



Royal Commission on the Future
of the Toronto Waterfront

REGENERATION



The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of small, stylized teal leaves on a light cream-colored background. The leaves are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some leaves pointing upwards and others downwards, creating a subtle, organic texture.

REGENERATION



REGENERATION

TORONTO'S WATERFRONT AND THE SUSTAINABLE CITY: FINAL REPORT



CANADA



Ontario

**HONOURABLE
DAVID CROMBIE
COMMISSIONER
TORONTO, CANADA**



**Royal Commission on the Future
of the Toronto Waterfront**

Regeneration: Toronto's waterfront and the sustainable city: final report

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Royal Commission on the
Future of the
Toronto Waterfront



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l'avenir du
secteur riverain de Toronto

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Executive Director and Counsel
Ronald L. Doering

Commissaire
L'honorable David Crombie, c.p.

Directeur exécutif et Conseiller juridique
Ronald L. Doering

TO HIS EXCELLENCY
THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN COUNCIL

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

By Order in Council PC – 1988 – 589 dated March 30, 1988, I was
appointed Commissioner to inquire into and make recommendations regarding the future
of the Toronto Waterfront. I now beg to submit the attached Report.

Respectfully submitted.

David Crombie
Commissioner

December 1991

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Future of the
Toronto Waterfront



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l'avenir du
secteur riverain de Toronto

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Commissaire
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Directeur exécutif et Conseiller juridique
Ronald L. Doering

TO HIS HONOUR,
THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF
THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR:

By Order in Council O.C. 2465/89, dated the 12th day of October, 1989, I
was duly appointed a Commissioner under the *Public Inquiries Act*. I am pleased to
present to you the attached Report of the Royal Commission on the Future of the
Toronto Waterfront.

Respectfully submitted.

David Crombie
Commissioner

December 1991

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CONTENTS

Preface	xix	Part II: Environmental Imperatives
Introduction: The Work of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront	1	3. Water
The First Phase	1	The State of the Lakes.....
The Second Phase	8	Why Is Progress Stalled?.....
The Third Phase	14	The Metro Toronto Remedial Action Plan
The Final Report	16	Action on the Great Lakes
Part I: Planning for Sustainability		4. Shoreline
1. The Ecosystem Approach	19	History of Shoreline Modification..
A Region Under Stress	19	A Bird's Eye View of the Shore Today
Ecosystems	31	Significance of Shoreline Modification
Initiatives	49	Shoreline Regeneration Issues.....
Principles for Regenerating the Waterfront	56	How Has Shoreline Modification Caused Problems?
Summary	60	Why Should We Be Concerned?.....
2. Planning Practice	63	What is the Problem?
Context	63	What Can Be Done?
The Nature of the Problem	65	Desirable Characteristics of a Shoreline Regeneration Plan
Towards Ecosystem Planning Practice	76	Implementing The Plan
A Suggested Framework for Ecosystem-Based Planning	81	5. Greenways
		The Benefits of Greenways
		Implementing Greenway Plans

The Provincial Role in Creating Greenways.....	202	11. Scarborough.....	415
The Role of the Federal Government.....	205	<i>Watershed</i> Update.....	421
6. Winter Waterfront.....	207	Planning Initiatives.....	422
Enhancing Winter Waterfront Use	207	12. Durham	427
Opportunities for Maximizing Year-round Use	217	The Region.....	430
Steps to Winterization	222	Town of Pickering.....	433
Healing an Urban Watershed: The Story of the Don	225	Town of Ajax.....	435
Part III: Places		Town of Whitby	439
7. Halton	265	City of Oshawa	441
<i>Watershed</i> Update.....	269	Town of Newcastle.....	443
Towards a Green Net.....	270	Greenways.....	446
Waterfront Planning Policies.....	272	East of Durham.....	448
Planning Initiatives	274	Town of Port Hope ..	448
8. Mississauga	277	Town of Cobourg.....	452
<i>Watershed</i> Update.....	281	Part IV: Regeneration and Recovery	455
Waterfront Planning Policies.....	282	Epilogue.....	470
Waterfront Greenway and Trail.....	285	Appendices	
Planning Initiatives	286	Appendix I: Orders in Council.....	473
9. Etobicoke.....	289	Appendix II: Annotated Bibliography of Royal Commission Publications	483
<i>Watershed</i> Update.....	292	Appendix III: Watersheds	489
Waterfront Greenway and Trail.....	293	Appendix IV: Illustration Credits.....	495
Waterfront Planning Policies.....	294	Selected Bibliography.....	505
10. The Central Waterfront.....	303	Index.....	515
<i>Watershed</i> Update.....	306		
Place and Corridor	318		
Humber Bay.....	339		
Garrison Common	350		
Toronto Bay	363		
Lower Don Lands	385		



