

August 23, 2023



**ARCHITECTURAL
CONSERVANCY
ONTARIO**

Media Release

Yesterday Therme unveiled a revised proposal for their facility at Ontario Place. Architectural Conservancy Ontario (ACO) appreciates Therme's willingness to respond to public criticisms, but rejects their proposal.

If this proposal is realized, Michael Hough's iconic landscape on the West Island will be erased and the Cinesphere and Pods will be dwarfed and blocked from most angles.

Regrettably, the revised plan continues to ignore the site's heritage importance. The landscape and architectural features of Ontario Place have been widely recognized as globally important examples of 20th Century Design. It is difficult to think of another public site in Canada that is a more important contribution. The World Monuments Fund called Ontario Place a Modernist Icon.

Imagine if other places treated their iconic sites as this proposal would have us do? What if the Australian government decided to bulldoze the park next to the Sydney Opera House in order to build an enormous spa that vastly overpowered the existing structure?

The proposed modifications, such as adding landscaping to the roof of the building attempt to address concerns about the amount of publicly accessible space on the site—but from a heritage point of view they are little more than "parsley on a pig". There is a superb landscape on the site already, part of Michael Hough's original design. It just needs to be carefully restored.

This new proposal does not address the fact that over 800 trees will need to be removed. While new trees will be planted, it will take decades for them to reach a significant size. This, at a time when we are all seeing the effects of climate change.

Therme representatives did not respond to public outrage about the cost of the parking garage. It is reported in today's Toronto Star that, "Provincial officials also refused to disclose the figure..."

While Indigenous place-keeping seems now to be incorporated within the new design, surely we can recognize Indigenous place-keeping without building a giant spa.

The modifications proposed by Therme to remove the glazing and hence make the site safer for migrating birds, enclosing the building with solid walls, certainly confirms ACO's position that this spa does not need to be at Ontario Place.