

- employment and job opportunities relating to the waterfront; and
- initiatives to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment and the quality of life for people living in the region.

The Commission was asked to conclude its inquiries and submit its recommendations to the Province at the same time that it reported to the federal government.

In the second phase of its operations, the Commission used the same methods as in its first year: utilizing work groups, independent analysis, public hearings, and consulting with interested parties. Now, however, it was working in a much more fully regional context — looking at a region with a shoreline of some 250 kilometres (155 miles) covering 17 local municipalities, six conservation authorities, four regional municipalities, and four counties on the waterfront.

The Commission held three more sets of public hearings in this second phase, in Burlington, Toronto, and Oshawa, and published three more background reports: *A Green Strategy for the Greater Toronto Waterfront*; *Waterfront Transportation in the Context of Regional Transportation*; and the results of the first phase of the environmental audit, *East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area: Environment in Transition*.

The work ranged from theory to practice, policy to program, and from the scale of the Great Lakes to that of the region and its communities. Fundamental to all its efforts was the conviction that the

environment had to be the workbench on which all other aspects of the Commission's operations and conclusions would be built.

This need — to consider the environment first and make it the central theme — led the Commission to choose an ecosystem approach for analysing the state of the environment of the waterfront, the watershed, and the (bio)region, and for charting their future. Learning as it went, leaning

heavily on thinkers (Jack Vallentyne, Andy Hamilton, Henry Regier, Don Gamble, Peter Sly, Katherine Davies, and Trevor Hancock, among others) who had been and are still working out underlying

ecosystem concepts, the Commission sought to understand the approach in theory and, in its audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area, to apply it.

The emphasis on understanding environmental conditions as a prelude to planning courses of action brought the Commission into contact with many parties, among them:

- the International Joint Commission (IJC), in connection with its work on water quality and water levels in the Great Lakes;
- the four parties (i.e., environmental agencies of the U.S. and Canadian governments, the State of New York, and the Province of Ontario) responsible for creating the Lake Ontario Toxics Management Plan (LOTMP); and
- locally, various stakeholders associated with Remedial Action Plans (RAPs),

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*The environment had to be the workbench on which all other aspects of the Commission's operations and conclusions would be built.*

*This conviction led to the ecosystem approach.*

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which are designed to clean up contamination “hot spots” in areas around the Great Lakes, Toronto being one of them.

The Commission’s second interim report, *Watershed* (1990), was submitted to the federal and provincial governments in September 1990; it begins with a definition of “ecosystem” and an explanation of the significance of the ecosystem approach:

Simply put, an ecosystem is composed of air, land, water, and living organisms, including humans, and the interactions among them. The concept has been applied to many types of interacting systems, including lakes, watersheds, cities, and the biosphere.

Traditionally, human activities have been managed on a piecemeal basis, treating the economy separately from social issues or the environment. But the ecosystem concept holds that these are interrelated, that decisions made in one area affect all the others. To deal effectively with the environmental problems in any ecosystem requires a holistic or “ecosystem” approach to managing human activities. . . .

The environmental audit is demonstrating the inextricable links among the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area, other parts of Toronto, the Don River Watershed, and the Great Lakes. Similarly, the Greater Toronto Area waterfront being investigated by the Royal Commission is part of a region that includes the watersheds of the

rivers leading into Lake Ontario from the GTA. Anything that happens within this area is tied ecologically to the health of the waterfront.

Therefore in order to truly understand the waterfront itself, we must gain an understanding of the biological region, or bioregion in which it lies.

*Watershed* then goes on to assess the state of the waterfront and of the Greater Toronto bioregion, defined by the Commission as the area bounded by the Niagara Escarpment to the west, the Oak Ridges Moraine to the north and east, and Lake Ontario to the south. In the words of the report:

The assessment concluded that this is an ecosystem under considerable stress; one that is, to a large degree, “dis-integrated”, in which the carrying capacity — the ability of air, land, and water to absorb the impact of human use — is clearly strained, and cannot be sustained over the longer term unless fundamental changes are made.

There is an urgent need for regeneration of the entire

Greater Toronto Bioregion to remediate environmental problems caused by past activities, to prevent further degradation, and to ensure that all future activities result in a net improvement in environmental health.

The Commission recognizes that governments, working alone, cannot solve our environmental problems, and that the bioregion’s six thousand industries and four million residents have responsibilities they must meet.

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*The ecosystem concept holds that economy, social issues, and environment are interrelated — decisions made in one area affect all the others.*

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Because the ecosystem approach highlights interactions among ecological, social, economic, and political systems in the bioregion, the Commission emphasized the importance of developing new administrative mechanisms that bring jurisdictions together to solve problems co-operatively and that help establish environmentally sound ways of living.

