

**Orillia Museum of Art and History  
Submission to the  
Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway  
8 August 2007**

Chairman Doug Downey  
Members of the Panel

Thank you for inviting the Orillia Museum of Art and History to express its concerns regarding the future of the Trent-Severn Waterway, and particularly the Museum's response to the relevant key issues facing the waterway, as identified by the Panel.

**Orillia Museum of Art and History**

The Orillia Museum of Art and History (OMAH) was created in 1999 by the amalgamation of the Sir Sam Steele Art Gallery and the Orillia Historical Society. Its mandate is to promote the public's interest and appreciation of the aesthetic arts and the history and culture of the City of Orillia, Ontario, and the surrounding region by establishing and operating a non-profit institution which encompasses the functions and activities of a public art gallery, a museum, and a historical society.

OMAH strives to fulfill its mandate through such programs as exhibitions, workshops, seminars, lectures, collections, and other related activities and events that enhance the role of the institution as a centre of education and enjoyment. OMAH researches, records, and preserves the art and history of Orillia and area.

**Key Issues Identified by the Panel**

***Deteriorating Infrastructure***— OMAH is saddened to learn that the infrastructure of the waterway has been allowed to deteriorate to the point that extended closures might result. Undoubtedly, this will have significant economic impact on the communities and businesses along the route. In Orillia and area, the greatest impact by a closure would come from the decline of the tourist trade, not only for the water-based businesses such as marinas and waterside gas stations, but restaurants, stores, motels, fairs, festivals and other attractions that greatly contribute to the economic and social health of the community.

The Panel will realize that deterioration results from neglect, and neglect results from low priority being placed on the waterway by successive governments. How can this be corrected? OMAH recommends that an advocacy group consisting of representatives from communities along the waterway from Trenton to Midland, similar to the nineteenth century Trent Valley Canal Association, could be effective in encouraging governments to perform regular maintenance and renewal.

***Understanding and Protecting Significant Historic Resources*** — The Trent-Severn Waterway is not just a unique transportation route winding through central Ontario; it is also a rich depository of Canadian heritage. One cannot appreciate the transportation side of the route without a knowledge and understanding of its historical context. In order to understand and protect the waterway's significant historic resources, it is necessary to know what and where they are. OMAH suggests, as a first step in this process, that the history branch of Parks Canada create — or up-date if one exists — an inventory of historic events and locations along the waterway, and as a second step, insure that the historic events and locations are identified and marked by either the Ontario Heritage Trust or the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board, with one of their distinctive plaques.

OMAH notes the reference made by the Panel to the 1994/95 cultural resources inventory, but not being familiar with the inventory, we wonder how “cultural resources” are defined. Do they, for example, include physical artefacts, buildings, events, and locations, such as the 4,000 year old fish weirs at the Atherly narrows?

OMAH wonders if it would be possible to use the 1994/95 cultural resources inventory to identify stakeholders that share a common interest and could work together to address opportunities such as identifying cultural landscapes, or that might suggest a framework for presenting the waterway as culturally and historically significant resource.

***Provide Public Education and Understanding*** — Parks Canada should be commended for previous attempts at communicating information, especially about the history and function of specific locks, with plaques, a few pictures, and diagrams, but it could do a better job of creating educational and interpretive programs to expand public awareness of the rich heritage of the waterway, and the important relationship that exists between it and the communities through which it passes. In this regard, OMAH suggests the use of the following educational and interpretive activities:

- create a panel of speakers made up of employees and knowledgeable stakeholder volunteers to address historical societies, service clubs, cottage associations, and schools;
- create DVDs and PowerPoint presentations for the assistance of the speakers;
- make sure there is enough technical equipment, maps, etc. spread throughout the waterway for the speakers' use;
- disseminate information about the local importance of the waterway at town docks with plaques or pamphlets, i.e. Orillia's Port Pouch program;
- allow significant communities to place plaques at nearby locks advertising historically and culturally significant places, and/or events to visit - Parks Canada would control the content and standard of the plaques, perhaps with templates;
- Parks Canada should use its good offices to revive the Friends of the Trent-Severn Waterway organization (FTSW was a major protector and promoter of the waterway, through the sale of books, charts, tour guides, to say nothing of T-shirts and souvenirs. It sponsored a speakers committee. It conducted major heritage restoration projects, such as the restoration of a steam-driven work tug at Peterborough, the restoration of the lockmaster's shelter house at Kirkfield and the David Milne historic panel at Big Chute);
- expand the live interpretive programs conducted at Big Chute, Port Severn, and Peterborough in the last couple of years.

## **Interpretive Programs**

Interpretive lectures about select sections of the waterway by knowledgeable and trained presenters could be an effective tool available to Parks Canada for conveying understanding and appreciation of the history and modern contribution of the waterway. Parks Canada historians, in consultation with local historical societies, municipal heritage committees, boards of trade, chambers of commerce, geologists, and Parks Canada's own resources, should have no trouble in preparing interpretation scripts for the use of volunteer presenters, who should be trained in methods of communicating with the public.

The volunteer interpreters should be placed at major lock stations along the route. Also Parks Canada might arrange to place interpreters on day-cruise tour boats, at no cost to the operators.

### ***Changing Visitor Patterns***

Many of the day visitors to the lock stations along the waterway can be serviced through the various educational and interpretive programs enumerated above.

### ***Water Allocation***

### ***Protecting Natural Resources***

### ***Mandate, Legislation and Jurisdiction***

These issues are beyond the mandate of OMAH to comment upon.

OMAH thanks the Panel for the opportunity to present this brief. We wish the Panel success in its deliberations.

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