

Buckhorn District Tourist Association

presents to

**Trent Severn Waterway Panel**

September 13, 2007

## TSW Panel

The Buckhorn and District Tourist Association is the oldest tourist association in Peterborough County. Our organization represents a wide variety of businesses, which are directly involved in the tourism industry or receive the trickle down effect from the tourist dollar. The BDTA services an expansive geographical area, which spans approximately a 30 km radius of the Hamlet of Buckhorn. Our membership own and operate businesses on Upper and Lower Buckhorn Lakes, Pigeon Lake, Chemong Lake, Clear Lake, Ston(e)y Lake, Katchewanooka Lake, Lovesick Lake, the Otonabee River as well as the Village of Lakefield and the City of Peterborough. Being a tourist organization we realize and appreciate the impact the Trent Severn Waterway has on our livelihood as well as our way of life.

We would be naive to assume that the Trent Severn Waterway does not face a multitude of challenges regarding such issues as water levels, fish spawning, bird nesting and other wildlife habitats that are at risk throughout the system. Economic impacts such as boat traffic, accommodations, retail and service industries, view the waterway as an asset to their businesses. The water management aspect of the system keeps our homes and resorts above water. And last, but probably most important is the actual infrastructure of the system. The locks, which have fallen into disrepair, have a direct effect on all of the issues I have mentioned previously.

We understand that this panel has been formed to prioritize the issues that affect the system as a whole and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts and diligence in this matter. This being said, our organization also believes that you are putting the cart before the horse. Before any decisions can be made on the future of the Trent Severn a method of sustainable funding must be developed.

The Trent Severn Waterway is owned and operated by the federal government and therefore their financial responsibility. We would like to go on record as stating that we would not tolerate any form of downloading of this financial detriment to the municipalities or more importantly the tourist industry. Our industry has faced numerous challenges over the past five years including SARS, mad cow, rising gas prices, rising Canadian dollar and the removal of the GST credit just to name a few. Some of the stop gap solutions that have been tabled such as dock taxes, reduced hours on the waterway and increased user fees, the removal of buoys throughout the system will not solve the financial burden faced by the TSW but will actually put another nail in the coffin of the tourist industry.

Our organization believes that the federal government should name one government agency responsible for the Trent Severn and designate adequate budgets to that department to properly maintain the system. Presently there are numerous agencies that are responsible for different sections of the system and the buck is constantly being passed as to who should take responsibility. We realize that at the end of the day the

*system will be covered by our tax dollars; however, we believe the collection base should be expanded nationwide.*

The Trent Severn Waterway is an economic driver for Central Ontario and it is not only waterfront businesses and property owners who reap the benefits of the system. This being said it should not only be waterfront businesses and property owners who pay the bill. The Kawarthas is a tourist destination locally, provincially, federally and internationally, thus contributing tax dollars to the federal coffers. The deterioration of the tourist industry in our region has far reaching effects which must be addressed by the federal government.

As a tourist organization we do understand that we have a role to play in the waterway system. This summer we used our summer student to help clean and maintain the government property in Buckhorn. We would not be adverse to a formal partnership in the future where government grants could be obtained (from the designated federal government agency responsible for the system) to hire summer help and share some of the responsibilities being neglected due to current financial restraints. Partnerships such as this could be formed with tourist organizations, chambers and cottage associations throughout the entire system.

We believe that once sustainable financing has been incorporated for the waterway system a realistic business plan can be put into effect. We have read some of the reports that have been brought before this panel previously and believe the request at this point to be nothing more than a wish list. In a perfect world the system would have crystal clear water, brand new locks with generating stations, docks for millions of boats and a fish population so robust they will simply jump into your boat, however realistically speaking nothing can be done without an actual budget. The BDTA reiterates that the budget and business plan must come from the federal government and not be downloaded to the municipalities or tourist operators.