



PART III: PLACES

This part of the final report of the Royal Commission is an appreciation of the waterfront as a place and as a series of places. Moving across the bioregion, from Burlington Bay in the west to the Trent River in the east, it offers comments about the Commission's experience of the diverse places on the waterfront.

While those who live, work, and play in these places probably have a deeper appreciation of their attributes, in this section the Commission attempts to define the public values and objectives for each place along the waterfront, as well as recommending strategies for the future.

The kinds of places we create and evolve — the buildings we allow to be built; the way we treat our rivers, roads, wastes, trees, and water; the care and attention we pay to our offices, schools, factories, restaurants, recreational facilities, monuments, and places of worship — measure who we are and what is important to us.

In his excellent book, *The Experience of Place* (1990), author Tony Hiss captures

the importance place has in the ordinary, day-to-day experiences of people.

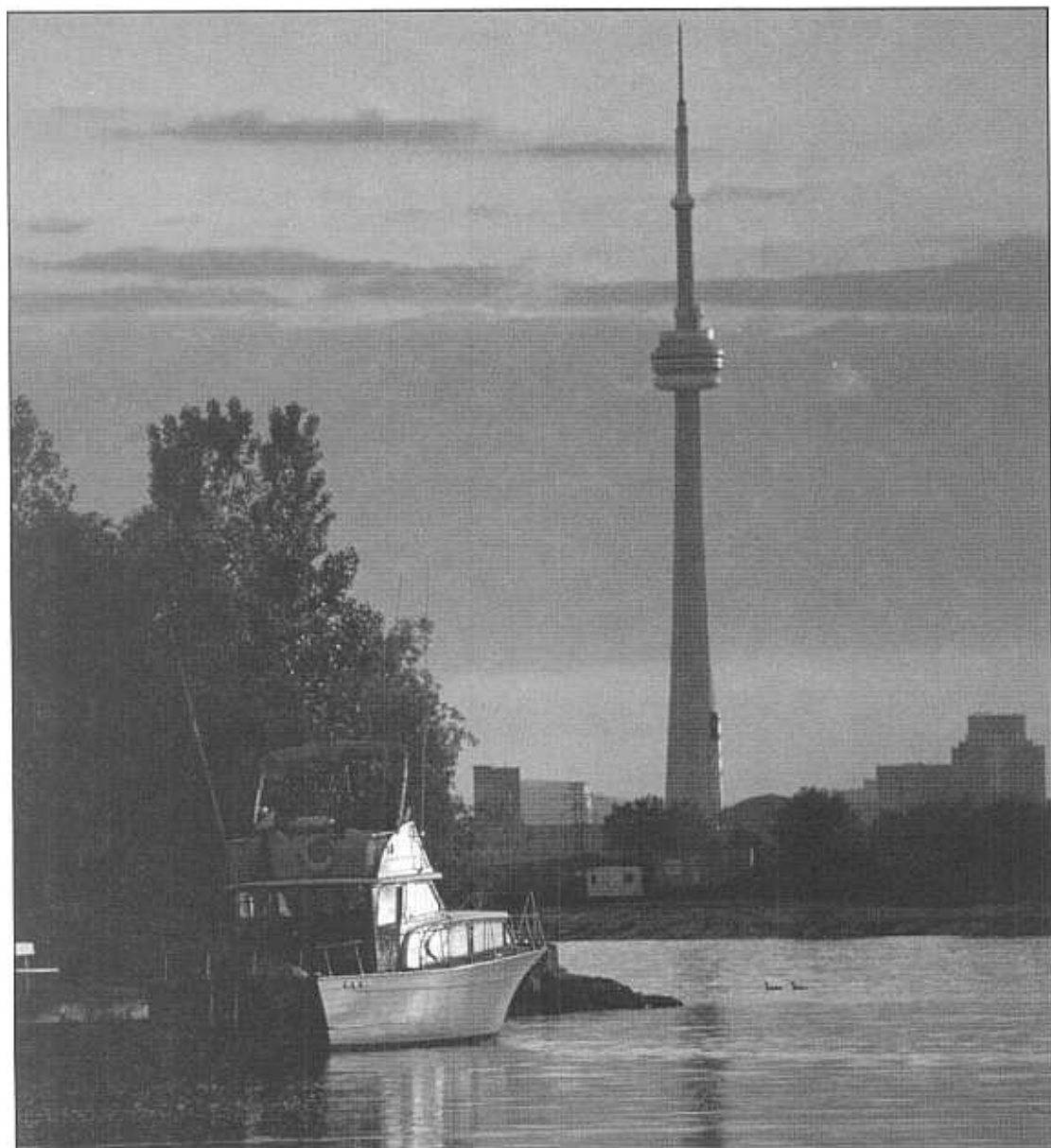
We all react to the places where we live and work, in ways we scarcely notice or that are only now becoming known to us. Ever-accelerating changes in most people's day-to-day circumstances are helping us, prodding us, sometimes forcing us, to learn that our ordinary surroundings, built and natural alike, have an incredible and continuing effect on the way we feel and act, and on our health and intelligence. These

