



**NICK DI DONATO, B.A.Sc. P.Eng.**

**President + CEO, Liberty Entertainment Group**

For over three decades, the Liberty Entertainment Group, led by Nick Di Donato has been redefining the restaurant and special event experience in both Toronto and Miami. As creators of numerous landmark establishments the Liberty Entertainment Group has become recognized as one of the most successful and innovative companies in this industry, appreciating a continuous growth and garnering constant media attention. At the heart of this evolving urban development is President and C.E.O., Nick Di Donato.

Di Donato earned his Bachelor of Science and a Professional Engineering degree from the University of Toronto. With 25 years of design and construction experience, as well as simultaneously working in the food service industry, Di Donato leads one of Canada's top nightlife and entertainment companies.

The Liberty Entertainment Group, has gained success and acknowledgment for developing an impressive roster of unique venues.

These venues include Casa Loma, the Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex, Rosewater, Toronto's premier special event facilities; Toronto most prolific restaurants including BlueBlood Steakhouse, Don Alfonso 1890, Spice Route, and three Cibo Wine Bar locations (King West, Yonge St and Yorkville). In addition Liberty Group operates several international properties including the Coral Gables Country Club and Cibo Wine Bar with locations in Coral Gables and Miami Beach, Florida.

With a passion for creation, a love of architecture, a barometer for trends, and an eye for design, all married with construction knowledge and engineering expertise, breathing life into any structure has simply become a never-ending adventure for Nick Di Donato.

In particular, the restoration of historic properties and their transformation into world class special event facilities, that are open to the public, reflects the Liberty Entertainment Group's commitment to recapturing each property's place as the epicenter of their surrounding community.

The Consumers Gas building (circa 1852), was transformed by the Liberty Entertainment Group in 1996 into the Rosewater. The Liberty Grand was originally constructed in 1926 and was only used during the two weeks of the Canadian National Exhibition; the one hundred thousand square foot complex underwent complete renovations and reopened to the public under the operation of Liberty Entertainment Group in 2001. In 2008 the Liberty Entertainment Group once again had the privilege of adopting a neglected, underutilized Heritage site and restoring it to its original glory. Constructed in 1924, the forty thousand square foot Coral Gables Country Club in Miami, under the direction of Di Donato, underwent extensive renovations.

In January 2014, the Liberty Entertainment Group entered into a long term lease of Toronto's Casa Loma. After an extensive RFP process, the City of Toronto approved the Liberty Group to take over the historic complex, completed in 1914. This included all aspects of the operation of Casa Lomas as both a special event facility as well as an attraction. Casa Loma represents an unparalleled opportunity in the city of Toronto and is an iconic historical and heritage landmark. The Liberty Entertainment Group, under Di Donato's direction, plans to preserve and make improvements to the facility, enhance the special events and dining experience and integrate new technology for school and cultural programming.

In recognition of Nick Di Donato's outstanding contribution to the development and representation of the restaurant and special event industry, Di Donato has received the Toronto's Construction Association "Best of

the Best” Award, Foodservice & Hospitality Magazine’s Pinnacle Award for “Entrepreneur of the Year”, Ontario’s Trillium Award for “Restaurateur of the Year”, Toronto Night Club “Lifetime Achievement” Award and the Bartenders Ball “Lifetime Achievement” Award.

In addition to his success in business, Nick Di Donato has been recognized for his tremendous achievements and contributions to the economic prosperity of the city, he was awarded: “Business Recognition Award” by former Mayor Lastman and the Toronto Economic Development Council.

In May 2013, Di Donato was honoured by the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario with the prestigious Business Excellence Award. The award recognized his outstanding achievements in all four categories - entrepreneurialism, innovation, philanthropy and community involvement, as well as his significant contribution to the arts.

Di Donato was named one of the Top 30 Italian business people in Canada by Partners Magazine, the official publication of the Italian Chamber of Commerce. Di Donato is also listed in the Who’s Who among Top Executives, Kaleo Publications North America.

