009) have noted the promise of multilevel governance in a number of urban policy areas, including economic development, poverty reduction, and immigration and settlement services. Here, however, I concur with Peters and Pierre (2004) that this assumption cannot (and should not) be taken for granted. There are myriad examples of intergovernmental arrangements that are wholly dysfunctional — what may even be described as cases of multilevel non-governance.\footnote{I borrow the term multilevel non-governance from remarks made by Clarence Stone at the 2009 meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association (Ottawa, May 27, 2009) in a workshop on American and Canadian perspectives on cities and multilevel governance.} Regrettably, though, the literature is relatively quiet on this topic. How, then, might we define the characteristics of intergovernmental dysfunction in multilevel systems?
To address these questions, this chapter begins by reviewing the literature on federalism, intergovernmental relations, and multilevel governance, both in Canadian and international contexts. Against this backdrop, it then investigates the historical influence of multiple orders of government in the Toronto case, demonstrating how prevailing institutional dynamics defied conventional interpretations of intergovernmental relations in Canada. I conclude by exploring the implications of these findings for the study of multilevel governance.

Federalism and Multilevel Governance: An Urban Perspective

Just as urban political scholars often downplay the role of senior levels of government in the practice of local politics, the study of Canadian federalism and intergovernmental relations is similarly myopic, albeit in reverse, consistently trivializing the role of cities and municipalities in the Canadian federal system. Historically, the constitutional supremacy of provinces in municipal matters has isolated the study of cities from a generation of federalism scholars preoccupied with more traditional intergovernmental concerns, such as the decades-long national unity crisis (Cameron and Krikorian 2002). Local and municipal politics have in large part been viewed only as subordinate to, and derivative of, classical federal and provincial dynamics (Eidelman and Taylor 2010).

Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations

The classical model of federalism is premised on a clear division of powers and functions between two strict orders of government. As Steytler (2009, 393) explains, “local government [is] typically placed within the sole jurisdiction of the states [read: provinces], excluding any direct federal interference. Local governments [are] mere

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193 For international readers, it is important to note that according to the 1867 Constitution Act, which sets out the division of federal and provincial powers, municipalities fall under the exclusive authority of provinces, not the federal government (Section 92.8). Hence the common refrain that Canada’s cities are nothing more than “creatures of the provinces.”
creatures of states, existing at their will and having no independent relations with the federal government.” This dyadic model prevails not only in Canada, but also the US, Switzerland, and Australia. Indeed, few countries around the world afford constitutional recognition of any kind to local governments.194

Paradoxically, then, while Canada could be considered one of the world’s most decentralized federations in terms of federal-provincial relations, it remains one of the most centralized in terms of provincial-municipal relations (Simeon and Papillon 2006, 110). The types of “collaborative” mechanisms (Cameron and Simeon 2002) that underpin contemporary federal-provincial relations in Canada (first ministers meetings, entrenched bureaucratic dialogue) have no equivalents in the realm of provincial-local relations. Accepted wisdom dictates that “the essence of the system remains unaltered: the provincial governments control municipalities and what they do” (Young 2009a, 107). The federal government, by this account, has had little say over local affairs for several decades (Berdahl 2006, 30; Sancton 2008, 317-321; Stoney and Graham 2009, 392; Young 2009a, 115) — the only major exception being housing policy (Hulchanski 2006). Such restraint has often been attributed to the provinces’ protective stance on local matters, which routinely provides federal actors a comfortable excuse to abstain from action, though the full extent of these hurdles has been difficult to diagnose (Wolfe 2003; Young and McCarthy 2009).

There are, however, signs that conventional governing frameworks have begun to evolve. Even in countries where subnational governments continue to dominate local affairs, local governments have gradually achieved moderate gains in both fiscal and administrative authority.195 Direct relations between federal and local governments are also increasingly being forged (Steytler 2009, 393, 407-408). The Canadian experience is said to be following the international trend. The role of local governments in Canadian intergovernmental relations, though limited, is more fluid than ever before, operating along a continuum from no formal relations (that is to say, as an interest group), to a mix

194 Important exceptions include Germany and Spain, which enshrined principles of local self-government in the German Basic Law and Spanish Constitution in 1949 and 1978, respectively. Others include Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa.
195 It should be acknowledged that this trend is not limited to developed countries. Decentralization is also an emerging phenomenon in the global South (see Gore and Stren 2002; Stren 2012).
of formal and informal relations, and in the rarest of circumstances, full and equal partnerships. Hence recent academic interest in the concept of multilevel governance.

**Multilevel Governance**

The term multilevel governance was first utilized to capture the nature of EU structural reforms initiated in 1988, which seemed to challenge prevailing state-centric depictions of European integration (van Kersbergen and van Waarden 2004).¹⁹⁶ The standard two-level (national and supranational) model of European governance was being undercut by apparent decentralization and diffusion of authority to other levels of decision making, such as subnational territorial units, supranational interest groups, and nonstate actors. The term “multilevel” in this sense thus referred to the growing *vertical* interdependence of governments at different territorial levels, while “governance” referred to a related *horizontal* interdependence between governments and *non*-governmental actors (Bache and Flinders 2004c).

Hooghe and Marks (2003) have since refined this definition into a typology of MLG activity. Type I governance systems involve durable governmental jurisdictions nested within one another. The Canadian federal system — hierarchical in nature, with municipal authority nested within provincial jurisdiction, and provincial authority nested within the sovereign power of the nation-state — qualifies within this category, as does the EU’s more complicated representative system of supra- and subnational bodies, which accommodates up to six territorial units of government. Type II governance systems, by contrast, involve more flexible arrangements wherein governmental or non-governmental bodies — for example, public agencies, special purpose authorities, or not-for-profit organizations — are tasked with providing public goods or services for a specific policy audience, as opposed to a territorially defined community.¹⁹⁷ Operating

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¹⁹⁶ Since this time, other scholars have come up with a variety of alternative nomenclatures, including: “multi-tiered” governance, “polycentric” governance, “multi-perspectival” governance, conditions of “functional, overlapping, competing jurisdictions,” and “spheres of authority” (see Bache and Flinders 2004c).

¹⁹⁷ North American examples of such functional specialization include conservation authorities, which coordinate inter-municipal, inter-regional, and even inter-provincial environmental planning and
according to the corporate logic of efficiency, competition, and risk taking, these organizations are expected to improve service delivery by avoiding the perceived shortcomings of top-down, bureaucratic policy implementation. As we will see, both Type I and II systems were at work in the Toronto case.

The two ideal types of MLG identified by Hooghe and Marks have gained substantial traction in American circles, primarily among scholars interested in coordination problems involved in metropolitan governance. Ostrom’s (1999) analysis of polycentricity and fragmentation of metropolitan functions could be interpreted as evidence of Type II governance arrangements. The proliferation of special districts and special purpose authorities for local service delivery (see Foster 1997) also fits the MLG model, as these bodies usually operate within Type I systems — that is to say, created by territorial units such as municipalities and state governments.

In Canada, scholars have been equally receptive to multilevel analysis. Reflecting on a collection of research investigating contemporary federal-provincial-municipal relations, Young and Leuprecht (2006, 13) conclude that the multilevel governance literature has made an important impact on the study of urban politics. Although provinces continue to serve as the linchpin of urban governance, decision making has increasingly become shared (and contested) by actors operating at other levels — in other words, exhibiting both Type I and Type II relationships — depending on the urban problem at issue. To what extent this evolution fundamentally challenges conventional understandings of how the Canadian state operates remains open to debate.

Commenting during a period of renewed interest in urban issues spurred by former Prime Minister Paul Martin’s dream of a “New Deal for Cities,” Neil Bradford (2004; 2005) witnesses an emerging policy architecture that transcends conventional jurisdictional compartments. Drawing from multilevel analyses in the European Union, Britain, and the US, Bradford labels such multilevel coordination as “place-based” policy-making in that it acknowledges the diversity of place-specific problems facing big cities, small towns, and areas in between. Although frustrated with the Canadian management, as well as a growing number of public-private partnerships (P3s) established as part of the New Public Management paradigm (Osborne and Gaebler 1992).
experience thus far, Bradford remains optimistic that public policy goals in Canada can indeed be properly aligned with local needs and capacities based on recent intergovernmental frameworks (such as the 1999 Social Union Framework Agreement) and several “action-oriented” tri-partite agreements, such as the Urban Development Agreements signed in Winnipeg and Vancouver over the last several decades.

Christopher Leo, in a series of recent papers (Leo 2006; Leo and Pyl 2007; Leo and Andres 2008; Leo and August 2009; Leo and Enns 2009), extends Bradford’s analysis further, proposing his own conceptualization of federal-provincial-municipal relations in Canada as “deep” federalism. The steady shift toward decentralization in economic and social policy-making, argues Leo, necessitates an expansion of our conception of federalism to include not just differences between regional communities, but local, even neighbourhood, level variations. Utilizing various case studies of intergovernmental collaboration in Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Saint John, New Brunswick, across several policy areas — from urban development agreements forged to spur local economic development and infrastructure renewal, to homelessness and housing, to immigration and settlement services — Leo and his colleagues paint a picture of contemporary intergovernmental relations which sharply contrasts with previous interpretations.

**The Limits of Multilevel Governance**

The analyses put forward by Bradford, Leo, and others in the field represent solid contributions. But it is fair to say that taken together, the study of multilevel governance in Canada as it pertains to urban and local policy-making remains largely untapped. The recently completed SSHRC-MCRI project on public policy in municipalities marks an important leap forward in bringing together a community of like-minded scholars on the topic, but this is only a first step. Many important theoretical and empirical questions are left unexplored in the Canadian context (see Young and Leuprecht 2006, 15; Young 2009b, 498).

At this point, the reader should be reminded that, in spite of arguments to the contrary (Piattoni 2009; 2010), the multilevel governance literature does not include a compelling
theory of governance. It presents few hypotheses to be tested, and its predictive utility remains tenuous at best. Its true value, I believe, is instead as a comprehensive analytical framework — an “organizing perspective” in the words of Bache and Flinders (2004b, 94) — which offers a full catalogue of concepts and mechanisms to better understand complex policy systems. Its appeal, witnessed not only in the study of federalism or European integration, but also in such disparate fields as international political economy and climate change policy, lies in its capacity to help conceptualize power relations set against the proliferation of jurisdictional actors and challenges to state power (Bache and Flinders 2004c, 4-5). Put differently, the utility of the multilevel governance framework in advancing the study of intergovernmental relations in Canada depends on conceptual clarity, not predictive success.

The remaining analysis is intended to highlight two aspects of multilevel governance which, in my estimation, have not been given full consideration and require further investigation and conceptual refinement. First, I contend that there is an unconscious tendency within the Canadian literature to treat multilevel arrangements as a strictly recent phenomenon. To his credit, Leo (2006, 489) briefly hints that MLG dynamics may have been at work in the 1970s, but it is fair to say that the bulk of the Canadian literature focuses on events over the last 10-15 years. If there is reason to believe that the MLG framework resonates in earlier time periods, this would force us to rethink the historical relevance of intergovernmental relations in Canada, which has long been interpreted as the exclusive domain of federal and provincial, but not local or municipal, political institutions.

