

VOICES FOR THE TRENT SEVERN WATERWAY  
POSITION PAPER

On May 12, 2006, the Member of Parliament for Simcoe-North introduced private members motion 161 in Canada's Parliament. The motion reads as follows:

*“That, in the opinion of the House, the government should consider the advisability of evaluating the future of the historic Trent-Severn Waterway,(TSW) one of Parks Canada’s National Historic Sites, and its potential to become: (a) a premier recreational asset; (b) a world-class destination TRENT SEVERN WATERWAY for recreational boaters; (c) a greater source of clean, renewable electrical power; (d) a facilitator of economic opportunity and renewal in the communities along its 386 km length; and (e) a model of environmental sustainability. “*

It should be noted that all parties spoke in support of the motion. Minister Baird reminded Parliament that “the TSW has become much more than locks and canals to move boats.” He spoke of nearly 50 communities along its shores and the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on it for drinking water, flood control, tourism and recreation. It was he said a showcase of human history and an important contributor to the protection of wildlife, wetlands and conservation areas. While we appreciate this support, we the “Voices for the TSW” have many concerns in regard to the content of the Report “**It’s all About the Water**” by the Panel on the Future of the Trent Severn Waterway. While we believe in and support most recommendations in the Report, there are a number which have the potential to cause significant damage to the TSW. The consequences of implementing these recommendations will cause multiple problems for the Trent Severn system and those who depend on it. In particular, our concern is that, if the six-foot draft of the TSW were reduced, it would become un-navigable. The implications for TSW residents, visiting tourists and wetlands would be drastic from an economic, environmental and cultural impact.

It is our understanding that the “reservoir lakes” have voiced frustration during the summer period when their lakes are drawn down to support navigation on the TSW. We recognize that there are divergent views from these lakes versus the stakeholders all along the Trent Severn Waterway. However, everyone must consider the economic and environmental impact on the TSW system should the current water management system be significantly altered.

The Report includes the statement: “ Although there is currently a legal requirement to maintain a six foot draft, managing water in such away that navigation trumps, or is perceive to trump, all other demands makes little sense in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (P.32,). **This statement alarms us.**

We do acknowledge that water levels could be better managed and point out that infrastructure along the TSW was constructed and has been maintained to ensure a sustained draft of six feet in the system. Meanwhile, the existing reservoir lake residents' infrastructure was built with expectations of reduced water levels as summer progressed.

While we support the formation of Trent Severn Heritage Region Council, we have concerns with the report's recommendation to form a Water Management Agency. Implementation of the Water Management Agency will create the opportunity for conflict which we believe to be unnecessary. Parks Canada thru the TSW should retain responsibility for water management in the system. With respect to water management, the implementation of Recommendation 25 and 26 plus the Federal government's commitment to stable long term funding is key. Recommendation 25 and 26 deal with Improving the Condition of Waterway Infrastructure. Recommendation 25 and 26 must be implemented if we are to achieve effective water management.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 25**

Ensure that waterway infrastructure is maintained, repaired and replaced according to appropriate standards by increasing the annual infrastructure maintenance, repair and replacement budget by \$21 million per year on a phased-in basis starting immediately.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 26**

Ensure that the effectiveness of investment in maintenance, repair and replacement of waterway built assets is maximized through development of a cadre of well-trained and experienced personnel with a strong succession and training program.

Without the full implementation of Recommendation 25 and 26 combined with a commitment from the Federal Government to stable long term funding the implementation of the Agency would do more harm than good to the economy of the entire region. Stable long term funding can be assisted by numerous recommendations in the panel report that encourage further development of renewable energy (hydro developments) and more appropriate revenue sharing arrangements. Recommendations 15 thru 18 should receive high priority if the TSW is to have the committed funding necessary for its renewal.

In addition we believe that any appointments to the Council should reflect the population numbers, economies, recreational revenue and property values of all TSW stakeholders. Along

the TSW there are 50,000 residences, not including residents of affected towns and cities, such as Trenton, Peterborough, Lindsay, Barrie and Orillia. In contrast, the reservoir lake residences number approximately 16,500 (P.38 Report).

We require sustainable water levels and flow for quality water and the maintenance of a healthy natural environment. As Minister Baird stated in Parliament the TSW contributes to the protection of wildlife, wetlands and conservation areas. It is also vital to economic activities, especially tourism, which are of major importance to all residents of this part of Ontario. Our lake associations are strongly supportive of a grass roots volunteer organization, the Kawartha Lake Stewards Association, whose mandate is to monitor and investigate water quality issues and potentially other matters that affect the health and the enjoyment of the Kawartha Lakes.

In conclusion, while we believe that the water flow can be better managed, this can only occur with the constructive implementation of Recommendation 25 and 26 and the establishment of long term funding by the Federal government (Recommendations 15 thru 18) that would allow the TSW to continue to provide a positive economic benefit and a quality habitat for all. The implementation of the Water Management Agency would introduce greater uncertainty in regard to water management. Parks Canada thru the TSW must retain responsibility for water management.