
Chapter **one**

INTRODUCTION



Beach and bluffs, west of Port Darlington

Dr. J.D. Murray



East Beach, Port Hope

Since aboriginal people first settled on the banks of Lake Ontario, the waterfront has provided generations of people with a place to live, sources of food, means of transportation, drinking water, recreation and more. It is a precious asset, but has suffered over the years from the pressures of use and abuse from human activities along the shoreline and in the watersheds that feed it. This strategy shows how we can regenerate the waterfront to ensure that its values are protected, enhanced and restored.

BACKGROUND

The Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy builds on the foundation established by the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, which was headed by the Honourable David Crombie. Between June 1988 and June 1992, the Commission undertook extensive research and analysis, and held public hearings and workshops on a range of issues affecting the waterfront, culminating in the publication of an interim report *Watershed* and a final report *Regeneration*.

The Royal Commission found that Lake Ontario is a significant provincial resource, similar in significance to the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine, Georgian Bay and other major natural features. People who came to the hearings described the myriad ways in which they use and enjoy the waterfront. They expressed their deep concerns about environmental degradation, loss of cultural heritage, and inappropriate development patterns. They urged the Commission to

find ways to ensure that the waterfront becomes clean, green, accessible, connected, open, useable, diverse, affordable and attractive.

To help implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the Ontario Government created the Waterfront Regeneration Trust in June 1992 under Bill 1.

The mandate of the Trust is to:

- facilitate the establishment of a waterfront trail and associated green or open spaces from Burlington Bay to the Trent River;
- coordinate programs and policies of the Government of Ontario and its agencies relating to waterfront lands;
- advise the Province on any matters relating to the use, disposition, conservation, protection and regeneration of waterfront lands;
- serve as a resource centre and information clearinghouse relating to waterfront lands;
- consult with the public to determine the public interest in the environmental integrity of the waterfront lands; and
- do such other things as the Government of Ontario may direct.

WATERFRONT PRINCIPLES



CLEAN: all activities and future development should work with natural processes to contribute to environmental health; air, land, sediments and water should be free of contaminants that impair beneficial uses by all living beings.



CONNECTED: connections throughout the bioregion with the region's natural and cultural heritage (wildlife habitats, city and countryside, social communities, past and present, people and nature) should be restored and maintained. Greenways should connect and incorporate existing public open spaces to form a "linked-nodal" pattern.



GREEN: natural features and topography should form a "green infrastructure" for the bioregion including natural habitats, land-forms, aquifer recharge areas and other open spaces.



OPEN: existing views of Lake Ontario and its bays, bluffs, peninsulas, and islands should be maintained. Views created by the open expanses of water should be treated as important values. Density and design of waterfront structures should not create a visual barrier to the lake.



ACCESSIBLE: waterfront communities should be serviced by roads and public transit. Improvements to access should be made for people to enjoy the waterfront on foot or by bike. The waterfront should be accessible to everyone including the disabled, children, and older adults.



1 Protect



2 Restore



3 Promote understanding and recreational use



4 Promote compatible economic activity



5 Co-operate

In coordinating this Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust is fulfilling its mandate as described in Bill 1, and working with waterfront partners to pursue the directions established in *Regeneration*.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy is to foster commitment to actions that will regenerate a healthy and sustainable waterfront that is clean, green, accessible, connected, open, useable, diverse, affordable and attractive.

These principles are embodied in the five objectives of the Greenway Strategy. Using an ecosystem approach, the Strategy is intended to:

- protect the physical, natural and cultural attributes associated with the Lake Ontario Greenway;
- identify restoration needs and methods and encourage landowners, communities and agencies to undertake regeneration activities;

- promote greater awareness, understanding, access and recreational use of the waterfront and encourage community pride and participation in its regeneration;
- promote economic activities and employment on the waterfront that are compatible with the other Greenway objectives; and
- foster cooperation in cost-effective public and private initiatives by reducing jurisdictional gridlock, sharing resources, and coordinating waterfront activities.

The ecosystem approach recognizes that humans are part of ecosystems, and that everything – economic, social and environmental – is connected to everything else. To work towards healthy and sustainable ecosystems, the ways that activities are planned and decisions are made must change. Instead of working with separate disciplines, linkages and integration must be given higher priority. Instead of managing resources piecemeal, regeneration activities must incorporate the full spectrum of protection, enhancement and restoration.

