

## “Protecting and restoring ecological health, a sense of community, and economic vitality”

### A VISION FOR THE LAKE ONTARIO GREENWAY

**F**ifty years ago, the north shore of Lake Ontario was a string of communities, large and small, separated by farmland and forest, joined by two-lane roads, railways and lake shipping routes. Today, that same waterfront has become the largest urban conglomerate in the country, with the distinctions among its communities masked by subdivisions and superhighways, its waters polluted, its forests and wetlands reduced to remnants. Despite that degradation, many places on the waterfront provide a special quality of life for residents, and recreation and beauty for visitors.

Fifty years from now, what kind of waterfront will our children and other forms of life share?

Waterfront communities will be larger, that is certain, and more crowded and more diverse, with over twice the human population in the surrounding region. But the waterfront itself will have emerged as a vital focus for those communities, a special place to be cherished and visited often by local residents and tourists alike. The Waterfront Trail will be a vital link between communities, bringing people into contact with the water’s edge throughout the year.

Some of us may go to the shore to find tranquillity alongside the water – water clean enough that our children can swim or fish safely. Or we might go to catch sight of the abundant wildlife in the protected natural areas and regenerated forests and wetlands that dot the shore in blocks large and small. We might stroll along the beaches and bluffs, watching the waves that continually shape the shoreline.

Most of us will visit the waterfront to play – to boat or picnic or watch birds, or to walk or cycle along paths that loop and interconnect along the entire length of the shore. We might also come to shop or dine or visit festivals in the vibrant “people places” that cluster along the water’s edge. And when we come, we will notice how each community has used its waterfront heritage to create a distinctive feel, its own unique sense of place that proclaims pride in its past and confidence in its future. That pride will be reflected in a quality of design that creates memorable places and special experiences, and in the involvement of a wide range of community groups in waterfront activities.

Some of us will be lucky enough to live near the waterfront, in a variety of housing types and styles. A good many of us will find work near the water, in businesses and industries that share a sense of stewardship of the environment, or in offices in our homes. For an increasing number of urban dwellers, the daily drive to work will change, thanks to new automobile technologies, improved transit and expanded networks of commuter cycling routes. Some of those routes will be set in broad corridors of green up the river valleys that link the waterfront to the Oak Ridges Moraine and other natural habitats.

The Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy is about protecting and restoring those elements of the waterfront that we jointly value – ecological health, a sense of community, economic vitality. Fifty years from now, we will value the waterfront even more than now, and that sense of value will give us the continued commitment to work together to ensure that the waterfront is clean, green, accessible, connected, open, useable, diverse, affordable and attractive.