Second, much of the multilevel governance literature (both in Canada and elsewhere) tends to subscribe to the normative position that multilevel governance necessarily engenders better governance, both in terms of process as well as on the ground results, especially at the local scale. Multilevel governance, claim its proponents, both encourages innovation and experimentation among policy actors and acknowledges the need to tailor policy to local conditions (Marks and Hooghe 2004, 16). At least in the

198 Useful concepts that have emerged from this literature include the “joint-decision trap” (Scharpf 1988; 2006), discussed in Chapter Six, which describes obstacles to problem solving in circumstances requiring collective decision making.
Canadian context, however, such claims have rarely been tested with any rigour (Horak 2012, 359).\textsuperscript{199} Even the most casual observer of intergovernmental affairs is well aware that such is not always the case. The study of multilevel governance thus requires consideration of \textit{all} potential governance outcomes, functional \textit{and} dysfunctional. The case of waterfront redevelopment in Toronto is particularly insightful in this regard.

\textbf{Insights from the Toronto Case}

As seen in previous chapters, the historical fragmentation of waterfront ownership added a layer of complexity to the existing intergovernmental dynamic that effectively crippled implementation efforts. Perhaps more interesting, at least for our purposes here, is that this unusual circumstance ran counter to longstanding interpretations of federal-provincial-municipal relations in Canada.

\textit{‘When Everyone is in Charge, No One is in Charge’}

At least on paper, jurisdictional obligations concerning waterfront redevelopment in Toronto should have been straightforward: the federal government was constitutionally responsible for overseeing port operations (air and sea), while the province was ostensibly responsible for monitoring various land use planning, housing, and infrastructure functions delegated to the municipal level, that is, the City of Toronto and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. The federal government, in other words, no doubt cognizant of Toronto’s declining maritime traffic and the island airport’s largely recreational aviation functions, should have been expected to assume only a minor role in waterfront decision making, while the city and Metro collectively should have spearheaded development under the watchful eye of the province.

In practice, however, the traditional boundaries of federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdiction were rarely so clear-cut, let alone respected. The federal government, for

\textsuperscript{199} Horak and Young’s (2012) recent survey of multilevel governance in Canadian cities marks an important exception. Yet even internationally, the list of skeptics is surprisingly short. Rare examples include Papadopoulos (2007) and Newig and Fritsch (2009).
example, was at various times a major player in development along the lake shore, albeit in “enigmatic” ways (Sanderson and Filion 2011, 224). The controversial Harbourfront project, for instance, dominated waterfront politics for nearly two decades after Prime Minister Trudeau’s effort to score political points in a surprise election pledge in 1972. The resulting “concrete curtain” along the lakeshore sparked vociferous political opposition from local officials and residents alike, partly prompting the creation of David Crombie’s Royal Commission on the matter. Federal crown corporations and agencies such as the CBC, Canada Post, and particularly CN Rail, also controlled considerable land holdings in the area, solidifying the federal government’s general stake, while simultaneously fracturing this interest across a variety of departments and agencies, each with their own institutional priorities. The fate of the Railway Lands, for example, touched on in Chapter Three, was especially contingent on federal involvement, not only because of CN Rail’s physical assets, but also Transport Canada’s inherent jurisdiction over rail transportation.

The province, by contrast, generally refrained from direct intervention on the waterfront despite its undisputed constitutional authority over municipal planning. This was particularly evident during Premier Davis’ tenure, which brought the demise of Harbour City and Metro Centre, two high profile redevelopment projects with clear provincial ties in the western harbour and central bayfront, respectively. When the province did show interest, its enthusiasm was momentary. Premier David Peterson, for example, offered promises in the late 1980s of a new social housing project, Ataratiri, in the West Don Lands, and explicit support for the Crombie Commission’s investigative work. Only a couple of years later, and after an unexpected change in government, Ataratiri was quickly abandoned as project costs escalated. Meanwhile, the provincially sponsored Waterfront Regeneration Trust, a direct descendant of Crombie’s inquiry, guided its minimal resources to the larger regional watershed, not the central waterfront. Simply put, the financial and political costs of taking a leadership role in redevelopment efforts were too high for the province to bear. The mosaic of ownership interests and jurisdictional quandaries were too complicated to justify spending the necessary financial
and political capital. The province was thus more comfortable assuming a basic monitoring and regulatory role.\textsuperscript{200}

The city and Metro, for their part, did not feel the need to work together in any productive capacity. Political and bureaucratic channels for cooperation were rarely forged. These upper- and lower-tier municipalities considered themselves partners only when forced to protect what little autonomy they already held. At the bureaucratic level, with the city planning department already “punching above [its] weight,” Metro staff sat back, unwilling to overextend their limited resources.\textsuperscript{201} At the political level, ambivalence reigned. Apart from disagreements over plans for the Toronto islands and the treatment of island residents, there were few major episodes of friction between elected leaders at city hall and Metro.\textsuperscript{202}

This blurring of traditional jurisdictional lines — sometimes the result of “turf wars” quite literally created by the degree of land ownership fragmentation detailed in Chapter Six, at other times the by-product of political dithering or neglect — certainly did not follow any established model of intergovernmental decision making. On the contrary, such a jurisdictional “stew”, as former city planning commissioner Robert Millward describes it, defied conventional logic.\textsuperscript{203} After all, as the Crombie Commission concluded in its final report, “When everyone is in charge, no one is in charge” (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1992, xxii).

\textsuperscript{200} Garcea and Pontikes (2006) point out that, in national perspective, this is a common calculation in cases where provinces sense a possible political and financial minefield.

\textsuperscript{201} Interview, Peter de Tolly, November 22, 2010. The one exception seems to have been the Metro parks department, which according to de Tolly, was somewhat active in the planning and development process.

\textsuperscript{202} Interview, Art Eggleton, September 23, 2010.

\textsuperscript{203} Interview November 15, 2010.
Beyond traditional intergovernmental concerns, one must also factor in the role of special purpose bodies in shaping the character and pace of waterfront redevelopment efforts. Key here is the influence of the Toronto Harbour Commission.\textsuperscript{204}

Created by federal legislation in the wake of the early 20th century municipal reform movement, the Harbour Commission was vested with substantial statutory powers, yet few public oversight mechanisms.\textsuperscript{205} It could acquire, expropriate, hold, sell, lease and otherwise dispose of any properties it deemed necessary for port operations virtually at will (Canada 1911, Sec. 15.2).\textsuperscript{206} This was in keeping with the engineer-driven, technocratic approach to municipal politics of the day, wherein questions about the integrity of elected officials forced restrictions on the day-to-day influence of politicians in the delivery of important public services (see Weaver 1977, Chps. 3-4; Foster 1997, 15-20).\textsuperscript{207}

\textsuperscript{204} The THC was not alone as a special purpose authority involved in waterfront affairs. The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, which although funded in part by Metro Toronto, reported to the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources, was one of several other institutional actors involved in consultation and planning exercises across all four decades. The bulk of the conservation authority’s impact, however, was felt outside the central waterfront area, in places further afield, such as the Scarborough Bluffs and Mimico. For a brief overview of these agencies, as well as associated government departments, see Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{205} The commission was first conceived as a joint proposal of the city and the Toronto Board of Trade, the city’s largest and most influential business organization at the time. Both parties were concerned that the industrial potential of the waterfront was being squandered by the existing port authority, commonly known as the Harbour Trust (legally speaking, The Commissioners of the Harbour of Toronto), which predated confederation (Province of Canada 1850). The two parties sought a centralized authority with powers far exceeding those of the Harbour Trust, and sponsored a successful municipal plebiscite to legitimate their position in 1911 (Mellen 1974).

The notion that an independent agency should be created to regulate and control all port-related land and maritime navigation in the harbour was not unusual. Until the adoption of the 1936 National Harbours Board Act, nearly all Canadian ports were administered by harbour commissions similar to the THC. Later, most harbour boards and commissions were made subject either to greater federal oversight, as seen when the National Harbours Board was replaced with the Canada Port Corporation in 1983, or in some cases, greater devolution to municipal authorities.

\textsuperscript{206} Subsequent legislative amendments to the THC Act expanded the commission’s mandate even further, providing it authority over the Toronto Island Airport, and even contentious powers to approve development proposals within its defined jurisdictional boundaries, whether or not such development involved THC-owned property (see Malcolm 1981, 15).

\textsuperscript{207} The legacy of the reform era is still with us today in the thousands of so-called ABCs (agencies, boards and commissions) operating in municipalities across Canada (see Richmond and Siegel 1994).
The THC, however, was not your typical arm’s-length authority. For one, it was one of only two port authorities nationwide established under its own enabling legislation. This provided the commission with land development responsibilities far beyond any port-related duties outlined in the standard Harbour Commissions Act. Even Edward L. Cousins, the THC’s founding chief engineer, acknowledged that the Harbour Commission “was a misnomer. It should have been called an industrial and commercial development commission or some such name. No sane man would ever have spent $25,000,000, which was the amount of the original bond issue, on Toronto’s ambitions to be a lake port” (*Star Weekly*, March 14, 1931, qtd. in Merrens 1988, 97).

Second, as we saw in Chapter Six, the THC held title over an unprecedented amount of waterfront property. Before being forced to hand over over 600 acres of Port Lands property to the city in the mid 1990s, the Harbour Commission typically controlled between 20% and 37% of all land holdings in the central waterfront since the early 1960s. Not only that, it in fact created the vast majority of waterfront land available for redevelopment. As such, the commission felt compelled to assert itself in almost every waterfront endeavour. “Only God and the Harbour Commission [could] create land,” explains David Crombie, his tongue firmly in cheek. “You weren’t dealing with a normal enemy here, or some other competitor, or some other jurisdiction. You were dealing with extraordinary powers given to [an] extraordinary jurisdiction.”

Third, the THC was remarkable in that it was perhaps the only federal agency ever created with a board of directors controlled by municipal appointees. Of the commission’s five board members, three were appointed by city council, one by the federal government, and another by the federal government on the recommendation of the Toronto Board of Trade. Thus, while at first glance the THC existed as a federal agency, in practical terms it also operated as a municipal entity. This unorthodox

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208 In testimony to the Senate Standing Committee on Transport in 1998, Harold Peerenboom, then commission chairman, boasted that THC-built land and infrastructure had been appraised at over $1 billion (1998).

209 Interview, December 6, 2011.
governance structure granted the THC an “almost mystical power” (Sanderson and Filion 2011, 242) that transcended ordinary accountability structures.\textsuperscript{210}

As neither an obvious agent of the federal Crown nor the City of Toronto, the commission routinely operated outside the apparent interests of its political masters. “It was an empire,” reflected Martin Silva, former city councillor and THC board member, to a 1997 Senate committee, “that lived on its own and made its own decisions,” routinely evading federal oversight while ignoring the wishes of council (Senate of Canada 1997). One Ontario court went so far as to characterize the THC as “masters in their own house” (Ontario High Court of Justice 1987).

Effectively answering to no one, the commission “felt it virtually owned the waterfront.”\textsuperscript{211} With almost complete legal autonomy, it exploited its double identity as the situation required. When self-interest dictated that the commission act as a federal agent, it did so with near complete immunity; conversely, if self-interest required donning a municipal hat, the commission played the part. For example, on the rare occasion when federal Transport officials sought to review THC operations, commission staff could point to the composition of the board and claim that their primary reporting duties were to the municipality. With few motives to contest this position, federal officials treated the THC with “benign neglect.”\textsuperscript{212} As long as the commission kept its finances in the black — made easier by its ability to sell off waterfront assets at any time — the federal government generally stayed out of the commission’s affairs. At the same time, when city planners proposed introducing mixed-uses in the East Bayfront and Port Lands as part of the Central Waterfront Plan review process culminating in the early 1980s, THC staff were quick to argue that as a federally-incorporated agency, the commission had legal say in any prospective zoning amendments affecting port industries. If city planners had a

\textsuperscript{210}Ironically, such powers did little to actually accomplish the commission’s industrial development goals. Port traffic peaked in the late 1960s, and declined ever since. The number of vessels passing through Toronto’s port dropped from a high of 1187 in 1967 to a low of 255 in 1985 (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1989, 108). These figures are roughly equivalent to traffic and cargo totals seen in the port of Goderich, Ontario — a town of approximately 7,000 residents.

