

CHAPTER THREE



REGENERATION

Regeneration

A. AREA-WIDE ISSUES

Regenerating the Toronto waterfront and the watershed of which it is a part depends on taking actions that affect both the entire area and specific localities within it. The first section of this chapter describes recommendations applicable to the waterfront and watershed, while the second discusses those prescribed for defined areas.

1. Implementing an Ecosystem Approach

As outlined in the first two chapters of this report, successful efforts to restore the health and usefulness of the waterfront will depend, in large measure, on an ecosystem approach. By its nature, such an approach cannot be implemented by any one agency or government in isolation. Rather, a wide range of agencies and governments must co-operate to apply an ecosystem philosophy and principles.

Since the beginning of its work, it has been clear to the Commission that applying an ecosystem approach to restoring and regenerating the Greater Toronto Bioregion requires new thinking and new mechanisms for developing and implementing public policy. It is also clear to the Commission, and to many deputants who appeared before it, that the old ways of finding and funding solutions are no longer sufficient to deal with problems in this increasingly urbanized region.

During the course of its hearings, for example, the Commission heard from a variety of sources, including municipalities, about the inability of the present land-use planning process to incorporate environmental concerns. As Mayor Marie Hubbard, chairperson of the Durham Regional Planning Committee, told the Commission, “the *Planning Act*...has a number of areas where the environmental issues slide through the cracks during the process of applications....”

New methods of dealing with problems should reflect broad, integrated, regional thinking. We cannot afford to ignore the threads that knit the natural environment and the economy into the social fabric, to give us the urban setting in which almost four million Ontarians make their homes today. The new thinking should cut across both traditional boundaries and established jurisdictions if truly sustainable solutions are to be found.

The Commission is encouraged by several initiatives that have brought together the common interests of municipalities and the Province. The newly established Heads of Council Committee and the Greater Toronto Co-ordinating Committee are two examples of a collaborative partnership through which the regional and local municipalities and the Province can shape the urban future of the GTA.

The federal government has participated in a number of significant joint endeavours recently: its prompt support of the Royal Commission’s first interim report; its participation in the environmental audit of the East Bayfront and Port Industrial Area lands; its initiative with respect to federal land management in the Toronto area; and its continuous support of the work of the International Joint Commission are to be applauded. Municipalities are also taking initiatives to adopt the ecosystem approach — for example, Metropolitan Toronto is also using this approach for its new Waterfront Plan.

Now, we need to determine how an ecosystem approach can help us find solutions to common problems. We need to pursue opportunities and establish mechanisms that make our provincial and municipal institutions and the federal framework respond to the trans-boundary pressures and stresses in the ecosystem.

It is the Commission’s view that this process of bringing governments and people together must begin with the Government of Ontario. The Province should recognize the Toronto Area Waterfront, from Burlington to Newcastle, as a Provincial Resource

and commit itself to a policy and program of waterfront regeneration. The representatives of government and government agencies, and the scores of interest groups and individuals who came before the Commission — and who consistently called for strong provincial leadership, collaboration and, resources on which new provincial-municipal partnerships could be constructed — would applaud and support such a declaration.

The provincial commitment would consist of the following:

- ~ adoption of the ecosystem approach as described in this report;
- ~ a waterfront regeneration policy based on principles articulated in Chapter 2 of this report;
- ~ provincial-municipal Waterfront Partnership Agreements, established to ensure consistent purpose and implementation;
- ~ a financial and resource regime to support the implementation of these Waterfront Partnership Agreements.

The agreements would be created across the waterfront, where appropriate, and up the river valleys, as necessary. While there would obviously be common elements among them, the exact form, nature, composition, and time-frame of the agreements would, of course, depend on the issues being addressed and the regeneration opportunities being pursued in each municipality.

