

6. Durham Region

The Region of Durham has many of the best remaining opportunities for protecting stretches of natural waterfront in the Greater Toronto Area. At the same time, however, that waterfront is controlled by a diverse array of institutions: one regional and five local municipalities, and three conservation authorities.

In the westerly part of Durham, the towns of Pickering and Ajax have traditionally relied on the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to carry out waterfront planning, land acquisition, and development. Neither Pickering nor Ajax has prepared waterfront plans beyond those routinely prepared by the conservation authorities for its holdings.

However, the conservation authorities — particularly Central Lake Ontario and Ganaraska Region — have been constrained by lack of funding and local support. The GRCA's attention has been directed primarily to the headwaters. CLOCA developed a long-range waterfront plan in 1973, but its activity since then has focused primarily on Lynde Shores, the Oshawa Creek Valley, and Bowmanville Harbour.

In the Town of Whitby and the City of Oshawa, leadership on waterfront issues has effectively been assumed by the local municipal governments. Although Whitby has no comprehensive waterfront plan, it has dealt with its waterfront through its Official Plan and with the Lynde Shores Secondary Plan. In addition, the development of a major waterfront activity centre has been detailed in the Port Whitby Secondary Plan and the related draft Harbour Master Plan.

Oshawa recently approved a comprehensive waterfront development plan which calls for a system of linked waterfront parks. A major section of the City's waterfront, the Port of Oshawa, is currently under the control of the Oshawa Harbour Commission, a federal agency.

The Port is a relatively small commercial operation in an urban setting, adjacent to the

Second Marsh, an environmentally sensitive area. It serves a local market and is attempting to expand its limited cargo base.

In October 1989, the City, concerned about planning in the Port and surrounding areas, imposed an Interim Control By-law, which has restricted development in the area. A comprehensive planning study for southeast Oshawa is to be undertaken on these lands, primarily to confirm the future role and function of the Oshawa Harbour; it will also resolve a number of land-use issues and identify the most appropriate development for the area.

At this time, there does not appear to be an agreed-on set of development objectives for the southeast Oshawa waterfront. Instead, the Oshawa community appears to be divided on the role of the Port area, between those who favour the traditional port function and those who foresee a waterfront that emphasizes open space, recreation, and alternate land uses including residential and light commercial development. Some believe the waterfront, including the Port, is an underdeveloped resource that must be revitalized.

There are also questions of the future uses or expansion of the St. Mary's Cement terminal in Bowmanville, but these cannot be resolved without further detailed analysis.

The Town of Newcastle has no comprehensive plan covering its entire waterfront, although official plan policies for the urban areas of the Town of Bowmanville and the Village of Newcastle deal with limited waterfront issues. In response to recreation and tourism proposals for the waterfront east of Bowmanville Harbour, the Town has initiated a waterfront study of that particular area.

However, a plan for the entire Newcastle waterfront is also needed, to address development opportunities in the best interests of the Town. This plan should not be simply reactive to private-sector proposals; rather, it should address the public interest in communities about to face the pressures of rapid urbanization. In that regard, it is vital that



the plan retain as much as possible of the currently undeveloped shoreline for future public use.

While plans to protect the public interest along the Durham waterfront are fragmentary, the forces threatening to diminish waterfront opportunities are mounting. It is expected that the population of Durham will increase by 65 per cent from 1986 to 2001, the greatest growth rate for any of the four regions on the Greater Toronto Waterfront.

Substantial portions of the waterfront are already blocked off by industrial or utility designation and use, as well as by considerable residential development. Proposals for new development along the waterfront are being submitted at an unprecedented rate.

Without decisive action, many opportunities for a green and accessible waterfront in Durham Region will be lost; clearly, an agency is needed to deal with the issue

Sundown at Ashbridge's Bay

with a sense of urgency and the determination to protect the potential of the Durham waterfront.

Although the Commission recognizes and commends the excellent waterfront planning already under way in individual parts of Durham (Oshawa and Whitby), it believes that the issue has to be treated on a regional basis. The conservation authorities are not in a position to do so, in part because their jurisdictions fragment the region. Moreover, it was clear from the Commission's public hearings that CLOCA currently lacks the respect and public support necessary to be a leader in this matter.

In the Commission's view, leadership for the Durham waterfront should be assumed by the Region of Durham itself, which has limited waterfront policies, and is currently

reviewing its Official Plan. In her remarks before the Commission, the chairwoman of the Regional Planning Committee said of the Region's role on the waterfront, "I think that the time is right for some new thinking and new direction."