\textsuperscript{211}Interview, Karl Jaffary, November 19, 2010.

\textsuperscript{212}This characterization was first expressed to me by Michael Goldrick, in an interview on August 23, 2010. Subsequent interviews with Susan Schiller, Karl Jaffary, and Ron Doering lent support to Goldrick’s perspective.
problem with this, THC staff would remind municipal lawyers, they should take it up with the federal government.

Such gamesmanship even extended to relations with the province. When asked whether he had considered challenging the THC’s apparent authority during his tenure as premier, Bill Davis maintains that, to the best of his recollection, such action was considered verboten: “It was off limits. They [the Harbour Commission] reminded us of that on many occasions.” Later, when it became clear that the commission had never completed environmental assessments for the thousands of truckloads of lake fill used to create the Leslie Street Spit, THC staff continued to insist that as a creation of federal legislation, it was not subject to provincial environmental approvals.

Insulated from federal, provincial, and municipal oversight, the commission was effectively free to exert a level of political influence arguably on par with a genuine order of government — a fifth level of government, one might say. Where there should have been four government actors involved — federal, provincial, and lower- and upper-tier municipalities (Toronto and Metro) — there were, in effect, five: the federal government, the province, Metro, the city, and the Harbour Commission, an agency with no clear political constituency, yet with unparalleled authority over waterfront planning and development. The result was a scenario which completely defied the conventional federal-provincial-municipal equation. Where the province should have been expected to take the policy lead on an issue of regional and strategic importance, it routinely kept its distance. And where, according to conventional wisdom, the federal government should have kept a relatively low profile, it dominated waterfront headlines for decades, a constant thorn in the side of local officials.

This intriguing intergovernmental history, combining features of both Type I and Type II multilevel arrangements, was observable going back at least to the early 1960s,

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213 Interview, December 22, 2010.
214 Such bravado is all the more impressive considering that the province, not the THC, held legal title over the lakebed in which the Spit was created. Interview, Ron Doering, November 17, 2010.
215 Numerous interview respondents concurred with this assessment. Art Eggleton, former mayor and current Senator, was most succinct in his remarks. When asked if the THC operated as a fifth level of government, Eggleton replied: “Very definitely” (Interview, September 23, 2010). The irony, of course, is that such autonomy was originally intended to help protect the commission from political obstruction, not allow the commission itself to become a major source of interference.
Fuelled by high levels of jurisdictional disorder and fragmentation of land ownership, it yielded an intergovernmental framework almost inimical to collaboration and coordination. It bred a decision-making environment paralyzed by institutional inertia and intergovernmental stasis — a state, one might conclude, of multilevel non-governance.

**Toward a Pathology of Multilevel Non-Governance**

The Toronto experience offers an intriguing reference point from which to explore the conceptual limits of multilevel governance as an analytical framework. As alluded to earlier, two insights are particularly noteworthy.

First, based on the sheer diversity of governmental actors involved in redevelopment efforts, as well as the non-hierarchical nature of their interventions over time, it may well be that multilevel governance has far greater historical utility than generally depicted in the literature. Multilevel dynamics were observable in the Toronto case as far back as the early 1960s. It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that the MLG framework has analytical value not only for Canadian urban scholars interested in contemporary events, but also those engaged in historical research. Where this potential begins and ends, of course, is difficult to gauge from a single case. It seems unlikely, for example, that one could pinpoint the exact shift from conditions of intergovernmental relations to multilevel governance with great accuracy. Still, introducing a historical lens to the MLG literature provides a more textured understanding of the concept, opening up new avenues for inquiry into the historical foundations of federal-provincial-municipal relations in Canada.\(^{217}\)

Second, the Toronto case is a reminder that multilevel arrangements do not always generate superior outcomes. A core assumption underpinning much of the MLG literature is that the diffusion of authority across multiple jurisdictions is necessarily “more

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\(^{216}\) McLaughlin (1987, 19) goes so far to suggest that Toronto’s waterfront has “been everyone’s, but no one’s, business for over 150 years.”

\(^{217}\) The field of political development, for example, which has recently begun to explore the role of cities in American political history (Dilworth 2009), seems fertile ground in this regard.
efficient than, and normatively superior to, central state monopoly” (Marks and Hooghe 2004, 16). Recent empirical work in numerous federal states, however, suggests that this position is, at best, overstated (Lazar and Leuprecht 2007). The democratic and administrative benefits of multilevel systems are by no means guaranteed. Conditions of multilevel non-governance, typified by policy dysfunction and intergovernmental conflict, are just as possible as those of collaboration and coordination.218 The Toronto experience is emblematic of this reality, highlighting the need to better understand not only the features of the Canadian system which make multilevel arrangements work, but also the as yet uncharted pathologies of non-governance which fuel policy failure in federal and multilevel systems.

How, then, might one distinguish between multilevel governance versus non-governance? Taking the question literally, one could begin by reversing the affirmative definition of governance — a process of collective action and decision making, or the general exercise of authority (Robichau 2011) — to reveal its logical inverse. This is similar to the approach taken by Dimitrov (2006; 2007) in the international regime literature (not to be confused with the urban variety espoused by Clarence Stone), which focuses on the production of multilateral agreements and treaty-making. Here, a “non-regime” refers to an international policy domain lacking formal multilateral agreement — in other words, domains characterized by the absence of a formal regime.

Applying the same logic to the study of multilevel governance, however, is problematic. Governance, after all, is not a binary concept; it has no clear opposite. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any political process that could not be conceived of as governance. Interdependencies between governmental and non-governmental actors and institutions is now an accepted fact of modern political life. Bevir (2009), for example, highlights at least fifty separate applications of the term.219 A more fruitful approach is

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218 This is particularly true with respect to urban politics. As Stein and Turkewitsch (2008, 24) put it, “While there is no disputing the existence of local authorities as the lowest tier of a multi-level system, and even their increased interaction with other levels of government, MLG may exaggerate the actual role, power and importance of local governments. Here, MLG presents more of a normative, indeed idealistic, picture than an accurate depiction of reality” (original emphasis).

219 By now, the astute reader should realize that waterfront governance in Toronto was quite clearly dominated by governmental (as opposed to non-governmental) actors. Governance models that de-
therefore to consider the *quality* of observable governing arrangements, not simply their mere presence or absence.

One would certainly be hard-pressed to identify a clear, universally observable threshold that might characterize political processes as sufficiently dysfunctional to qualify as non-governance. Nevertheless, the Toronto case does illuminate two useful starting points: the quality of (a) inputs and (b) outputs. By inputs, I mean the structural features of political relations among governmental (and non-governmental) actors — that is to say, patterns of cooperation and/or conflict in collective decision making — that either enable or obstruct the realization of policy commitments. Stein and Turkewitsch (2008, 14), for instance, suggest that the prevailing climate in most multilevel governance systems “is one of cooperation, mutual accommodation, and shared authority and responsibility.” As we’ve seen, the Toronto case presents a cautionary challenge to this normative expectation. The high degree of public land ownership, described in Chapter Six, consistently poisoned prospects for cooperation and mutual accommodation. The jurisdictional sclerosis detailed in this chapter further cemented such discord. As for shared authority, collective responsibility was spread across a maze of institutional actors that bore little resemblance to Type I governing arrangements envisioned by Hooghe and Marks, contrary to Canada’s constitutional division of powers. Type II special purpose bodies like the THC only exacerbated this broken hierarchy of decision making. Rather than complement or supersede existing jurisdictional relationships, the Harbour Commission’s duplicitous behaviour effectively shattered any remaining semblance of political accountability.

By outputs, I mean the inherent effects of these institutional dynamics – what a pathologist might refer to as the observable reaction to (in this case political) stimuli. Here, common sense dictates that implementation failure, even in the realm of urban development, denotes dysfunction. As we know from Chapter Six, the aspirational nature of urban development policy presupposes that “successful” city-building is anything but the norm. One should be careful, in other words, to not make too much of unrealized

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emphasize the capacity and influence of state actors (such as Peters and Pierre 1998) are thus of lesser value to this analysis.
plans. Still, as David Gordon, director of the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen’s University, puts it: “If you've been set up to redevelop the Toronto waterfront, and twenty years later, nothing has changed, then you have failed. A redevelopment agency that has not redeveloped, by definition, has failed.”220 The capacity to translate intent into action is crucial.

The pathology of multilevel non-governance as applied to the Toronto case therefore speaks to at least two characteristic features of dysfunction: a structural predisposition to institutional and intergovernmental conflict, as opposed to coordination; and a lack of political agency necessary to overcome such institutional inertia and achieve collective ends. Whether these features hold across cases remains to be seen; this must of course be tested across a wider population. If confirmed, though, fresh opportunities arise to investigate the practical origins of multilevel non-governance, that is to say, the conditions under which functional governing arrangements might degenerate into dysfunctional forms (or perhaps, vice-versa). Again, this would require comparative analysis far outside the scope of work presented here. But it does highlight the critical connections that could be made between the multilevel governance framework and neo-institutionalist literature on the genesis, reproduction, and transformation of institutions (Greif and Laitin 2004; Thelen 2004).

Conclusion

Reflecting on the theoretical evolution of public policy and administration, Frederickson (2005, 291) points out that the study of governance “tends to ignore or at least de-emphasize the vast world of non-governance that lies deep in the folds of jurisdiction, organization, and bureaucracy.” I would argue the same can be said for the study of multilevel governance, in which the Toronto case provides an important corrective. This chapter has revealed the peculiar relationships between federal, provincial, and municipal actors over four decades of waterfront planning and development in Toronto. This convoluted mix of institutional interests did not in itself provoke policy stagnation and

220 Interview, August 26, 2010.
implementation failure. It is the fact that each jurisdictional actor operated according to widely diverse objectives amid formidable institutional constraints: the city, with the most to gain from redevelopment, hamstrung by fiscal shortcomings and legal challenges to its planning authority, not to mention an indifferent municipal partner in Metro; the province, content to stick to the sidelines of waterfront debates out of political prudence despite its constitutional prowess; the federal government, a jurisdictional “wildcard” (Sanderson and Filion 2011, 234) with a material stake in the central waterfront, yet a spotty record of urban development and property management; and the Harbour Commission, a bureaucratic anomaly with substantial powers whose very existence, in the words of David Crombie, served as “a contraceptive on the thrust of progress.”

The result is a dysfunctional system that I refer to as multilevel non-governance, typified by institutional and intergovernmental inertia, which has bearing on the established literature on federalism and multilevel governance, and its relations to urban politics and policy in Canada, in two important respects. First, it calls into question the ungrounded assumption that multilevel governance in Canada is a recent phenomenon. Through the lens of the Toronto case, we see that the multilevel governance framework has historical relevance far beyond recent events, certainly to the 1960s. This forces us to rethink the common assumption in Canadian political science that intergovernmental relations in Canada has, until only recently, operated as the exclusive domain of federal and provincial governments; that only now, in recent years, have cities become implicated in multilevel arrangements. Second, Toronto’s recurring experience with waterfront disappointment further challenges the extant literature’s presumption that multilevel governance typically produces optimal outcomes, particularly at the urban and local scale. In doing so, it serves as a modest contribution to a nascent body of literature assessing the quality of policy-making in multilevel systems, and offers theoretical starting points from which to better understand why, when, and how such systems break down.

