

PIRNETNEWS

Building and growing for a better tomorrow

March 2008

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[\[Read the full story.\]](#)

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From a standing start just over a year ago, Ontarians have embraced the **Bag it back** program and are on track to return 65 per cent of wine, beer and spirit containers for recycling. [\[Read the full story.\]](#)



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That's certainly how it felt when our team from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal left for Washington in the middle of a mid-February blizzard. But there was a warm welcome at the other end, where we had been invited to the [New Partners for Smart Growth](#) conference. We met old friends from across the continent, and shared information about what Ontario is doing to fight urban sprawl and prepare for an energy-smart future.

February was also a busy month on several fronts. We and our partners at [Waterfront Toronto](#) announced that Claude Cormier's design group had won the Jarvis Slip Public Space Design Competition. Right across the shipping inlet from the Redpath sugar refinery we're going to see "Sugar Beach", an innovative urban beach complete with sand and a little cantina.

The Toronto waterfront will probably always be short on palm trees, but right now it's very rich in ideas. The result of just one of those ideas, Sugar Beach, is one of five parks and public spaces that will be built in the East Bayfront area alone.

It might not be as eye-catching as a new beach, but recycling is also going to make Ontario a prettier place. And people seem to agree, judging by the success of the new [Bag it back](#) program. During its first twelve months, Ontarians returned an impressive 220 million wine, beer and spirit containers to locations of [The Beer Store](#) and other designated return locations across the province. They were turned into new bottles, as well as fiberglass insulation, ceiling tile and other useful products. A great improvement on pushing them into a landfill!

Meanwhile the Ontario Growth Secretariat (OGS) launched a new website – a comprehensive resource where visitors can get the latest news about ReNew Ontario, the Greenbelt Plan, and developments related to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the forthcoming Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. The site contains an image bank as well as quick links to technical

studies. Brad Graham, the Assistant Deputy Minister at OGS, calls it a 'one-stop shopping' information resource.

So, with apologies to George Herbert, we're hoping to turn every two miles – or, perhaps, kilometers – into one. That means less pollution, more prosperity and best of all, more time with our family and friends in well-planned and environmentally friendly communities.

David Caplan
Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal

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PIR visits Washington to talk about smart growth



Smart Growth experts from across North America gathered in Washington D.C. February 7 to 9 for the [New Partners for Smart Growth conference](#), where Ontario's award-winning [Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#) was featured.

Public Infrastructure Renewal minister [David Caplan](#), Deputy Minister Carol Layton and staff from the Ontario Growth Secretariat attended the conference on behalf of the province.

Washington was the perfect place for these discussions, since the first Smart Growth plan was launched there in 1995.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was featured in a session titled "Taking the Long View: Planning for Urban Regions." It was highlighted along with three other U.S. jurisdictions – the State of Maryland; Sacramento, California; and the Delaware Valley Region -- that all face common challenges, such as urban sprawl, car dependency and the loss of natural areas and agricultural lands. More than 50 participants attended this conference session, where discussion focused on how these innovative, long-term regional planning initiatives use smart growth principles to create livable communities that are transit-supportive and pedestrian friendly, and that protect natural areas and agricultural lands.

"Ontario has been garnering more and more attention internationally for the approach we have taken to manage growth," said Brad Graham, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Ontario Growth Secretariat. "It is very encouraging to see other jurisdictions looking to Ontario as a model for smart growth."

At the conference, Minister Caplan hosted a luncheon for members and partners of the National Committee of America 2050, a national initiative launched by the Regional Plan Association to address the United States' infrastructure, economic development and environmental challenges anticipated as the country is expected to grow by 120 million people by 2050.

In his remarks, Caplan stressed Ontario's desire to play the "long game" when it comes to growth planning in the province. The fact that Ontario is expecting an enormous influx of four million immigrants in the next 25 years, he said, means that short-term "cut and slash" government budgets would be a catastrophe for the province. "It takes political will to look into the future and extend planning cycles, " Caplan added.

