

Presentation to the Panel on the

Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway

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Minden

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Presentation to the Panel on the TSW

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for allowing the Haliburton County Development Corporation (HCDC) to attend this meeting and to comment on several of the discussion papers put out by the TSW. First, I would like to congratulate the TSW for distributing some very informative discussion papers that provide the history of the TSW and identify many areas of concern.

The HCDC is a federally funded not for profit community futures development corporation funded by Industry Canada. Our mandate is to create jobs in Haliburton County and to contribute to strategic community planning and community economic development in our area. I am the manager and have a board of directors of 15 that represent business and residents from all municipalities.

On behalf of HCDC, I would like to comment on the Discussion Paper #4 as it relates to Sustainable Community Economic Development, Discussion Paper # 5 as it relates to Board Governance and Discussion Paper # 6 as it relates to Jurisdiction.

By way of an introduction, I would like to look at the demographics of our region when it was first designated as a reservoir for the TSW and as it looks today.

Initially, the Haliburton Highlands was comprised of small hamlets with the majority of the population centred around Haliburton and Minden. The impact of the fluctuating water levels was not a big concern as what became the reservoir lakes, for the most part, were only sparsely inhabited. Today, while much of the permanent population of 16,000 is still located around the two small villages, there are another 50,000 people residing on properties located around the several dozen lakes that comprise the reservoir lakes of the TSW. Fluctuating water levels are a big concern for these property owners.

Regarding Discussion Paper #4 – Sustainable Community Economic Development

Water Management comments

The paper refers to the 160 dams and water control structures and the benefits this has created. It infers that the attractiveness of the area for boating and lifestyle residential activity is the result of the TSW. This being said, it is now imperative to manage the system and maintain reasonable water levels in the Haliburton reservoir lakes in order to maintain this attractive lifestyle, which is a vital part of the economy of our area. This cannot be stressed enough. To maintain a balance between the needs of the TSW and the needs of the residents on the reservoir lakes is indeed a juggling act affected by many variables but in June of this year some of the waterways were no longer navigable as the water levels were too low. Having our lakes full has a direct effect on property values.

Lifestyle Economy comments

The paper points out the economic impacts and environmental requirements of the communities along the TSW. I would agree but ask the Panel to acknowledge these impacts and environmental requirements are the same for the reservoir lakes. Actually, residents in the Haliburton Highlands should be seen as stewards for the quality of the water entering the TSW.

Cost Avoidance comments

The paper states the TSW saves the area in terms of flood control but, poor water management resulting in low water levels costs the area with decreased boating, lifestyle, property values and taxes.

Where the economic value of the waterway lies comments

The paper acknowledges it is possible that the economic contributions of seasonal and permanent waterfront development exceed those of tourism. Assuming the communities around the Haliburton Reservoir lakes are considered a part of the waterway then these communities will derive a long-term benefit from good water management of the TSW. Conversely, a community's ability to be sustainable is reduced as a result of poor water management.

Generating Sustainable Economic benefit comments

The Haliburton Highlands has been steadily developing its waterfronts and the County Government is determined to protect the natural environment including lake water quality. The TSW is also dependent on the good water quality found in the reservoir lakes. While there is a benefit to Haliburton keeping the lakes and rivers clean, there is also an economic cost and lost income by limiting development, limiting lake capacity with designated protective zoning.

Therefore, it is reasonable for the TSW to acknowledge Haliburton County as a partner and consider projects in Haliburton County as part of the rejuvenation of the TSW. Projects could include marine railways, hydro electric projects and fisheries (spawning and ladders).

Regarding Discussion Paper #5 – Board Governance

The paper reviewed a number of models for consideration and concluded with a question, What do you think?

Whatever governance model is chosen one of the key challenges will be communicating with your members. In this case, your members are the stakeholders along the TSW (including the reservoir lakes).

In reviewing other responses to the Panel, I note other communities have had challenges communicating with the TSW. I read in the Scugog Standard that Sandy Beaton of the local group Scugog Lake Stewards, noted that it seems “the TSW regards only those communities located on a lock as part of the system.” Mayor Marilyn Pearce told the panel “a lack of communication” was certainly seen by Scugog as a prime issue in dealing with the TSW.

At a recent public meeting in Minden, one of the TSW representatives responded to the water level frustrations by saying “that the people in Lindsay sure do like their water levels”. I realize the remark may have been said lightly, however, it frustrates communities to be ignored or not taken seriously.

Regarding Discussion Paper #6 - Jurisdiction

In 1988, the acting Director, Land Management Branch, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources “confirmed his understanding that no ownership problems exists (sic) along the Rideau Canal and that it falls under federal jurisdiction.” He also “felt that the Trent-Severn Waterway was also federal jurisdiction with the exception of the reservoir lakes, which included in his definition, Haliburtons, Simcoe and Couchiching.” Later on in the paper, it states;

There is no record that the governments have discussed the “ownership of natural resources” issue particularly ownership of the water. Issues with respect to the reservoir lakes have not been discussed.

The Panel is soliciting the views of both Canada and Ontario on the jurisdictional questions and options presented in the foregoing paper. Specifically, the following question was advanced regarding the Haliburton Lakes.

How should jurisdiction and responsibilities be exercised over the Haliburton reservoir lakes?

While The HCDC is not qualified to determine whose responsibilities the Haliburton Lakes fall under, we feel it is essential to consult with the Haliburton Lake stakeholders allowing them to be part of the process for determining which level of government will assume responsibility and the manner by which they will control the Reservoir Lakes.

Conclusion

Benefits of the TSW to the communities are described in the discussion paper #4 but it does not acknowledge the costs to the area when the TSW drains the reservoir lakes.

Therefore, given the costs, it is reasonable TSW should consider projects in Haliburton County as part of the rejuvenation of the TSW. Projects could include, but not be limited to, marine railways, hydro electric projects and fisheries (spawning and ladders). Projects such as these could help offset some of the costs that go along with being designated reservoir lakes.

Communication and respect for the opinions and suggestions from the residents of the reservoir lakes is important. Please ensure the residents of Haliburton Highlands are stakeholders and are included in the governance model for the TSW.

Finally, we agree with the response by Dr. Richard Staples when he “urge(s) all interested parties, which in effect include all Canadians, to look closely at what the present and continuing partnership arrangement is for the TSW within its acknowledged multi-jurisdictional environment”.

Thanks to the Panel for the opportunity today to present comments on some of the discussion papers. I hope I have been able to share the concern we as residents of Haliburton County have for the future management and stakeholder relationship of the TSW. Haliburton County has untapped expertise and energies to be productive contributors to a new governance board and await the opportunity to participate.

Best Regards,

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