

# Tory takes to Twitter to ask where 'Toronto' sign should go next | Toronto Star

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Ideas will be accepted until the end of the Parapan Am Games using #TORONTOsign

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The giant TORONTO sign at Nathan Phillips Square has quickly become a popular backdrop for visitors' photos.

By: [Sarah-Joyce Battersby](#) Pan Am and Parapan Am Games Reporter, Published on Thu Jul 16 2015

Call it a sign of the times.



Mayor John Tory ([open John Tory's policard](#)) launched a social media campaign Thursday crowd-sourcing ideas for the next placement of the “Toronto” sign.

The gigantic, light-up, playground-of-a-sign will stay in its current spot at Nathan Phillips Square until the end of the year. After that, it’s up to Toronto to decide.

“There is no written-down plan as to where it goes after Dec. 31,” Tory said. “If you want to have great ideas on where to have the sign go, why not ask the people?”

People can offer suggestions using the hashtag #TORONTOsign from now until the Parapan Am Games end on Aug. 15.

The sign was designed to be a legacy of the Games, Tory said, with a chunk of its almost \$100,000 budget dedicated to maintenance and relocation.

“People should understand there’s a cost to moving it; it isn’t a simple matter of putting it in the back of someone’s car,” Tory said. “But we’ll sort that out.”

The mayor offered “mundane” suggestions, such as outside the former civic centres of the pre-megacity municipalities, or something a little cheekier.

“Maybe we should have it installed in front of the Canadian Tire Centre where those awful Ottawa Senators play,” Tory joked.

Choosing the sign’s next location will be the fun of 2016, Councillor Norm Kelly ([open Norm Kelly's policard](#)) said.

“I’m hoping it’s not a combination of the sign and the setting. I’m hoping that the sign itself is what’s important,” Kelly said. “But the combination of the sign, Nathan Phillips Square, City Hall, fireworks at night: gorgeous.”

For Kelly it’s the latest piece of civic design, including the CN Tower, Toronto City Hall, and the recent AGO addition, that signal the city’s increasing status.

“It’s a simple, bold, affirmative statement of contemporary Toronto,” he said. “These are the things over the last 50 years that have together, I think, captured the spirit of modern Toronto. We’re not a sleepy provincial capital anymore.”

Unveiled last week, the sign is already building Toronto’s brand, says Patricia McQuillan, president of Brand Matters and a brand expert and board director for Invest Toronto.

“When we look at brand we look at things that motivate a connection,” McQuillan said.

**“Whenever you can have your brand name out there and it’s photographed and people are interacting with it ... that’s a really good sign for your brand.”**

The mayor hopes the sign, and the social media movement it has generated, takes the city’s brand from self-effacing to celebratory.

“We’re a very modest people here in this city,” Tory said.

“I think that having a great big, bold, multicoloured Toronto like this maybe just reminds people this is a big place, and it’s an exciting place, and we should have a little more swagger in terms of being proud to be a city that’s recognized every where else as one of the great cities in the world.”

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## **SEVEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE TORONTO SIGN**

1. The font is Azo Sans Bold. It was chosen for its perfectly circular Os, “making it fun for people to stand in,” city spokesperson Wynna Brown explained in an email. The flat bases of the other letters bolster the sign’s structural integrity, she added.
2. The LED lights, 400 metres in all, can create 228 million colours (all controlled by Wi-Fi).
3. The letters weigh about 136 kg (300 pounds) each, with another 1,180 kg (2600 pounds) in the base. Their size will restrict the search for future destinations. “You can’t plunk something that is that large down just anywhere,” said Tobias Novogrodsky, the city’s director of planning implementation for the Games.
4. The company that built the sign isn’t new to making majorly Canadian projects. Unit 11 Custom Staging Ltd. has done work for Hudson’s Bay at the Vancouver Olympics, CBC’s new Hockey Night in Canada set, and Justin Bieber’s 2011 Home for the Holidays Christmas special.
5. The total cost came in just under \$100,000, including \$7,500 for design, \$57,410 for materials and construction, and \$29,724 for installation, maintenance and relocation. The money came from the \$20 million city council approved for its Host City Showcase Program.
6. The sign has two hashtags, #share3DTO and #HostCity2015, that the city is using to filter images of the sign into a showcase website.
7. The city posted “prime photo op” decals throughout the square to encourage people to take photographs.

“It was deliberate, to have a strong, colourful, powerful statement about Toronto and our love for our city out on the square through a big sign like this, and to encourage folks to come and take their picture with the sign and tell their friends and the world that they’re here in our iconic civic place, Nathan Phillips Square, celebrating the Games and their city,” Novogrodsky said.

**Read more about:** [Nathan Phillips Square](#)

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