

Submission to

**THE PANEL ON THE FUTURE OF THE
TRENT-SEVERN WATERWAY**



Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority

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Introduction

This submission provides the Panel with a brief introduction to the programs of Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority (LTRCA). It also outlines the Trent Conservation Coalition which includes all of the Conservation Authorities in the Trent River watershed.

LTRCA has a very positive relationship with the Trent-Severn Waterway (TSW). We have a long history of working together cooperatively with flood control, planning and regulations issues, and management of public lands. LTRCA is pleased to have this opportunity to present some thoughts on the various issues, challenges and opportunities facing the TSW. We are also looking forward to working with the TSW in the future to assist with the implementation of the Panel's recommendations.

Although the Panel is concerned with the whole TSW, this submission speaks only about the Trent River watershed portion.

It addresses the need for, and the reason why, an integrated watershed management approach is the LTRCA's preferred direction.

It also addresses three areas of interest to the LTRCA that are raised in the background papers provided by the Panel.

1. Waterway operational issues.
2. Regulatory and planning issues.
3. Natural environment, recreation, community economic development.

Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority

Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority is watershed based. Its boundaries follow the drainage of the landscape. It is governed by a local Board of Directors appointed by the seven municipalities in the watershed. Its mandate for watershed management is very broad as per the *Conservation Authorities Act* (Sections 20 and 21).

The mandate set out in the *Conservation Authorities Act* is to "establish and undertake, in the area over which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and minerals".

The Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority focuses its efforts in four sets of services including:

- Flood Protection Services
- Environmental Advisory Services
- Conservation Lands
- Watershed Restoration

Effective communication to create public awareness of conservation issues and initiatives and assisting with meaningful public consultation is an integral part of all of the services offered.

Partnerships and collaboration is core to the delivery of our watershed management programs and services. Our funding comes from a variety of sources including municipal levies, provincial grants, agreements with federal departments, fees for services, and contracts with other non government organizations.

Conservation Authorities in the Trent River watershed have collaborated on a number of initiatives under the umbrella of the Trent Conservation Coalition (TCC). The Trent Conservation Coalition is a partnership of the Crowe Valley, Ganaraska Region, Kawartha Region, Lower Trent Region and Otonabee Region Conservation Authorities. Our current collaboration is Drinking Water Source Protection Planning under Ontario's *Clean Water Act*.

Integrated Water Management

The Trent River watershed is very complex – there are many jurisdictions and many competing interests. There are 32 lower tier/single tier municipalities, 5 upper tier municipalities, 5 Conservation Authorities, 3 Ministry of Natural Resources Districts, 2 Ministry of the Environment Districts, 4 Health Units, 4 First Nations and, of course, the Trent-Severn Waterway. Non government interest groups likely number into hundreds.

Water management within the Trent River watershed, as in the rest of Ontario, has been and continues to be managed on a sector/issue-based approach. As each new problem comes along, a solution is custom built for that problem. The latest example is Ontario's *Clean Water Act* which is designed to address the security of municipal drinking water sources. This is in response to the Walkerton tragedy in 2000.

The problems with the sector/issue-based approach include:

- Multiple pieces of legislation and regulations
- Many agencies involved
- Lack of an overriding strategic direction
- Duplication of effort
- Conflicting objectives
- Costly in both time and money

Integrated water resources management has been defined by the World Health Organization as:

The process of promoting the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

Integrated water resources management is integrated across:

- Issues and sectors
- Disciplines and agencies
- Groundwater and surface water
- Water quantity and quality
- Environmental, economic and social interests

Everything is connected to everything else. Integrated water management tries to break down the boundaries between issues and sectors, and reflects the linkages in the decision making process.

In June of 2005, TSW and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) invited participants from across the watershed to explore the interest and challenges in approaching integrated water (watershed) management. Thirty-eight participants came together from a wide range of agencies and interests. At the end of the day, it was concluded that integrated water management was a goal worth pursuing and that a steering committee would be convened to develop the next steps.

