

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Toronto, 1/12/2024] - SwimOP, a beloved local swimming group, is facing a significant change in their routine due to the unexpected closure of the beach access they have long used. The closure, announced via a hastily placed handwritten sign at West Island entrance, has been a sudden shock to the community and has sparked concerns about the preservation of Ontario Place's public access.

Despite this setback, SwimOP is determined to continue its urban swimming activities, choosing the waters around Trillium Park as its new location. This move symbolizes not only the resilience of the group but also their dedication to maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle in the face of adversity.

Earlier this week, Ann-Elisabeth Samson, Co-Chair of Ontario Place for All, expressed dismay at the closure: "To announce the closure of the West Island by tacking a hastily handwritten sign to the chain link gate speaks volumes about the careless disregard of the Ford government for the heritage value of Ontario Place."

Norm Di Pasquale, another Co-Chair of Ontario Place for All, added, "Oddly, whoever posted the sign doesn't seem to know there is only one West Island, part of a larger, internationally-recognized, cultural landscape; a masterwork of landscape architect Michael Hough and architect Eb Zeidler, two of Canada's most celebrated design professionals."

SwimOP echoes these concerns and stands with the community in calling for the immediate reopening of pedestrian access to West Island. The group believes in the importance of preserving the area's significant cultural heritage and maintaining public access to its natural beauty, which has long been a source of mental and physical well-being for Ontarians.

Furthermore, SwimOP urges the Ontario Government to reconsider the development of a MegaSpa on West Island, a project that has faced significant public opposition. The group advocates for a more community-focused approach that honors the legacy of Ontario Place and promotes the health and wellness of humans, animals, trees, and the environment.

SwimOP remains committed to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for swimmers of all levels and invites the community to join them in the waters around Trillium Park. Together, we will continue to celebrate the spirit of Ontario Place and the joy of urban swimming in the heart of downtown Toronto.

For press inquiries, please contact:

SwimOP Press Contact

Email: press@swimop.com

Steve Mann or Perry Toone

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