James Dann

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS · PUBLIC OPERATIONS · TORONTO

james.douglas.dann@gmail.com · linkedin.com/in/james-douglas-dann · jamesdann.ca

25 years
leading at the City of Toronto

5 mayors
and dozens of councillors worked with

200
unionized staff and 10 managers

$14M
operating budget

$15M
revenue target, ferries and permits

I spent 25 years running Toronto's waterfront: the Island ferry service, the Toronto Islands and the beaches. That work put me across the table from five mayors, dozens of councillors, and federal and provincial agencies on some of the city's largest waterfront projects. In 2026 I ran for City Council and built the campaign from a standing start. I know how government actually works, and how to make a difference inside it.

EXPERIENCE

Manager, Waterfront Parks

2001 to 2024

City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Led the waterfront parks portfolio: the Island ferry service, the Toronto Islands, the eastern and western beaches, and the new flood-protection parks in the Port Lands. Operations, stakeholder relations, finance and administration.

Working across government

- Worked with five mayors and dozens of councillors across the city, and regularly briefed municipal and provincial political offices on major waterfront files.
- Led Parks operations on the $1.25 billion Port Lands Flood Protection project, working with all three levels of government to turn flood-prone land into new public park space.
- Chaired the Beach Management Committee and sat on the Waterfront Inter-Agency Committee, working with Waterfront Toronto, the TRCA, PortsToronto and Transport Canada.
- Parks lead in the City's Office of Emergency Management for more than a decade.

Island ferry service: a federally regulated City transportation operation

- Ran Toronto's Island ferry service for two decades: a five-vessel fleet, among the oldest in North America, operated by the City and regulated by Transport Canada.
- Brought the fleet into full compliance with federal marine safety and security regulations, including the MTSR and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, without interrupting service. Served as Ferry Fleet and Facility Security Officer.
- Developed the City's Ferry Fleet Replacement Strategy, which secured a $97 million investment in a new electric fleet: Toronto's first new Island ferries in about 60 years.
- Ran annual safety and security exercises with PortsToronto, the Toronto Police Marine Unit and Transport Canada.
- Rebuilt customer service for the ferries around performance measures and rider surveys.

Operations and crisis leadership

- Led 10 managers and about 200 unionized staff. Represented the division in union negotiations, grievances and arbitration.
- Directed the multi-agency response and media communications for the 2017 and 2019 lake flooding, bringing in Toronto Water, the TRCA and staff from across the City.
- Ran waterfront operations for the city's largest events, including Canada Day, Victoria Day, Caribana, the Beaches Jazz Festival and the Waterfront Marathon.
- Brought in and held Blue Flag certification, the leading international environmental standard for beaches, across nine waterfront beaches.

Capital projects

- Rebuilt or restored the Leuty Lifeguard Station, Woodbine Bathing Station, the Boardwalk, Martin Goodman Trail and the Kew Gardens bandshell.

Finance and revenue

- Managed a $14 million operating budget against a $15 million revenue target earned from ferry fares and permits, beating revenue targets by 5 to 10%.
- Negotiated waterfront leases and partnership agreements that added about $5 million in annual revenue.
- Partnered with private operators on revenue-generating events while protecting public access.

Manager, Enterprise Services 2005 to 2009

City of Toronto

- Ran the City's five golf courses, growing rounds and revenue about 10% a year for five straight years.

Recreation and Facilities Supervisor 1999 to 2001

City of Toronto, Moss Park and Regent Park

Candidate for City Council, Beaches–East York 2026

Ward 19, City of Toronto

- Built the campaign from a standing start, with one paid staff member and more than 100 volunteers.
- Raised over $75,000 from more than 200 donors, more than the campaign's legal spending limit.
- Knocked on more than 25,000 doors.
- Covered by CityNews, TorontoToday and Beach Metro News.

STRENGTHS

Government and stakeholder relations · Federal and municipal regulatory compliance · Crisis leadership · Unionized workforce leadership · Budget and revenue management · Media relations · Public consultation

EDUCATION AND SERVICE

- Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Physical Education, Dalhousie University
- Board member, Ontario Parks Association, 2021 to 2024
- Board member, Balmy Beach Club, main and sports sections, 15+ years
- Volunteer coach in soccer, hockey and squash, 15 years