

FORT YORK HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Governance Failure & Erosion of Oversight

A Chronological Record | 1793 – April 2026

This document is a chronological record of the planning commitments, heritage protections, and governance mechanisms established for the Fort York Heritage Conservation District and Gore Park — and of the sequential erosion of those protections. It is intended as a reference document for submissions to the Toronto Preservation Board, the Toronto and East York Community Council, and any heritage review of the proposed Toronto Tempo performance centre at 701 Fleet Street / Gore Park.

The record demonstrates a clear pattern: every independent check on the City’s conflict of interest as owner, steward and regulator of the HCD has been removed or neutralized in the years preceding the April 2026 Tempo announcement. The Toronto Preservation Board is now the last independent institutional safeguard with standing to require proper heritage process before this proposal advances.

FOUNDATION	HERITAGE PLANNING	GOVERNANCE FAILURE	Historical Background
------------	-------------------	--------------------	-----------------------

PART 1 — FOUNDATION: THE LEGAL AND PHYSICAL BASELINE (1793–1927)

1793	Fort York established as a British military garrison on the north shore of Lake Ontario. The site would become the birthplace of the City of Toronto and one of Canada's most significant National Historic Sites.
1812–13	Battle of York. American forces burn the fort. It is rebuilt, establishing the physical heritage fabric now protected by the HCD.
1909	Federal agreement transfers military lands — including what would become Exhibition Place — to the City of Toronto. Agreement includes a condition requiring restoration of Fort York to its 1816 condition, with a right of federal re-entry if the City fails to comply. This agreement continues as a 'shadow on the title' over adjacent lands including Gore Park.
1924	Gore Vale Pumping Station constructed within Gore Park. Later protected as a heritage structure. The Fort York Neighbourhood Secondary Plan would subsequently mandate its incorporation into any improvements to Gore Park.
1927	Princes' Gate constructed as the ceremonial entrance to the Canadian National Exhibition. Designated heritage structure. Official Plan Map 7B identifies a protected view to the Princes' Gate from the northeast and southeast corners of Lake Shore Boulevard West at Fort York Boulevard — a view corridor the proposed Tempo building sits directly within.

PART 2 — HERITAGE PLANNING: COMMITMENTS MADE AND CODIFIED (1994–2014)

1994	Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common publish 'Revealing Fort York' — the first citizen-led planning principles document for the site. Successfully influences the Bathurst/Strachan Part II Official Plan, establishing community-led heritage advocacy as a force in Fort York planning decisions.
1995	Report of the Bathurst/Strachan Working Committee (April 18, 1995), chaired by provincial facilitator Dale Martin. Fort York Working Group findings codified. The committee included City planning staff, heritage advocates, and the Friends of Fort York.
1996	Fort York in the Community: An Ideas Workshop (September 27–28). More than 100 participants — neighbourhood residents, landscape architects, engineers, planners, landowners, politicians, and heritage professionals — spend a weekend at Fort York Armouries developing a shared vision. Jointly sponsored by the Friends of Fort York, Heritage Toronto, and City of Toronto Urban Development Services.
1997	Garrison Common Transportation Plan (Metro Planning, August 26) adopted by Metropolitan Council — establishes Fort York Boulevard extension as a transportation priority. Fort York Business Plan published jointly by the Friends and the Toronto Historical Board.
June 28, 1999	CRITICAL COUNCIL COMMITMENT: Toronto Community Council adopts report of the Commissioner of Urban Planning and Development Services on the Fort York Boulevard Extension. Recommendation 6 directs that a design for Gore Park be prepared 'consistent with the extension of Fort York Boulevard and Section 4.4.3 of the Bathurst/Strachan Part II Official Plan.' Section 4.4.3 explicitly calls for Gore Park as 'open space for the local community, the elimination of parking as soon as possible and the preparation of a parks plan.' Toronto Community Council also directs that Phase I park design be undertaken specifically for the area of Gore Park east of the proposed Fort York Boulevard — the precise