Among the elements that the Royal Commission would recommend be included in the agreements are the following:

- ~ incorporation of waterfront plans in official plans;
- ~ provision for a Waterfront Trail with links to river valleys and ravines;
- ~ provision for water quality and wastewater Remedial Action Plans (RAPs);
- ~ use of sewer by-laws, based on the Province's model by-law;
- ~ protection of wetland and other environmentally significant areas;

- ~ provision of public open space on the waterfront;
- ~ provision of public transit, road, pedestrian, bicycle, and water access to and along the waterfront;
- ~ application of provincial Affordable Housing policy requirements in projects on or close to the waterfront;
- ~ protection or enhancement of historic and heritage environments, both natural and built;
- ~ particular projects of special interest to each municipality that would improve the waterfront.

The federal government should also consider participating in these agreements, where appropriate. It now has an outstanding opportunity to apply its commendable commitment to the environment in practical ways. Under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, Canada and the United States have specific responsibilities for water quality in the Great Lakes, including, of course, Lake Ontario. Canada also has other responsibilities according to federal-provincial agreements, such as the RAPs.

Indeed, the recently released *Fifth Biennial Report on Great Lakes Water Quality (Part II)* contains recommendations for action by the federal government that could provide great impetus for waterfront regeneration in the Toronto area. Moreover, the Government of Canada, which has extensive landholdings and significant jurisdiction on the waterfront, has a role to play that is too often overlooked and underestimated. The ecosystem approach advocated here requires the active, ongoing participation of the federal government and its agencies.

Public support for this collaborative approach is very high. Indeed, it is clear that people are prepared to back a common vision that takes into account the long-term health and well-being of the waterfront and its river valleys. The hundreds of deputants before the Commission bore witness to that fact.



Toronto Island Airport Ferry

They may well be ahead of their governments. Clearly, they want their various levels of government to build on this consensus and move toward restoring the integrity of the waterfront and the ecosystem that sustains and determines it.



Recommendations

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.

2. 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.
3. The Province should establish Waterfront Partnership Agreements with municipalities, along the lines recommended in this report.

4. 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.

5. The Province should encourage and assist in forming a citizens' coalition for the waterfront, to provide research and advocacy on behalf of waterfront users, and to help ensure that issues that cross traditional jurisdictional boundaries are addressed.

People involved in RAP processes could form the core of this waterfront coalition, but special efforts should also be made to involve the broader constituency represented by such groups as the Centre for the Great Lakes, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, and the Canadian Environmental Law Association. The coalition might also sponsor local forums in appropriate areas, such as the Toronto Outer Harbour.

To establish the coalition, the Province should help fund an organizing conference and assist in determining an ongoing financing formula, based on a mix of private and public funding.

2. Waterfront Trail

A Green Strategy for the Greater Toronto Waterfront: Background and Issues, the Commission's Publication No. 8, suggested that a Waterfront Trail should connect the various facilities and green spaces along the shore. In the excellent tradition of such notable pathways as the Adirondack Trail and the Bruce Trail, a Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail could make people aware of the connectedness of the features along the shore. By tying together the often disparate attractions of the waterfront, the trail would help create a sense of community stewardship that is essential to the success of the ecosystem approach.

The trail would also become a symbol of the importance the Province places on the waterfront, and its determination to manage the waterfront in an integrated, ecosystem-based manner.

The trail concept was well received by deputants at the Commission hearings: most agreed that a continuous Waterfront Trail was not only feasible (although difficult in spots), but highly desirable. In some municipalities, trails already exist, such as the Martin Goodman Trail across much of the City of Toronto waterfront. In others, trails are being created, including a system of bicycle paths in Burlington and proposed walkways in Oshawa. The Waterfront Trail would integrate existing sections into a cohesive and more useful whole.

At its ends, the Waterfront Trail should link to the Bruce Trail and the Ganaraska Trail, two long-distance footpaths. Along its course, it should also be linked with trail systems extending up the associated river valleys to and along the Oak Ridges Moraine, as proposed in MTRCA's Greenspace Strategy.

