

## TRENT-SEVERN WATERWAY PRESENTATION (Lakefield)

My name is Jeremy Carver. I have lived on the shores of Stoney Lake for the past twelve years and I have been involved in efforts to mitigate the environmental impacts of developments on our lake. This is the fifth public hearing that I have attended so I have some sense of the breadth of issues before you.

It is an understatement to say that you face a “challenge” in integrating the input you have received – in fact you have a monumental task ahead. You have raised expectations and people want you to deliver.

In addition to giving you my personal list of concerns, I decided the most useful approach at this late stage in the process would be to suggest a frame-work for your recommendations.

The overwhelming issue that I have heard raised is that the T-SW is a “jewel” that has been sadly neglected.

My own experience suggests that the neglect results from drastic under-funding for the size of the mandate that has resulted in too few people with too little expertise trying desperately to patch things together to keep the T-SW operating.

To clarify, I see the mandate of the T-SW is ***to protect and enhance the recreational values of the T-SW Watershed*** in the broadest sense.

Should the panel succeed in liberating the funds to first overhaul and secondly properly operate the T-SW, the economic spin-offs would be profound for the communities along the T-SW - for many of which tourism is the sole "industry".

So the framework I have found useful in organizing my thoughts has five major headings:

1. **Water quality**
2. **Wildlife protection**
3. **Water Quantity**
4. **Heritage features**
5. **Governance**

1. You have received a clear message that **water quality** must be improved before any major efforts are made at further promoting the T-SW as a tourist destination – this requires T-SW receive funds specifically for remediation. For example:
  - In Lake Simcoe levels of phosphorous are climbing
  - At the Bolsover meeting cottagers on lakes immediately down stream of Lake Simcoe reported uncontrolled weed growth and toxic water that has caused rashes on swimmers;

- Paradoxically, phosphorous levels at Burleigh Falls, while fluctuating widely, have been steadily falling over the last 40 years (OMOE data);
- The most probable explanation is that the intervening wetlands are providing a natural cleaning mechanism so an integral part of any remediation plan must be the strictest possible protection of remaining wetlands in the T-SW watershed

In this respect

- T-SW has jurisdiction over in-water wetlands in the waterway and must refuse to approve development with negative impact on those wetlands (OMNR estimates a shoreline barrier of 120 m is necessary to minimize impacts of development on natural heritage features).
- T-SW needs to acquire the right to review and comment on development proposals that potentially impact wetlands in the watershed, including terrestrial wetlands that play an equally important role in maintaining water quality; one mechanism to ensure the latter would be to seek an amendment of the Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act to designate the T-SW watershed as a “natural heritage feature” on a par with provincially significant wetlands; and,

- T-SW needs to acquire the environmental planning expertise to be able to assess negative impacts and mitigation proposals – the current process is a joke.

2. **Wildlife protection** – you have heard a great deal about the esthetic values people attribute to the wildlife along the T-SW – whether it is the spectacular return of the Osprey, the call of the loons or the antics of the otters – these are highly valued by T-SW visitors, sport fishing enthusiasts and residents alike and wildlife protection must be valued equally to, for example, maintaining water levels for boaters.

3. **Water levels** on reservoir lakes must be managed more sensitively with recognition that these lakes have been developed and their enjoyment by cottagers must be factored into decisions to precipitously change water levels – e.g. a six foot drop in level on a steep-sided lake has less impact than on a shallow lake

- Dams and locks must be repaired on a routine maintenance schedule not on an emergency only basis and where possible more sophisticated control mechanisms should be installed allowing for remote monitoring and adjustment providing for finer control of level changes;
- Revenue generation should be sought from low-flow hydro-electric generation. This possibility should be

explored whenever repairs are undertaken on existing dams on the system and should be on an “as built” basis not involving new diversionary canals etc.

However, care must be taken to ensure that the T-SW does not become obligated to maintain flow for generation purposes at the expense of its primary mandate to protect the recreational values of the Waterway.

4. **Heritage features** along the T-SW need to be identified, whether they be cultural artefacts from First Nations and settler use or environmental features unique to the “Land Between”, these must be catalogued, developed and made accessible to the public. In order to enhance tourism, this must include appropriate docking and pedestrian access;
  
5. **Governance** should be designed to meet the mandate. At the Bobcaygeon meeting I asked “Has it had been established to what extent the current problems with the operation of the T-SW are attributable to chronic under-funding and to what extent they arise from conflicting jurisdictions”. I still don’t know the answer, but it is clear to me that not all the problems are jurisdictional.

However, if you are going to recommend a new governance model, I would urge you to seek a crown corporation jointly funded by the Federal and Ontario Governments. Both levels of

government should cede jurisdiction to the T-SW in the areas I have outlined above, water quality, wildlife management, water quantity management as well as preservation and development of heritage features.

But most of all, the T-SW, whether a new entity or the present structure, must be adequately funded to design and implement an integrated management plan that maximizes the recreational potential of the watershed. How much that will cost in capital investment and annual operating costs can only be estimated once such a plan has been developed.

Thank you for providing this opportunity and good luck – we are all counting on you!