

Oral Submission for
The Panel on the Future of the Trent – Severn Waterway

Prepared by the
Kawartha Lakes Chamber of Commerce - Eastern Region
Public Policy Committee

Presented September 13, 2007

Good evening, my name is Scott Davidson, Director of the Kawartha Lakes Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Region, Public Policy committee member and owner of the Hendren Funeral Home here in Lakefield. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway for allowing us to express our concerns on the future of the waterway, but more importantly to allow the public process to enter into this most important of discussions.

This being your last stop on your tour of communities along the waterway, welcome to Lakefield. The KLCC – Eastern Region has approximately 325 members and formally represents the communities of Lakefield, Buckhorn, Apsley, points in between and beyond. We are extremely fond of this area and take great pride in our businesses and communities.

In our written presentation to the Panel which you will no doubt be viewing shortly, the Public Policy Committee of the KLCC has taken the opportunity to address the discussion papers that were presented on your website. We felt that the issues contained therein accurately fit the categories of many of our own concerns. In that paper we formatted our responses in the same order as you had. For this evening's presentation, I have changed the order in which they appear to depict the order in which we believe that the process of improving the future of the waterway should follow.

I will address each of the seven discussions separately and offer some of our concerns and recommendations, but before I begin I must add that this is not a quick fix or a small problem. The magnitude and scope of the issues we have looked at over this process are really quite unbelievable and very daunting. The economic impact of the Trent Severn Waterway is massive and if it continues on its current path, the fallout would be staggering.

The first issue to be addressed is that of Jurisdiction. Before any other matters pertaining to the waterway are looked at, the jurisdiction of the TSW need to be solidified. There has been a constant uncertainty as to whether the Federal or Provincial Governments have proper jurisdiction and if so to what degree? It is important to note that the Rideau Canal System which is now a World Heritage sight was clarified to have federal jurisdiction in 1991 by provincial Order in Council. We feel that clarifying the jurisdiction as a fully federal responsibility, we would alleviate all uncertainty and allow the proper base to move forward with the rejuvenation of the system.

Secondly, an equally important issue of improving the governance of the waterway follows closely on the heels of jurisdiction. Discussion Paper #5 on your website outlines the historical context and current situation regarding governance issues. The paper then briefly outlines a variety of collaborative body models which exist in Canada and the United States. These models may encompass ownership, oversight or both.

The paper mentions agreements between Canada and Ontario in 1975 and 1982, but then summarizes that paragraph by stating, "For a variety of reasons, little was achieved following the signing of this (1982) agreement." It further states that strategies for improvement through these processes relied heavily on informal relationships.

The KLCC recognizes that improved governance of the TSW will only occur when full federal jurisdiction of the waterway is clarified, and confirmed. Canada – the federal government - on behalf of the people of this nation owns the Trent-Severn Waterway. It is incumbent upon Canada to properly and appropriately manage the TSW.

The risk of recommending a *new* collaborative body is that the second most significant issue - the years of under funding for system maintenance, will get further lost in the shuffle. If resources are already limited, the costs of consulting upon and establishing such an entity will further starve the TSW. It is illogical to ask a new body to take over a system in dire need of repair and investment.

Further, the KLCC recognizes the value of Parks Canada Agency federal jobs to the economy of this immediate area as well as up and down the system. We do not want to see those jobs and that payroll further eroded.

The KLCC recommends that:

- the jurisdictional issues be addressed first,
- adequate levels of federal funding be appropriated to address the crumbling infrastructure, improved marketing and ensure staffing requirements are met
- at that time, and only at that time, a process be initiated to consider whether Parks Canada Agency is the appropriate governing body

It makes no sense to move forward at this time to create a new entity unless these key points are addressed.

The third important issue to be addressed is that of Sustainable Economic Development. It is very true that the TSW has an enormous economic impact on the communities that share its shores. We know that the money received from tourists annually contributes greatly to the financial sustainability of the waterway as well as the federal funding from the federal government.

As times change, and more and more people are attempting to attain a “lifestyle” here around the waterway, it is clear the role and the economics of the system have changed and are changing. It is also very clear that the current sources of revenue for the waterway do not meet the demands that are required for future sustainability. We are fortunate that many of the communities along the waterway have attempted their own economic development plans.

