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# OPG sells Hearn waterfront site for \$16 million

By **DAVID RIDER** City Hall Bureau Chief  
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Provincially owned **Ontario Power Generation** has sold the 16-hectare (40-acre) Hearn generating site on Toronto's east waterfront for \$16 million.

OPG's Thursday **announcement** that it sold the land and huge decommissioned plant to long-term tenant Studios of America blindsided Toronto councillor Paula Fletcher, who wanted the polluted Unwin Ave. site redeveloped for public use.



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## FILE PHOTO)

“It’s shocking,” she said in an interview.

“This is a sad day for the waterfront.

“This is an iconic landmark building that should remain in public hands and be part of our new waterfront, and, instead, it has been sold for a song.”

Mayor John Tory said “we were not consulted, at all, on the sale.”

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In October 2017, when the existence of sale negotiations [became public](#), he said the then-Liberal government vowed Toronto would be consulted before any purchase.

“The first I heard of the actual sale was today, when I guess (OPG) put out a press release saying it was done,” Tory said Thursday.

“It had been rumoured that it was going to happen. We were not consulted on it. We were not given an offer to buy it, as a city,” he said, noting Studios of America’s lease gave it first crack at a sale.

“It’s a heritage building. It’s an important building in the context of our waterfront, and, so I can only hope that what unfolds from here will be respectful, again, of the city of Toronto’s waterfront and our interest in making sure that that building and how it’s zoned, now and in the future, will be consistent with what we want to do with our waterfront and with the building of a great city.”

Premier Doug Ford’s Progressive Conservative government did not make the sale decision, said Sydney Stonier, press secretary for Energy Minister Greg Rickford, but “we believe this decision (by the OPG board) is in the best interest of taxpayers.”

OPG is a corporation with a board of directors reporting to sole shareholder, the province of Ontario. OPG’s real estate strategy manager last fall told a city committee the Hearn site wouldn’t be sold without the government’s “blessing.”

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residential and other “sensitive uses” there within 15 years.

He noted the former coal-burning site is “heavily contaminated” and encumbered by rights to access and use for a nearby Hydro One switch yard and Port Lands natural gas electrical generating station.

“It’s an industrial brownfield site requiring site preparation and remediation and that impacts its value,” which was determined by a 2016 external independent evaluation, Kelly said. “Also, any demolition or alteration of property’s heritage characteristics need approval of the City of Toronto.”

Studios of America, owned by partners including company president prominent real estate developer Mario Cortellucci and firm president Paul Vaughan, had a lease on the site, decommissioned as a power plant in 1983, from 2002 to 2041.

The company approached OPG in 2013 about exercising its first right of refusal if the site was sold. Two years later OPG deemed the property surplus.

Vaughan refused comment when reached Thursday, saying he wasn’t aware the sale was being announced.

Cortellucci’s [Cortel Group](#) has not yet responded to the Star’s questions, including what other “sensitive uses” can’t happen at the site for 16 years.

Cortellucci, a wealthy homebuilder and philanthropist who in March failed in a bid to be elected to the Italian senate as part of a right-wing coalition, donated the maximum \$1,200 to Ford’s leadership campaign, [provincial records](#) show.

Other family members including his son Nick Cortellucci gave Ford’s leadership campaign donations totalling thousands more.

—*with files from Wendy Gillis*

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