Deputy Minister Carol Layton and OGS staff also had an opportunity to meet with staff from the District of Columbia Office of Planning, who showed PIR staff a key redevelopment project in southeast part of the city, an area comparable to the Toronto waterfront. Now an-up-and-coming area as a result of rejuvenation, it is home to the new Nationals Baseball Stadium and the new Department of Transportation Headquarters, the first new federal headquarters to be constructed in the Capitol in over 30 years.

Minister Caplan's Friday schedule included a morning meeting with Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer, who spearheaded the renewal of Portland while serving on its city council. Early in the afternoon he spent an hour with Parris Glendenning, who campaigned for the cleanup of Chesapeake Bay while governor of Maryland, and is credited with coining the phrase "Smart Growth." Glendenning is currently President of the Smart Growth Leadership Institute.

On Saturday, February 9th, the minister took a tour of the White House before returning to Toronto.

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MIII top-up boosts support for municipalities



243 Ontario communities can now proceed with critical investments in local infrastructure, thanks to funding announced March 28 under the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative (MIII), a program to provide municipalities across Ontario with more money to build and repair roads, bridges and other public facilities.

Last fall, the Ontario government announced the launch of the \$300-million initiative, and on February 25 Premier Dalton

McGuinty announced that the government would be adding another \$150 million to the investment, bringing the MIII total to \$450 and creating about 6,700 construction jobs in the process. The Premier also announced that projects ranging from cultural attractions to sewer systems would be eligible for this funding.

“Investing in our infrastructure creates jobs, makes us more productive and makes our communities better places to live,” said Premier McGuinty. “Together, we’re making it easier for parents to get to work, we’re giving kids new places to play and we’re making sure all families have safe, clean water to drink.”

The MIII funding builds on ReNew Ontario – the investment by the province and its partners of more than \$30 billion over five years in hospitals, schools, universities and other major projects. Ontario will also invest an additional \$60 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years.

“The Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative investment is part of the government's commitment to strengthening communities and revitalizing public infrastructure across Ontario,” said Public Infrastructure Renewal Minister David Caplan. “Through rebuilding the facilities and public services Ontarians need and deserve, we’re creating a higher quality of life for everyone in this province.”

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Young People Plan their Cities



Engaging young people in building their futures is an important element in the success of the province's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).

That's what the Places to Grow Youth Engagement Project is all about. Over the next few months, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal's Ontario Growth Secretariat will bring together young people ages 16 to 18 from across the GGH – Burlington, Etobicoke, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Newmarket,

Oakville, Peterborough and Pickering – to engage them in activities that will teach them Growth Plan basics and get their ideas on how they might redesign their city centres into sustainable, livable communities.

Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal David Caplan attended the kick-off event for the project in downtown Toronto on March 1. Caplan urged the young people attending to play an active role in helping the province plan for growth and for downtown revitalization through their projects.

"We are busy rebuilding this province's public infrastructure, today and for generations to come," Caplan told the participants. "It will be people your age who will be making the important decisions about what this province is going to look like. One of the keys to our future is creating vibrant, exciting city centres. We want to hear about and see your vision for what our cities can become, and your ideas for how to make that happen."

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Jarvis 'slips' into new design for waterfront



On February 1 another piece of Toronto's colourful waterfront park was put in place when [Waterfront Toronto](#) and its government partners announced the winning design for an urban beach at the foot of Jarvis Street.

The design, called "Sugar Beach", and presented by Claude Cormier Architectes Paysagistes, features a wedge-shaped sandy beach with candy-coloured

umbrellas, together with granite outcrops and grassy knolls where people can sit and be entertained by buskers and musicians.

Calling Sugar Beach "an incredible design", Public Infrastructure Renewal Minister David Caplan added that it's "another example of the tremendous progress we're making to transform the Toronto waterfront into a people-friendly part of the city."

Sugar Beach takes its inspiration – and its name – from the Redpath sugar refinery that faces it across the Jarvis Slip, which is still used by cargo ships. It will be the second urban beach on the downtown waterfront, after the immense success of the HtO Park just to the west.

"The jury appreciated the big idea approach of the design," said architect Siamak Hariri, the chair of the jury which chose Sugar Beach over two other designs. He cited the confidence, purity and playfulness of the design, together with the thoughtful way it is integrated into the three-kilometre waterfront promenade which will run from Bathurst to Parliament.

