



## Staff recommendation to scrap Expo 2025 bid should be ignored, advocates say

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Published Tuesday, October 25, 2016 11:10AM EDT

Last Updated Tuesday, October 25, 2016 11:20AM EDT

Supporters of a Toronto bid for Expo 2025 are calling on Mayor Tory's executive committee to ignore the advice of staff and to continue looking into the possibility of hosting the major international event.

A report that will be considered by the 13-person committee on Wednesday recommends that a potential bid for Expo 2025 be abandoned due to its considerable cost as well as the "significant risk" that the city will not be able to complete the "many concurrent construction projects" that would be required to host the expo in 2025.

On Tuesday, however, a number of advocates for the bid held a press conference outside city hall to make the case that Expo 2025 is something that is worth pursuing, regardless of the challenges that the city may face.

Expo events take place every five years around a particular theme to showcase innovation. Expo 2015 was held in Milan, Italy around the theme "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life."

"We have in our hands the most extraordinary opportunity, a chance to stage the most transformative event that the city has ever seen," Toronto Arts Foundation Director and CEO Claire Hopkinson. "Unfortunately the staff report recommends we shouldn't bid. It suggests that the necessary projects couldn't be delivered on time. We beg to differ. This is not a city staff project. This is a city, province and nation project. We believe in our city and its ability to deliver."

The staff report pegs the costs of hosting Expo 2025 at \$6-\$7 billion; however that number does include funding for a number of infrastructure projects that the city is already pursuing, including flood protection work in the Port Lands and the construction of an East Bayfront LRT that would service the waterfront communities.

As well, the staff report estimates that the expo would create 50,000 person years of employment and add \$3.3 billion to Toronto's GDP. But the report also says that the city would face considerable risks in hosting the event, including the "lack of clear commitment from other orders of government" with regards to funding and the potential for significant delays and cost overruns in the completion of "complex" capital projects, many of which would be undertaken concurrently in a small geographic area.

“There is a significant risk that construction projects could be delayed as a result of technical, financial, environmental or other factors, which would in turn have major cost implications to the city and project partners,” the report states.

The report categorizes the risk of not completing needed infrastructure projects on time and on budget as “high”

In fact, it says that staff believe that it is “improbable” that many projects will be completed by 2025, including the “Expo site itself.”

Many of the advocates at Tuesday’s press conference, however, rejected that assessment.

“We were surprised to see the staff report suggest that somehow Ontario’s construction industry might not be able to deliver expo on time and on budget. That conclusion is absolutely wrong,” Executive Director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario Andy Manahan said. “When large long-term projects arise they act as magnets for our trades. I can assure you that we will have more than enough skilled people knocking at our doors.”

The estimated cost of bidding on Expo 2025 is \$10 to \$15 million. Manchester, England, Tokyo and Paris are also reportedly considering whether to bid on hosting the event.