Buildings have many histories. Those of design conception and implementation. Followed by the initial operation when idea intersects with the complexity of our world to slowly reshape the project. And finally, there are the future histories: abandonment, reuse, additions, subtractions, etc. Each stage meaning something a bit different to the various stakeholders. Taken together these histories form our understanding of a project and give the place meaning within a community. The challenge of this studio will be to translate those many intersecting accounts of the iconic entertainment venue, Ontario Place, on the waterfront of Toronto into a new chronicle that both preserves the story of its past, and reshapes the building to engage the evolving context of the city and its environment.

Last year Premier Doug Ford’s government posted an opaque solicitation for proposals to redevelop Ontario Place centered around a reprogramming of the site. In response the non-profit, Future of Ontario Place, formed to develop alternative ideas that take into consideration the history of the facility and the voice of the surrounding communities. As part of that effort the group is sponsoring a design competition for students across Canada. Our studio will operate parallel to that initiative allowing the students to build off the competition’s resources and to submit a proposal for the competition in January.

The studio will begin by exploring the ideas that shaped the original Ontario Place designers’ intent, and the challenges those ideas faced with the energy crisis of the 1970’s. The initial individual projects will include both a case study of a similar project as well as a short design exercise (3 weeks). Following that exercise larger teams will develop visioning statements for the future of Ontario Place and Toronto that will serve as the context for the final design interventions (3 weeks). Ultimately for the final review teams of at least two will develop design proposals for Ontario Place (6 weeks). While the implementation of those design proposal will occur now, their representation will look to the year 2070 as the building completes its next 50 years of life and begin another cycle of use.