places have an impact on our sense of ourself, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, the ways we interact with other people, even

our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In short, the place where we spend our time affects the people we are and can become.

As places around us change — both the communities that shelter us and the larger regions that support them — we all undergo changes inside.

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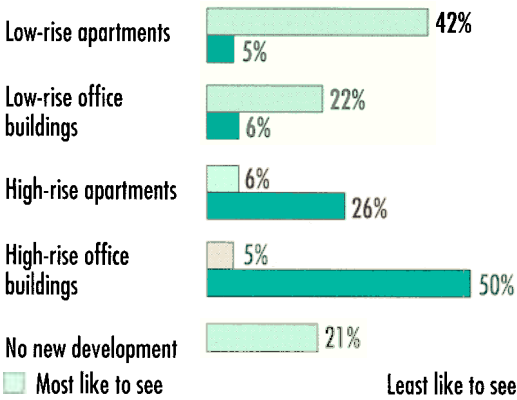


Toronto, cityview in the evening

This means that whatever we experience in a place is both a serious environmental issue and a deeply personal one. Our relationship with the places we know and meet up with — where you are right now; and where you've been earlier today; and wherever you'll be in another few hours — is a close bond, intricate in nature, and not abstract, not

remote at all. It's enveloping, almost a continuum with all we see and think. And the danger we are now beginning to see is that whenever we make changes in our surroundings, we can all too easily short-change ourselves by cutting ourselves off from some of the sights, or sounds, the shapes or textures or other information from a

Most and Least Desired Types of Waterfront Development



When asked to consider different development options for the waterfront, respondents favoured low rise over high rise development.

Source: Environics Poll, 1991.

place that have helped mold our understanding and are now necessary for us to thrive.

When people speak about vivid experiences of place, they are often referring to fond memories or magical moments; the waterfront offers many of these. Stand at the foot of Grindstone Creek and see the densely treed slopes rise steeply on either side of the water; glance across Humber Bay from the eastern shore of Etobicoke and see the distant gleaming towers of downtown Toronto shining in the sun; watch children play in Ajax's Rotary Park with the rushes and shrubs of Duffin Creek in the background; walk on Scarborough's bluffs and look out over the lake — these are experiences to savour and remember for a lifetime.

Sometimes, however, people's most unforgettable experiences are of places that have been damaged and diminished over time. Absorb and survive the assault on all

the senses when walking down York Street under the rail viaduct and the Gardiner across Lake Shore Boulevard, past the parking lots to reach the water's edge; fight the down-draft winds hurling down the sides and around the corners of the new high-rises along Toronto's Central Waterfront on a windy day; find an historic vista across the bay, one that has brightened the daily lives of many, but is now being appropriated for the benefit of a few hundred — these experiences remind us that we need to safeguard, repair, and enrich the places our heritage has lent to us so that we can enjoy them before we pass them on to others.

Many of the places surveyed here are in transition: sometimes that transition is measured and gentle, while nonetheless important, while in others, change is fundamental and magnificent in its impact. In all of these places, we have the opportunity not to "short-change" either our heritage or our future.