



The Fife and Drum

The Newsletter of the Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common

July 31, 2002

Opening of Fort York Boulevard

A Truly Momentous Event for the Future of Historic Fort York

At 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 14th Councillor Joe Pantalone will cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the new Fort York Boulevard. Councillor Pantalone played a major role in bringing this important project to fruition.

For the last hundred years, Historic Fort York has been hidden from the City, cut off by railways, factories and the Gardiner Expressway. Fort York Boulevard will physically reconnect the City of Toronto with its birthplace, Historic Fort York. When extended to the east to connect with Bremner Boulevard, Fort York Boulevard will give citizens and visitors a direct route from downtown Toronto.

Careful planning of the Fort York Community residential development south of Fort York will enable this new avenue to become a truly great boulevard and walkway that will significantly enhance Historic Fort York. As the city grows towards Fort York through the development of the railway lands and the Fort York Community the new visibility of the fort will enable it to finally realize its potential as a heritage site and historic museum.

We welcome all of our members and other friends of the fort to join us at the entrance to Fort York Blvd. on Bathurst Street for this historic ceremony. At 10:00 a.m. the Fort York Guard will present a musical performance for the arriving public. At approximately 10:45 a.m. Councillor Pantalone will open the official program with his comments. Geordie Beal, Chair of the Fort York Management Board and Joe Gill, Chair of the Friends of Fort York will also speak. At 11:00 a.m. the ceremonial ribbon will be cut to the sound of a cannon firing. All will then proceed to a reception in the Blue Barracks. We look forward to seeing you on August 14th.

For your information we attach a draft public relations release showing how the opening of Fort York Boulevard relates to the overall strategic planning for the future of Historic Fort York.

Draft Release

Road Opening sets the stage for continued growth of visitors to Historic Fort York

Exactly at 11 am on Wednesday August 14, as the mid morning cannon booms from Fort York, Councillor Joe Pantalone, Geordie Beal, Chair of the Fort York Management Board and Joe Gill, Chair of the Friends of Fort York will cut a ribbon to open Fort York Boulevard. The Fort York Guard, dressed in authentic 1812 uniforms of the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry, will drill, demonstrate musketry and provide Fife & Drum music. The Guard is comprised of students with salaries and uniforms paid by donations to the Friends of Fort York. The road opening ceremony will celebrate the reconnection of Historic Fort York with Toronto, the city to which it gave birth.

The completion of the new boulevard is a critical step in making Historic Fort York a "must see" for citizens and students of Toronto, and the thousands of tourists to the City, a challenge that the City, the Culture Division, site staff and the citizen Management Board have set as a priority.

Over the last two years programming and displays have been expanded to prepare the Fort to take advantage of the access provided by the new boulevard. This year visitor attendance is up over 100% in each of April, May and June versus last year as the strategies of the Management Board and fort staff are gaining momentum. Three of these strategies are core to continuing and accelerating the growth in visitors to Fort York.

The first strategy is to fill each of the seven original War of 1812-1815 buildings with a variety of displays and artifacts that will engage visitors in the history and culture that shaped the future City of Toronto. These displays will displace administrative and non-historic functions that currently occupy significant space in the historic buildings. The seven buildings account for over half of all the buildings remaining in Canada from the 1812 War period. As such, these buildings themselves are the Fort's and the City of Toronto's most important artifacts. Visitors should be able to see them in total.

The second strategy is to enliven the site by increasing programming, interpretation and events. This will allow visitors to experience the vibrant life that existed on the grounds of the Fort. Understanding how people lived and worked almost two hundred years ago provides an important insight into the cultures and beliefs that influenced the nature of early Toronto and how these set patterns for generations that have followed.

The third strategy is to reconnect Historic Fort York to the City of Toronto. Fort York Boulevard, to be opened on Wednesday, is an important beginning in the physical reconnection to the city. For the last hundred years, Fort York has been hidden from the City, cut off by the railways, factories and the Gardiner Expressway. Now the Fort will be revealed again. Fort York Boulevard, when extended to the east to connect with Bremner Boulevard, will give citizens and visitors a direct route from downtown Toronto. It is rare in North America to have the origins of a city preserved largely intact side by side with the modern city. Toronto has a unique opportunity to show tourists and citizens the visible beginnings of our city.

Fort York Boulevard physically reconnects Historic Fort York with the City of Toronto. Now the challenge is to reconnect Torontonians intellectually and emotionally with their cultural history and past as revealed at Fort York.

In today's world strong and enduring cultures understand and embrace their roots. Fort York and Toronto are poised to capture this potential for our future.