*Watershed's* second chapter focuses on the needs of the Greater Toronto waterfront in the context of its bioregion and offers a set of nine principles for planning, developing, and managing a healthy, integrated waterfront.

The Commission said the waterfront should be clean, green, useable, diverse, open, accessible, connected, affordable, and attractive. (There is a more detailed explanation of the interpretation, origins, and possible applications of these principles, both in *Watershed* and in this report.)

*Watershed* contains some 80 recommendations for implementing an ecosystem approach that will restore the health and usefulness of the waterfront. As in the first interim report, some suggestions are generic, involving the entire waterfront or region, while others are specific to particular areas or jurisdictions. Although many recommendations were directed to the federal government, most flowed from the Commission's provincial mandate.

Among the most important generic, region-wide recommendations were:

All federal, provincial, and municipal governments and agencies with an

interest in or influence over the waterfront should adopt the ecosystem approach and principles outlined in this report as a basis for planning.

The Province should declare the waterfront from Burlington to Newcastle a Provincial Resource, and it should provide leadership, resources, and opportunities for collaboration amongst various parties, in order to integrate planning and programs as part of efforts to regenerate the waterfront.

The Province should establish Waterfront Partnership Agreements with municipalities, along the lines recommended in this [*Watershed*] report.

Over the next year, the Province should work with the Commission to review ways in which the philosophy and principles of the ecosystem approach could best be integrated into the Planning Act and other relevant provincial legislation, as it affects the Greater Toronto bioregion. . . .

The Province should plan, co-ordinate, and implement a Waterfront Trail from Burlington to Newcastle, to be completed by 1993 to celebrate both the bicentennial of the founding of York and the centennial of the Ontario provincial parks system. . . .

The Province should take immediate steps to preserve the ecological, scenic,

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**Watershed offers recommendations for implementing an ecosystem approach and developing the administrative mechanisms to bring jurisdictions together to solve problems co-operatively and to establish environmentally sound ways of living.**

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and recreational significance of the Oak Ridges Moraine, and to ensure that future land use in the moraine does not result in cumulative impairment of the ecological quality of downstream rivers or the waterfront. . . .

The federal and provincial governments should modify the RAP process by elevating each municipality from being one of many stakeholders, to being a joint partner in developing and implementing the RAP. Using the watershed approach, all municipalities within a given watershed should be asked to collaborate on the RAP. . . .

The Province should bring forward comprehensive lakefill policies for public review as soon as possible. The policies should require thorough environmental appraisal of all individual lakefill projects, and of their cumulative effects, across the Greater Toronto Waterfront. Until such policies are in place, there should be a moratorium on new lakefilling. . . .

The waterfront, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and river valleys of the Greater Toronto Area should be recognized as Provincial Resources in the public debate and decisions made by all levels of government on the urban form and structure of the region. . . .

In addition to the recommendations dealing with environmental regeneration at the regional scale, *Watershed* considered a wide range of specific matters, including:

- devising a concept for the route of a continuous Waterfront Trail from Burlington to Newcastle;

- examining the possibility of reducing the barrier effects of the Gardiner/Lakeshore Corridor, by taking down the elevated portion of the expressway in phases and improving public transit and road systems in the area;
- creating a Waterfront Regeneration Trust, to co-ordinate the regeneration of the waterfront;
- defining and proposing the transfer of THC's non-port lands: to the City of Toronto for parkland and a wildlife corridor; to the Toronto Economic Development Corporation (TEDCO) for industrial purposes; and to the proposed Waterfront Trust for decontamination and redevelopment for mixed uses;
- creating a Centre for Green Enterprise and Industry; and
- drafting waterfront plans and projects in Halton Region, Mississauga, Etobicoke, Scarborough, and Durham Region.

When *Watershed* was released, Mr. Crombie said he was "encouraged over the past year by the continuing strong public interest in the waterfront and by signs of an emerging consensus among all levels of government concerning waterfront policies and priorities. The aim of this report", he continued, "is to provide the basis for governments to act now on the fundamental decisions that have to be taken to ensure that the people of Toronto have the waterfront they want and deserve".

There was widespread and positive community and government reaction to the Commission's principles, and to its recommended approach for regenerating the waterfront and watershed.

## THE THIRD PHASE

Once more, the Government of Canada responded promptly. On 12 September 1990, Robert de Cotret, then Treasury Board president and Environment minister, said:

I fully support the comprehensive ecosystem approach that the Commission has adopted and which is integral to the *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement*. The federal government has an important role to play in responding to *Watershed* and we will do our full share within our jurisdiction.

