



Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway Commission sur l'avenir de la voie navigable Trent-Severn

Terms of Reference

Introduction/Background

Since 1833, the dream and reality of a navigable Waterway from Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay has been part of the fabric of central Ontario. The Trent-Severn Waterway was designated a national historic site as early as 1929, and today is appreciated by more than 130,000 boaters each year and more than a million land visitors that visit its 44 lock stations. Hundreds of thousands of people live along the Waterway's shorelines in cities, towns and villages as well as cottage and rural residential developments. Eighteen generating stations produce green energy and more than 35 species at risk live along its length.

The Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site of Canada is managed by Parks Canada. The existing Trent-Severn Waterway Management Plan was completed in 2000. Parks Canada must now review the current management plan.

The challenges in implementing the current management plan have led to the realization that the Trent-Severn Waterway is at a crossroads. Infrastructure deterioration, changing visitor patterns, the Waterway's presence within a rapidly-growing Greater Golden Horseshoe, competing demands for water, and the quality of the Waterway's natural environment all offer challenges beyond the capacity of a single agency to manage.

These challenges have been recognized as impeding the potential associated with the Waterway. In the spring 2006, MP Bruce Stanton introduced the following motion (M-161) in the House of Commons:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should consider the advisability of evaluating the future of the historic Trent-Severn Waterway, one of Parks Canada's National Historic Sites, and its potential to become: (a) a premier recreational asset; (b) a world-class destination for recreational boaters; (c) a greater source of clean, renewable electrical power; (d) a facilitator of economic opportunity and renewal in the communities along its 386 km length; and (e) a model of environmental sustainability.

The House passed this motion unanimously on October 18, 2006.

The challenges and opportunities associated with maintaining and enhancing the Waterway as a sustainable contributor to Canada and Central Ontario has led the federal Minister of the Environment to endorse the creation of an independent panel to report on significant questions and opportunities associated with the Waterway's future .

The Challenge

The Trent-Severn Waterway is a nationally significant historic, cultural, ecological and recreational corridor with the potential to serve Canadians more broadly and more effectively than is the present case. The economic and social environment within which

the Waterway operates has changed dramatically however the mandate and associated tools for its management have not.

Providing for navigation was the Waterway's original mandate. As a National Historic Site, the protection and presentation of nationally-significant cultural resources is also an essential obligation. Beyond those goals, the modern Waterway must, in a sustainable manner, contribute to the recreational and lifestyle economy, access to water-based enjoyment, green power generation, protection of natural resources and critical community water sources, support of economically sustainable communities, and telling a compelling story of the evolution of Central Ontario and canal technology.

Determining how best that can be achieved and by whom is the challenge facing the Panel.

Purpose of the Mandate Review

The purpose of the Mandate Review is to assess and make recommendations to the federal Minister of the Environment concerning the future contributions and management of the Trent-Severn Waterway. Broadly, the review will recommend a new Vision for the Waterway that will ensure its long term effectiveness and sustainability and optimize the full range of contributions that it makes to Canada and Central Ontario: More specifically the Review will suggest

- How to protect and present the Waterway's cultural heritage;
- Ways of assuring the future of the Waterway natural environment;
- How the Waterway can contribute to the present and future outdoor recreational needs of Canadians and particularly the growing and diverse population of the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
- A water management regime that is seen to meet the demands and expectations of a diverse array of stakeholders and needs;
- A framework for jurisdictional and inter-agency coordination and governance along the Waterway corridor;
- Ways in which the Waterway can contribute to economically sustainable communities, including the role of renewable energy; and,
- A sustainable funding framework.

Process

A six member, expert panel has been appointed to undertake the review. The Panel will be independent and report directly to the Minister. Parks Canada input into the Panel process will be primarily through submissions in the consultation process.

The federal Minister of the Environment will select the Chair and the other panel members, having regard for Parks Canada's mandate as well as mandates of other jurisdictions along the Waterway.

The panel members will ideally be respected leaders within their communities of interest, be familiar with the Waterway, have a broad outlook, and understand the complexities of governance in a public context.

The Panel will conduct an extensive consultation program to seek public and key stakeholder views on the future mandate and expectations for management of the Waterway.

The Panel will consider the results of the consultations and the results of supporting studies to generate analysis and recommendations to be considered by the Minister.

A small, full-time Secretariat will be established to support the Panel's work and to provide project and contract management.

Reporting and Timing

The Panel will report to the Minister in December 2007.

The Minister will respond to the Panel recommendations following submission of the Panel report.

The accepted results will be incorporated into a revised Management Plan to be prepared by Parks Canada and submitted to the Minister for approval within a year of the Minister's response.