



Canada



Ontario



CONSTRUCTION STARTS ON BERM AND NEW WATERFRONT PARK

Major milestone in development of first new waterfront neighbourhood

Toronto, June 25, 2007 - Federal Environment Minister John Baird, Ontario Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal David Caplan and Toronto Mayor David Miller today launched the start of construction of both a flood protection berm and the Don River Park in the West Don Lands, the first new community to be developed as part of waterfront revitalization.

“The revitalization of the West Don Lands will transform an underused industrial area into a vibrant new sustainable community for Torontonians,” said the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment. “The health of our cities and communities is critical to our country’s ongoing success. That is why Canada’s New Government is providing \$17.6 million to fully fund the construction of the Don River Park. We are committed to working with other levels of government to renew Toronto’s waterfront and ensure a high quality of life for residents and visitors alike.”

Don River Park will be an active, vibrant and inviting neighbourhood park serving the community, the City and visitors alike. Don River Park will provide a rich and diverse offering of landscape experiences. It will transform an abandoned and contaminated post-industrial site into a dynamic, re-natured public park that is animated year-round. It will invite the city to the Don River and enhance the experience along the river’s edge.

Waterfront Toronto in partnership with the Ontario Realty Corporation is overseeing the construction of the six-hectare berm. The berm is a key requirement for developing the West Don Lands which are located in the flood plain of the Don River. The berm will provide flood protection for a 174 hectare area that extends west to York Street, including Toronto’s financial district. Don River Park, a signature piece of the new West Don Lands community, will be built on top of the berm.

“The waterfront’s future really begins today – as we begin the process of transforming the provincially owned West Don Lands into a new community that will one day rival London’s Canary Wharf or New York’s Battery Park,” said Caplan. “The long awaited berm construction is the critical step to making the West Don Lands, one of Canada’s first complete and sustainable communities.”

Approximately 200,000 cubic metres of fill will be used to construct the low-lying berm. This is the equivalent to the load carried by 10,000 dump trucks. At its high point, the berm will be four metres high. The berm is scheduled to be complete in 2008 after which final landscaping for Don River Park will take place. The park will be open in 2009. The cost of constructing the berm is \$25 million. Don River Park will cost \$15 million.

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“This berm is vital to the transformation of the West Don Lands into the dynamic community Torontonians have long been looking for in the vicinity of their downtown waterfront,” said Mayor David Miller. “It will be an affordable and accessible community that will attract a wide variety of families and residents from diverse economic backgrounds who want to live, work and play in a clean, green urban environment.”

Starting construction of the berm and Don River Park is part of a number of development activities now underway in the West Don Lands. On June 18, 2007, Waterfront Toronto issued a Request for Qualifications for the development of 850 units of residential housing in the West Don Lands. And, Toronto Community Housing, Waterfront Toronto’s affordable housing partner for the first phase of West Don Lands development, will start construction of 130 units of affordable rental housing in the fall of 2007.

“Today represents a major milestone for revitalization of Toronto’s waterfront,” said Mark Wilson, Waterfront Toronto’s chair. “Building this berm has been one of the biggest barriers to transforming this area into a new vibrant neighbourhood. Today we officially overcome that barrier and start the major construction of the first new waterfront community.”

In addition to the berm, flood protection is also being provided by widening the channel of the Don River so that it can accommodate a larger flow of water. Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) is carrying out this work. Widening the river channel requires extending the railway bridge that spans the channel. This bridge work will be complete in July along with a new pedestrian underpass that links the new West Don Lands community to the existing Don River and waterfront trails. The underpass will open in 2009 when Don River Park is complete.

The West Don Lands, made up of 32 hectares next to the Distillery District, run from Parliament Street east to the Don River and from King Street south to the rail corridor. Waterfront Toronto has made community consultation an integral part of the design and development of the West Don Lands.

“In 1999 our community identified flood protection as the single biggest barrier to redevelopment of the West Don Lands,” said Cindy Wilkey, Chair of the West Don Lands Committee. “When the flood protection berm is completed in 2008, landscaping for the fabulous new Don River Park can start and new neighbours will finally be able to move in. The \$20 million for flood protection and the \$19 million for the creation of Don River Park are critical investments that will stimulate private sector partnership in building this new neighbourhood.”

The Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto created Waterfront Toronto to oversee and lead the renewal of Toronto’s waterfront. Public accessibility, design excellence, sustainable development, economic development and fiscal sustainability are the key drivers of waterfront revitalization.

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