In June 2014, Nick Di Donato was recognized by Biz Bash North America as one of the Top Innovators in the event industry. Each year, BizBash recognizes innovation and excellence by selecting 10 individuals from across North America who have demonstrated significant achievements over the previous year.

In addition to Nick Di Donato’s success as CEO and President of the Liberty Entertainment Group, he generously shares his time, resources and expertise in a variety of ways to benefit both the hospitality industry and the community at large. Di Donato has served on numerous boards that focus on the economic prosperity of Toronto including the Board of Directors, Toronto Transit Commission, the Board of Directors, Invest Toronto; Board of Champions, Toronto Museum Project; Board of Directors, Tourism Toronto; Toronto City Summit Committee.

In June 2002, Di Donato accepted an invitation from former Mayor Mel Lastman to participate in the Toronto City Summit. As a leader and representative of the hospitality industry, Di Donato was called upon to share his knowledgeable expertise with the community; at the request of former Mayor David Miller, Di Donato was a member of the Mayor’s Economic Competiveness Advisory Committee. Di Donato would share his insights and ingenuity with other leaders in the community. Ultimately this collaboration resulted in the publication of The Agenda For Prosperity which was the guideline that would drive the future of the City of Toronto.

In September 2012, Di Donato accepted an invitation from former Mayor, Rob Ford to participate in a business trade mission to Chicago, IL. The purpose of this mission was to focus on maximizing trade, forging strategic alliances, encouraging investment and learning opportunities between Toronto and Chicago.

In November 2012, Di Donato was selected as one of only four civilians to be appointed to the Toronto Transit Commission Board of Directors as Commissioner. The TTC operates the third largest transit system in North America. The Commission is responsible for the consolidation, co-ordination and planning of all forms of local passenger transportation within the urban area of Toronto, servicing some 4.5 million people in the Greater Toronto Area.

Community involvement has also been a priority for Di Donato. He has been a proud member of the Development Council for the Hospital for Sick Children, Board of Directors for Variety Village, the George Brown Steering Committee and the Toronto Crime Stoppers Executive Steering Committee to name a few. Recently, Di Donato has been asked to speak at seminars and do consulting for both Rotman’s Commerce at the University of Toronto and Florida International University’s Business School. Drawing on his years of experience and passion for creating, he has inspired many young students and provided invaluable insight to educators.

Di Donato can also be found taking part in various inspirational affairs and speaking with youth at events such as Future Leaders Entrepreneurs Forum and as a Keynote speaker at St. Michael’s College Annual Career Day. Di Donato was a keynote speaker at the Inspire Toronto 2011 and as result of Di Donato’s direct involvement, "Inspire" launched its first of many University-sponsored speaker series. He was pivotal in helping to launch Inspire-Rotman at the University of Toronto.

In 2015, Di Donato personally set up a bursary at St Michael's College School to support underprivileged students to attend the prestigious school, which he himself attended. This is a permanent long term bursary over 40 years. St. Michael's College School was founded in 1852 by the Basilian Fathers, and stands as Ontario's only independent Catholic school for young men. In April 2015, Di Donato was inducted into the Order of St Michael. The Order of St. Michael is the highest honour that St. Michael's College School can bestow on a member of its community. It is awarded to individuals who embody the Basilian Fathers' motto "Teach Me Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge" through their contribution to the spiritual, academic, or material welfare of the school and the greater community. The members of the Order serve as models for St Michael's students and for all of society. Di Donato was also named to the Board of Directors St Michael's College School.

In addition to giving his time to support various initiatives, Di Donato also provides support in the form of sponsorships and donations to a number of charitable events held at the Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex. Through these initiatives the Liberty Grand provides sponsorship in excess of \$750,000 annually in support of a number of worthy causes in both Toronto and Miami, including, the Pencer Foundation Gala, Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario Gala, Oceana Ball, and Autism Speaks to name a few.