	area of the Tempo proposal. Authors: Ian Cooper and Beate Bowron, Community Planning South District.
1999 (same year)	A proposed visitor centre sited just outside the west gates of Fort York at Exhibition Place is DEFEATED by community opposition. The HCD Study documents the reason: 'The proposed visitor centre would have overwhelmed the modest scale of the Fort and, furthermore, would block views from inside the Fort west towards an open common.' This defeat establishes the precedent and produces the planning documents that will become the HCD Plan. The proposed Toronto Tempo performance centre is a substantially larger structure proposed at the same location.
June 2000	'Fort York: Setting It Right' published by the Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common and the Fort York Management Board. Establishes fort-centred planning and design principles. Foundational document from which the 2014 HCD Plan draws its core principles. Addressed to the Prime Minister, Premier, and Mayor. Authored by Robert Allsopp (du Toit Allsopp Hillier) and Catherine Nasmith.
Nov. 6–8, 2001	CRITICAL COUNCIL COMMITMENT: City Council adopts the Fort York and Garrison Common Parks and Open Space Design and Implementation Plan (Report No. 8, Toronto East York Community Council, Clause 24) without amendment. Key provisions: (1) identifies 'the design and development of Gore Park and 800 Fleet Street as parkland' as an explicit priority project; (2) recommends incorporating Gore Park into the expanded HCD boundaries; (3) confirms the June 28, 1999 direction to design Gore Park east of Fort York Boulevard as parkland. Neither of these Council commitments has ever been formally rescinded.
~2004	Fort York and Garrison Common Heritage Conservation District formally designated under the Ontario Heritage Act by By-law 541-2004. The Fort York Advisory Committee (FYAC) is established as a formal Council Advisory Body to provide independent oversight — specifically designed to manage the City's conflict of interest as simultaneous owner, steward, and regulator of the site.
2005	'Fort York: Adding New Buildings' published — further codifies principles on scale, massing, and visual subordination of any new structures to the fort.
March 5, 2014	Fort York Heritage Conservation District Plan formally adopted. The FYAC consultation requirement is hardwired into the Plan at ss.11.1.3 and 11.1.4.5. The Plan explicitly requires: Heritage Impact Assessment; Visual Impact Assessment using the City's 3D model; FYAC consultation; Toronto Preservation Board review; and Design Review Panel input — for any large new element affecting the HCD. The Plan states it prevails over conflicting City by-laws (Ontario Heritage Act s.41.2). All of these requirements remain legally in force.

PART 3 — GOVERNANCE EROSION: THE SEQUENTIAL DISMANTLING OF OVERSIGHT (2018–2026)

~2018	GOVERNANCE FAILURE #1 — EMERGENCY SHELTER BUILT IN GORE PARK WITHOUT HERITAGE REVIEW: A shelter is constructed in Gore Park as an emergency structure, bypassing the Ontario Heritage Act s.42 Heritage Permit requirement and the HIA process. Eight years later the structure remains — its emergency justification long expired — with no retroactive Heritage Impact Assessment produced and no formal assessment of its impact on the HCD. The shelter has caused documented damage to the Heritage Conservation District during this period. No remediation plan has been produced. This is the first instance in a pattern of using emergency or urgency framing to bypass heritage process at this site.
2022	GOVERNANCE FAILURE #2 — THE FYAC IS NOT RE-ESTABLISHED: The Fort York Advisory Committee — the specific institutional safeguard the HCD Study prescribed to manage the City's conflict of interest — is not re-established for the 2022–2026 Council term. The Toronto History Museums Strategic Plan transitions to a centralized model focused on decolonization and indigenization across all 10 Toronto History Museums. Site-specific heritage conservation oversight for Fort York is replaced by city-wide advisory councils with fundamentally different mandates. No formal amendment to the HCD Plan's consultation requirements is made — meaning the obligation to consult the FYAC may remain legally in force despite the body's non-existence.
2022 onward	GOVERNANCE FAILURE #3 — ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CULTURE CONSOLIDATES UNCHECKED CONTROL: Management and heritage governance for Fort York shifts entirely to the Economic Development & Culture (EDC) division of the City. The General Manager of EDC becomes the primary channel for Fort York heritage matters. EDC is the same department that will co-announce the Tempo facility in April 2026. There is no longer any institutional separation between the City entity promoting development on the site and the City entity responsible for heritage oversight of it — the precise conflict of interest the

