

PRESENTATION TO THE PANEL ON THE FUTURE OF THE TRENT-SEVERN WATERWAY

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen of the Panel. My name is Jim Walden and I am the Mayor of Georgian Bay Township. Welcome to our Township which we refer to as the "Gateway to the Near North". More specifically, however, welcome to Port Severn which is the western terminus of the Trent-Severn Waterway and this waterway forms the southern boundary of our Township.

I, of course, have a responsibility to address this issue by virtue of my office. From a more parochial perspective, however, I am also resident on the Trent-Severn Waterway, have holidayed here since 1950 (or 57 years), have been a property owner since 1971 (or 36 years) and have lived full-time on the waterway since 2001 (or six years). I have lived its existence for a significant amount of the life of the waterway since its completion in 1920.

I must issue a disclaimer at the start of the presentation. For some reason our Township was omitted from the list of invited stakeholders who were consulted during the Trent-Severn Water Management study which reported on May 31, 2007. The extensive report on this study plus a number of other background and discussion papers have been published on the website. We began our deliberations from a rather cold start. We have a significant number of stakeholders to consult before providing a final municipal response. What you will hear today are the initial thoughts of a special committee of Council and some Muskoka District and Township Planner consultations but this presentation by no means represents a final submission with all stakeholder views represented. **We will follow this verbal presentation with a formal written submission by your September 30, 2007 requested submission date.** We wanted our preliminary views represented as early in the process as part of your iterative

consultations but we have to conduct further consultations and study in order to represent a truly broad-based Township position.

The form of the presentation will be to first discuss local factors that we consider pertinent to your deliberations followed by answers to the seven specific questions you posed to municipalities in your invitation to present.

LOCAL FACTORS

Township Geographic Description

The Township extends approximately 42 kilometers north to south and 24 kilometers east to west for a rough total of 1000 square kilometers. Highway 400 is the single north to south road in our Township. East to west there are several roads which characteristically end at an inland lake which in turn is generally serviced by private roads. There are two main water routes in the Township. A north/south inner channel services the Archipelago of the 30,000 Islands and the shoreline of Georgian Bay; and the Trent-Severn Waterway, which generally runs east/west, and forms our southern boundary. **It is worthy to note that the eastern shore of Georgian Bay has recently been designated a UNESCO Littoral Biosphere Reserve. This designated region connects almost directly with the Trent-Severn Waterway.**

Township Population Distribution

The Township comprises approximately 5030 households. The average population density is approximately 5 households per square kilometer. There are three semi-urban centers, MacTier in the north and Port Severn and Honey Harbour in the south. Apart from these concentrations, one can see by scrutiny of the map that the remaining population distribution is essentially strip type

development around the shores of inland lakes or is served by the north/south Archipelago water route or the east/west Trent-Severn Waterway route. **We are almost entirely a water-based community.**

Consider the following:

a. Number of Households in Township	5030
b. Port Severn Community Households (<u>GBT</u>)	602 (12% of a.)
c. Trent Severn Waterway Community (<u>GBT</u>)	873 (17% of a.)
d. Total of b, and c. Households	1475 (29% of a.)
e. Water Access Households on Trent-Sever	291 (33% of c.)

I have to mention that the Port Severn area is on the cusp of significant development. Considering sub-division applications and approvals and pending applications there is a short to medium term potential for 1000 more households in the Port Severn area. Capital plans are in place for the requisite expansion of water and sewage treatment capacities. When this development is completed the population concentration along the Trent-Severn Waterway could increase to in excess of 40% of our total Township population. **Is the Trent-Severn important to Georgian Bay Township and Port Severn in particular? You bet it is!**

Jurisdictional Issues

Jurisdictional issues are a major problem from several perspectives:

- a. Port Severn. Port Severn is the Western Terminus of the Trent-Severn Waterway. From Lock 45 to the west, Port Severn is part of Georgian Bay Township in the District of Muskoka. This portion of the town has municipal water and sewage treatment, a co-located community centre, a fire hall, a public works yard and a municipal office. From Lock 45 to the east, Port Severn is part of Severn Township in the County of Simcoe. There are few municipal services on this side of the Lock in spite of considerable commercial activity on this side, Ironically, when entering the western side of the town one encounters a "Welcome to Port Severn" sign. It is obvious that the epicenter of the town should be at the lock and dam. Nothing could be greater testament to the jurisdictional difficulty in Port Severn.