WATERFRONT PRINCIPLES



USEABLE: the waterfront should support a mix of public and private uses. Uses should be primarily water-related; permit public access and use; provide a balance of ecological, recreational, employment and residential opportunities; be environmentally friendly; and promote year-round use.



AFFORDABLE: waterfront development and management should be undertaken in ways that provide opportunities for economic renewal and for efficient use of limited government and private-sector resources. Waterfront recreational opportunities should be affordable to people with a range of income levels.



DIVERSE: the waterfront should include diverse landscapes, places, wildlife habitats, uses, programs, and experiences that offer varied opportunities. The mix of land uses and facilities should balance public and private; urban and rural; regional and local; residential and recreational; industrial and commercial; built and natural; large- and small-scale; active and passive; busy and quiet; and free and user-pay.



ATTRACTIVE: design and landscaping should protect, enhance, and create distinctive and memorable places. Design on the waterfront should protect vistas and views of the lake; provide a sense of continuity with the past; emphasize sensitive placement and design of buildings; consider relationships between buildings, open spaces, and the lake; use harmonious colours, textures and materials; and include a wide range of landscape types (e.g., wildlife habitats, parklands, gardens, promenades, courtyards, waterscapes, play areas).

ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

TRADITIONAL



ECOSYSTEM APPROACH



The shift from traditional to ecosystem-based decision-making

The Greenway Strategy shows how the ecosystem approach can be applied to a specific geographical area – the north shore of Lake Ontario, in the context of the watersheds that drain to the lake.

THE GREENWAY

The Lake Ontario Greenway encompasses the lands and waters that show a direct ecological, cultural or economic connection to the waterfront from Burlington Bay to the Trent River (see Map 3). It extends into the lake, generally to the ten metre depth within which most of the nearshore coastal processes and fishery activities occur. Inland, the Greenway generally extends to the first significant rise in elevation, which often corresponds to the former Lake Iroquois shoreline. Where significant natural areas extend up major river valleys, they are usually included.

The greenway concept is gaining increasing popularity in Canada and the United States as a means to integrate environmental regeneration and recreation opportunities into the urban and rural fabric. Greenways can:



Ecosystem approach

- protect and link habitats,
- enhance environmental quality
- provide recreation activities close to home
- create more liveable and healthy communities, and
- enhance business and tourism opportunities

This Greenway Strategy for the Lake Ontario waterfront shows how these benefits can be realized through stewardship, restoration, and careful planning. The Waterfront Trail forms the backbone of

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the Greenway, in a setting that includes protected natural areas, cultural heritage, appropriate waterfront development, and compatible commercial ventures. Thus, the Lake Ontario Greenway encompasses all the components of the ecosystem in which we live – the social and economic aspects as well as the environmental ones.

CONTEXT

The Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy is occurring in the context of a number of related and complementary initiatives. For example, the reform of the Ontario Planning Act is providing a land use planning framework that is supportive of many of the objectives of the Greenway Strategy (see Chapter Four). Strategic planning initiatives for the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greater Toronto Area are intended to direct urban growth so that environmental values are sustained. Land use change on the Niagara Escarpment has been guided by the Niagara Escarpment Plan since 1985.

Hamilton-Wentworth Region's *Vision 2020* is a comprehensive statement of community goals for the next two decades that is now being implemented. A strategy is underway along the Trent-Severn Waterway to enhance culture, tourism, recreation and economic activities while protecting environmental quality.

Since 1972, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the Canada-Ontario Agreement have provided a framework for programs to restore the health of the Great Lakes by the United States and Canadian governments, as well as the province of Ontario and municipalities.

Recent and ongoing planning initiatives and policy development by many regional and local municipalities along the Lake Ontario shoreline demonstrate increased commitments to waterfront access and regeneration.

The Waterfront Trail contributes to a network of existing and emerging greenways and inter-regional trails, including the Bruce Trail on the Niagara Escarpment, a number of river valley trails (e.g., Credit, Ganaraska), greenways in Hamilton-Wentworth and Niagara regions, Eastern Ontario trails, the Loyalist Parkway in Prince Edward County, and the Seaway Trail on the south side of Lake Ontario.