It is the belief of the KLCC that creating an encompassing Sustainable Community Economic Development Plan should be of utmost importance to the Panel. This plan will be the footprint on how the TSW will survive and hopefully flourish in years to come.

The KLCC agrees with several of the Panels ideas on improving the economic development along the waterway. It is also agreed that Parks Canada is not an Economic Development Agency and may therefore not be the appropriate body to manage the TSW through the long-

term. The KLCC recommends the following for the improvement of economic development along the TSW.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That the Federal Government identifies its resolve to maintain ownership and management of the waterway.
- That the federal government creates a broad Economic Development plan encompassing the entire waterway.
- This plan should have the input of the various local agencies and governments input but be administered by the federal body.
- That the agency looks carefully at prior examples of sustainable waterways to understand positive and negative impacts of these plans.
- That the government use financial assistance plans for communities that are promoting the Economic Development Plan.
- That the agency identifies and prepares resources for communities along the Waterway to plan for the inevitable growth in their areas from the GGH.

Recreation is a key component of the TSW. It is truly a recreational gem that must be promoted, utilized, maintained and respected.

We have compiled four recommendations as to recreation for the waterway.

- Further to the creation of a regional strategy for open space provision along the waterway we suggest that the government should immediately identify those areas currently utilized but that are under promoted such as public beaches, public boat launches and popular areas to fish and communicate these areas to Chambers of Commerce and Tourism Bureaus across the waterway. Consider providing this information to boat dealers, bait shops, boat rental businesses and marinas. Let the businesses along the waterway help you to promote the waterway – if we work together everyone wins!
- With respect to activities along the waterway we further suggest that the government provide municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Bureaus and Service Clubs with set criteria for holding events or activities along the waterway. Additionally, if possible, streamline the process for holding events making the process as easy as possible for event planners and associations wishing to hold events.
- And finally, regarding utilizing lock stations as important land-based visitation areas, the KLCC promotes a trail system that incorporates the lock in Lakefield. Perhaps other trail systems could incorporate locks along the TSW as to tie into the growing and increasingly popular trail systems in central Ontario. In addition to this, we feel that the government could better promote other recreational areas along the waterway such as Beaches, Parks, Historic Sites and other areas of interest to stimulate travel from lock to lock as well as daytrips – by water and land.

Lock usage does need to increase. It is worthwhile to note that vessel traffic across the Waterway this year (2007) in May, June and July is up 9.3% over last year (2006) and the lock here in Lakefield is up by 5.1% over last year. These positive facts along with our lack of complaints about the lock fees suggest that the elimination of lock fees may not be the answer, although we would support further research. Our research suggests boaters are more concerned with lock hours, the price of gas and what is, at least perceived, as an overly rigid enforcement of Waterway regulations. We strongly feel that more promotion of the waterway and user friendly lock stations will have more of a significant impact than the elimination of fees. Increasing staff to lengthen operating hours and season combined with strong promotion could ultimately lead to increased revenue.

The natural environment of the TSW is also a concern of the KLCC. Issues include waterfront development and shoreline hardening which are difficult to manage unless the appropriate staff is there to monitor. The loss of wetlands along the waterway is of concern as well. We caution against the over dependence on TSW reservoir lakes and we recognize that some of this loss may be due to the world wide water levels declining. There are concerns over the introduction into the waterway of pollutants which are depriving the habitat of nutrients for proper growth of some species as well as the addition of land runoff and faulty septic systems contributing to the severe growth of water weeds which have made several areas of the waterway unusable. As well, the introduction of new flora and fauna into the waterway can cause stress on the current ecosystem. We believe that education; monitoring and timely diagnosis of problems may not alleviate them but would certainly help. We acknowledge that the waterway will evolve and change occurs, but through proper management we can assist in its transition.

The KLCC recommends that the federal government coordinates an in-water waterfront and backshore development permit process. By coordinating a central body for the access of permits for new and re-development projects, the TSW will be able to closely monitor the surrounding natural habitat. We also suggest that tax incentives be given to farmers and land owners along the waterway to promote the donating of land along the waterway. And finally, that through a larger educational program, the natural habitat of the TSW be promoted to heighten awareness, appreciation and stewardship of the waterway.