Port Severn has languished for 50 years from a development and planning perspective. If one enters Port Severn by boat, commercial development on the waterfront is quite evident but a drive through by car conveys an impression of a "down at the heels" village with traffic constricted to a single lane by a dam and two bridges. There is no street scape, no parking plan and no pedestrian sidewalks. There are inadequate municipal services with a consequent threat to the environment. There is little in the way of public access to the waterfront and there is not a single public serviced dock on this level of the waterway between Port Severn and the Big Chute. Is Port Severn, in its current state of planning disarray, the first point or the last point on the waterway that visitors should see? **It is recommended that, if nothing else, a joint planning body be formed for Port Severn, the point of entry or departure to/from the waterway.**

- b. Shoreline Management. In the same way as for Port Severn, the south shore of the rural part of the waterway in this area is the responsibility of the Township of Severn, in the County of Simcoe. The north shore is the

responsibility of the Township of Georgian Bay and the Township of Muskoka lakes, both in the District of Muskoka. Different official plans, zoning by-laws, Committees of Adjustment, Land Division Committees, planners and building officials operate in relative isolation of each other. Superimpose the jurisdiction of Parks Canada over shoreline development, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the provincial and federal environmental agencies and one starts to see quite a "patchwork quilt".

No consultant could possibly devise such a management structure. The result is widely divergent standards of development on one side of a body of water as opposed to the other. Your public is unhappy. Six months to receive an answer from Parks Canada on simple proposals to build a dock, as a for instance, is simply unacceptable service. Parks Canada standards of shoreline development are unacceptably low when compared to municipal government standards and treat citizens within the municipality, resident on different bodies of water, inequitably. This tends to offend a principle of "quiet enjoyment of one's own property" and practices a principle of denying permissions in the absence of inherent harm. **The absence of a coherent and efficient management structure is simply unacceptable and must be rectified.**

Competing Priorities of Waterway Use

To those living on the shores of the waterway there is a pride of ownership and community which will always be at odds with the purpose of the waterway as a means of transportation and transient recreational use of the waterway. Of late, however, the interests of developers are becoming a third competing and increasingly threatening priority. While it is submitted that sensible policies and an effective management structure should be capable of resolving these conflicting priorities, as it has been pointed out above, it is firmly believed that such structures and policies are not in place and are unlikely to be in place given

the "patchwork quilt" of responsibilities as described above. **Is the necessary foresight and planning for the future apt to be in place under the current situation? I fear not.**

As an example, I previously mentioned the very real possibility of significant development in the Port Severn area. The area is zoned for commercial and high density residential use; however, there is not a significant amount of developable waterfront land available and what is available has already been banked by developers. There are no public water access points in the Port Severn area or in the whole of this level of the Trent-Severn Waterway. This is a deficiency in planning and raises the very real possibility of the general public, including transient users of the waterway, being shut off from access to the waterway. There is a very narrow window of opportunity to redress this planning oversight; however, **if the responsible levels of government do not act, this lack of foresight has the capability to seriously compromise the use of the waterway as a transportation corridor or for recreational use.**

Logistics Infrastructure

The developmental factor discussed above has greater potential impact on the waterway than simple access to the waterway from land. Some of the largest waterfront holdings at this level of the waterway are marinas. The economic reality for many of these marinas is that there is more profit in selling the land for development rather than continuing operations as a marina. In the past 12 months, three marinas have indicated their intent to close within the near future. A fourth is listed for sale at this moment and may or may not continue as a marina. **This situation not only has grave impact on water access residents but also a serious and long term implication. There may simply cease to be**

sufficient shore based logistics infrastructure to support the waterway as a water-based recreational transit corridor.