221 Interview, January 19, 2012.
Chapter Eight
Conclusion: Even the Best Laid Plans…

It is not often the case that land so strategically located is in public ownership and control; it would be a permanent loss if the potentialities of these [waterfront] lands were not fully realized.

— Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board (1961, 40)

It has become something of a local tradition to bemoan the sorry state of Toronto’s waterfront. Pundits have deplored the water’s edge as everything from an “unsightly backyard” (Toronto Daily Star 1962b) to a “monumental disaster” (Reguly 2006). Not even the establishment of a Royal Commission on the matter could dispel the disappointment, as critics wondered aloud whether the inquiry’s $9.3 million budget might have been better spent (Toronto Star 1992). “How many times has the waterfront been studied by the city?” asks Susan Schiller, former Harbour Commissioner and aide to Mayor Crombie, with noticeable resignation. “How many times has there been… yet another initiative proposed?”

This dissertation — informed by extensive archival and documentary analysis, as well as interviews with past and present politicians, political staff, and bureaucrats at all levels of government, urban planners and designers, architects, journalists, and community representatives long involved in waterfront issues — has sought to uncover the roots of such pronounced implementation failure, to reveal the fascinating political history that repeatedly transformed good intentions into broken promises. Stock explanations, perpetuated by the media, often point to the pitfalls of “government wrangling” (Urquhart 1972a) and “political indifference” (Merrens and Lemon 1987). These accounts,

222 Interview, January 18, 2011.
223 This is not to suggest that nothing at all has happened on the Toronto waterfront since the 1960s. As outlined in previous chapters, landmarks such as the CN Tower and neighbourhoods such as Harbourfront are now established parts of the city that obviously did not exist in 1960. My point, however, is that these projects, like so many others devised in the ensuing four decades, turned out vastly different than originally conceived. Or as Sanders and Stone (1987) put it, that the “politics of announcement” overshadowed the “politics of execution.”
however, struggle to truly make sense of the maze of political actors, events, relationships, decisions and non-decisions that defined such gridlock.

It has been said that “a successful city fulfills itself not by master plans but through an attentiveness to the processes that have created it and awareness of its possibilities” (Fulford 1995, 14). To entertain and prepare for the potential failures of the future, in other words, one must understand the failures of the past. The arguments and ideas presented in the preceding pages have been written with these words firmly in mind. This chapter reviews the conclusions reached over the course of this dissertation and considers both the practical and theoretical implications of my analysis going forward.

Revisiting the Three Eras of Modern Waterfront Planning

This study has been organized around the evolution of three comprehensive redevelopment plans: Metro Toronto’s 1967 Waterfront Plan and its logical extension, the 1968 Bold Concept; the 1984 Central Waterfront Plan, produced by the former City of Toronto; and the 1994 Metropolitan Waterfront Plan, published by Metro’s Planning Department on the heels of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront. Each of these plans marked the culmination of several years of study and public deliberation; yet each, at best, was only partially implemented, or at worst, abruptly abandoned altogether not long after receiving initial approval from local councils. While exploring the development and demise of each planning vision, three distinct eras of waterfront planning and implementation between 1960-2000 become apparent.

The first era (1960-72), reviewed in Chapter Three, centres on the 1967 Metro Plan and 1968 Bold Concept, as well as three high-profile redevelopment projects — Harbour City, Metro Centre, and Harbour Square. Harbour City, a dramatic proposal for a new lakefront community expected to house up to 50,000 residents, was first revamped, then completely discarded after legal challenges from the province over land titles, and a change in leadership in the premier’s office. Metro Centre, a mammoth commercial and transportation hub planned for the railway lands, fell prey to a variety of technical
challenges and coordination issues created by public and private project proponents, CN and CP Rail, as well as a reform-minded council intent on saving Union Station from demolition. Meanwhile, Harbour Square, a multi-million dollar residential and hotel complex at the foot of Yonge Street, was the subject of several delays, including a change in management, as necessary property swaps were negotiated, financing secured, and planning approvals brokered at council. Ultimately, just one of Harbour Square’s three planned phases was eventually completed.

The second era (1972-88), examined in Chapter Four, revolves around the painstaking adoption of the city’s 1984 Central Waterfront Plan, the product of fifteen years of stakeholder consultations intended to maximize public access to the water’s edge, trigger new industrial and commercial uses in the eastern sections of the waterfront, and complement the highly contentious Harbourfront redevelopment project. First announced as an election promise during the 1972 federal campaign, Harbourfront was later restructured as a largely self-financing operation requiring substantial increases in density targets and building heights, thus enraging local politicians and residents alike. The ensuing political backlash led to the establishment of a four-year formal inquiry known as the Crombie Commission, which froze all new development until inquiry’s end — a freeze initiated the very same month, it turned out, as the Central Waterfront Plan was finally adopted by council.

The third and final era (1988-2000), summarized in Chapter Five, captures the fallout from the Crombie Commission, the creation of a new provincially incorporated coordinating agency, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, as well as the preparation of the 1994 Metro Waterfront Plan. As the commission’s scope broadened to consider the wider regional watershed consistent with the principles of “ecosystem” planning, attention to the central waterfront waned. Implementation of the Metro Plan was further complicated by the commission’s highly contentious recommendation to transfer the bulk of the THC’s substantial land assets in the East Bayfront and Port Lands to a city-controlled agency known as TEDCO. The ensuing legal battle was hostile, carrying through to decade’s end. Premier Harris’ unexpected decision to amalgamate Metro Toronto and its
six lower-tier municipalities, as well as the federal government’s resolution to restructure the THC as the Toronto Port Authority in 1998, only added to the institutional disorder.

The obstacles to redevelopment in each specific planning era were numerous. Periodic economic downturns, community resistance, bureaucratic impasses, and budgetary considerations were all evident at various points in time. But these were short-term concerns that do not help explain the persistence of political dysfunction across all four decades of waterfront planning. In this respect, we can identify one defining barrier to implementation that carried through all forty years in question: the fragmentation of waterfront land ownership.

**When Property Trumps Jurisdiction**

As we saw in Chapter Six, between 1961-1998, no less than 81% of all land holdings in the central waterfront area were publicly owned. Yet these assets were scattered across an array of government departments and agencies nested within four different levels of government or highly autonomous special purpose authorities, such as the Toronto Harbour Commission. This great degree of ownership fragmentation fundamentally paralyzed long-term redevelopment efforts, creating a “joint-decision trap” (Scharpf 1988; 2006) impervious to conventional resolution via bargaining, problem solving, or unilateral action. The result was a succession of ownership disputes that forestalled, delayed, or entirely derailed planned developments. The province’s legal stake over lands designated for Harbour City as originally envisioned in the 1968 Bold Concept, for instance, triggered a complete rethink of the plan before Bill Davis finally cancelled the project outright in late 1971. The fate of the Harbourfront precinct during the 1980s was intimately connected to ownership disputes, as city officials waged an aggressive campaign to secure dedicated park space and recreational lands from federal agents dependent on these assets for financial leverage. Likewise, hundreds of acres of lakefront property in the East Bayfront and Port Lands were subject to several stormy legal battles between the city/TEDCO and the Harbour Commission through the 1990s.
Implementation failure on Toronto’s waterfront, in other words, was not simply rooted in jurisdictional gridlock, as has been suggested in various official accounts (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1992, xxii; Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force 2000, 3), but rather by competing ownership interests. The historical fragmentation of waterfront property among these ownership interests hampered prospects for intergovernmental cooperation. In historical institutionalist terms, initial property ownership conditions constrained the ability of waterfront authorities to carry out successive redevelopment plans. While the proportion of waterfront assets controlled by different ownership interests fluctuated over time — the Harbour Commission’s share of central waterfront property, for example, fell from a high of 37% in the 1960s to just 6% by the end of the 1990s — the number of government agencies, corporations, and departments with veto power remained relatively stable. To the extent that public landowners continued to behave as private property owners, rather than as champions of the public interest, a pattern of implementation failure endured.

This can be demonstrated by way of counterfactual. Suppose the distribution of land ownership on Toronto’s waterfront was not so highly fragmented across governmental actors. What might we have observed in this hypothetical scenario? Based on evidence presented in Chapter Two, I would argue that events would have played out far differently. Experiences in Vancouver’s Coal Harbour and North False Creek districts, Cape Town’s Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, and New York’s Battery Park City, suggest that redevelopment in Toronto would likely have proceeded with fewer complications had a majority of waterfront land assets been concentrated in the hands of one or two principal landowners. This is not to downplay the extent of political conflict and administrative complexity witnessed in these international examples. Battery Park City, for example, was at one point mired in bureaucratic wrangling for over a decade.

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224 According to Tetlock and Belkin (1996, 4), counterfactual analysis is “a prerequisite for any form of learning from history.” The most plausible counterfactuals are those that require only “minimal rewrites” of history (Lebow 2000, 568). The challenge is thus to identify realistic antecedent conditions that may have redirected event trajectories. Doing so involves concentrating on both theoretical and historical consistency — events that, according to a given theory or available historical record, should have been expected (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 357).
But each city was certainly spared the same degree of political confrontation that afflicted the Toronto case. Once planning priorities were set, each waterfront redevelopment programme proceeded in relatively straightforward fashion, with funding and completion timetables negotiated between a single public or private land owner (or consortia of land owners) and a single municipal planning authority.

Of paramount importance here is the distinction between property ownership and jurisdiction. Macpherson (1978) reminds us that property does not refer merely to a physical possession; more accurately, it speaks to a set of enforceable rights. These rights vary according to three separate categories of property: common, private, and state. Common property involves the non-exclusive rights of an individual to make use of a public good, such as a city street or public park. Private property concerns an individual’s exclusive rights to make use of a private good, such as a parcel of land. State property captures aspects of both common and private property, albeit in peculiar form. Here, the state, acting as a corporation, exercises exclusive rights over a public good, thus enabling state actors to buy, sell, protect or dispose of property held in the public trust as if it were a private good.

Why make this distinction clear? Because state property rights, unlike private property rights, do not necessarily conform to standard conceptions of political jurisdiction. The state, of course, is not monolithic; its power is diffused across countless state agents, such as government departments and special purpose authorities. Conflict between these agents is inevitable, pitting the property rights of one actor against the jurisdictional authority of another. Typically, such conflicts are resolved via constitutional edict or convention. For example, a province might use its constitutionally enshrined jurisdiction over municipal affairs to assume ownership of municipal lands.

225 By comparison, the relationship between private property rights and jurisdiction is relatively straightforward. For instance, a private individual or corporation with title to a specific parcel of land (private property) is granted exclusive rights to develop said property so long as his/her intended use conforms to rules dictated by the municipality. The boundaries of private property rights and jurisdiction are thus well defined: individual property rights end where municipal jurisdiction begins.
But as we saw in Chapter Seven, jurisdiction on Toronto’s waterfront was rarely so clear-cut.\footnote{Roy Merrens, former Harbour Commissioner and retired geography professor, cleverly boils this point down to a simple question: “How do you deal with land that was created by stealing it from the water?” Interview, August 30, 2010.}

Consider the nettlesome role of the Toronto Harbour Commission. Although established under federal legislation, it was never exactly clear which arm of the state the Harbour Commission served. Indeed, even the courts had trouble deciphering whether the THC operated as an agent of the federal or municipal government (Ontario High Court of Justice 1987). Traditional notions of jurisdiction simply did not apply. The THC was free to exercise its authority over a vast share of waterfront property with almost complete autonomy for over 80 years.