"We look forward to working with Claude Cormier Architectes Paysagistes in animating this important public amenity," said Mark Wilson, head of Waterfront Toronto.

Sugar Beach is one of a series of urban beaches which Waterfront Toronto will create along the water's-edge promenade. The urban beach concept was pioneered in cities such as Paris and Berlin,

to allow city dwellers to have a beachside experience without the environmental cost of travelling to distant cottages or resorts.

Like other such beaches, Sugar Beach will acknowledge its urban setting through physical connections with nearby buildings, and by providing a public gathering space for the future East Bayfront community. In the near term, it will complement the striking architecture of the First Waterfront Place structure, which will be the home of Corus Entertainment Inc.

“We congratulate Claude Cormier’s Sugar Beach team and look forward to working with them in making our city’s waterfront a thriving community,” said John Cassaday, CEO of Corus.

Sugar Beach will also acknowledge its setting with a cantina, to be inspired by the traditional beach stations on Cherry and Kew Beaches, and a trusswork lighting pylon which echoes the gantries of the nearby sugar refinery.

“We’re proud to be a partner in this remarkable transformation,” said Senator Michael Meighen, on behalf of federal Environment Minister John Baird, at the Feb. 1 event announcing the winning design .

Thanking all three design firms which competed, Mayor David Miller said that “all of them represent the kind of brilliant thinking that will make Toronto’s waterfront a place truly for people.”

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Places to Grow gets new Web presence



Anyone looking for the latest information and background on the Ontario government's Places to Grow initiative can now visit www.placestogrow.ca

The site is a one-stop resource for smart growth in Ontario, and includes the latest news and information about the province's regional growth plans enabled by the Places to Grow Act, including the award-winning Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and the developing Growth Plan for Northern Ontario.

The site features:

- quick links to plans and technical studies
- a number of implementation tools, including an image bank
- links to related Ontario government initiatives, such as Renew Ontario and the Greenbelt Plan
- research on growth management and urban planning

"www.placestogrow.ca is an invaluable tool for anyone who wants to know more about planning for growth across the province," said Brad Graham, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Ontario Growth Secretariat. "It provides a 'one-stop-shopping' resource for information about the government's work. I think people are going to really appreciate having all this information available at one click."

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One year later, deposit return program thrives



From a standing start just over a year ago, Ontarians have embraced the [Bag it back](#) program and are on track to return 65 per cent of wine, beer and spirit containers for recycling.

“The participation reinforces what we’ve come to know about our customers: protecting the environment is an important priority for them,” says Bob Peter, president and CEO of the [LCBO](#).

Peter’s enthusiasm is echoed by anti-pollution crusaders such as Rick Smith, head of the Environmental Defence group. “Congratulations on the Bag it back program,” says Smith. “I’m delighted the program’s going well after just one year.”

The program is simplicity itself. A consumer pays a small deposit on each container of wine, beer and spirits purchased at LCBO, and at other Ontario beverage alcohol retail outlets. Then they recover the deposit by dropping off the empty containers at The Beer Store or other designated return locations.

Leading by example, Premier Dalton McGuinty [returned some empty containers](#) to an outlet of [The Beer Store](#) in Kitchener at the beginning of February. Pointing out that 96 per cent of beer bottles in Ontario are already recycled, he said “that’s something to inspire us to bring back every single container” used for alcoholic beverages. “When we do that, there’s less stuff going into the landfill,” McGuinty added.

Bag it back has several direct benefits. Materials recycled through The Beer Store system can be put to high-end use, such as more bottles, ceiling tile and fibreglass insulation. At the same time, space is freed up in Blue Box containers, so that municipalities can encourage consumers to recycle more and other materials, such as cardboard and plastic. This helps reduce the environmental cost of landfills.

Bag it back is a partnership between government, the beverage alcohol industry, and the hospitality industry. Hotels, bars and restaurants are returning over 70 per cent of containers, helping the

program to reach an impressive total of 220 million recycled containers in its first year. The Ontario government launched this program to increase of the number of beverage alcohol containers diverted from landfill.

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