The Trent Severn Waterway is of significant importance as an Arts Community as many artists, drawn to the natural beauty of the lakes and the system, make this area their home.

We believe that the underwater history of the first settlers and maintaining the natural beauty of the area, through preservation of “wetlands, natural shorelines, natural uplands, and wildlife and other habitats” is critical to the more than 300,000 people who live along its route. More than 1.5 million people visit lock stations each year and approximately eight million people live within two to three hours’ drive.

The Federal Government should take a lead role in the Protection of the culture of First Nation Peoples and all citizens who live along the Waterway. The area could be a haven for Cultural activities with its rich and unique heritage.

With insight, care and planning the area can become a more significant tourist attraction that goes beyond its natural beauty and the wonder of its lock systems. It can provide a look into the

heritage of its native peoples with underwater signage and markings of areas where artifacts are known to exist. While many who live in the area are passionate about the TSW, it is difficult to reach all of the tourists and visitors with that message. Increased marketing can assist in the 'telling of the story' and further heighten the awareness of this cultural resource.

Water Management of the TSW is a key component to the users of the system and the other stakeholders that are affected. The level of water throughout the system impacts many businesses and recreational users. The creation of the waterway was authorized by the federal government to provide a way to move boat traffic between Lake Ontario and Lake Huron away from any possible American intervention during the post-war years of 1812. This act alone established the federal mandate and ownership of the system. As mentioned earlier, this panel is in a unique position to develop future plans for the waterway that involve all the stakeholders.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Water drawdowns in the system due to winter and summer operations have a major impact on shoreline businesses and the environment. Businesses are quite sensitive to water level change, not only during the seasonal operation of the locks, but also in the few months before and after the locks close.
- The water level impacts the access to the system. If the water levels are too low, boats accessing docks have a problem. Low water impacts navigation of boats through the system. Drawdowns also affect water supply for those who use the system as a water source.
- In the spring, flood control is an issue, particularly in the late spring when some businesses must start their operations. More up-to-date water level control structures and technology would enhance flood control.
- It is becoming obvious to the users and stakeholders that maintaining low flow water in the system is creating problems. For example, when we experienced low rainfall amounts this summer, the system seemed to be driven by maintaining minimum water flow through the low head hydro plants in the system, thereby creating low levels in feeder reservoirs.
- Water levels in the feeder reservoirs must be maintained so that the users around the reservoirs can have decent water access to their lakes. There are many complaints in this area which means that either the water capacity is to be increased (more dams), better regulation of the water in the system, or hydro electric users may need to cut back on their water requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- We agree that the federal government's responsibilities in the ecological and recreational programs must be set in legislation to preserve them.
- To ensure the future viability of the system, we agree that the government must allow representation of the federal, provincial and municipal governments, First Nations, conservation groups, and stakeholders in the operation.
- As owner of the federal waterway, the federal government needs to spend \$400 million over the next 10 years to repair and upgrade the system. This means that these costs are are

not to be downloaded to anyone else. Upgraded locks and canals would ensure long-term viability of the system that would make it easier to control water levels.

- The KLCC strongly supports increased marketing of the waterway. It is the key to improving revenue and providing a better life for all the stakeholders and recreational users involved.
- Improved communication for stakeholders and water level changes would be helpful. We recommend that a hydrological study be performed before any more dams are added to the system, such as the one planned for the Trent/City of Peterborough hydro project. The hydrological study would need to model the entire system. It would look at the capacity and water levels of the water reservoirs feeding the system, as well as the water levels in the waterway itself.
- Many users of the system require the water quality to be maintained or improved.
- Retention of marker buoys would be helpful to recreational users as they have been in previous years. The removal of marker buoys this year should be reinstated.
- The federal government must revisit the operation and maintenance of the TSW in 10 years to maintain its future viability.

In closing, I would again like to thank the Panel for allowing us the opportunity to express our concerns in this public forum. We will watch very closely as the plans for the future of the Trent Severn Waterway are unveiled and it is our hope that the decisions made in the near future will be the most positive for all involved, including the Waterway itself. Thank-you.