

# TORONTO: BEING A WORLD-CLASS CONTENDER ON THE WATERFRONT

Rob Meikle, CIO, City of Toronto, opened his presentation saying, “We [cities] must continue to change and transform if we want to remain relevant.” He added, “That means how we interact with people, businesses and also engaging a talented workforce.” He explained how Toronto’s Waterfront, one of the biggest revitalization projects in the world, demonstrates this people-focused approach.

Toronto has been ranked as one of the most liveable cities in the world by indices such as the Sustainable Cities Index and the Economist’s Best Place to Live. The city is also seeing tremendous growth, including substantial high rise development.

Meikle said, “A city needs to have a purpose... We want to build a city where the quality of life for people to live, work and play is very attractive globally...to do that we had to build around some strategic pillars – including economic prosperity, environmental sustainability but also social advocacy.”

He talked about a “tremendous opportunity” which requires good governance, so that decisions are made based on information, as well as a sound digital infrastructure. The city is creating a master plan which takes advantage of the city’s core services and looking at its digital infrastructure, as well as where it wants to be in the future.

Meikle said, “One of the things that we have recognized is that innovation not only comes from the city and its administration, but innovation comes from the businesses, the citizens, the whole community that we are part of – the ecosystem. We can’t limit this to what the city just does, but how do we build that ecosystem where we can get the best practices that are shared amongst all?”



## TORONTO AT A GLANCE



**LARGEST  
CITY IN  
CANADA**



**4TH LARGEST  
CITY IN NORTH  
AMERICA**



**POPULATION:  
2.8 MILLION  
PEOPLE**



**TO REACH  
3.1 MILLION  
BY 2031**



**140  
LANGUAGES  
SPOKEN**



**230+  
ETHNIC  
ORIGINS**

**“A city has to have a purpose...We want to build a city where the quality of life for people to live, work and play is very attractive globally.”**

He noted that citizens are increasingly demanding; they expect services in an integrated, seamless and simple manner. They're looking for services any time.

He said, "What we focus on is what we magnify so instead of just looking at all the things we don't have we have also learned to focus on what we do have – and when you focus on those things you begin to realise that there are several pieces that exist today. When we recognize that these pieces exist today the opportunity is how do we build a framework that enables us to build on those foundations?"

### Waterfront Toronto

He shared the case study of Waterfront Toronto, which he described as a "tremendous, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity".

The initiative will transform 800 hectares (2,000 acres) of disused, neglected industrial land into beautiful, sustainable mixed-use communities and dynamic public spaces. For example, every business will be screened before being accepted for the Waterfront Toronto community – each must demonstrate a 25-year sustainability business case. There will also be homes for people of all income levels and approximately 20 percent of the residential units will be affordable housing.

Meikle said, "Instead of just redevelopment, we embarked on one of the largest revitalization projects in the world. We said, let's start all over. How would we do this?"

The aim is to create 40,000 new homes, 40,000 new jobs and 300 hectares of park space... "a community where people can live, work and play". It will take 25 years and \$34 billion investment to build out the Waterfront.

The city is approaching the project with an integrated planning approach. Meikle said, "We have used this as a springboard for a catalyst of innovation, not just for the waterfront area but for the entire city."

### Master-planned communities

It's an urban design for a waterfront community, but it's also on a human scale, Meikle said. So there is priority for pedestrians, there are cycle trails and all residents will live within a five-minute walk of public transit.

Meikle talked about "master-planned communities" such as one of the neighborhoods that was comprehensively planned and then built almost overnight as part of the Toronto 2015 PanAm Games. It was touted by experts as one of the best athletes' villages and is now being occupied as a brand new neighborhood.

### WATERFRONT TORONTO



25-YEAR  
PROJECT



\$34 BILLION  
INVESTMENT



TRANSFORMING 800 HECTARES  
OF DISUSED INDUSTRIAL LAND



40,000  
NEW HOMES



40,000  
NEW JOBS

Meikle said, "We have been able to leverage that investment." It includes integrated sustainable systems, such as a feature that attracts visitors and teaches about water quality and how water is collected, treated and made useable once again.

One of the things Meikle said the city is very excited about is its Innovation EpiCenter. The purpose-built facility has a community of organizations that are driving innovation, not just for the city but for global use. The center will eventually have work space over 2,000 employees.

### Planning for tomorrow

"The overall goal is to be future-ready," Meikle said. "How can we plan for today, but also tomorrow?"

Toronto was the Innovative City Forum's Global Intelligent Community of the Year award winner in 2014 and Meikle points out that leadership was a critical factor in this. He said the city recognizes that it needs a framework that is sustainable.

This framework is built on six pillars: Broadband, Knowledge workforce, Innovation, Digital equality, Sustainability and Advocacy.

Meikle said, "The intelligent community is based on those six pillars and it provides us an opportunity to really drive out some ultra-broadband and Wi-Fi solutions that will be consistently upgraded to future proof our community."

He concluded by reiterating, "For us, smart city is not a destination. It's not a place or a time that we want to be – smart cities for us is a journey, it's something that we continue to build on."