



WRITTEN/VERBAL PRESENTATION TO TSW PANEL SEPTEMBER 13, 2007, LAKEFIELD

Opening remarks

On behalf of the County of Peterborough of Peterborough, I would like to thank the Panel for allowing us the time to make a formal presentation. The Trent-Severn Waterway is an extremely integral part of our County as it provides our residents and visitors with recreational, employment and tourism opportunities. At the same time, it is a living entity unto its own as it possesses its own unique ecosystems, environments and wildlife habitats. All combined, the Trent-Severn Waterway continues to be a source of both pride and criticism as you have no doubt heard throughout your public consultations.

By way of introduction, the TSW divides the County of Peterborough in half and also draws upon our many waterbodies as feeder lakes. Within the County, 12 of the 44 locks in the system, or 27%, are located in Peterborough County. In addition, 140 kms of the 386 kms, or 36%, run through the County.

According to your mandate, the key issues facing the Waterway are as follows:

- Deteriorating Infrastructure
- Understanding and Protecting Significant Historic Resources
- Provide Public Education and Understanding
- Competing Water Allocation Demands including those for lake users, hydro generation, canal flows
- Protecting Natural Resources Changing Visitor Patterns
- Antiquated Mandate, Legislation & Jurisdiction

The County has prepared a brief presentation that addresses some of these very important issues.

Presentation of Issues and Recommendations

In response to some of the issues facing the Panel, the County of Peterborough is providing the following comments and recommendations for your consideration.

Improving Water Quality

There has been a substantial amount of development and redevelopment along the waterway in the last number of years. New development standards contained in Township and County Official Plans help to provide greater setbacks from the waterfront and encourage naturalized shoreline areas. Larger scale developments have in some cases been subject to detailed lot level plans (similar to “mini” site plans for each residential lot) which incorporates the naturalized shoreline so that lot purchasers are aware of this requirement prior to purchasing properties. In addition to these strategies, new and improved forms of septic systems and communal systems are being utilized for these developments thereby providing for a greater level of treatment for effluent from development compared to older systems servicing existing developments along the waterway. In addition, it is a noted fact along the waterway that cottage conversions have been prominent for the last number of years. Cottages which were developed for seasonal use are now being utilized as principle residences with year round occupancy. This trend does not seem to be slowing and one must recognize that these properties are now being used for full-time homes as opposed to seasonal cottages which constituted the original intent when they were created. In our view it is the older developments/cottage areas that are having the most significant impact on water quality along the waterway. Many of the old septic systems may not be functioning properly and are certainly not setback from the shoreline to the degree that new developments are required to. In order to actively address a way to improve water quality along the waterway it is suggested that the Federal government provide funding to undertake a septic re-inspection program along the waterway. Such a program would identify systems that are working ineffectively which in turn are possibly contributing to water quality issues along the waterway. Remedial action could then be undertaken to correct the problem. Although recognizing this could be a costly venture, if the TSW is serious about improving water quality, we believe that this program could be an instrumental step in achieving that goal.

Boaters who disregard the importance of water quality need to be made aware of the impacts of their environmentally unsound practices. The dumping of grey water when traveling has its own set of impacts upon water quality and in this regard, we recommend a public awareness program aimed at curtailing such practices.

Related to the topic of water quality and shoreline strategies, the TSW has undertaken to draft a set of internal working policies for matters along the shoreline. This new policy only relates to such matters as dock placement, boathouses, dredging and weed harvesting. It does not address land use matters within the upland areas of the waterway. While the TSW is no doubt aware of impacts from upland development, there is no legal jurisdiction to suggest ways of curtailing development and/or the effects of shoreline development. However, unlike the Provincial Policy Statement for Land Use Planning, or the Oak Ridges Moraine Act, there is no legislation in place that actually requires approval authorities to abide by certain development standards or criteria for upland areas along the TSW. While the prospect of having to be governed by yet another piece of legislation is not wholeheartedly embraced, the implementation of a goal statement or policy statement that approval authorities will consider when making decisions about development along the waterway may be a means to assist in lessening the effects of shoreline development.

Changes in Water Levels

County Councilors and staff have heard the frustrations of many lakefront property owners who have had to deal with dramatic lake level changes. This is particularly evident in many of the

feeder lakes that provide water to keep the main system at a certain level. Most times, logs are removed from the dams without any prior notification or widespread broadcast of such occurrences and result in both economic and environmental impacts. Many land owners have witnessed situations where their boats, that were once in the water, were resting on the bottom of the waterbody. In some cases, this has also caused damage to the boat itself. If some sort of prior notification was issued at least some property owners would be able to take appropriate action to avoid such consequences. In addition, many environmental impacts result from drastic lake level changes. Loon eggs become destroyed when water levels rise quickly because they are permeable to water, and fish spawning areas and other wildlife habitat are destroyed when lake levels plummet. We understand that the science behind keeping levels in the main system can be very complicated, but there must be a re-evaluation of what parts of the Waterway are no longer needed and a subsequent review of water budget requirements based upon the impacts on feeder lakes.