As founder and co-chair of the annual Caring & Sharing Children's Christmas Gala, Di Donato graciously donates the entire Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex as well as all culinary and service staff for the event hosted in support of the Children's Breakfast Club. This event hosts over 1,200 underprivileged children from priority neighborhoods across the GTA to show the true meaning of the holiday season.

Beyond his support of a number of community based charities, Di Donato has been a longtime supporter of the arts. For over 15 years, Di Donato has been a proud supporter and partner of the Toronto International Film Festival, a charitable cultural organization with a mission to transform the way people see the world through film. In 2012, Di Donato was appointed to the Advisory Board of the International Indian Film Festival Toronto, a not-for-profit cultural organization with a mission to celebrate and promote Indian cinema in North America with a vision to build stronger relationships through the art of cinema.

Di Donato has also been very involved in promoting Italian culture both in Canada and the United States. All Cibo Wine Bar locations have been certified authentic by the Italian Government and have received the globally recognized "Marchio Ospitalita Italiana", awarded by the Italian government to restaurants outside of Italy who meet the highest standards of Italian authenticity across a number of categories including menu options, food quality, restaurant design and traditional Italian characteristics. Di Donato is also the Founder and Co-Chair of Castello Italia, an annual event held at Casa Loma in honour of Italian National Day. The event is a partnership between the Consul General of Italy, Liberty Entertainment Group and several prominent Italian organizations and associations. The day is a celebration of Italian culture, cuisine and entertainment and plays host to over 5,000 people annually. He was honoured as a 2015 recipient of the CIBPA Presidents Award, presented by the Canadian Italian Business Professionals Association. The award is given to a business professional of Italian heritage who has gained a high level of professional achievement while at the same time continues to recognize his Italian heritage by working within the Italian community.

Renowned for creating venues of magnitude, originality and diversity, Nick Di Donato's vision and commitment is the driving force that fuels the Liberty Entertainment Group to continuously strive to achieve greater heights and higher standards far beyond the competition. Under the leadership of Nick Di Donato, the Liberty Entertainment Group has gained success and acknowledgment for creating an impressive roster of unique venues that garner immediate recognition. Each venue is rich in detail and originality and caters to a diverse clientele; including A List celebrities, talent and industry leaders. Constantly ahead of the curve Liberty Entertainment Group is distinguished for its ability to set trends, push limits and create the impossible.

## **Awards**

- Toronto's Construction Association "Best of the Best" Award
- Foodservice & Hospitality Magazine's Pinnacle Award for "Entrepreneur of the Year"
- Ontario's Trillium Award for "Restaurateur of the Year"
- Toronto Night Club "Lifetime Achievement" Award
- Bartenders Ball "Lifetime Achievement" Award
- Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario "Business Excellence Award"
- St. Michael's College School "Order of St Michael"
- Canadian Italian Business Professionals Association's "Presidents Award"
- BizBash "Top Innovators" National Award
- Ontario Professional Engineers "Citizenship Award"
- Dine Magazine "Restaurateur of the Year"
- Food Service and Hospitality "Independent Restaurateur of the Year"

## **Boards**

### *Current*

- Board of Directors Canada's Walk of Fame
- Board of Directors St Michael's College School
- Tourism Toronto Marketing Advisory Committee
- Founder and Co-Chair of Italian National Day at Castello Italia
- Founder and Co-Chair of Caring & Sharing Children's Christmas Gala
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### *Previous*

- Toronto Transit Commission Board of Directors – Commissioner
- Development Council for the Hospital for Sick Children
- Board of Directors for Variety Village
- George Brown Steering Committee
- Toronto Crime Stoppers Executive Steering Committee
- Mayor's Economic Competiveness Advisory Committee
- Board of Directors, Invest Toronto
- Board of Champions, Toronto Museum Project
- Board of Directors, Tourism Toronto
- Toronto City Summit Committee
- War of 1812 Commemorative Committee
- Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Toronto Committee
- King and Spadina Advisory Committee
- Advisory Board of the International Indian Film Festival Toronto