In essence, such a system would cast a green net over the Greater Toronto Area, making the public open spaces far more accessible and attractive. Residents and visitors alike would be able to use the trail

system for a few spare moments on their lunch hour, for a pleasant Sunday afternoon or for a vigorous end-to-end jaunt. Continuity is important — not only should there be physical continuity of the trail, but a common logo, design standards and signage should be used to identify the trail throughout.

Within that continuity, however, the system should take full advantage of the diversity within the Greater Toronto Bioregion. The trail could be set in shaded ravines, wind-blown shores, quiet streets, and busy commercial centres. It might be asphalt or gravel, bark chips or natural surface, depending on the location and intended use.

Trail uses could vary: walkers, joggers, hikers in most places, a separate path for bicycles for pleasure or commuting where appropriate, and trails for equestrians in suitable areas, as well as provisions for the disabled, could be accommodated.

In many parts, the system should be buttressed by corridors of green space, both to make the trail experience more pleasant and to protect and maintain the environment on a local scale. Like the greenways which are emerging in the United States, these corridors should be designed to emphasize links among larger attractions, and to weave threads of green into the community fabric.

In more urban sections, the trail should be designed not just for recreation, but as a transportation corridor, and as a safe and convenient alternative to driving for those who want to walk or cycle to work or shopping facilities. This role has been more fully recognized in other jurisdictions: in Britain, for example, developing and maintaining an extensive system of footpaths is the responsibility of roads departments, rather than of parks or recreation authorities. The same assignment of responsibilities could be considered here for trails outside park areas.

The Waterfront Trail should also direct attention to the heritage elements of the waterfront area, both cultural and natural. Heritage considerations should play a major role in both the design and the location of

the trail, and in the way it is promoted and described in guidebooks and literature. For example, the trail could be a vehicle to interpret the geological processes visible at the Scarborough Bluffs, and could use signage or interpretive materials to inform people about the industrial heritage of Toronto Harbour. Perhaps the historic parts of downtown Toronto — Queen's Park, Toronto's city halls, University Avenue, the St. Lawrence Market, and other memorable places — could be incorporated to enhance the heritage aspect of the trail.

The idea would also make sense in other cities, towns, and villages along the waterfront. For example, the trail could pass by the Thomas Merrick House at Lakeside Park in Oakville (which recreates the life of a family in 1830); the Guild Inn Estate in Scarborough (to allow interested users to view the art works on display there); and a 300-year-old tree on the bluff east of the Rouge River mouth in Pickering.

A number of barriers to a continuous trail along the waterfront must be overcome. In some places, bridges will be needed over river mouths; footbridges are already planned over the Credit River, Mimico Creek, Humber River, and Duffin Creek. The trail will have to loop inland in places where marshlands and embayments create natural barriers along the shore, to avoid undue pressure on sensitive wildlife habitats. It will also have to be routed inland to bypass major industries such as generating stations and quarries.

In existing residential areas, the trail will often have to go along quiet streets, linking existing parklands on the shore. In some places, waterfront properties can be gradually acquired to create windows to the lake. Elsewhere, redevelopment can be used to gain shoreline strips to be incorporated into the trail system, as now happens in Oakville and some other municipalities.

It may occasionally be essential to acquire properties to provide links while avoiding busy roads. In order to help achieve continuity, the trail should be designed to make

full use of existing public lands, such as water and sewer facility lands, as appropriate links.