He also commented favourably on the proposed Centre for Green Enterprise, and promised that the government would look closely at recommendations to increase public access to the waterfront, and to transfer federal lands along the waterfront to other levels of government. Mr. de Cotret added, "Mr. Crombie has presented a useful framework for discussing the future of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners. The government will be discussing these recommendations with the City of Toronto, the Province, the Royal Commission, and other interests".

That same afternoon, Bob Rae, then premier-elect, welcomed *Watershed*, saying:

The Government of Ontario will provide the strong provincial leadership needed to maintain the ecological integrity of the waterfront. We fully agree with the ecosystem approach to waterfront policies and priorities, and we are prepared to work closely with local governments and existing agencies to protect the ecology of the watershed and to create a diverse, integrated, and healthy waterfront.

Almost all municipalities across the waterfront also endorsed the report, as did

representatives of business, labour, and environmental and community groups.

Shortly after the release of *Watershed*, the Commission organized another work group, to review how the philosophy and principles of the ecosystem approach might best be integrated into the Planning Act and into other legislation that affects the Greater Toronto bioregion. The group's conclusions and recommendations were published in *Planning for Sustainability: Towards Integrating Environmental Protection into Land-Use Planning*.

The Province of Ontario responded more fully three months after *Watershed* was released. On 17 December 1991, Ruth Grier, Minister of the Environment and minister responsible for the Greater Toronto Area, commended the previous government and John Sweeney in particular, for giving the Commission a broad mandate and for supporting the Commission; she continued:

We endorse fully the principles put forward for the future direction of the waterfront area; a waterfront that is clean, green and attractive; a waterfront that is useable, diverse and open; and a waterfront that is connected, affordable and accessible.

We intend to use these nine principles as a guide, not only for the waterfront, but to move beyond the waterfront — to the GTA urban structure process. We will provide a framework to ensure that greenlands and watersheds become an integral part of future plans for the Greater Toronto Area.

Today, I would like to outline how we intend to implement key recommendations of the report.

Firstly, we will establish a continuous Waterfront Trail which will



*Watersedge Park, Mississauga*

become the Green-Way that ties the GTA together from Burlington to Newcastle. It will link to the Bruce and Ganaraska Trail systems at either end. We see the waterfront trail as the highest land use for all public lands along the water's edge. The trail will be much more than a four foot strip of asphalt. This trail will connect the waterfront with river valleys and source areas and link up areas of natural and historic importance along Lake Ontario. It will be a place for people, for families and children to enjoy the out of doors and the natural environment on foot or bicycle.

Secondly, we accept the idea of Waterfront Partnership Agreements as a valid implementation vehicle for waterfront plans. We will negotiate agreements between local, regional and federal governments, along with conservation authorities, to prepare responsible development plans and implementation

mechanisms for the waterfront consistent with the Crombie principles.

Thirdly, we will establish by legislation a Waterfront Regeneration Trust to co-ordinate regeneration activities.

Finally, we will move to halt the unnecessary privatization of the public shoreline and Crown resources such as water lots.

Mrs. Grier turned her attention to the remaining period of the Commission's mandate:

In the final year of the Royal Commission's work, we will ask Mr. Crombie to address:

The feasibility of relocating the Gardiner Expressway in consultation with Metropolitan Toronto and the Ministry of Transportation;

the pooling of lands and the integration of future plans for the Canadian National Exhibition,

Ontario Place, Fort York and HMCS York in consultation with the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation and the other authorities involved; and

policies, practices, technology and methods available to regenerate shoreline areas.

The Commission soon realized that these additions to its mandate could not be explored in the time still available. As a result, both the federal and provincial governments extended the Commission's life by six months, to December 1991.

In addition to publishing *Planning for Sustainability*, in the third phase of its work, the Commission completed the environmental audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area (*Pathways: Towards an Ecosystem Approach*) and the three tasks given it by the Province. The results of these efforts were published in three major reports: *Shoreline Regeneration*; *Garrison Common: Preliminary Master Plan*; and *The Toronto Central Waterfront Transportation Corridor Study*.

Adopting the ecosystem approach made the environment the key to the Commission's thinking. But that approach demands an understanding of the dynamic interaction among environmental, economic, and community issues. Therefore, in addition to work associated with the new elements of its mandate, the Commission carried out further research and mounted seminars to consider the broader implications of the ecosystem approach.

In addition, working papers were published on cumulative effects, soil decontamination, the regional economy, community profiles, and the waterfront in winter.