Consider, also, the frequency of federal intervention in waterfront affairs. In strict jurisdictional terms, the federal government should have exhibited little interest in Toronto’s waterfront. The strategic case for national-level oversight of Toronto’s port, for instance, was growing weaker by the day.\footnote{Changes in shipping technologies were leaving secondary ports like Toronto behind. Between 1969-75 alone, shipping activity dropped nearly 60%, leaving Toronto with just five percent of Eastern Canada’s shipping traffic (Price-Waterhouse Associates 1975, Exhibit X).} The same could be said for the island airport, which required annual subsidies (Canada 1967; Bouchard 1989). And yet, as owner of considerable waterfront assets via crown corporations such as CN Rail, Harbourfront Corporation, and to a lesser extent, Canada Post, the federal government was a constant presence on the waterfront, with state agencies protecting their property rights even in cases where jurisdiction rested at provincial or municipal levels.

In sum, the Toronto case resembled what Michael Heller (1998; 2008) describes as the “tragedy of the anticommons,” a play on ecologist Garrett Hardin’s famous turn of phrase, wherein excessive private ownership invariably produces suboptimal outcomes. What Heller misses, however, is that such “tragic” outcomes can just as easily result when state property is fragmented across multiple state interests. Paradoxically, the greatest threat to the public interest (singular) might come from public interests (plural).\footnote{Unfortunately, Heller disregards the concept of state property, choosing instead to focus on the simple dichotomy between common and private property rights (see Heller 2008, 34).}
The Practical Implications of Public Ownership

In November 1972, the Toronto Star ran a feature interview with Douglas Fullerton, then chair of the National Capital Commission, which oversees federal land holdings in the Ottawa region. The headline, placed prominently above the masthead in bold type, struck a decidedly authoritative tone: “Only public land ownership will save land for the people” (Toronto Star 1972b). The best way to protect Canada’s cities and citizens from the corruption of local politics and greedy developers, argued Fullerton, was for federal and provincial governments to take control of key land assets across the country.

Fullerton’s comments were published during a period of intense anti-establishment activism in cities across the country. Such cynicism has waned somewhat over the years. Still, the idea that public ownership inevitably benefits the public interest remains an accepted dictum in civic discourse — a sentiment that extends even to the business community. When asked to evaluate the prospects for waterfront revitalization as part of Toronto’s bid for the 2008 summer Olympic Games, a task force of private sector leaders was united in the conclusion that the “high percentage of public ownership [on the waterfront] represents a special opportunity for the public to catalyze reinvestment and recapture costs.” In short, public ownership represented “a great advantage that many cities have lacked when they faced the prospect of waterfront renewal” (Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force 2000, 17).

The findings and conclusions presented in the preceding pages suggest the opposite: that public ownership, in itself, does not automatically lead to public benefits. The political history of waterfront redevelopment in Toronto is a striking demonstration that gathering land in public hands is no guarantee that it will be put to good use. What matters is not how much land is controlled by either public or private actors, but rather the relative distribution and concentration of these assets across controlling interests, public or private. The greater number of ownership actors (veto players) with a material stake in redevelopment, the more difficult it is to coordinate and carry out implementation. This is not to say, of course, that public land ownership is necessarily
detrimental to urban development; only that public ownership must involve the consolidation of land assets under as few public authorities as possible in order to avoid creating conflicts between the property rights of one government actor against the jurisdictional authority of another.

Unfortunately, this lesson has yet to permeate waterfront politics in the post-2000 era. Without reading too much into recent events — which are still very much fluid and thus intentionally excluded from the historical analysis presented here (for more on the current state of waterfront politics, see Eidelman 2011) — it is worth pointing out that redevelopment efforts in Toronto remain heavily constrained by land ownership concerns.

In 2001, as part of the city’s failed Olympic bid, the federal, provincial, and municipal governments jointly established the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (since renamed Waterfront Toronto) to re-energize redevelopment efforts. Funding commitments totalling $1.5 billion were secured from all three levels of government. The agency was also granted legal jurisdiction to prepare precinct plans and phasing strategies, coordinate environmental remediation efforts, and begin enlisting private sector partners to carry out construction. Crucially, though, it was expressly prohibited from purchasing waterfront land, or borrowing against existing public assets, to help execute its plans. To this day, in financial matters, the agency must seek consent from all three government shareholders, which have thus far demonstrated little, if any, interest in relinquishing their land holdings in the area.

And so, the story of waterfront redevelopment in Toronto continues apace, a broken record of “turf wars and political pettiness of the worst sort” (Hume 2005), in keeping with forty years of political dysfunction detailed above. Indeed, as I write these words (August 2012), Waterfront Toronto currently finds itself embroiled in a high-profile dispute with the city over the fate of the Lower Don Lands, where ownership is largely controlled by the Toronto Port Lands Company, the latest incarnation of the municipal agency TEDCO. The city, led by Mayor Rob Ford and his brother, councillor Doug Ford, has threatened to seize municipal assets in the area and terminate its relationship with Waterfront Toronto, leaving the agency scrambling to reconfigure its award-winning
redevelopment plans to avoid potential ownership conflicts (Alcoba 2011a; 2011b; Church 2012).

Until such time as public lands on Toronto’s waterfront can be consolidated in fewer hands, the likelihood of transformative change remains remote. A comprehensive review of available policy options is well beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, one could imagine that the path of least resistance may involve granting Waterfront Toronto the legal and financial authority to raise capital, via debentures or development charges, to begin independently assembling necessary land assets. During this time of austerity, when authorities at all levels are feeling the fiscal crunch, the financial incentives may now be high enough for certain ownership interests to cash in their land assets to fill various budget shortfalls. Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan, for instance, has recently suggested that the province may be willing to sell the Liquor Control Board of Ontario’s waterfront headquarters as a deficit reduction measure (Ferguson 2012). Given the right financial tools, Waterfront Toronto itself could buy up such properties. Doing so, however, would of course require various legislative amendments, which, given the current climate of minority government, seem low on the provincial agenda.

The Literature and its Limits

In addition to its practical implications, the political history of waterfront redevelopment in Toronto also has certain theoretical significance. First, with regard to the study of urban politics and governance, the Toronto case highlights the glaring scarcity of theories of urban development tailored to the Canadian context. As argued in Chapter Two, Toronto’s modern waterfront history poses a considerable challenge to conventional liberal, structuralist, and regime-based theories derived from US experiences. All three literatures, for example, tend to overemphasize the influence of private sector interests in the development process. In Toronto, the degree and fragmentation of public land ownership across Toronto’s waterfront noticeably inhibited private sector investment.229

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229 Bear in mind that the development industry constructs and perceives opportunities for profit based on risk (Fainstein 1994, 18).
Indeed, the uncertainties inherent in such an unorthodox institutional landscape clearly discouraged the formation of any “development coalitions” (Keating 1991), “place entrepreneurs” (Logan and Molotch 1987), or informal “regimes” (Stone 1989) dependent on support from powerful private interests.

Second, the distinctive features of waterfront redevelopment in Toronto also call into question the utility of various models of policy implementation employed in the subdisciplines of public policy and public administration. As argued in Chapter Six, the policy literature often inappropriately adopts what I describe as an excessively programmatic outlook on the policy process, which fails to capture the aspirational qualities of urban development that transpire over the long term. I thus suggest that urban development policy should be studied with a keen eye toward the role of time in political processes, a theoretical and empirical challenge that Rast (2012) has recently confirmed as a serious shortcoming in the literature. To this end, I propose that urban development is simultaneously influenced by both path dependent and reactive sequence policy dynamics. Although generally understood in the temporal analysis literature as two distinct, independent concepts, the Toronto case demonstrates that path dependence and reactive sequencing exhibit a symbiotic relationship in processes of urban development linking policy formulation and implementation. The three comprehensive waterfront plans around which this dissertation is organized, for example, were each formulated, at least implicitly, as a reaction to those that came before; actual implementation of these plans, on the other hand, was highly constrained by path dependent feedback effects rooted in prevailing land ownership conditions.

Third, as discussed in Chapter Seven, Toronto’s waterfront experience forces us to rethink the emergence of multilevel governance as a relatively recent phenomenon. The multiplicity of governmental actors involved in waterfront redevelopment efforts in Toronto, and the non-hierarchical relations between these actors over time, suggests that multilevel governance as an analytical concept has theoretical purchase in the Canadian context extending back to the 1960s, if not earlier. What’s more, it throws into relief the ungrounded assumption, perpetuated in the Canadian literature, that multilevel governance necessarily produces optimal outcomes, particularly at the local scale. The
Toronto case is a compelling illustration that policy dysfunction and intergovernmental conflict are common in multilevel systems, and deserve far greater scholarly attention. To this end, I propose a basic pathology of multilevel non-governance to serve as an analytical foundation from which to examine cases of policy failure in federal and multilevel systems.

To be clear, my goal has not been to completely discount the theoretical contributions of the established urban politics, public policy, or multilevel governance literatures, but rather to highlight the limits of these approaches utilizing Toronto as an “extreme” or “deviant” case (Gerring 2007, 89). With these limits in mind, as well as the need to build intellectual bridges between seemingly disparate literatures, at least two avenues for further research stand out.

First is the question of how institutional analysis, already prevalent in the study of public policy, might be further integrated into the study of urban politics (see Lowndes 2001). Stone’s emphasis on the “intermediate” structures of urban governance (Stone and Whelan, in Ward and Imbroscio 2011, 858) — that is, the informal networks which direct decision making in many cities — is a valuable start. It has helped inspire a large literature cataloguing various political processes operating outside the formal system. Still, it may be time to re-centre our analytical focus. We should take care not to neglect the formal institutions — the departments, agencies, and special purpose authorities — which often underpin and interact with these informal networks, institutions which may have their own particular interests, or in cases like Toronto, control a substantial share of state property. At least in the Canadian context, this analytical adjustment would not only acknowledge the many important institutional interdependencies between local, provincial, and federal actors involved in Canadian urban politics and policy-making, but also help chart the conditions under which multilevel governing arrangements for the purposes of urban development might break down, or fail to emerge altogether.

Second, far greater scholarly attention should be paid to issues of land ownership, and specifically public land ownership, which has served as the central focus of my analysis here. Note that the federal government represents the single largest landowner in Canada, and a significant portion of its properties — port facilities, railway yards, military
installations, postal networks, or office buildings — are located in cities (Canada 1986, 1). Provincial and municipal governments likewise hold similarly extensive land portfolios, as evidenced along Toronto’s waterfront. Across Ontario, the province currently controls real estate assets worth an estimated $14 billion (Benzie 2012). The City of Toronto, for its part, owns nearly 4,800 properties with an assessed value of $15.8 billion, including $2.6 billion worth of vacant land (City of Toronto 2011, 10). Yet studies examining how and why these assets are developed, divested, or protected across Canada are scant at best. The American literature is equally lacking on this count. Research detailing the concentration, distribution, and utilization of public properties in US cities is hard to come by. Yet if the City of Detroit is any indication — where local, state, and federal governments control nearly eight times the land assets of the next 10 largest private landowners combined (Wilkinson 2011) — there is a trove of data waiting to be explored. All told, opportunities for comparative research abound.

**Concluding Thought**

In his seminal study *Urban Canada: Problems and Prospects*, Harvey Lithwick (1970) persuasively argued that the fundamental source of urban political conflict in Canada is land — its scarcity and its development. The political history of waterfront development in Toronto is a vivid confirmation of Lithwick’s observations. Above and beyond the political challenges typical of any major urban redevelopment project, in Toronto, issues of land ownership — specifically public land ownership — were pivotal in defining the scope and pace of waterfront planning and implementation. It is high time that urban political science began taking Lithwick’s revelation to heart.