The Martin Goodman Trail,
Cherry Beach area, Toronto



Suzanne Barrett, Waterfront Regeneration Trust



**MAP 1
INTER-REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK**

	Inter-regional Trails		Regional/County Boundary
	Proposed Trails		Oak Ridges Moraine
	Niagara Escarpment		

0 10 20 30 40 50 km

PROCESS

The Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy is directed by a steering committee composed of representatives of the federal, provincial, regional and local governments, conservation authorities, and non-government groups, and chaired by Commissioner David Crombie. Six workgroups undertook extensive research and analysis and made recommendations to the steering committee. Appendix B lists the steering committee and workgroup participants.

The public was consulted by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust at public hearings in November 1992 and on an ongoing basis in workshops and meetings with interested groups. In addition, valuable public input on many matters related to the Strategy was received by waterfront municipalities and conservation authorities in the course of their planning and strategic activities.

These public and agency consultations, as well as the experience gained in implementing the Waterfront Trail and other projects, reinforced the basic thrusts of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront – the need to apply an ecosystem approach to address the overlapping circles of environment, economy and community; and the need to coordinate the actions of many existing agencies rather than impose solutions from above.

PURPOSES OF THE STRATEGY

This report was prepared by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust on behalf of the steering committee. It is a summary of work in progress, a record of steps being taken today to realize a shared vision of tomorrow's waterfront, and a guide for the choices to keep moving in the right direction.

A great deal of progress has been made since the Royal Commission began its work in 1988 – progress in implementing specific projects; significant improvements in provincial and municipal policies; and, not least, a striking change in the way communities view their waterfront. Almost universally, the waterfront is now recognized as an environmental, community, and economic resource of great value – a resource to be carefully protected, and to be restored to its full potential where necessary.

In a variety of ways, all levels of government have already demonstrated significant commitments to the Lake Ontario Greenway. Federal programs under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Canada Ontario Agreement, and the Great Lakes Cleanup Fund are contributing to the regeneration of Lake Ontario. The Province's commitment is amply demonstrated by the passage of legislation establishing the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, by adoption of the Royal Commission's nine principles and ecosystem approach, and by allocation of funding to the Waterfront Trail and other projects. The commitment of municipalities, conservation authorities,



Report on progress



Confirm the vision



Establish a blueprint



Outline the tools

and community groups is also evident – a commitment measured in time and energy, in plans for the future, in projects, and in dollars.

Within this context, the Greenway Strategy is a signpost along the way. It reports on the progress that has been made to date and establishes a consensus-based blueprint for further actions. It is not intended to be a formal statement of government policy, but rather to provide a context for setting priorities, guidance on ways to achieve a shared vision, and an information base to assist decision-making.

The Strategy may be used by different agencies and groups in a variety of ways. For example, federal and provincial agencies may use the Strategy in establishing funding criteria for programs and priorities for research and other activities. The Strategy can be used by conservation authorities to guide watershed and shoreline stewardship. Regional and local municipalities may use it in developing their plans, policies and projects, and in reviewing the effects of proposed developments on the waterfront. The Strategy can also provide information and guidance to assist non-government groups with their projects.

In summary, the Strategy is intended to assist the many waterfront partners to act in a cooperative, efficient and focussed manner, so that the progress made to date will continue to grow and be sustained.

GUIDE TO THE REPORT

Following this Introduction, Chapter Two describes The Waterfront of Today – its values, resources, issues and opportunities. Chapter Three, The Waterfront of the Future, highlights some of the considerable progress that has already been made, and outlines the steps that must be taken to accomplish our shared vision of a regenerated waterfront. Chapter Four, Implementation, summarizes the many existing and emerging tools available to implement the Strategy, and outlines the potential roles of key agencies and groups.

A separate report titled *Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy: Next Steps* provides a more detailed assessment of the landscape units along the north shore of Lake Ontario. For each unit, there is a description of the landscape character, a summary of the patterns of change and associated issues, a statement of regeneration goals, and a listing of short-term opportunities and actions.