Crown Land Use

Unregulated camping on Crown Land is becoming an increasing problem throughout the Township of Georgian Bay including on those pieces of Crown Land along the waterway. A quick survey at this level of the waterway showed five parcels for picnicking and three parcels for camping. There are additional parcels above the Big Chute, especially in the Lost Channel and Pretty Channel areas where the problem of unregulated campers has become particularly acute. The Ministry of Natural Resources apparently does not have the resources to establish and maintain even the most basic of infrastructure on these parcels, let alone regulate and police the use of these. Garbage and human waste is evident over these parcels and trees and underbrush is being indiscriminately cut for firewood. Where old infrastructures such as docks exist, they are in decay and represent a safety hazard. **There is simply poor stewardship of this land. There is an increasing demand for active transportation routes for such activities as canoeing and kayaking. If properly regulated, use of such areas could be complimentary and inoffensive. If these areas were ceded to respective municipalities under land-use agreements, municipalities could regulate and police use of such properties by By-law. If a system of camping permits, similar to fishing and hunting licenses, was introduced, revenues could be utilized for the ongoing supervision of such areas.**

PANEL QUESTIONS

1. What are the essential values of the waterway from the standpoint of your community?

Answer. It is our preliminary view that the waterway should support the following values:

- Provide a chain of lakes and rivers supporting low density waterfront residential development
- Provide a transportation corridor on behalf of water-access only property owners, recreational power-boat users and active transportation enthusiasts such as kayakers and canoers
- Provide a recreational outlet for outdoor sports enthusiasts
- Act an economic generator for green power production, logistics support for waterway users, tourist operators and nodal urban development
- Protect and nurture the environment through the maintenance of natural habitat
- Provide a clean source of water supply
- Protect and educate on the historical and natural environment of the waterway

2. Is current water management decision-making reflecting your needs and expectations?

Answer. This is not currently an issue in our area.

3. What tools and changes should be put in place to ensure that agencies and orders of government work together?

Answer. Identify required management, co-ordination and funding activities to fulfill the essential tasks of the waterway as an entity. Responsibility for execution should be delegated to the lowest practical level in order to achieve the overall aims of the waterway. i.e. standards, funding, infrastructure creation and renewal, water management and heritage maintenance would seem impractical for conduct at less than a national or provincial level. It is impractical to see

shoreline development managed at these same levels because this is an established function of municipal governments. Similarly, land use policies and supervision is the responsibility of municipalities. Where fragmentation of municipal responsibilities exists, such as in our area, put joint planning mechanisms in place to ensure coordinated accomplishment of the waterway aims.

4. How can communities benefit economically, environmentally and socially from a future sustainable waterway and what programmes should government put in place to ensure that happens?

Answer. As discussed above, the waterway is a significant factor in the economic, environmental and social fabric of this municipality. The world has recognized the Georgian Bay Littoral Biosphere Reserve and the Rideau Canal as deserving of world recognition. It seems axiomatic that this waterway, which is a national historic site, cutting a 386 km swath through the middle of Ontario, and completing a circumnavigation route with the Great Lakes, will remain in place. The task remains to identify a management structure at respective levels of government to co-ordinate, plan for and pro-actively manage this hugely significant waterway.

5. How can the varied cultural heritage resources along the Waterway be protected and its important story told?

Answer. Surely this is a task for the Federal government. If this is identified as a programme in the management of the waterway then modalities can be designed to achieve these aims. In order to accomplish this on site, however, one must have the facilities and infrastructure in place to make it attractive for transients to stop and "smell the roses"

6. How can jurisdictions better co-operate and integrate their efforts to protect and restore the natural environment?

Answer. This can only be accomplished through top-down leadership rather than bottom-up initiative. It must first be determined, however, whether this is being addressed adequately by the respective jurisdictions now? If not, why not?

7. How can governments work together to ensure that the waterway plays an important role in satisfying increasing demands for outdoor recreation coming from a growing Greater Golden Horseshoe?

Answer. As discussed above, this requires a coherent definition of responsibilities and a well-defined management structure to ensure the waterway achieves its full potential.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for indulging us today. I wish to conclude with one final remark. The residents of Georgian Bay Township have found the Trent-Severn Waterway as a place to cottage and, increasingly, as a place to live permanently because of the original infrastructure put in place over the 20th century. Developers are starting to find it at the start of the 21st Century. You are already aware of the pressures that the growth of the Greater Golden Horseshoe is going to bring to bear for transient/recreational use of the waterway. The Trent-Severn Waterway, particularly in the area from Port Severn to Lake Simcoe, is a destination. It must continue to be developed and marketed as a destination. This requires coherent management structures and effective and timely business planning and execution to develop and preserve this

wonderful heritage site. Only by this means can we resolve the inevitable conflicts that will arise between the conflicting values of the waterway. Population expansion will, with all certainty, bring change. The science is in the purposeful, intelligent and timely management of this change.