The Commission continued to communicate with a wide range of groups and individuals, using the *Newsletter*, speeches, presentations, consultations, and meetings. In the summer of 1991, it surveyed public opinion on waterfront issues, having the polling firm, Environics, add a number of questions to its regular survey of residents living in the Greater Toronto region.

Environics found that issues relating to the environment and the waterfront ranked high among elements identified as contributing to the quality of life in the region, and that people in the region view environmental protection as an economic issue.

## THE FINAL REPORT

This final report summarizes all that has come before in the work and experience of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront. Throughout the Commission's existence, all those involved in it thought hard and listened carefully to the views and advice of people — thousands of people. Therefore, this is the work of many hands and minds; it embodies the values, aspirations, concerns, and hopes of these thousands of citizens.

In looking at our collective experience, those who were involved with the Commission in the course of its existence have come to the end of their work with a sense of optimism: the core values — orderliness, tolerance, and the seizing of opportunities — held by Torontonians are starting to be applied to the regeneration of the waterfront and the watersheds across the entire bioregion.

This final report treats waterfront regeneration as an opportunity that brings with it the long-term promise of a healthy environment, economic recovery and

sustainability, and maintaining a liveable community.

The likelihood that these opportunities will be realized is strengthened by an emerging sense of order as governments, working with business, labour, community leaders, and ordinary citizens, recognize the degree of discipline and tolerance that is needed: discipline to perform one's role without blocking or ignoring that played by others, and tolerance of their needs and functions as all work together to deal with the waterfront or watersheds.

The title of this final report, *Regeneration: Toronto's Waterfront and the Sustainable City*, reflects the Commission's beliefs about what has to be done and what can be accomplished. The report itself consists of four parts.

Part I, "Planning for Sustainability", describes what the Commission found about the need for regional planning and co-operation, based on the ecosystem approach, and including concepts of sustainability, health, equity, stewardship, responsibility, and the bioregion as "home". After an updated assessment of the environmental state of the bioregion, the report articulates the Commission's philosophy and principles. The Commission's own efforts as an "agent of change" — applying the ecosystem approach — are described, and their value is assessed.

Part I concludes with a discussion of the Commission's ideas for ecosystem-based planning practice. This is based on the *Planning for Sustainability* report and the working paper on cumulative effects, as well

as on practical methods for ecosystem-based planning now being used or proposed by experts in the field.

Part II, "Environmental Imperatives", deals with a range of environmental imperatives that must be considered by each level of government if it is to help restore and maintain ecosystem health.

This second section includes: a critical review of the state of the Great Lakes ecosystem and efforts at regenerating it; measures for regenerating the Lake Ontario shoreline in the Greater Toronto bioregion; an explanation of the environmental, social, and economic importance of a greenway and

trail system for the waterfront and the bioregion; and the advantages of considering winter conditions on the waterfront. It concludes with an analysis of the Don River

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**Regeneration explores the opportunities to realize the promise of a healthy environment, economic recovery and sustainability, and a liveable community.**

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watershed: its past, present, and future, treating the problems and opportunities of this watershed as typical of those throughout the bioregion.

Part III, "Places", surveys the various places along the waterfront, from Burlington in the west to Port Hope in the east. It includes summaries of responses to the Commission's previous area-specific recommendations, as well as encapsulating new research and recommendations for places across the waterfront, including the need for the integration of environment, land use, and transportation on the Central Waterfront.

This section reviews the Commission's own efforts to apply the ecosystem approach in its own work, in such projects as the

environmental audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area, the Garrison Common Preliminary Master Plan, and the Toronto Central Waterfront Transportation Corridor Study. As well, it includes comments on the initiatives undertaken by other bodies — municipalities, conservation authorities, federal and provincial ministries, and private-sector owners and developers — now using the ecosystem philosophy and approach.

The final section of the report, “Regeneration and Recovery”, discusses issues related to implementation of the Royal Commission’s recommendations. It includes the Commission’s ideas about the nature and structure of public administration needed to manage the waterfront: no single level of government can or should be in total control of the waterfront; each should perform its role in its own jurisdiction, in partnership with others.

The section also offers the Commission’s views on partnership agreements, the issue of financing waterfront regeneration, and a practical program of co-ordinated action across the waterfront, including consolidated capital budgets for the next five-year period.

Sir Winston Churchill once said that people create buildings and then buildings create people. The same is true of the cities and regions in which we live and their waterfronts. As a small element of two governments in a democracy, the Commission offers a possible map to a better, healthier, sustainable city. In a democracy, however, the ultimate decisions — what maps to use, whether to use a particular map, whether to use any map at all — rest with and are made real by the behaviour, attitudes, and actions of its citizens.