That new thinking should help the Region of Durham develop a strong regional role as co-ordinator of waterfront activities, and become a proponent of protective waterfront policies. This does not mean

Increasingly, physical changes in the configuration and use of harbors and adjacent land areas have been subject to environmental constraints. Impacts of such changes upon ecosystems, both landward and in the waters, are major considerations in determining the feasibility and desirability of harbor and channel projects.

Mayer, H. M. 1988. "The physical harbour: new demands on a scarce resource." In *Urban ports and harbor management: responding to change along U.S. waterfronts*, editor M. J. Hershman. 90. New York: Taylor & Francis.



that the plans of local municipalities should be ignored — rather, they should be co-ordinated within a regional context and helped to become reality.

Recently, the Region began discussions with the Province and with local municipalities regarding development of a regional waterfront plan. While the Region's priority has been review of its Official Plan, it is important to recognize the significance of the waterfront in this context and the need for comprehensive policies as part of this plan and related documents.

Several issues could be particularly emphasized in a Durham waterfront plan. In several areas, protection of high-quality marshes and other natural areas demands attention, to prevent their loss to marinas, quarrying or other development. In order to protect some marshlands, controls are also needed on adjacent land development that might cause the loss of habitat quality as the result of stormwater inflows, lack of buffers or excessive traffic.

There are also the issues of creating appropriate links past several major industrial and utility sites, and of finding the right scale and balance of residential and recreational developments and their timing.

Recommendations

77. As recommended by the Region of Durham, the Province should declare the Durham waterfront an area of Provincial Interest under the *Planning Act*.
78. The Province should negotiate a Waterfront Partnership Agreement with the Region of Durham, other levels of government and their agencies, and appropriate private-sector interests, to govern future activity along the waterfront. (Because various municipalities in the Region are at different stages of waterfront planning, several area-specific agreements may be required for the short

term.) The Waterfront Partnership Agreements should be closely linked to preparation of a Durham Waterfront Plan, and should include:

- a) provision for financial assistance to the Region and local municipalities to prepare or extend comprehensive waterfront plans;
- b) mechanisms to obtain commitments of substantial, multi-year provincial funding to support public acquisition and development of waterfront natural areas, recreation sites, and links;
- c) provisions that ensure the Durham Waterfront Plan and local plans conform to the ecosystem approach and principles outlined in this report;
- d) clear identification of the roles and responsibilities of various agencies in implementing waterfront plans in Durham, with Durham Region taking the co-ordinating role;
- e) clarification of the roles of conservation authorities, giving them expanded powers to regulate shoreline and valleyland development based on ecological and recreational objectives, as well as account for flood and erosion protection;
- f) a review of proposed regional water and sewer facility plans along the waterfront, to ensure that their location and design do not detract from other waterfront objectives;
- g) strategies to maintain and protect significant natural habitats, including:
 - ~ Frenchman's Bay marshes;
 - ~ Carruther's Creek mouth;
 - ~ Lynde Creek mouth;
 - ~ Pumphouse Marsh;
 - ~ Oshawa Second Marsh;
 - ~ McLaughlin Bay;
 - ~ West Side Beach Marsh;
 - ~ Wilmot Creek mouth; and
 - ~ Bond Head Bluffs;
- h) identification of opportunities and plans to maintain or create green corridors up the valleys of Duffin Creek, Lynde Creek, Oshawa Creek, Bowmanville/Soper Creek, Wilmot Creek, and the Ganaraska Valley, and to protect the natural values of other valleylands such as Petticoat Creek, Carruther's Creek, and Graham Creek;
- i) a land-use concept study of Frenchman's Bay and the surrounding lands to determine how the ecosystem approach and principles would apply to potential land uses there;
- j) plans to establish substantial community forests in the urban separators defined by the Region of Durham, and a major new park on the west side of Lynde Creek, as proposed by the Town of Whitby;
- k) details of a Waterfront Trail route, noting in particular the challenges provided by Ontario Hydro, the Pickering and Darlington-generating stations, and St. Mary's Cement;
- l) plans for protecting the West Side Beach Marsh and creating a suitable buffer area in relation to continued quarry operations;
- m) plans to modify the pattern of development and stormwater outlets proposed in the Lynde Shores Secondary Plan, to satisfy the Ministry of Natural Resources, the conservation authorities, and the Durham Region Field Naturalists that no long-term damage will occur to the Lynde Shores Marsh;
- n) incorporation of the concept of continuous public access to the waterfront in Whitby Harbour, in line with the principles outlined earlier in this report;
- o) the transfer of the Class 3 wetland at the mouth of Carruther's Creek and a suitable buffer, to be managed by a public agency as a protected wetland, and acquisition of waterfront lands east of the creek by the Town of Ajax or MTRCA, as a requirement of future development;