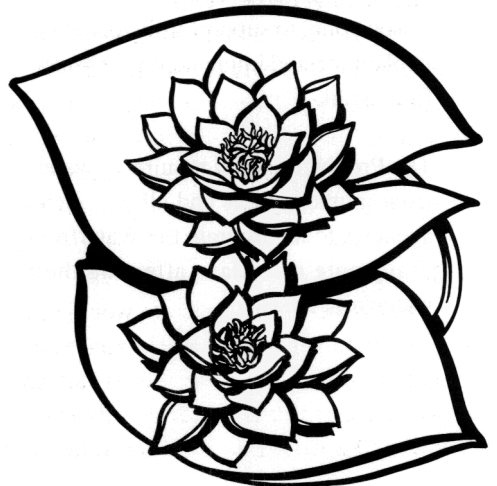
Some barriers may be overcome only in the long term. Planning for the Waterfront Trail can take that reality into account by specifying both a final and an interim route, which would allow necessary connections to be completed in the short term.

In the past, the planning, developing, promoting, and maintaining of long-distance trails in Ontario have been carried out, in the main, by volunteer, non-government groups.



Few places in the world better illustrate a far-reaching chain of ecological effects on the environment caused by human activity than the Great Lakes. The interconnections between the physical features and living things are such that in the Great Lakes, when any one characteristic of water quality is altered, then change reverberates throughout the ecological system.

Theberge, J. B. 1989. "Changes in water characteristics and aquatic life." In *Legacy: the natural heritage of Ontario*, editor J. B. Theberge. 323. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.



The provincial government has become increasingly involved in securing the Bruce Trail route in recent years, as part of the Niagara Escarpment land-acquisition program. However, the leadership and the leg-work of the non-government Bruce Trail Association are still essential to success.

The Commission has commented on the desirability of having a membership association to support a Waterfront Trail. Such an association could play a pivotal role in planning, promoting, advocating, and even being involved in some aspects of constructing and maintaining the trail. However, because of the high density of people and development along the waterfront, development and maintenance of a trail there will require a greater degree of provincial and municipal involvement.



Recommendations

6. The Province should plan, co-ordinate, and implement a Waterfront Trail from Burlington to Newcastle (as shown conceptually on Map 2), to be completed by 1993 to celebrate both the bicentennial of the founding of York and the centennial of the Ontario provincial parks system.
7. The Province should provide financial and technical assistance for the founding and early operations of a Waterfront Trail Association, to support its involvement in planning and implementing a Waterfront Trail.
8. The Province should require all waterfront municipalities and all provincial agencies to incorporate the Waterfront Trail route into plans affecting their waterfront areas.

3. Oak Ridges Moraine

During the course of the Commission's hearings, deputants repeatedly stressed their conviction that the waterfront cannot be considered in isolation from its bioregion. The links are most strongly expressed in relation to water quality issues, but the waterfront is also tied to its hinterland, especially through the valley systems, in terms of wildlife movement and recreational uses.