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230 Altshuler and Luberoff’s (2003) expert analysis of transport-related mega projects provides a strong foundation from which to investigate the politics of large-scale redevelopment projects involving significant public resources. But this account is still very much focused on business-led development coalitions. The comparative task in light of the Toronto case is therefore to extend Altshuler’s and Luberoff’s analysis to account not only for mega projects of different kinds, but also different ownership interests.
Appendix A: Methods

This study employs a single case design based on within-case research methods — what Lijphart (1971) might refer to as a “hypothesis-generating” case study, or a “heuristic” case analysis in Eckstein’s (1975) terminology. Admittedly, this approach departs from prevailing methodological norms in contemporary political science, where comparative (read: cross-case) research methods have gained significant traction in all empirical subfields, not least within the study of Canadian politics (see White et al. 2008) and urban politics (Pierre 2005; Sellers 2005; Wood 2005). In the eyes of many, single case studies continue to be associated with “loosely framed and nongeneralizable theories, biased case selection, informal and undisciplined research designs, weak empirical leverage (too many variables and too few cases), subjective conclusions, nonreplicability, and causal determinism” (Gerring 2007, 6).

Given the pervasiveness of this outlook, I would be remiss if I did not address these methodological charges head on. The following section thus offers a brief justification of the single case study approach as it pertains to my research objectives. I then go on to provide detailed notes on the range of data collection and analytical techniques employed during my field research.

The Logic(s) of Case Study Research

The high degree of contempt for case study research in the social sciences can be traced, in part, to confusion over what case studies are and what they are intended to accomplish. VanWynsberghe and Khan (2007) note at least 25 competing definitions of “case study” in the literature. These depictions differ in their conception of the appropriate number of cases and observations employed (questions of N), comparability among cases/observations, as well as styles of data analysis.\(^{231}\) At the core of these debates,

\(^{231}\) My interpretation is probably most consistent with Creswell’s (2002) definition in that it starts with a single quandary or puzzle, then uses particular events or processes within this puzzle to illuminate and inform the study of broader political phenomena.
however, is a more fundamental distinction between variable-oriented and case-oriented qualitative research (Ragin 2004), summarized in Table A.1 below.

**Table A.1. Variable-oriented vs. Case-oriented Qualitative Research.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Inference</th>
<th>Method of Comparison</th>
<th>Research Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable-oriented research</td>
<td>Co-variation</td>
<td>Cross-case analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case-oriented research</td>
<td>Causal process tracing</td>
<td>Within-case analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Blatter and Blume (2008, 30).

Put briefly, the central goal of variable-oriented (cross-case) research, most commonly associated with the seminal work of King, Keohane, and Verba (1994), is to test or generate falsifiable propositions that explain co-variation between causes (independent variables) and effects (dependent variables) across two or more cases. Cases, in this light, are chosen based on their ability to represent (generalize to) a broader population of similar units exhibiting a full range of causal effects (2007, 20). The goal of case-oriented (within-case) research, by contrast, is to identify and investigate the causal mechanisms operating within a specific case or limited number of cases. Accordingly, the researcher’s task is to “trace” political processes back through time to identify complex interactions or contextual factors that link an expected or potential cause to observed outcomes — what George and Bennett (2005) refer to as process tracing.\(^{232}\)

In sum, each approach is driven by different research goals and operating assumptions. The former gives prominence to theory testing, the latter to theory development. Neither is inherently superior to the other (see Collier 2008). Each is

\(^{232}\) Related techniques include “pattern matching” (Campbell 1975, 181-82), “causal narrative” (Sewell 1996, 261), “systematic process analysis” (Hall 2003), and “causal-process observation” (Collier, Brady, and Seawright 2004).
simply better suited to certain research enterprises. Within-case comparisons, for example, are particularly valuable for investigating complex causal relations (interaction effects, equifinality) and issues of timing (sequencing, unintended consequences). In these instances, the “thickness” — that is, the level of detail — intrinsic to within-case analysis offers high degrees of conceptual (internal) validity, and therefore greater causal leverage.

**The Limits of Case-oriented Research**

Notwithstanding these methodological virtues, my research design remains susceptible to three important critiques, those of falsifiability, generalizability (representativeness), and selection bias. I deal with each in turn.

**Falsifiability.** Generally speaking, the insights generated by within-case analysis are not easily translated into falsifiable propositions for testing in small- or large-N cross-case studies, either because of the level of detail involved in a given causal narrative or because there may be no equivalent cases to compare against. How, then, does a researcher know if their analysis is right? Unfortunately, the literature it is not clear on what differentiates “good” process tracing from “bad.” George and Bennett (2005, 223) recommend that process tracing should be evaluated based on the quality of evidence demonstrating an uninterrupted causal chain between cause and effect. Verifying the links along this chain, though, remains problematic. For ultimately, the causal influence of historical processes can only be evaluated via counterfactuals, which by their very nature, diminish the possibility of empirical testing, and by implication, causal leverage (Przeworski 2004). Nevertheless, while this may preclude the possibility of developing a definitive, falsifiable theory of why certain political events or outcomes did or did not occur, the task of establishing a plausible account of how specific events came to be, by observing the causal mechanisms and context through which these outcomes were determined, is still extremely valuable as a social scientific enterprise, if for no other reason than it provides the foundations from
which causal inferences can be generated. As McKeown (1999, 184) explains, “[whether] a causal account that fits one historical circumstance will fit others is an open question. What matters here is that a causal mechanism has been identified, and the researcher has some framework within which to begin to investigate the external validity of these causal claims.”

**Generalizability.** This brings us to issues of generalizability, or representativeness. The dominant assumption among mainstream social scientists, driven mainly by scholars in the quantitative tradition, is that a case must always be representative of a larger population. Gerring (2007, 147), for instance, notes that case studies “rest upon an assumed synecdoche: the case should stand for a population. If this is not true, or if there is reason to doubt this assumption, then the utility of the case study is brought severely into question.”

This position, however, is misguided on several counts. First, the notion that observations in one case must be comparable to all others presumes unit homogeneity, a presumption which stands on shaky empirical ground (Lincoln and Guba 2002; Mahoney and Goertz 2006). Not all revolutions, as Skocpol (1979) famously reminds us, are necessarily alike; to suggest otherwise would have us believe that the storming of the Bastille was fundamentally analogous to Mao’s cultural revolution. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is false to suggest that generalization can take only one form. The notion that “real” social science must generalize about causal effects — and causal effects alone — would make a sinner even out of Darwin, whose general theory of evolution, and description of natural selection (a causal mechanism), was based, in large part, on within-case observations of a single case.

Researchers employing within-case methods typically seek *contextual* generalizations — meso-level or middle-range theoretical insights — which, despite difficulty extending to a larger population, still speak to important concepts, categories, or typologies that can inform the study of similar phenomena in different spatial and temporal contexts. In this way, while I may not be able to generalize about the causal variables specific to the Toronto case, I am able to generalize about the causal processes and mechanisms at work
— theoretical concepts such as path dependence, or decision traps — which likely do have considerable relevance for the broader study of urban politics and policy-making.\textsuperscript{233}

**Selection bias.** According to conventional practice, a case should never be selected based on the characteristics of its dependent variable. To do so would have the “dangerous” consequence of underestimating the effects of the independent variable (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 140). So heinous would such a methodological crime be that Geddes (1990, 131) goes so far as to label studies which select on the dependent variable as “bedevilled.” Single outcome studies, like mine, which exhibit no variation on the dependent variable, are by the same logic one step removed from academic purgatory.

Much like criticisms centred on the generalizability of case study research, however, concerns over selection bias are misplaced, the product of a dubious foundational assumption: that case studies must invariably provide insight to a larger population of cases. If this assumption were universally true, these dramatic warnings would certainly be warranted; selection bias does pose a real problem for the purposes of cross-case comparison. But again, this concern has little bearing for the purposes of within-case analysis. As Mahoney and Goertz (2006, 240) put it, “if your goal is to estimate average causal effects for large populations of cases, it makes sense to avoid selecting on the dependent variable… But if your goal is to explain outcomes in particular cases, it does not make sense to select cases without regard for their value on the outcome.” As such, a lack of variation on the dependent variable may in fact be reason enough to warrant intensive study of single case (Ragin 2004, 129). Problems of selection bias only arise if this case were chosen without sufficient attention to its theoretical import (Shively 2006). As seen throughout this study, particularly in Chapter Two, the political history of Toronto’s waterfront meets this standard in numerous respects.

\textsuperscript{233} This is not unlike Stone’s (1989) diachronic case study of Atlanta, Georgia, which, though never intended to explain the political dynamics of all American cities, introduced a new framework for studying urban politics, regime analysis, that continues to resonate within the subfield.
Data Collection

My research relies on evidence collected from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including archival materials, interviews, census and employment figures, as well as geospatial data (with the help of Geographic Information Systems software). The following sections provide reference information and methodological notes for each data set.

Archival Materials

Archival materials, such as newspaper accounts, planning reports, legal agreements, legislative debates, as well as intra- and inter-governmental correspondence, were gathered on location at the City of Toronto Archives, the Archives of Ontario, the National Library and Archives of Canada, and the Toronto Port Authority Archives (formerly the Toronto Harbour Commission Archives). Several supplementary documents were consulted at the City of Toronto’s Urban Affairs Library. I was also granted access to an extensive collection of waterfront documentation graciously donated by Prof. Gene Desfor, York University.
Interviews

In total, I conducted 24 in-depth, semi-structured “elite” interviews with past and present politicians, political staff, and bureaucrats at all levels of government (including quasi-governmental agencies), as well as various urban planners and designers, architects, journalists, private developers, and community representatives historically involved in waterfront issues, to supplement and strengthen the explanatory value of my documentary analysis. All alleged facts cited by interview respondents were treated with a healthy dose of skepticism, subject to confirmation via other sources.

Individual participants were selected based on their historic involvement in, or apparent insights into, waterfront planning and development in Toronto, and where appropriate, any related national or international experience or expertise. Additional respondents were recruited using “snowball” sampling methods; that is, participating interviewees were asked to suggest other individuals whose input may be valuable to the research project. The full list of participating interviewees, including biographical information, is provided below.

Round One (August-September 2010)

1. Ken Greenberg
Program Manager, Division of Architecture and Design, City of Toronto Department of Planning and Development (1977-87); Chair, Access & Movement Working Group, Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront (1989); Author, Toronto’s Moveable Shoreline (Canadian Waterfront Resource Centre, 1990), Dreams of Development (City of Toronto Records and Archives Division, 1984), “The Urban Waterfront as a Terrain of Availability” (City, Capital, and Water, Routledge, 1996); Consultant, Lower Don Lands Framework and Precinct Plans (2010).
2. Michael Goldrick (by phone)

3. Suzanne Barrett (by phone)

4. David L. A. Gordon

5. H. Roy Merrens
Professor Emeritus, Department of Geography, York University; Founding member of ForWARD 9, an east-end residents’ association, and former member of Citizens for a Better Waterfront; Toronto Harbour Commissioner (1973-78); Author, "Port authorities as urban land developers: The case of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners and their outer harbour project, 1912-1968" (Urban History Review, 1988); Co-author, “Redevelopment on the North American water-frontier: The case of Toronto” (in Revitalising the Waterfront: International Dimensions of Dockland Redevelopment, Belhaven Press, 1988), “A political economy of the water-frontier:

6. Anthony C. Coombes
Chief Planner, Core of the Central Area, City of Toronto Planning Board (1972-76); Senior Vice President Development, Olympia & York (1980-1992); Co-Executive Director, Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force (1999-2000).