- p) updating of the 1984 *Oshawa Harbour Development Plan*, which was created by Transport Canada, the Oshawa Harbour Commission, and the City of Oshawa, in order to define the Port's role on the waterfront; the traditional port function should be examined in light of the potential for alternate land uses and development, and plans for the future of the Southeast Oshawa waterfront must be developed and implemented; if it is determined that the industrial commercial port function is no longer warranted, the Oshawa Harbour Commission should be disbanded and its lands transferred to the City of Oshawa for development based on an approved plan and conforming to the principles espoused in this report;
- q) suspension of any approvals for proposed residential, commercial, industrial, tourism or recreational projects along the Newcastle waterfront until a plan for its entire length has been approved or until it can be ascertained that such proposals are in conformity with the principles of the plan and those contained in this report.

THE PICKERING LANDS

Several deputants directed the Commission's attention to the block of federal and provincial lands originally assembled for the proposed Pickering airport and adjacent urban development. These lands, which total approximately 16,187 hectares (40,000 acres), are located just east of the Rouge Valley. (Superimposed on a map of Toronto, they would cover an area from the Toronto Islands to Steeles Avenue, and from High Park to Greenwood Avenue.) They are entirely publicly owned, and are now managed under short-term leases.

The federal government is considering disposing of half of its 7,527 hectares

(18,600 acres), retaining the other half for a possible future airport. The Province recently unveiled plans to develop some 2,833 hectares (7,000 acres) of their holdings as the Seaton townsite. Most of the federal and provincial lands at the Pickering site are eminently suitable for agriculture, and include a mosaic of high-quality natural areas and valleylands.

As Lorne Almack of the Pickering Rural Association pointed out:

This is no ordinary piece of real estate; it is green. We the people of Ontario and Canada, own it. We are free to make intelligent decisions as to its use, and we can demonstrate our concern for the environment.

The Commission agrees that the legacy of federal and provincial lands at Pickering offers a unique opportunity for both levels of government to lead by example. Present management by short-term lease, which leads to abuse of agricultural lands and environmental deterioration, must be improved. Selling off lands to the highest bidder, which would continue the pattern of adjacent suburban sprawl, would squander an opportunity to provide a better model for future use of near-urban open space.

The root of many concerns about the future of these lands is the lack of clarity and co-ordination between the provincial and federal governments regarding their long-term intentions. After nearly two decades of public ownership, it would seem reasonable to expect that both governments could decide what their future needs are for the properties involved, and could work together to plan management or disposal of surplus lands.

By announcing its plans for the "environmental city" of Seaton on part of the Pickering site, the Province has already accepted the principle of innovative use of the lands in the public interest. The Commission applauds the Province's decision to



embark on this important initiative. Planning for Seaton must ensure that the commendable concept of the environmental city does not deteriorate and lead to simply another sprawling bedroom community. It is essential that the densities and patterns of development allowed in Seaton support necessary services, and demonstrate the environmental advantages of a compact urban form. But planning should go one step further, to place the environmental city in an environmentally sustainable countryside.



Recommendations

79. The federal and provincial governments should co-operate in planning

Towards Lake Ontario, at Newcastle

co-ordinated future uses of the Pickering lands, and in managing or disposing of lands surplus to their needs.

80. The federal and provincial governments should co-operate to ensure that portions of the lands are used for agricultural purposes and create a living, functioning countryside, in which there is special emphasis on practices that sustain the environment and preserve future options for a green gateway to the city.

WATERSHED

The Greater Toronto Region is, both literally and figuratively, at a watershed. Not long ago, society believed that the environment was endlessly able to absorb the detritus of a modern, industrial-based economy. More recently, the assumption was that the environment and the economy were inevitably opposed: opting for one meant damaging the other.

Today, however, it is clear that the two, rather than being mutually exclusive, are mutually dependent: a good quality of life and economic development cannot be sustained in an ecologically deteriorating environment.

The way we choose to treat the Greater Toronto Waterfront is crucial. If governments and individuals recognize — and act on — the need to resolve past environmental problems and forge strategies to protect the waterfront now and in the future, we will, indeed, have successfully crossed a watershed.

David Crombie