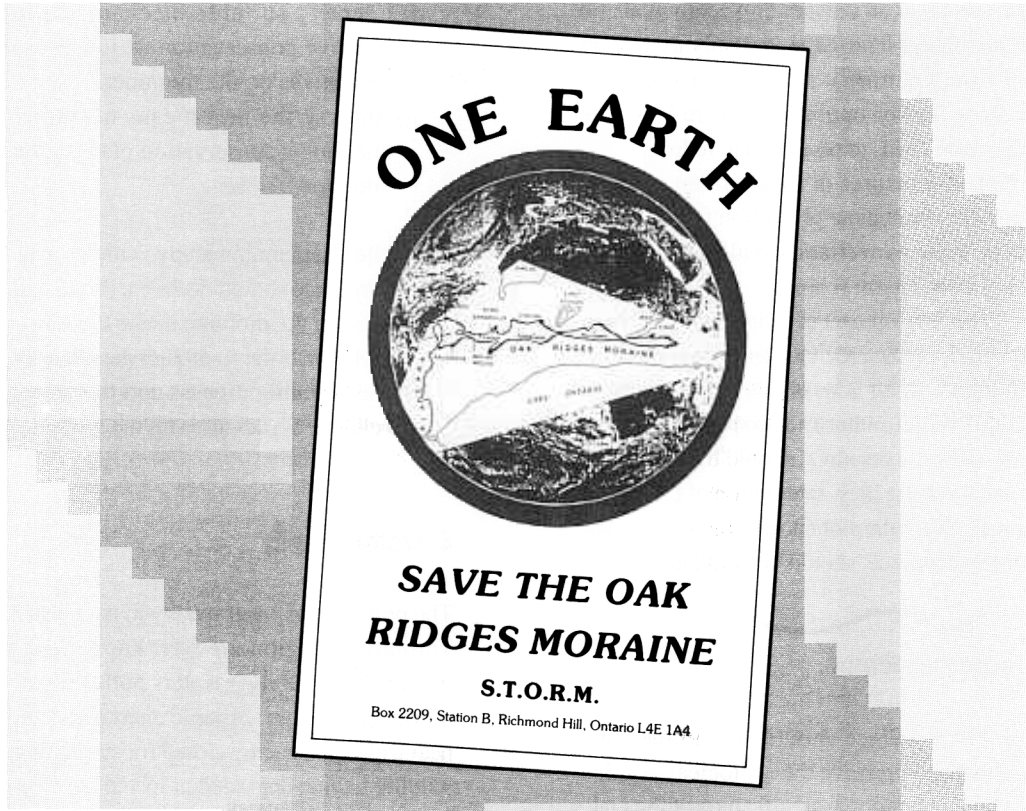
In particular, citizen groups, conservation authorities, and municipalities came forward to emphasize the natural and scenic significance of the Oak Ridges Moraine, and to urge that it be protected. Of special significance to this Commission is the role of the moraine as the source of a great deal of the streamflow in the rivers feeding into the waterfront. Because the headwater springs along the edges of the moraine tap into a vast underground reservoir of groundwater encased in the gravels of the moraine's landforms, the streams there are cool and unpolluted.

Forty-two streams along the moraine support healthy trout populations, a good indicator of their quality. This reliable, clean source of water for communities and rivers alike is a vital asset in the struggle to restore water quality in the Greater Toronto Area.

Katherine Guselle of Save the Ganaraska Again (SAGA) emphasized to the Commission the strong connections between the moraine and the waterfront:

It is fair to say that the ecological health of the extensive waterfront you are studying will depend in great measure on the continued health of the undisturbed natural headwaters and watersheds, such as the Ganaraska River, that drain the south slope of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Many of the deputants made reference to *The Adequacy of the Existing Environmental Planning and Approvals Process for the Ganaraska Watershed*, Report No. 38 of the Ontario Environmental Assessment



Advisory Committee (EAAC), which made a series of recommendations about planning and development on the moraine. The report obviously struck a chord: deputants were virtually unanimous in praising and endorsing it. The Commission heard many citations of inappropriate or poorly planned development on the moraine, and of widespread threats from land speculation and gravel extraction.

The Commission was also told that the existing land-use control system is inadequate in taking into account cumulative effects of development on the environment, or in preventing destruction of natural features as part of development. Many deputants echoed this conclusion of the EAAC report:

The existing land-use planning and approval process in Ontario is inadequate to the task of maintaining social and ecological quality in the face of development pressures.

This Commission recognizes that the Oak Ridges Moraine has been studied in

more depth by Ron Kanter, MPP, whose recommendations address many of the concerns about the future of the moraine that were discussed with the Commission. It is clear, however, that preserving the Oak Ridges Moraine is central to an ecosystem approach to management of the waterfront. It is equally clear that the existing patchwork of municipal, conservation authority, and provincial programs will lead only to a progressive and severe decline in the quality of the moraine and associated rivers. In the words of Dorothy Izzard of Save The Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) coalition:

If our precarious ground water supply and base flow level in a significantly populated area of south central Ontario is to be maintained, a strong provincial policy with rigidly enforced land-use controls on the Moraine is vital and urgently required.

This Commission shares that sense of urgency. Most of the moraine can still be