



## Shadow Lakes Association Inc.

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### Written Submission of Presentation to the Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway

Thank you for the opportunity to make this Presentation to you today.

The Shadow Lakes Association Inc. represents over 600 seasonal and year round residents on the Shadow Lake System which runs from Norland, southerly approximately 11 kilometers, to Coboconk along the Gull River Drainage bed with approximately 41 km of shoreline. The waterway begins at the bottom of the Norland Dam as a river then opens up to Shadow Lake which is our largest lake and then proceeds through a Narrows to Silver Lake and then passes through a small rapids into Little Mud Turtle Lake from which it empties into another stretch of river down to Coboconk. When looked upon as a whole System, the Shadow Lakes, from Norland to Coboconk, are really a section of the Gull River with three bulges in it. There is a substantial difference in elevation between the bottom of the Norland Dam and the top of the Coboconk Dam, so much so, that the water level in the System is only affected by the rate of flow over the Norland Dam and the Coboconk Dam only has an effect on the water level for about 500 metres upstream of it. We are truly a "Flow-Through System", as there is no method available for the TSW to hold water in our Lakes.

Our System acts like a "funnel". No flow or very low flow in causes our Lakes to drain out. Too much flow in and our Lakes flood. Water will only remain safely in our "funnel" if there is a continuous flow. In this respect we are no different than many of the lower Lakes of the Canal proper. We understand that a 1970's Consulting Study established a recommended continuous flow rate and a minimum flow rate that have been generally been followed ever since. We need this to continue.

Our geographical situation is such that we are the absolute bottom of the Gull River Watershed and we totally depend on the TSW for maintenance of our water levels, but not in the same way as the Reservoir Lakes that are above us in the Watershed. We are the proverbial “meat in the sandwich” between the needs of the Trent-Severn Canal and the Reservoir Lakes. When the TSW needs water in the Canal, they increase the flow over the Norland Dam which due to the three ‘pinch points’ in the System, causes our water levels to rise. When the TSW doesn’t need water, then they slow the flow over the Norland Dam which allows our System to drain out through Coboconk and our water levels decrease. This is the anomaly that makes our System unique within the Gull River Watershed. We totally rely on a well managed flow over the Norland Dam, to stabilize our water levels. Because of the nature of our System, the “funnel”, there is a finite ability for our waterway to absorb an increase in the flow over the Norland Dam and if the flow is too high, such as in the period of Winter Drawdown, substantial property damage can be caused to our residents. We are the outlet of the Gull River into the Canal at Balsam Lake and the TSW cannot undertake any water level or flow changes within the Reservoir Lakes above us, without it having a substantial impact on our Shadow Lakes System. Due to this we realize that managing the water levels within the Gull River Watershed can be very delicate operation.

The Shadow Lakes Associations’ mandate is to provide stewardship to the waters of the Shadow Lakes System, provide and maintain navigational markers and represent our Members’ interests with respect to issues that will affect their enjoyment and use of their properties along the Shadow Lakes System. One of the attractions of the System is the ability to be able to take a trip on the water from Coboconk to Norland with out damaging your watercraft. This has spawned residential development on every section of our shoreline due to the fact that the water level, even in the river sections, has traditionally been deep enough to allow property owners in these areas the ability to access the whole System. Water levels have for the most part, from the opening of the Canal to present, has allowed people to do this on our System. All of our many water hazards are marked with buoys that are installed and maintained by the Association. We have never expected nor demanded that the costs for these markers be paid for by any one other than our residents as this is one of the expected perks for having a property on the System. Navigational ability for the whole length of our System has always been available and is considered the “norm” for anyone that has purchased a property or is intending to in the future.

Our System was created by the Trent-Severn Canal and ever since it’s opening, our water levels have remained relatively stable within an expected fluctuation range that varies from season to season, but during the time of year that the Canal is open, the fluctuation range has remained relatively constant for as long as anyone can remember. For this reason, our System was one of the first areas of the Gull River Watershed to be populated by seasonal residents beginning in the early 1920’s and has resulted in a very mature community, with many of the Properties having been in the same family for generations. The waterfront is fully developed and due to the historical predictability of the water levels, most properties have permanent dock and boathouse facilities and have adapted their water intake systems to suit. Our residents have also built retaining walls and other

water-edge structures and have purchased watercraft that function well with the historical water levels that we have experienced. Properties have been purchased and developed with the expectation that the water levels will vary, but not outside of the historical ranges that we have experienced since the opening of the Canal.

