

## THE BIG PICTURE

If one focuses on the recreational aspect of the Trent-Severn Waterway and the revenue generated by businesses located along the system – marinas, lodges, etc. – one can easily lose sight of the big picture.

Consider that in the short section between Fenelon Falls and Peterborough – which includes Lindsay, Burnt River, Bobcaygeon, Buckhorn, Burleigh Falls, Young's Point and Lakefield – a population in the order of 100,000 people are entirely dependant on the system for water. Think also of the business and industry that couldn't exist were it not for the water supply the Trent-Severn provides. We are not talking about the tens of millions of dollars the recreational aspect pumps into the economy, we are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars and perhaps billions.

We should also be reminded of the fact that the waterway acts as a huge reservoir holding back the heavy spring rains and melting snow and by so doing reduces the likelihood of flooding the cottages, homes and businesses that have, over time, been allowed to locate on the flood plain of the system. No water management and the cost of flooding could run to many more millions.

In fact, I would argue the cost to maintain the system is small if not miniscule compared to the cost of failing to do so.

And the big picture – as I have earlier referred to in this paper - must now include development of the hydro-electric generation potential. Clean, renewable energy that will help with the phase out of all coal fired plants and perhaps even delay the construction of more nuclear plants until the problem of storing the radioactive waste produced by these plants has been solved.

# *The Recreational Aspect*

## Panel on the future of the Trent-Severn Waterway

In my opinion the Trent-Severn Waterway has no future if this panel fails to do its work well and so, ladies and gentlemen I implore you to pay attention to what you hear, chase down every suggestion no matter how improbable some might initially seem to be and think outside the box.

The Trent-Severn Waterway management team has done a creditable job of managing the system given the constraints they cope with.

Those constraints appear to me as a layman to fall into two main categories. They are:

- a lack of adequate funding, and
- a tangle of overlapping regulatory and NGO bodies that seem incapable of seeing the whole picture, identifying their own unique place within that whole and working cooperatively with the other interests to serve and protect the public interest. This hodge podge must be eradicated beginning with removal of the waterway from the oversight of Parks Canada.

On that section of the system my wife and I frequent i.e. Burleigh upstream to Rosedale we find the lockmasters courteous and helpful. As a rule, the washrooms are clean but nowhere are there shower facilities. There are a handful of communities – Lakefield and Bobcaygeon being two – that have invested large amounts of money in additional docks as a way of attracting people off their boats to do some shopping. These are the first communities where shower facilities should be installed and made available to boaters for a small fee. As well, internet cafes should also be installed so that boaters can easily keep in touch with home and/or business and, again, a small fee would be in order. Perhaps other communities along the system would finally get the message and begin to invest in the system as a matter of self interest.

Perhaps because of financial constraints, perhaps because of the competing interests I have referred to earlier there is an appalling lack of technical innovation being applied to the system itself and to its management. I will provide an example of each:

- Navigational aids – primarily floating steel red and green buoys – buoys that can and do sink, that can be shifted out of position by heavy spring runoff, by ice or fishermen who tie up to them, that must be repaired, painted or replaced can be phased out by a sonar type system laid on the bottom of our lakes and rivers with the signal received by a small, inexpensive piece of equipment – similar to a depth sounder – that all boaters, not just the bigger cruisers (most of which are now equipped with GPS) can afford.

Development of such a system might well be assigned to the Colleges, Polytechnics and Universities that exist within the Trent-Severn watershed. This is a “doable”, practical project.

- The training that houseboat rental businesses provide their customers is not adequate. Now, I can understand renters do not want a day or even a half day of their precious vacation time taken up with lessons in navigation or the nautical rules of the road. Why

then is such basic information not provided at the time of rental – by e-mail perhaps – with the understanding that upon arrival the “designated captain” will be required to pass a simple test and then take the “on the water” handling instruction which is currently given. Simple and cost effective this would improve the climate for the safe enjoyment of everyone on the water.

Several of the lock basin walls are badly in need of repair. Cracks in, and missing chunks of concrete allow cascades of water to drench those boaters who do not know each lock and its own particular shower patterns and who therefore may unwittingly position themselves in the way of such showers. Apart from an unexpected shower one wonders how long such seepage can be allowed before the entire lock basin is so compromised as to require the system be completely shut down for safety reasons.

Earlier I suggested the decision to place the Waterway within the purview of Parks Canada was a mistake. The effect has been to improve Parks by diverting funding needed to maintain – not improve, but simply maintain – the waterway. The result is a waterway system in disrepair and in danger of total collapse. The dynamics of a waterway are fundamentally different from those of a campground and, I suggest, a lack of understanding of those differences was in some measure responsible for the failure of the Friends of the Trent-Severn – a not-for-profit volunteer group of mostly boaters that needed some support to be successful. What a shame! Perhaps I’m being a tiny bit caustic to suggest knowledgeable input from a group of system users was not wanted by the “powers that be” and so was allowed to expire.

A separate focused waterway Authority is needed, primarily funded by government but with the regulatory means to develop supplementary income streams in addition to those now in place i.e. car parking fees, overnight charges for boats, lockage fees etc. This Authority might well be vested in the private NOT public sector with appropriate reporting mechanisms to ensure the public interest is protected. While I hesitate to suggest a framework for such an Authority I do see it having responsibilities in at least the following areas:

- infrastructure maintenance and development
- environmental and water management issues
- revenue generation
- advertising both of the system itself as a tourist destination and of goods and services available along the system (like the ads on the boards in hockey arenas)

There are a number of other potential sources of revenue – beyond those already mentioned – some of which I will now record with comments.

- logs harvested by the lumber barons litter the Scugog River bottom and should be recovered and sold. Now then, some will argue that removal of the logs will destroy fish habitat but one wonders how restoration of a river to its original condition i.e. it’s pristine condition before the lumber barons’ despoiling activities can be a bad thing. Were there no fish in the river prior to the logging? Commercial log recovery operations are taking place in a number of our rivers including the Ottawa river. Why not on the Trent-Severn?

- As a practical matter, development by private enterprise of hydraulic means for generating energy simply must be encouraged and the Trent-Severn Waterway must insist on benefiting from the use of its waters for this purpose. Lock 22 on the Otonabee River is the current candidate.
- Many years ago (I would guess about 55 years) the Federal Government refunded that portion of tax on a gallon of gas intended to be spent on roads but refunded because the fuel was being used in a boat. I remember applying for the refund each fall. Why cannot these road taxes – on fuel used for marine purposes – not be diverted for waterway maintenance. Every marina on the system will have precise records of gallonage sales of gasoline and diesel.

I will end this dissertation on a note of resignation in that I doubt very much this Panel will – with all the good intentions in the world – have the slightest impact on the bureaucracy. However, I do wish you well and good luck. You're going to need it.