

A Presentation to the Panel on the Future of the Trent Severn Waterway by Environment Haliburton!

Good afternoon. Members of the Panel: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is 'Mieke Foster and I am a member of Environment Haliburton!, a local non-governmental organization that takes a comprehensive view of environmental issues and provides a strong voice to encourage positive, attainable, and sustainable environmental initiatives and oppose those that could have an adverse effect on the environment.

We believe that the public consultations now taking place provide an excellent opportunity to express our concerns on a topic that few presentations to date have addressed: Protecting and Conserving Water.

Canada is a land of lakes and rivers and for generations we have been told that we have an unlimited supply of water. We treat our water accordingly: we let our taps run and run to rinse off a single toothbrush, we water our lawns with treated drinking water and we allow all manner of pollutants to enter our sewers and storm water systems.

We can not continue in this wasteful manner. Water is now a commodity and is being bottled and sold around the world. Our neighbours to the south look with envious eyes at our seemingly unlimited supply as they continue to build homes in waterless deserts and see their crops wither away for lack of rainfall.

Wasting water also wastes energy. And wasting energy contributes to Climate Change.

What, you may ask, does this have to do with the Trent Severn Waterway? Haliburton has a large number of lakes and rivers. Haliburton is also the headwaters of three major Ontario watersheds from which water flows east to the Ottawa River, south to Lake Ontario and west to Georgian Bay. Some of our lakes are also part of the reservoir lake system supplying water to maintain the on-going operation of the Trent Severn Waterway.

Without Haliburton's stored water, the Trent Severn Waterway would suffer, boats would become lake-locked, golf courses would turn brown, communities downstream would not have enough water for their citizens' basic needs, and businesses would suffer.

The critically important role of the reservoir and headwater lakes and rivers should not be ignored, rather it should be acknowledged, protected and enhanced. The review of the Trent Severn Waterway provides a timely opportunity to address those roles.

How?

1. **Water should be protected at its source.** Many years ago, New York City recognized that a continuous supply of clean water meant that it would need to work with the communities up-river to ensure that they protected the water that would one day reach the City. Environment Haliburton! believes that the Trent Severn Waterway and the communities downstream, who need our water, should be working with and supporting the reservoir lake communities in Haliburton to ensure that the water is protected at its source.

Support includes, but is not limited to the following:

- a) providing assistance for the development of Lake Plans
 - b) ensuring that municipal Official Plans protect all wetlands and not just those that are provincially significant
 - c) requiring regular inspection of all septic systems and upgrading, if required
 - d) planting trees to control runoff and help mitigate the effects of Climate Change, and
 - e) renaturalizing lake and river shorelines that have been hardened.
2. **Water should be conserved.** Communities on the Trent Severn Waterway that are downstream from the reservoir lakes, as well as the reservoir lake communities themselves, should assume responsibility for minimizing their water usage, thus ensuring a stable water supply throughout.

This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- a) requiring residences and businesses on a municipal water system to be metered and charged for that water based on the unsubsidized cost to supply the service
- b) supporting the installation of low flow showers, taps and toilets for residences and businesses
- c) encouraging naturalized gardens and the planting of trees, shrubs and flowers that require minimal watering
- d) supporting the collection and usage of rainwater to supplement the municipal water supply for use in toilets and washing machines
- e) upgrading municipal water infrastructure to prevent leakage, and
- f) requiring those with water-taking permits to renew them every five years, to demonstrate a need for the water requested, and to submit a water conservation plan.

Members of the Panel have been presented with the daunting task of evaluating the future role of the Trent Severn Waterway. You are being asked to provide a vision that will enable the Trent Severn Waterway to be all things for all people, but this may prove to be an impossible task.

There are many vested and often conflicting interests. Environment Haliburton! asks that you rise above these various interests and focus unwaveringly on water as a

valuable an increasingly scarce resource not to be squandered, but to be protected and conserved.

Recognizing the importance of water, perhaps in the preamble to your report, will send an important message consistent with the provincial Source Water Protection Act, the Clean Water Act and the bi-national Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Each one of us has a responsibility for protecting and conserving water both at its source and as it is being used.

For more information on Environment Haliburton! please visit our Website at www.environmenthaliburton.ca.

For the past four years, Environment Haliburton! has published an Enviro Book, a collection of articles with a strong environmental focus. A copy of each issue is being presented to you for your archives.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you today.