Local Economic Spin-offs

Increasing water quality as noted above may also assist in improving a declining sport fish population. Sport fishermen are active users of the waterway and an increase in sport fishing activities would prove to have positive economic spin-offs for local businesses (ie, food and lodging, gas, fishing and boating supplies).

As this panel is aware, a number of communities along the waterway have developed waterfront parks and facilities. A number of events are hosted at these parks each year. In order keep the boating public informed, it is suggested that the TSW website provide an opportunity for communities to link an Events Page to the site. Knowledge of local events along the waterway may assist local municipalities in promoting events and deriving additional community economic benefits in addition to increasing waterway and lockage usage for interested boaters.

Increasing Activities for Non-boaters

According to research as posted on the TSW website, land-based visits far exceed vessel/lock use. Less people own boats however people enjoy watching the locking experience or generally just take pleasure in being near the water. In order to provide a greater historical/cultural context to the locking areas it is suggested that historic plaques be installed at all locks. The plaques could incorporate the past history of the area (before the waterway was constructed) and gear it towards interesting specific local information. Possibly these plaques could be developed by and partnered with the TSW, local Historical Societies, BIA's, Chambers of Commerce and the local municipalities. This would increase the experience for the largest group visiting the waterway; the non-boater.

In order to further capitalize on this trend of increased visitation by non-boaters, the Panel might consider adding other amenities for which a charge could be levied to the user. Water access is restricted to the public due to the vast private ownership of the shoreline. However, the Federal government does own 34 sq. kms of upland property of which some could be developed as beaches, camping facilities and possibly some supporting commercial ventures. This would also assist in providing some additional revenue.

Deteriorating Infrastructure

It is recognized that the waterway flows through several municipal (37) and upper tier (8) jurisdictions. A single governing body must continue to be responsible for ownership and maintenance of the system and its infrastructure. Municipalities, both upper and lower tier, cannot be expected to handle the burden of this infrastructure. The financial needs of the system (operating/maintenance budget plus capital) are well beyond the financial capabilities of the municipalities. This is a national historic park with significant infrastructure and should continue to be owned and maintained by the level of government that has the financial capacity for maintaining such a system. It would appear that the existing governance model is not inappropriate. The TSW has been neglected to the point where capital, maintenance and rehabilitation costs are excessive. Photos of 2 local sites have been included to illustrate the presence of deteriorating infrastructure. It is neither responsible nor appropriate to suggest that the matters surrounding the operation of TSW should be managed by some agency other than the Federal government. In order to assist in operational challenges imposed by deteriorating infrastructure, it is suggested that the Panel give consideration to the development of a multi-year Asset Management Plan that ties together scheduled inspection and maintenance with capital improvements. Having one governing body would ensure continuity of funding and program delivery.

Revenue and Sustainability

At present, there are 18 hydro-electric power generating facilities along the TSW. With the emphasis on “green power” generation, it would appear that the establishment of new generation facilities placed appropriately along the TSW is supportable. While the historic nature of the canal system may currently be questionable at best, the construction of new facilities would not necessarily detract from its cultural appeal. At the same time renewable energy is lessening our reliance on other, more “brown”, sources of energy. By imposing a fee based either on power generation rates, or a flat fee based on a contractual arrangement, operation and/or capital revenues can be realized. This also reduces the burden on the Canadian public for tax contributions. While it is not known how much revenue could be garnered from this type of arrangement, it is one worth exploring as it not only provides for ongoing revenue but also is an environmentally sound alternative for power generation.

Promotion, Advertising and Public Education

The promotion of the TSW as a visitor site or tourism destination has not been prevalent in past years. It would be interesting to find out how much of the overall budget for the TSW is spent (outside of any trade shows) on direct marketing and advertising. While visitation by non-boaters is up, usage at locks is down along with the associated revenue from lockage. Creating a visitor experience program for travelling through the locks should be considered. This involves a strong and appealing marketing campaign that could be launched nationally and in the U.S. Targeting campaigns to spark interest and usage of the locks will only add to revenues. If this endeavour is targeted or coupled with new/improved on-shore sites (beaches, parks, etc.) then there is an even wider appeal and perhaps a greater scale of economy for advertising expenditures. I'm sure our joint County-City Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation would be interested in partnership suggestions.

Closing Remarks

You, as the Panel appointed by the Federal Government, have a daunting task before you. You have been charged with the responsibility to document community values and benefits that the waterway provides to Canadians as well as understand what the public at large expects regarding the purpose and operating efficiencies of the system. In addition, you must draft a shared vision for the future of the TSW. Your report is expected to address the issues, challenges and opportunities of jurisdictional responsibilities; alternative governance mechanisms and how to fund the waterway. Finally, you as the Panel must develop ways to achieve the Federal Government's mandate for Parks Canada for the protection of cultural and natural resources while advancing public education and creating memorable visitor experiences. This is no small enviable task and we wish you well in your endeavour to fully achieve the Panel's mandate. We hope that the suggestions and recommendations provided by the County will assist you in completing your assignment. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to express our views on some of the matters affecting the Trent-Severn Waterway.