



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

**President + CEO, Liberty Entertainment Group**

For over three decades, Liberty Entertainment Group, led by Nick Di Donato has been redefining the restaurant, nightlife and special event experience in both Toronto and Miami. As creators of numerous landmark establishments Liberty Entertainment Group has become recognized as one of the most successful and innovative companies in the hospitality and entertainment 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 most recognized and successful hospitality, nightlife and entertainment companies.

Liberty Entertainment Group continues to gain success and acknowledgment for developing an impressive roster of unique venues. These venues include Toronto's premier special event facilities; Casa Loma, Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex and Rosewater Room. Liberty Entertainment Group is also responsible for the development of Toronto's most prolific restaurants including BlueBlood Steakhouse, Don Alfonso 1890, Xango, a new concept with Claudio Aprile opening in summer 2019 and three Cibo Wine Bar locations (King West, Yonge St and Yorkville), as well as the city's most vibrant nightlife venues Spice Route and Arcane – opening spring 2019. In addition, Liberty Entertainment 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 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 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 Liberty Entertainment Group in 1996 into the Rosewater. In previous years, Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex ( originally constructed in 1926) had only been used during the two weeks of the Canadian National Exhibition. In 2001, the 100,000 square foot complex underwent complete renovations and reopened to the public under the operation of Liberty Entertainment Group. In 2008, 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, Liberty Entertainment Group entered into a long term lease for Toronto's historic complex Casa Loma. This included all aspects of the operation of Casa Loma 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. Liberty Entertainment Group, under Di Donato's direction, has invested \$12 million improvements to the facility, to enhance the special events and dining experience, while integrating new technology for educational and cultural programming.

In February of 2019, Di Donato was knighted by the government of Italy and named to the order of Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Stella d'Italia, the highest civilian honor awarded by the Italian government. Di Donato received his knighthood in recognition for his ongoing service to the Italian Republic and his promotion of Italian culture abroad. In addition, 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. 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. 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.

In recognition of 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, 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 achievements in entrepreneurialism, philanthropy, community involvement, and 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.

In June 2014, 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.

Moreover to Di Donato's success as CEO and President of 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 Michaels 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.

Furthermore, 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 Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex provides sponsorship in excess of \$250,000 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.

Recently, Di Donato created a new event called FoodBall. The unparalleled culinary event features a roster of 35 Chefs from around the world including Italy, Israel, London, Los Angeles, Dallas and New York, as well as across Canada, coast to coast from Vancouver to Saint John, NB. FoodBall is set to become the signature annual event in Toronto's culinary and social calendar. Proceeds from the event will benefit Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto.

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.

Renowned for creating venues of magnitude, originality and diversity, Di Donato's vision and commitment is the driving force that fuels Liberty Entertainment Group to continuously strive to achieve greater heights and higher standards. Constantly ahead of the curve Liberty Entertainment Group is distinguished for its ability to set trends, push limits and create the impossible.

## **Awards**

- Italian Republic “Cavaliere dell’Ordine della Stella d’Italia” (Knighthood)
- Food Service and Hospitality “Independent Restaurateur of the Year”
- Dine Magazine “Restaurateur of the Year”
- Ontario Professional Engineers “Citizenship Award”
- BizBash “Top Innovators” National Award
- Canadian Italian Business Professionals Association’s “PresidentsAward”
- St. Michael’s College School “Order of St Michael”
- Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario “Business Excellence Award”
- 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

## **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 FoodBall in Support of Mount Sinai Hospital
- Founder and Co-Chair of Caring & Sharing Children's Christmas Gala

### **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
- Advisory Board of the International Indian Film Festival Toronto