

# Preface

On 1 June 1988, the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront began its work as a federal inquiry, the Honourable David Crombie, Commissioner.

The Commission's mandate is to:

make recommendations regarding the future of the Toronto Waterfront, and to seek the concurrence of affected authorities in such recommendations, in order to ensure that, in the public interest, federal lands and jurisdiction serve to enhance the physical, environmental, legislative and administrative context governing the use, enjoyment and development of the Toronto Waterfront and related lands.

During its first year, the Commission published the reports of five working groups, as well as two research papers, one on the Toronto Harbour Commissioners and the other on the Toronto Island Airport. Its first *Interim Report* was released in August 1989.

From January to June 1989, the Commission held a series of public hearings on the major issues it was considering, at which it heard from nearly 300 deputants.

On 12 October 1989, the Government of Ontario, declaring that it "recognizes the importance of the Interim Report and recommendations of the ... Commission ..." appointed Mr. Crombie to carry on his duties on its behalf — thus making the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront only the second federal-provincial royal commission in Canadian history. Moreover, the provincial government asked that he expand the Commission's area of study to include the waterfront from Burlington to Newcastle and north to the Oak Ridges Moraine — in other words, the Toronto watershed.

The Commission continued its vigorous publishing program and, by April 1990, had released a total of ten book-length reports, five working papers, five technical papers, the first *Interim Report*, and eight newsletters.

In April and May 1990, the Commission held three series of hearings, in Burlington and Oshawa as well as in the Commission's Toronto offices, to hear opinions and ideas from more than 100 groups and individuals.

The Commission has established the Canadian Waterfront Resource Centre, which now has a collection of more than 6,000 books, periodicals, pamphlets, and clippings. Subjects include: economic development, housing, the environment, public health, urban planning, transportation, parks, recreational facilities, and information about the ways in which Toronto and other communities, both in Canada and elsewhere, use their waterfront lands.

This report, *Watershed*, constitutes the Commission's second interim report. The Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront will soon release the work plan for its third year of operations and will publish its final report in the summer of 1991.

## “A Pretty Average Day”

At five o'clock in the morning in early July, the rain began, slowly at first and then with increased intensity. It struck roof tops and trickled down gutters, gathered on driveways, parking lots, and roads. Along its way, the swirling stormwater picked up animal feces and herbicides from parks and yards, as well as asbestos, oil, and grease from roads. Before the rainfall ended, 4.5 billion litres of rainwater had gushed into the labyrinth of storm sewers under the metropolis.

At seven o'clock, people began to rise, taking showers, brushing teeth, and flushing toilets in 1.5 million households. By eight o'clock, when most had left for work or school, 770 million litres of wastewater had gone down household drains and into the sanitary sewer system. Combined storm and sanitary sewers were overflowing, and a noxious brew of stormwater and untreated sewage was flowing into local rivers or surging towards the sewage treatment plants. By nine o'clock, the hopelessly overburdened treatment plants began to bypass partially treated effluent directly into the nearshore of Lake Ontario.

Drivers sat in traffic with their windows closed, to avoid the exhaust from tailpipes, and listened to morning radio. “Heavier than usual traffic on the Don Valley southbound, the 401 westbound slow in both express and collector lanes,” the announcers said.

Unseen by commuters, the brown and swollen rivers in the area disgorged their loads of sediments and toxic chemicals into Lake Ontario. At the river mouths, fishermen tossed their catches back into the lake, mindful of the signs that warned against eating fish. “Just a reminder to stay out of the water at area beaches for two days after this rainfall,” the radio voices continued. By mid-morning, public health officials would be testing water at the beaches lining the waterfront; in less than a week, many would be closed to swimmers.

“Cloudy this morning, sunny later with highs of 25 degrees.” Along with the afternoon sunshine would come high levels of eye-stinging smog. “And cooler temperatures tonight, especially near the lake. All in all,” said the news readers, “a pretty average day in Greater Toronto.”