A steering committee was not convened, but now we have the review panel. I am hopeful that this Panel is the first step toward integrated water management in the Trent River watershed. Achieving integrated water management will not be easy. It will take time, resources (staff and money), institutional attitude change, public awareness and collective action. It is an adaptive management process that, in the long term, will be more strategic, more efficient and more results oriented.

Integrated water management will require leadership and resources from the federal and provincial governments to develop a strategy that will move it from a concept to reality. There are excellent examples and models to follow in Canada including:

- Quebec Water Policy, 2002, which includes integrated water resources management as one of three key issues to be addressed.
- Manitoba Water Strategy which sets out an integrated water planning and management system.
- Alberta's Water for Life implements an integrated, cross-sectional approach to water management.

The Trent River is a federal waterway. It is a major Lake Ontario sub-watershed that has significant impact on the Bay of Quinte and Lake Ontario. The federal government is a party to the Canada Ontario Agreement with respect to the Great Lakes and the bi-national Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Both of these agreements would benefit from a more integrated approach to water management.

The federal government has an interest and a responsibility to work with provincial, regional, and local partners to advance integrated water management.

The task for the senior levels of government is to develop an integrated water resources management strategy. This strategy needs to be based on a comprehensive framework, a generic watershed planning approach that can be applied to any issue, and a coordinated set of management tools that can be used to address the combined objectives of all sectors.

Conservation Authorities and Municipalities can develop plans within this broader watershed context. They can assist with creating the linkages between water management programs and ensure that data collection and management systems support integrated water management. Integrating management initiatives will ensure effective implementation of projects affecting water management.

With this kind of framework in place, we will be able to manage watersheds more effectively and avoid the need to go through an extended process to custom build yet another issue specific solution. There is an opportunity to apply an integrated approach to the Trent River to address water management issues.

Waterway Operational Issues

In reviewing the background papers issued by the Panel, there are three broad areas of interest for Conservation Authority involvement. The first area I will generalize as waterway operational issues. The Conservation Authorities along the Trent River have already identified issues related to water levels and flows and these have been captured in the Natural Environment discussion paper. Therefore, they are not repeated here.

The operational issues from an LTRCA perspective relate to:

- Aging operating systems and deteriorating infrastructure.
- Competing demands for the water in the Trent system.

The first is primarily a financial resource issue. The TSW does a good job with what they have. They have the operational knowledge and expertise to manage the system. No other organization provincially, regionally or locally has the mandate, capacity and expertise to take on this role.

The wide range of environmental, cultural and economic values of the Trent system depends on how well this vast infrastructure is maintained and operated. This asset must be preserved and, therefore, the federal government must make the appropriate investment to achieve that end.

If the waterway is adequately resourced, other interests including the Conservation Authorities can assist with rationalizing the operation to address some of the competing demands. This commitment was made two years ago by the Conservation Authorities and a number of other interests. Integrated water management on a watershed basis is the best way to deal with this.

Regulatory & Planning Issues

The second set of issues identified in the background papers of the Panel that are of interest to Conservation Authorities are what I will refer to as regulatory and planning issues.

As pointed out earlier, there is a lot of jurisdictional overlap between the federal, provincial, and municipal governments and agencies related to planning and regulations. This is reflective of the fractured nature of water management in Canada and Ontario. It is also reflective of the complex physical, environmental and jurisdictional makeup of the Trent River watershed.

In the longer term, we must all move to an integrated approach to water management with proper financial resources. There are a number of existing agreements and protocols currently in use that provide models to streamline the regulatory and planning maze and make it more effective and user friendly in the short term. These agreements and protocols cover a wide range of activities from planning and regulations to land management and stewardship.

Some Conservation Authority planning and regulation examples include the Department of Fisheries and Oceans - Conservation Authority agreements around Section 35 of the *Federal Fisheries Act*. Conservation Authority – Municipal agreements around provision of environmental planning services to assist with the *Planning Act* responsibilities, and federal – provincial – Conservation Authority agreements around remedial action plan areas on the Great Lakes.