7. W. Darcy McKeough
Member of Provincial Parliament, Ontario (1963-78), including Minister of Municipal Affairs (1967-1972), and Treasurer and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (1972, 1975-78); Author, Harbourfront: Report to the Honourable Elmer MacKay (1990); President, Redpath Sugar (1988-89).

8. Art Eggleton
Alderman, Ward 4, City of Toronto (1969-80); Mayor of Toronto (1980-1991); Member of Parliament, York Centre (1993-2004); Senator (2005-).

Round Two (October 2010-January 2011)

9. Leslie Woo
Member, City of Toronto Olympic Task Force (1989-90); Toronto Bay Project Manager and Project Director, Waterfront Regeneration Trust (1996-1999); Director for Design and Planning, Toronto 2008 Olympic Bid (1999-2001); Senior Advisor, Waterfront Revitalization, to Mayor David Miller (2005-06).

10. Robert Millward
Deputy Commissioner and Director, Central Core and Waterfront Planning Division, Toronto Planning Department (1979-86); Commissioner, City of Toronto Planning

11. Ronald Doering
Chief of staff to David Crombie, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and Secretary of State, Minister responsible for Multiculturalism (1984-1988); Counsel and Executive Director, Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront (1988-92).

12. Karl Jaffary
Alderman, Ward 7, City of Toronto, and member, Metro Council (1969-74); Toronto Harbour Commissioner (1975-80; Chair, 1980-82); Board member, Harbourfront Corporation (1976-78).

13. Peter de Tolly (by phone)
Toronto Island resident and member, Confederation of Residents’ and Ratepayers’ Associations (CORRA) (1972); Central Waterfront Program Manager, Central Area Division, Toronto Planning Department (1972-79); Chairman of the Central Waterfront Technical Committee and lead official to the Central Waterfront Planning Committee (1973-80); Author, *The Central Waterfront: Proposal for Planning* (Toronto Planning Department, 1972); Director of Planning and Deputy City Planner, Cape Town, South Africa (1980-1995).

14. Jeff Evenson
Political assistant to Joanne Campbell, Metro and City of Toronto councillor, Ward 7 (1983-87); Advisor, Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (1987-90); Chief of staff to Mayors Art Eggleton and June Rowlands (1990-94); Director, Central Waterfront Projects, Waterfront Regeneration Trust (1994-99); Special Advisor, Social Equity and Local Support, Toronto 2008 Olympic Bid (1998-2001).
15. Stephen McLaughlin
Policy Advisor to Mayor David Crombie (1975-78); Planning and Development Commissioner, City of Toronto (1979-86); Author, *Federal Land Management in the Toronto Region* (1987).

16. Howard Cohen
First general manager of Harbourfront Corporation (1978-1987); City planner, including position as Chief Planner, Neighbourhoods, City of Toronto Planning Board (1970-1978).

17. Herb Pirk
Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, City of Toronto (1983-1996); Lead negotiator, City of Toronto, in discussions with Harbourfront Corporation (1990); Toronto Harbour Commissioner (1993-95).

18. Eb Zeidler
Lead architect, Ontario Place (1968) and provincial Harbour City concept plan (1971); Board member, Harbourfront Corporation (1978-1979).

19. William (Bill) G. Davis

20. Susan Schiller (formerly Fish)
Advisor to Mayor David Crombie (1972-76); Alderman, Ward 5, City of Toronto (1976-80); Toronto Harbour Commissioner (1979-81); Member of Provincial Parliament, Ontario (St. George, 1981-87), Minister of Citizenship and Culture and Minister of Environment (1983-85); Board member, Harbourfront Corporation (1988-89); Co-author, *Persistence and Change: Waterfront Issues and the Board of Toronto Harbour Commissioners* (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, 1989).
Round Three (November 2011-January 2012)

21. James Ramsay
Executive Director, Special Projects and Planning Division, Ministry of Trade and Development (1969-1973). In charge of province’s Ontario Place and Harbour City projects.

22. David Crombie

23. John Sewell

24. Gene Desfor
Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University; Co-author, “A political economy of the water-frontier: Planning and development in Toronto” (GeoForum, 1989); Author, “Restructuring the Toronto Harbour Commission: Land politics on the Toronto waterfront” (Journal of Transport Geography, 1993); Co-editor, Reshaping Toronto’s Waterfront (2011).
Census and Employment Data

Census of Canada figures employed in this study were accessed via the CHASS Canadian Census Analyser, available through the University of Toronto library network. Specific figures corresponding to central waterfront districts, noted in Table A.2., below, were compiled based on reference maps provided by the University of Toronto Map and Data Library.  

Table A.2. Waterfront Districts by Census Tract.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1961-1966 CT</th>
<th>1971-2001 CT</th>
<th>Corresponding waterfront district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto 119</td>
<td>5350001</td>
<td>Port Lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto 65</td>
<td>5350002</td>
<td>Toronto Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto 34</td>
<td>5350003</td>
<td>Western Beaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto 50</td>
<td>5350008</td>
<td>Garrison Commons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto 64</td>
<td>5350012</td>
<td>Railway Lands and Harbourfront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto 77</td>
<td>5350013</td>
<td>Central Bayfront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto 105*</td>
<td>5350017</td>
<td>West Don Lands and East Bayfront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto 134*</td>
<td>5350020</td>
<td>Ashbridge’s Bay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The Census Tract (CT) numbering system was completely revised in 1971 to allow for comparability in future censuses. Central waterfront tracts are therefore different pre- and post-1971. Census tracts marked with an asterisk do not align perfectly with 1971-2001 tract boundaries. Specifically, Tracts 105 and 134 include small portions of land that also fall within CT 5350001.

Source materials consulted:
1961 Census Tract Series 95-530 Toronto, Ontario (CT-15)
1966 Census Tract Series 95-620 Toronto Ontario (C-20)
1971 Census Tract Series 95-721 Toronto, Ontario (CT-21A)
1971 Census Tract Series 95-751 Toronto, Ontario (CT-21B)
1976 Census Tract Series 95-826
1981 Census Tract Series 95-936
1981 Census Tract Series 95-977
1986 Census Tract Series 95-163
1986 Census Tract Series 95-164
1991 Census Tract Series 95-353
1991 Census Tract Series 95-354
1996 Census Tract Series 95-206
2001 Census Tract Series 95-240

234 Also available online: http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/datalib/major/prmapag.htm (last accessed May 16, 2012).
Maps and land ownership figures presented in my analysis are based on geospatial data analyzed with the help of GIS software. The process went as follows.

First, I generated a base map of lands encompassing the central waterfront area utilizing shapefiles obtained from the University of Toronto Map and Data Library, including census tract boundaries, roadways, and national topographic information (see GIS source files, below). Similar maps were generated for waterfront precincts in Vancouver, Chicago, New York, London, and Cape Town using Open Street Map data included in the software package.

Next, I began manually digitizing ownership data obtained from large-format scans of land surveys produced by the Harbour Commission, which covered much of Toronto’s central waterfront up to the year 1990. Throughout the process, I added labels at the block/parcel level noting the apparent land owner (federal government, provincial government, City of Toronto, Metro Toronto, Toronto Harbour Commission, private individual/company, or “unknown,” for areas with insufficient data), and when possible, basic land use descriptions (for example, park space, industry, and so on). I then georeferenced the data in order to calculate land ownership totals by area (acres, hectares, and square kilometres).

To ensure accuracy, I verified the ownership data by cross-referencing with relevant municipal property data maps available through Robarts Library. Where there were gaps — for instance, the years 1961 and 1971, for which no property data maps were available — I consulted municipal assessment rolls housed at the City of Toronto Archives and documents obtained from the Archives of Ontario, Waterfront Toronto, or in one case, via an Access to Information request filed with the Toronto Port Authority (source details noted below). In the rare cases where discrepancies arose — say, in cases where two maps revealed conflicting ownership information for a given land parcel — I consulted

235 By land, I mean land lots (above ground), not water lots (areas of shallow land covered by water). An exact survey would, of course, include both categories of property. Unfortunately, the challenge of differentiating between water lots of different depths is beyond my technical abilities (or anyone else not trained as a professional surveyor).
supplementary evidence. For example, based on 1979 and 1981 property data maps, it was unclear whether Ontario Place constituted federal or provincial land. After consulting relevant archival documents and reports (Ontario 1969; McLaughlin 1987, 22-23), I came to the conclusion that Ontario Place was in fact property of the Government of Ontario. Although I cannot guarantee that my assessment of available evidence is error-free, I did make every effort to be as discerning as possible.

GIS Source Files:

Toronto Harbour Commission surveys consulted:

Municipal property data maps consulted:
Sectors:
49G-123
50G-123
51G-112/121/122/123
52G-121/123

Sectors:
47H-111/112/113
48G-121/122/123
49F-123
49G-111/112/113/123
50F-111/112/113/121/122/123
50G-111/112/113/121/122/123
51F-111/112/122/123
51G-111/112/113/121/122/123
52F-121/122
52G-111/112/113/121/122/123
53G-111/121/122/123

Sectors:
47H-111/112/113
48G-113/121/122/123
49G-111/112/113/123
50G-111/112/113/121/122/123
51F-123/124/125/126
51G-111/112/113/121/122/123
52G-111/112/113/121/122/123/124
53G-111/112/113/121/122/123

Sectors:
47H-11/12/13
48G-21/22
49G-11/12/13/23
50G-11/12/13/21/22/23
51G-11/12/13/21/22
51F-23/24/25/26
52F-11
52G-11/12/13/21/22/23/24
53G-11/12/13/21/22/23
Municipal assessment rolls consulted:
1961 Ward-Divisions accessed: 1-1, 2-1, 3-1, 3-2, 4-1, 5-1, 6-1B, 8-1
1971 Wards-Divisions accessed: 1-1, 2-1, 4-1, 6-1/2/4, 7-1/5, 8-1, 9-1

Supplementary sources:
City of Toronto, Planning and Development Department. 1982. The Central Waterfront: Proposals. March. Toronto: Department of Planning and Development. (Specifically, Maps 4 and 5)
City of Toronto, Planning and Development Department. 1983. Railway Lands Part II: Development Concept. September. Toronto: Department of Planning and Development. (Specifically, Map 5)
Intergovernmental Staff Forum. 1977. Toronto Island Airport Study Program: Summary of Alternative Scenarios. May. Toronto: Intergovernmental Staff Forum. (Specifically, Fig. 4, pg. 9)
Appendix B: Glossary

Waterfront District Profiles

For the purpose of this study, the central waterfront area comprises eight waterfront districts matching six census tracts (also noted in Appendix A). For orientation purposes, consult Figure 1.1, in Chapter One.

**Central Bayfront (approx. 135 acres)**
Central Bayfront generally refers to the shoreline area south of Front St., between York St. in the west, and Jarvis St. in the east. The district includes landmarks such as the Harbour Castle hotel and Toronto Star building, at the foot of Yonge St, and corresponds to census tract CT0013.

**East Bayfront and West Don Lands (approx. 250 acres)**
East Bayfront refers to the district south of the Gardiner Expressway (and railway embankment) between Yonge St. and Cherry St. The land north of the expressway, extending up to Front St./Eastern Ave, between Yonge St. and the Don River is known as West Don Lands. Together, the two districts correspond to census tract CT0017.

