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A World's Fair for Toronto has benefits: coalition

KELLY LAPOINTE

staff writer

A coalition of community organizers, businesses, corporate figures and political leaders is asking Prime Minister Stephen Harper not to cancel Canada's membership in the [Bureau International des Expositions](#) (BIE) to keep the country's options open to hosting another World's Fair.

Canada is set to withdraw its BIE membership this December, halting the potential for a Canadian bid.

"We want to be able to demonstrate to the BIE no, Canadians actually do want to be part of this discussion, regardless of whether or not one prime minister is deciding for the rest of the country and for the future ambitions of every single Canadian city," said Toronto city councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam.

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"What he's saying is nobody gets the world's fair, no Canadian city will ever bid for the fair because we're backing out now."

On Aug. 20, the coalition publicly released a letter from Toronto mayor Rob Ford to the Prime Minister asking him to put a pause on the cancellation of Canada's membership to the BIE. There is also a joint letter of support from the coalition which also includes Mike Yorke, president of Carpenters Union Local 27, Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario executive director Andy Manahan and politicians from all three parties of all levels of government and 22 city councillors.

The federal government has said its concerns surround the relevance of expos in an era of mass communications and the Internet, and the scale of security costs, based on costs that took place for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.

"I don't think it's a matter of expos being relevant, but it's really a matter of how we engage broad-based Canadian society to get excited with us," said Wong-Tam.

In the letter, the coalition states that security costs associated with an Expo are "significantly more modest and largely incomparable" to an Olympic Games event.

The coalition's key step for 2013 is a careful review of all issues, including the timing, site, costs, finances, jobs, revenue projects, economic impact, infrastructure needs, logistics, transportation, community benefits and post-Expo legacy.

The coalition says Expo 2025 has a potential \$13-billion economic impact and the event would bring an estimated 40 million visitors to the Expo site.

The port lands area is the suggested site for Expo 2025. The area would need soil remediation, water and sewer, roads and electrical power, among other development.

"Even to make it as parkland, soil would still need remediation. Those kind of issues have to be addressed.

To use the funding for an Expo as almost a subsidy to get that done, I think that's a real opportunity," said Yorke.

He pointed to the West Don Lands area where some of the 2015 Pan Am Games infrastructure is currently being built as an example of the kinds of opportunities that exist with an Expo bid.

"That was another area that was derelict industrial land that really needed a lot of remediation and we've used the catalyst of the Pan Am Games to both expedite that and to also get the work done that's really required."

Pavilions make up the majority of an Expo site and Wong-Tam said new pavilions are often modular, collapsible and portable and not permanent structures anymore.

"We think that in many ways it can actually result in them becoming new community centres for another region. We can build modular housing that might allow us to collapse them and put them elsewhere," she said.



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Mike Yorke, Carpenters Local 27 president, is part of a coalition which is advocating for Canada to remain on the World Expo scene in order to possibly host one in Toronto.

Yorke also sees projects like the Pan Am Games and Expo 2025 as opportunities to develop the construction industry for the future.

"On a bigger project like this, we can tie that right into the tender documents...we're spending \$2 or \$3 billion, let's make sure there's an opportunity for young people to start an exciting career."

In the letter to the Prime Minister, the City of Toronto requested permission to allow the city to send observers to the Nov. 26 and 27 BIE general meeting in Paris, where the candidate city will be chosen to host Expo 2020.

A formal intent to bid for Expo 2025 would need to be submitted to the 162-member nation BIE on May 1, 2016.

Expos are held every five years and last from May 1 to Oct. 31 of the Expo year.

The most recent one was in Shanghai, China in 2010, which attracted 72 million visitors.