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OFFICE of the MAYOR

Douglas Downey, Chair  
The Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway  
185 King St. Suite 100  
Peterborough, ON K9J 2R8.

**Dear Mr. Downey:**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the discussion on the future of the Trent-Severn Waterway.

**Background:** The Township of Muskoka Lakes encompasses a large geographic area around lakes Muskoka, Rosseau and Joseph. Our municipal boundaries extend from the Severn River north to Parry Sound District. Within our 781.6 sq kilometres lie 80 lakes and several prominent rivers, including the Moon, Musquash, and the Severn. The natural beauty of the shorelines and the abundance of wildlife make Muskoka Lakes a pre-eminent tourism destination.

Our Severn River shoreline extends from Lost Channel near Big Chute to just east of the Swift Rapids lock. There is no road access to this north shore of the Severn River in our municipality. As such, residents gain access from marinas in Severn Township, Georgian Bay Township and the portions of the Severn River that fall within the Town of Gravenhurst's borders.

**Issues for consideration by the panel:** To date we find that the policies of the Trent Severn Waterway work well with our vision and guidelines. Our municipality has very restrictive guidelines to preserve shoreline vegetation and to prevent the built form from dominating the natural form. As such we support the direction that has been taken by the Trent Severn Waterway to preserve the natural heritage and environment along the Severn River. That being said, there are some issues that need to be addressed.

- A) Water levels: Living on a river with navigation locks and control dams means extreme fluctuations in water levels at times. I am told that water can drop or rise as much as a foot overnight. Residents are most interested in water level management plans that provide more predictability and stability for shoreline structures and navigation.
- B) Recreation: Having the locks or the marine railway closed for maintenance or labour disputes is a perennial concern for residents along the river. It is important that the navigation infrastructure remains in excellent condition and that management maintains good working relationships with staff.

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- C) Red tape: In terms of shoreline structures, Parks Canada's requirements are more restrictive than the Township of Muskoka Lakes'. To get a building permit, a resident on the Severn River must first have a permit from Parks Canada. While we are happy to assist residents in sorting out the bureaucracy of building on the Severn River, residents have wondered if it would be possible for Parks Canada to streamline the process, or provide a one-window approach, similar to the Service Canada model. We would be interested in working with Parks Canada in this regard.
- D) Loss of water access as marinas close: The closure of the marina at the Big Chute has been a particular worry to residents who rely on water access to reach their cottages. Any new dwelling built with water access in the Township of Muskoka Lakes must provide evidence that they have a marina slip to provide access to their cottage. The closure of marinas will be a particular hardship to residents in our municipality, and places pressure on the municipality to find alternative means of access.
- E) Provision of municipal services: The fact that there is no direct road access to connect the residents who have seasonal homes on the Severn River to the rest of our municipality, means we have to rely on partnerships with other levels of government and other municipalities to ensure that residents can access their seasonal homes and receive the service they expect from municipal government.
- F) Destruction of habitat and social problems associated with camping on Crown land: Increasingly, camping on Crown land in the Pretty Channel has seen destruction of forests, littering and rowdy behaviour at campsites. This is a great concern to us. Better enforcement of these Crown land campsites would greatly assist. Again, there is a problem about ready access to the sites. By the time police officers reach the area, the damage is done. A Trent Severn marine patrol would be a godsend in this area and is something the panel might wish to consider.

We look forward with interest to the final report from the Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway

Sincerely,



Susan Pryke  
Mayor

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