	HCD Study identified and the FYAC was designed to prevent.
2022 onward	GOVERNANCE FAILURE #4 — THE FRIENDS OF FORT YORK ARE EFFECTIVELY SILENCED: The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common — authors of 'Revealing Fort York' (1994), 'Fort York: Setting It Right' (2000), co-organizers of the 1996 Ideas Workshop, and the community body that defeated the 1999 visitor centre proposal — are effectively removed from meaningful participation in Fort York heritage decisions. The mechanism of their silencing and its precise timing relative to increasing development pressure on the site requires documentation. Their silencing eliminates the one body with both the institutional memory and the independence to hold City decision-makers accountable to 25 years of prior commitments.
2025–26	PARALLEL PATTERN — FIFA WORLD CUP 2026 SUBCOMMITTEE: A FIFA World Cup 2026 Subcommittee reviews and grants by-law exemptions to facilitate fan zones and events at Fort York and The Bentway. No connection to the Tempo proposal exists, but the episode illustrates that event-preparation urgency has already been used as a mechanism to grant exemptions from normal process at this location. The pattern — emergency or urgency framing used to bypass heritage review — is now documented across multiple episodes at the same site.
April 17, 2026	GOVERNANCE FAILURE #5 — TEMPO ANNOUNCED WITHOUT REQUIRED HERITAGE PROCESS: The City of Toronto and Toronto Tempo jointly announce a performance centre at 701 Fleet Street / Gore Park, with a construction timeline of fall 2026. The announcement is made with: no Heritage Impact Assessment; no Visual Impact Assessment; no FYAC consultation (body no longer exists); no Toronto Preservation Board review; no Design Review Panel review; no formal acknowledgment of the 1999 and 2001 Council commitments to Gore Park as parkland; no HIA for the existing shelter or the pumping station. The 2014 HCD Plan's mandatory requirements have not been met. Lease terms are 'pending City Council approval.' The announcement predates every process step the HCD Plan requires.

PART 4 — WHAT REMAINS: UNRESOLVED OBLIGATIONS

Unresolved	Council's June 28, 1999 direction to design Gore Park as 'open space for the local community' per Section 4.4.3 of the Bathurst/Strachan Part II Official Plan has never been formally rescinded. It remains the operative policy for Gore Park.
Unresolved	Council's November 2001 commitment to develop Gore Park 'as parkland' as a priority project has never been formally rescinded. It remains part of the adopted Fort York and Garrison Common Parks and Open Space Design and Implementation Plan.
Unresolved	The HCD Plan's requirement to consult the FYAC before approving large new elements affecting the HCD remains in force. The FYAC's non-existence does not extinguish the legal obligation.
Unresolved	The ~2018 shelter's impact on the HCD has never been formally assessed. No Heritage Impact Assessment, no remediation plan, no documented baseline condition exists. Any HIA for the Tempo building that ignores this pre-existing damage is built on a deficient baseline.
Unresolved	The Gore Vale Pumping Station (1924, protected heritage building) immediately adjacent to the Tempo footprint has received no Heritage Impact Assessment for construction and operational impacts from the proposed facility.
Unresolved	The shelter structure to the south of the Tempo building has received no Heritage Impact Assessment despite 8 years of presence and documented HCD damage.
Unresolved	The 1909 federal agreement conditions regarding Exhibition Place lands have not been assessed in the context of the Tempo proposal. Federal Crown consultation has not occurred.

Note on Sources

All events in this timeline are drawn from primary documents on file: City of Toronto Council Minutes (June 28, 1999; November 6–8, 2001); Fort York HCD Study and Plan (March 5, 2014); Fort York: Setting It Right (June 2000); Fort York and Garrison Common Parks and Open Space Design and Implementation Plan (2001); and direct knowledge of heritage governance changes communicated by persons with involvement in Fort York oversight. Dates marked '~' are approximate. The Friends of Fort York silencing timeline requires further documentation.