In moving forward to find solutions to this issue, it is critical to avoid adding another layer of oversight in the name of creating so called one window efficiency.

Natural Environment, Recreation & Community Economic Development

The third set of issues is what I refer to as natural environment, recreation, and community economic development. In other words, how to inspire and motivate communities to combine their efforts to protect the values of the waterway, enjoy them, promote them, and leverage investment and economic development.

There is a real need to develop a common vision for the TSW. A vision that helps communities see themselves as part of something bigger. The waterway connects the communities along it, but oddly enough, that connection is not always part of the operating strategy of those communities. The river is ever present and impacting these communities, but at the same time, it is rarely top of mind in community decisions.

The Trent River provides water supply and waste disposal, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, power generation, a means of transport and economic opportunity. It is a great place to live near with its many aesthetic and cultural values.

These values have been summarized through four of the discussion papers prepared for the Panel. The relevant discussion papers are:

1. Natural Environment
2. Cultural Resources
3. Recreation
4. The Waterway's Contributions to Sustainable Community Economic Development

The lack of a strong vision for the TSW, competing demands for the resource, and lack of connection to the resource is very similar to the situation with the Lake Ontario waterfront in the late 1980s.

In 1988, the Royal Commission of the Future of the Toronto Waterfront was established to examine a set of issues not unlike those faced by the Trent-Severn Waterway today. That commission, headed by David Crombie, successfully engaged a very broad community of government, business, interest groups and citizens.

The results of the commission's research and consultations were published in two reports, Watersheds and Regeneration.

Subsequently, Ontario formed the Waterfront Regeneration Trust in 1992 to help implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The Trust had no regulatory powers. It was mostly a coordinator, facilitator and resource centre for the myriad of agencies, municipalities and groups with interests in the Lake Ontario Waterfront.

One of the vital pieces of work completed by the Trust was the Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy covering the waterfront from Hamilton to Trenton. The Strategy was a large collaborative effort that resulted in a 50 year vision for the waterfront and established a blueprint and tools for its implementation.

No new implementation agency was formed. The work started and continues with existing agencies. In fact, following completion of the plan, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust ceased to be a provincial agency and became a non profit charitable organization. It continues to work primarily on completion of the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail and promotion of sustainable use of the waterfront.

The Trust has partners from Niagara to the Quebec boarder and is currently working with that province to extend the greenway concept along the St. Lawrence River.

It is recommended that the Panel meet with the Waterfront Regeneration Trust to discuss their experience and the potential of that model to assist with the issues associated with the Trent-Severn Waterway.

No doubt there are many other successful models that the Panel can examine. Regardless of how the Panel moves its agenda forward there is, from my perspective, a

large impediment and that is trust or more accurately a lack of trust. Unfortunately, it is prevalent at all levels of government, non government agencies and the public. It hinders our collective ability to reach consensus on important issues and move forward. It dampens our creativity in finding new solutions to old problems.

Fear of downloading and being left with insufficient resources to tackle seemingly insurmountable problems will keep organizations and individuals from becoming part of the solution.

The Conservation Authorities in the Trent River watershed are willing to help develop and implement a new vision for the TSW. We have worked with the TSW in matters dealing with flood control, regulations, land management, stewardship, species at risk and communications. With adequate financial resources and cooperative action, many innovative solutions can be found to the current problems facing the Trent-Severn Waterway.

Summary

1. The Trent-Severn Waterway must be adequately resourced.
2. There are many potential partners that can help achieve gains in the short term.
3. Integrated water resources management should be where we are headed.
4. There are successful models within Canada.
5. Integrated water resources management is an adaptive management approach and involves continuous improvement.
6. Communities need to be engaged in a way that they see themselves as part of something larger. The Waterfront Regeneration Trust is a model worthy of examination.
7. Trust is an issue.
8. Clear understandable communication at all levels is essential to engaging people and organizations.

Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority is grateful for the opportunity to provide input to the Panel. The health of the Trent River watershed is vital to all of the natural systems and people of the watershed.