

# Public Authority As Sports Entrepreneur: The Case Of The Toronto Harbour Commission, 1922-1940

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In its search for revenues during the interwar years, the Toronto Harbour Commission - a creation of federal and city governments - became an active, if behind-the-scenes, player in the production

of sports performances for public sale, or what is now generally known as commercial sport. The best known example is its role in the site selection, design, construction, and eventual ownership of Maple Leaf Stadium (1926-1967), the primary tenant of which was the Toronto Maple Leaf professional baseball company. The Stadium provided a powerful precedent for the public creation (and largely private profits) of Toronto's new SkyDome, where the 1992 World Series was played. The Commission's direct interest in commercial sport is also exemplified by its investment in Sunnyside Stadium (1922-1959), which became a focal point of women's softball. The games drew thousands of fans in the continent-wide first enthusiasm for highly competitive women's sport. In certain years, more fans paid to watch the women's amateur games than the men's professional Maple Leafs just down the road, generating considerable revenue for the Commission.

This paper examines the role of the Toronto Harbour Commission as an active developer of commercial sport in interwar Toronto. It stresses the importance of commercial sport for the Commission's own revenues and prestige, and discusses the implications for general theories of sport and the state.