



## **TORONTO'S FIRST "UNDERPASS PARK" OFFICIALLY OPENED IN THE WEST DON LANDS**

**Toronto – August 2, 2012** – The first phase of the most extensive park ever built under an overpass in Canada and Toronto's first was opened today by Waterfront Toronto and its government partners.

Located under and around the Eastern Avenue and Richmond/Adelaide overpasses in the West Don Lands, Underpass Park is a unique urban public space that transformed the derelict space beneath the overpasses into an unexpected and inviting community asset.

"Underpass Park is an example of creative city building," said John Campbell, President and CEO, Waterfront Toronto. "By viewing the space under the overpasses as an opportunity, we turned a potential liability into a great neighbourhood asset, one that helps connect the community and raises the bar for urban space."

"Today's announcement once again shows what can be achieved when different levels of government work together," said Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance. "As the federal minister responsible for the GTA and the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Initiative—and after having been at the ground-breaking of Underpass Park a year ago—I am pleased once again that our government is part of this remarkable transformation along Toronto's lakeshore."

"Our Government is proud to invest in key infrastructure projects that create local jobs and economic growth, and improve the quality of life for Canadians," said Peter Van Loan, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. "Improving the quality of life in our communities is key to their success. This is an aim of the Harper Government — more liveable, stronger and safer communities that benefit us all."

"The McGuinty government is proud to be part of the development of Underpass Park and the West Don Lands," said Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation. "Transforming previously unused lands into vibrant, functional space will contribute to the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games and benefit Ontario families and our community for decades to come."

"Underpass Park is a great example of how you can take a space that was neglected and turn it into a nice place for people and families to enjoy", said Toronto Mayor Rob Ford. "The park is part of the first phase of the West Don Lands redevelopment, which will transform the area in time for the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games."

Underpass Park is defined by the massive overpass structures. Designed by landscape architecture firm Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg with The Planning Partnership, the park takes full advantage of the structures to provide weather protection for large parts of the park, creating a year-round community amenity.

The unusual spaces formed by the large concrete beams and columns have been fully utilized and transformed with interesting features and amenities such as striking public art, inviting climbing structures, two half-court basketball courts and skateboarding facilities.

*Mirage*, an innovative public art installation in the park designed by Toronto artist Paul Raff, uses mirrored stainless steel panels suspended from the overpass to reflect and bounce light within the space. The concept is to engage the public through the playful use of light and reflection to accentuate the qualities of the space in an interesting and sculptural way.

Constructed in two phases, the first completed sections of the park are between St. Lawrence Street and Bayview Avenue. Visitors can access the completed portions of the park from River Street, south of King Street. Phase two of Underpass Park, located west of St. Lawrence Street to Eastern Avenue, is currently under construction and expected to open in spring 2013. When complete, Underpass Park will cover a total of 1.05 hectares (2.7 acres).

Construction of Underpass Park is another sign of the momentum and progress being made in the West Don Lands, which will be home to the Athletes' Village during the 2015 Pan Am Games. Work is well underway throughout the West Don Lands, both in the area that will be home to the Athletes' Village and the areas surrounding it.

## **Waterfront Toronto**

Waterfront Toronto has made major strides in revitalizing Toronto's waterfront. In addition to building and improving 18 parks and public spaces, Waterfront Toronto has finalized development agreements with Great Gulf Group of Companies, Urban Capital and Hines for private sector projects on the waterfront, as well as with George Brown College for the development of their new state-of-the-art Health Sciences campus.

The Governments of Canada and 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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