Since high water conditions generally occur following the spring thaw our members understand and typically delay putting in docks or launching boats until late May/early June. Early in the season when there are surges of high water after the flood subsides that are not obviously related to weather, or when there are conditions of unusually high rainfall in May or June our members are often not present to deal with the high water conditions. As a result most incidents of damage to docks, shoreline and other property occur during these times. The extent of damage caused by unexpected high water conditions has become serious enough in recent years that the Shadow Lakes Association has established a "high water alert" program with over 100 subscribers in which the association under the operation of two of our permanent resident directors alerts subscribing members via e-mail so they may take measures to protect their property. We have also stuck a Committee that has pursued the opening of a regular line of communication with the TSW to keep our Members informed of impending changes in water levels, throughout the year.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the environmental damage that might be occurring in the Reservoir Lakes due to the fluctuating water levels throughout the year. The Gull River Watershed and the Reservoir lakes were modified or created by the Trent-Severn Waterway nearly one hundred years ago and the fluctuation of water levels that are experienced throughout the Gull River watershed have been occurring ever since then. Even though these conditions were caused by man, they have existed for so long that they have created a new eco-system and all the fish, plant and wildlife have adapted to these conditions. If there are no trout in one lake then it is probably true that some other fish has thrived in that environment. Not all lakes can or do support all species of fish but any change to the environment now, might allow one species to live in that lake but kill off another species in another lake or river within the System. Any changes to the average water levels, fluctuations or flows in any part of the Gull River Eco-System can potentially cause irreparable damage to parts or all of the System.

All of the residents that live along the waterfront of the Gull River Watershed have lived with the existing water conditions for the past nearly one hundred years. This situation has not come as a surprise to anyone. It would be totally unrealistic for one group of residents to force a change within the water management plan that would adversely affect residents in another part of the System. It would not be helpful to try to solve one Group's problems by causing problems for another Group within the System. We need to find a solution to the Reservoir Lakes' problems and desires which respects the historical obligations that the TSW has to other stakeholders within the System as a whole.

It is also important to realize that most of the public infrastructure that has been built along the watershed has been adapted to accommodate the water levels and fluctuations that have existed since the 1920's. Norland has a water treatment plant intake that was

designed to accommodate a minimum flow and Coboconk relies on a constant flow to operate the water and sewage plants there. Permanent public docks and wharfs have been built taking the water levels into account.

It is the position of the Shadow Lakes Association that the TSW is an economically essential asset to the infrastructure of this country and that all efforts should be made to maintain and enhance it's operational capabilities. The water levels within the Canal should be maintained at their present levels so as to maximize the potential for watercraft use. We also believe that every effort should be made to harness the hydro-electric potential that exists with-in the System, including the Reservoir Lakes and Rivers. In order to accomplish these goals, and minimize the environmental impacts on the existing Gull River Eco-system, more resources are needed to assist in the management of the water levels within the whole TSW System. Past budget cuts have to be reversed and the people that manage the TSW have to be given the most up-to-date and efficient tools and resources to get their jobs done. The TSW is trying to manage a 21<sup>st</sup> Century problem with 19<sup>th</sup> Century technology and too few Staff. **They cannot win!**

It is unconscionable that one person is expected to manage the water resources for the whole TSW System as well as look after Public Relations. When the TSW was created, there were only a relative handful of residents along the shores of the Gull River Watershed, so the effects of TSW operational decisions were only noticed by a few people. Over the years, the same operational decisions are affecting a great many more people to the point where the TSW Staff are living in a fish bowl where every one of their decisions is being put under the microscope by people who only see their issues and not the big picture. It is time that communication between the TSW and the residents along the Gull River Watershed is improved so that there is good constructive two-way input, **but not to the point that the TSW cannot operate with the whole Canal System in mind.**

The TSW is an essential facet of the economic health of Coboconk and without the TSW, the Shadow Lakes System would not exist in its' present form. There is an implicit Contract, with respect to water levels, that exists between the Shadow Lakes System and the TSW that has been defined by precedent over the past nearly one hundred years and our residents expect that Contract to be honoured into the future.

The other major concern of our residents is that of Public safety and property damage. We realize that the management of the water levels and flows within the Gull River Watershed is a delicate balancing act but we also realize that if proper management is not undertaken in the Summer and Fall, then the potential for a flood in the Shadow Lakes System and in other parts of the Watershed is greatly increased. The Reservoir lakes have to be drawn down to certain specific historical levels so that they can hold the Spring Melt and runoff. If the Reservoir lakes are allowed to stay too full for too long then there isn't the ability within the Watershed to dump the water before Winter, without flooding out parts of the Watershed, including the Shadow Lakes System, and causing widespread and serious infrastructure and property damage. **This point can never be forgotten.** The Gull River Watershed and the Canal, itself, have a fixed capacity to safely pass water and

if too much water is allowed to pass at one time then there will be flooding and serious public safety issues will result. The TSW has to be given the resources to ensure that this is not allowed to happen.

In conclusion, the Shadow Lakes Association believes that the TSW should be improved and more resources and money be allocated to allow the TSW Staff to better serve the Public and all of the Stakeholders, including the Reservoir Lakes. We feel that with better water management tools, the water levels can be better stabilized, but not to the point that historic levels and flows are altered, as that will cause irreparable damage to the Gull River Eco-System. Better resources and more money should also allow the TSW to improve communications with the Public and all of the Stakeholders, but still allow it to carry out its water management mandate for both navigation and Public Safety. Due to the unique position of the Shadow Lakes System within the Gull River Watershed, we would expect to be at the table for any discussions that would impact the water management decisions made by the TSW and we also expect that the implicit Contract between the TSW and the Shadow Lakes System Residents, with respect to historic water levels, be maintained into the future. We would not be in agreement if the solution to the problems in the Reservoir Lakes impacts our traditional relationship with the TSW System as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and good luck with your deliberations.