**Garrison Common (approx. 400 acres)**
Garrison Common generally refers to area surrounding Exhibition Place, that is, south of Front St. (and rail tracks), between Dufferin St. to the west, and Bathurst St. to the east. In addition to Exhibition Place, the district comprises Ontario Place, Fort York, as well as Coronation Park, and generally corresponds to census tract CT008.
**Harbourfront and Railway Lands** *(approx. 220 acres)*
Harbourfront refers to the formerly industrial lands south of the Gardiner Expressway, between Bathurst St. in the west, and York St. in the east. The Railway Lands are located immediately north of Harbourfront, extending north from the Gardiner Expressway to Front St., also between Bathurst and York Sts. Together, the districts correspond to census tract CT0012.

**Port Lands** *(approx. 1,500 acres)*
The Port Lands, also known as the Port Industrial District, generally includes all lands south of Lake Shore Boulevard between Parliament in the west and Leslie Street in the east. The area generally corresponds to census tract CT0001.

**Toronto Islands** *(approx. 820 acres)*
The Toronto islands are home to a small residential community on Ward’s Island in the east, public parkland concentrated around Centre Island, and the Island Airport, near Hanlan’s Point in the west. Together, the islands form census tract CT0002.
Agency Profiles

Public administration of the waterfront is shared across all three levels of government. The following section highlights several key agencies and departments that have historically been involved in waterfront planning and development.

Federal
Federal jurisdiction over waterfront matters includes regulation and oversight of port and shipping operations (seaports and airports), fisheries, and Canada-US boundary issues. Accordingly, the following federal departments have a natural interest in waterfront redevelopment:

• Environment Canada — administers environmental assessment and review process
• Fisheries and Oceans Canada — responsible for fish habitat protection and pollution prevention
• Transport Canada — oversees navigation and shipping across all navigable waters, as well as airport operations

Toronto Port Authority (1999)
Created under the auspices of the Canada Marine Act, 1998, the Toronto Port Authority replaced the Toronto Harbour Commission, noted below. Unlike the THC, the majority of TPA board of directors are federal appointees and the agency is directly accountable to the federal Minister of Transport.
**Provincial**

The province holds de facto veto power over land use planning thanks to its constitutional authority over municipal affairs. Accordingly, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs must approve all municipal official plans. From time to time, it may also elect to fund local or regional planning studies, as witnessed with the City of Toronto’s Central Waterfront Planning Committee (Wilson 1978, 14). Cabinet also has the power to overrule any cases appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board.

Historically, the province has exerted only indirect influence in Toronto waterfront redevelopment. Exceptions include the brief promotion of Harbour City in the late 1960s, the construction of Ontario Place in 1971, and the creation of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust in the 1990s.

**Special Projects and Planning Branch, Ontario Department of Economics and Development (1964-68) and the Department of Trade and Development (1968-72).**

The Special Projects and Planning Branch directed the construction and operation of Ontario's pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal, Ontario Place, Ontario's pavilion at Expo ’70 in Osaka, Japan, and developed plans for Harbour City in 1970. It was disbanded in 1972, replaced by the Ministry of Industry and Tourism.


The Regeneration Trust was established in 1991 as an arms-length coordinating agency to improve the quality of the environment along the Lake Ontario shoreline from Niagara to Kingston. It also served as a clearing house and resource centre for policy relating to waterfront redevelopment. The trust was governed by an appointed board of directors, chaired by David Crombie, and reported to the Ministry of the Environment (1991-1992), the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (1992-1995) and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (1995-1998). The agency was restructured as a private, not-for-profit organization in March 1999, on the recommendation of Premier Harris’ Government Task Force on Agencies, Boards and Commissions (1995-97).
Other provincial agencies and departments involved:

- Ministry of Environment — responsible for environmental assessment reviews and regulations, including ground water, sewage, water works
- Ministry of Natural Resources — responsible for the management of provincial crown land, including permits for dredging or lake filling
- Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA) — responsible for conservation, restoration, and development of watersheds, including the Toronto waterfront (Conservation Authorities Act, Section 20/21); reports to Ministry of Natural Resources

Municipal

Until municipal amalgamation in 1998, two levels of government were responsible for planning and development in Toronto. Metro Toronto was responsible for area-wide services, such as physical infrastructure (e.g., piped services, expressways and arterial roads, and the Toronto Transit Commission), regional parks, and growth planning (population, employment, and housing). The City of Toronto, meanwhile, was directly responsible for localized services, such as land use designation, site plan reviews, and zoning by-laws. That said, the full scope of metropolitan planning responsibility “has never been clearly defined” (Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto 1977, 21). As a result, both Metro and the city initiated several task forces and committees, many with overlapping mandates.

*Metropolitan Toronto Waterfront Advisory and Technical Committees (1962-1968)*

The Advisory and Technical Committees were formed in October 1962 after their predecessor, the Metro Toronto Waterfront Committee “floundered in its original organization” (Sinclair 1962; Metropolitan Toronto 1962). The advisory committee
met on a semi-regular basis, providing high-level oversight.\textsuperscript{236} The Technical Committee was much more active, contributing the basic concepts and alternatives later formalized in the 1967 Metro Waterfront Plan.\textsuperscript{237}

**Central Waterfront Planning Committee, City of Toronto (1973-1980)**

The CWPC was established in 1973 on the recommendation of city planning staff and the City Planning Board to provide a central forum for private and public sector interests to comment on waterfront priorities and review waterfront plans. Rather than reach consensus on issues, the CWPC more often than not became a site of indecision. Though it included many diverse perspectives, its representative members were generally not agency decision makers.\textsuperscript{238} The committee was disbanded after Art Eggleton was elected mayor in 1980.

\textsuperscript{236} Advisory committee membership consisted of the following organizations: the Metro Toronto Planning Board (chair); MTRCA (vice-chair); two representatives from Metro Council; Credit Valley Conservation Authority; Canadian National Railways; Canadian Pacific Railways; Toronto Harbour Commission; Toronto Transit Commission; Conservation Council of Ontario; Toronto Board of Trade (staff appointed member); Community Planning Association of Canada, Toronto Area Boating Council; City of Toronto; Town of Port Credit; Township of Toronto; Township of Pickering; Town of Ajax; Borough of Etobicoke; and the Borough of Scarborough (Fish 1974, 45-47).

\textsuperscript{237} Members of the Technical Committee included: Metro Public Works (chair); Metro Parks (vice-chair); Metro Planning Board; MTRCA; Great Lakes Institute (University of Toronto); Ontario Water Resources Commission; Ontario Ministry of Lands and Forests; City of Toronto Planning Board; as well as two members of the Toronto Harbour Commission.

\textsuperscript{238} In addition to the Mayor, membership consisted of 26 representatives from: city council, the City Planning Board, the provincial government, the federal government (Minister of State for Urban Affairs or more commonly, MP for Spadina), THC, MTRCA (chairman of MTRCA Waterfront Advisory Board), Board of Trade, Community Planning Association of Canada, Confederation of Residents’ and Ratepayers’ Associations (CORRA), Conservation Council of Ontario, ForWARD 9 (neighbourhood association), Metro Centre Developments Ltd., Metropolitan Toronto Industrial Commission, Toronto Area Boating Council, Toronto Citizens for a Better Waterfront, Toronto Island Residents’ Association, Toronto Redevelopment Advisory Council, Ontario Association of Architects (Toronto Chapter, Urban Action Committee), Ontario Sailing Association, Toronto Field Naturalists’ Club, Association of Women Electors, Ontario Aviation Council, Toronto Transit Commission, and the Metro Toronto Police Commission.
Multi-jurisdictional

The most prolific (and intriguing) multi-jurisdictional agency involved in waterfront redevelopment between 1960-2000 was the Toronto Harbour Commission. There were, however, also various intergovernmental committees which served important coordination functions, two of which are highlighted here.

**Toronto Harbour Commission (1912-1999)**

The Toronto Harbour Commission was established by the federal government under the *Toronto Harbour Commissioners Act, 1911*. Although created under federal authority, its board of directors was controlled by local appointees. Of the commission’s five board members, three were appointed by city council, one by the federal government, and one by the federal government on the recommendation of the Toronto Board of Trade. The commission’s enabling legislation afforded it the power to “acquire, expropriate, hold, sell, lease and otherwise dispose of such real estate, building, or other property as it may deem necessary or desirable for the development, improvement, maintenance, and protection of the harbour” (Canada 1911, Sec. 15.2). Later, legislative amendments expanded the commission’s mandate to the operation of the Toronto Island Airport, and granted it powers to adopt by-laws. By-law 23, for instance, adopted in November 1962, dictated that THC approval was necessary before any development in the central waterfront could proceed, regardless of whether or not such development took place on THC property. This assumed veto power was exercised on an ad hoc basis; some projects were referred to council, others decided on by the commissioners alone without public comment (Malcolm 1981). The commission was eventually converted into the Toronto Port Authority, noted above, in 1999.

**Intergovernmental Waterfront Park Committee (1973-76)**

Also known as the Intergovernmental Waterfront Park Policy Committee, the consultative body was established in April 1973 to work out implementation details
for the federal waterfront park eventually known as Harbourfront. The committee was agreed to by: Ron Basford, federal Minister of State for Urban Affairs, and John Howard White, Ontario Treasurer and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs; a Metro official representing Chairman William Campbell (who was terminally ill at the time); and Mayor David Crombie. Meetings were infrequent, and were left to ministerial aids, such as the Assistant Secretary to the MSUA, the executive assistant of the provincial treasurer, the executive director of the Office of the Metropolitan Chairman, and Crombie’s special advisor on waterfront development and intergovernmental affairs. Technical discussions were left to associated Technical and Steering Committees (see Fish 1974 48-50, 50-56).

**Intergovernmental Waterfront Committee (1987—1989)**

Chaired by David Crombie, the Intergovernmental Waterfront Committee served as a high-level forum for coordination on waterfront issues between the federal government, represented by David Crombie and his chief of staff, Ron Doering, and the leaders of the three other levels of government, namely: Premier David Peterson and his special advisor on waterfront issues, Duncan Allan; Metro Chairman Dennis Flynn and his advisor, Ray Biggart; and Mayor Art Eggleton.
Appendix C: List of Waterfront Plans, 1960-2000

This dissertation focuses on three comprehensive redevelopment plans for the central waterfront area published between 1960-2000:


2. A plan entitled *The Central Waterfront: Final Recommendations*, published by the City of Toronto Planning Department in 1984, as part of the Official Plan process.


There were, of course, dozens of other complementary plans focused on specific waterfront projects and precincts. These include, but are not limited to:

**Metro Toronto**

1980 Official Plan for the Urban Structure (specifically, Section 8E)
1983 Exhibition Place Development Plan
1987 Future Uses of Exhibition Place

**City of Toronto**

1962 Core of the Central Waterfront Plan
1968 Metro Centre Plan (in collaboration with CN and CP)
1983 Railway Lands Development Concept
1986 Official Plan Pt. II: Railway Lands
1988 St. Lawrence Square (co-published with Ontario Ministry of Government Services)
**Government of Ontario**

1988 Bold Concept II: A Concept Plan for the Development of the Central Toronto Waterfront

**Toronto Harbour Commission**

1980 Final Report of the Port Industrial Development Task Force (co-produced with the City of Toronto)
1983 Toronto Island Development Plan
1988 Port Industrial Area Concept Plan

**Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority**

1980 Lake Ontario Waterfront Development Program (date estimated)
1985 Metropolitan Toronto and Region Lake Ontario Waterfront Development Project
1988 Lake Ontario Waterfront: A Strategy
1989 Tommy Thompson Park: Master Plan and Environmental Assessment

**Harbourfront Corporation**

1978 Harbourfront Development Framework
1980 Harbourfront Master Agreement
1986 Official Plan Pt. II: Harbourfront
1987 Recharting a Course for Harbourfront: An Assessment of Harbourfront Planning and Design
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