PREFACE

AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO THE REGENERATION OF CITIES

The city should be regarded as a natural ecosystem, requiring an integrated approach for addressing its problems.

Half the world's peoples will live in urban areas by the end of this decade. Whether we achieve a greater degree of environmental sustainability over that time will therefore be determined largely by our cities. Surely, sustainability is not possible in the long term unless we can soon find ways to regenerate our urban ecosystems, keep them in good health, and adopt more sustainable urban lifestyles.

*But the environmental challenges facing cities receive relatively little attention — as any review of the literature on sustainable development quickly makes clear. Even the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) devoted little to the analysis of what it called the urban challenges. As Michael Hough said in his book *City Form and Natural Process* (1989), "In a world*

increasingly concerned with the problems of a deteriorating environment, be they energy, pollution, vanishing plants, animals or productive landscapes, there is a marked propensity to bypass the environment most people live in — the city itself".

The City as Pestilence

Why do most environmental commentators engage in so little analysis of our urban ecosystems? Perhaps one reason is that many environmentalists continue to see cities as unnatural — or worse. Recently, for example, Canadian geneticist David Suzuki, a widely read analyst of social and environmental issues, offered his perspective on cities around the world:

We can't eradicate cities. Nor would we want to. But we must recognize that cities disconnect us from nature and each other. They exist by draining resources from the planet while spreading toxic materials and debris. And if we regard all living things on earth as an immense supra-organism (which some have called Gaia), then cities must be seen as the Gaian equivalent of cancer (1991).

Dr. Suzuki's view of cities, however harsh, plays to a familiar bias in North American

literature. Cities, in the accepted view, are not good things. ("Pestilential to our future," said Thomas Jefferson.) Bad things happen there. The countryside is a good thing. Good things happen there. "Nature" is at home in the countryside but not in the city, and God is clearly more knowable in the wide-open spaces than on city streets.

City bashing, therefore, is an easy occupation, but it makes the regeneration and renaissance of cities much more difficult for those who, like Lewis Mumford, see the city as a place where "the separate beams of life" are brought together and "the issues of civilization are brought into focus" — a place where ancient connections, origins, and identities merge with overwhelming events that suggest new opportunities, new dreams, and new questions.

The City as Beacon

It has not been all one-sided, though clearly the bashers have had their way. In a valiant brigade, city lovers such as Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte, Ian McHarg, Tony Hiss, and others have struggled to frame a more positive view of the city, and have offered both philosophical perspectives and practical steps for a more hopeful future.

They are supported, of course, by the millions upon millions of ordinary people who over the centuries have chosen to leave the countryside in order to live in the city. Why do they come? Why have cities grown and grown? Why do people, if they have the choice, decide to live in the "pestilence" and "cancer" of the city?

Cities are desirable and important because they continue to be beacons of hope and freedom to each new generation. Travel on any continent and you will see young people taking the road to town, drawn by the magnetism of cities. Cities are places where fame, fortune, and the future seem ripe for the picking. They are places where you can try to be what you want to be — and where, if you're lucky, you will find a sense of

*community that will serve your needs, shape your day-to-day experiences, give focus to your freedom and meaning to your hopes. For these reasons, as the Alberta Environment Council (1988) put it in its publication **Environment by Design**, cities continue to be "the habitat of choice for most people."*

The City as Natural Phenomenon

*But like us, a city is not separate from nature. Within cities we have vegetation, forests, fields, streams, lakes, rivers, terrain, soils, and wildlife. Hydrology, topography, and climate set the fundamental structure for human habitation and the building of the city itself. As Kevin Lynch (1981) wrote in **A Theory of Good City Form**, "People and their cities are as much natural phenomena as trees, streams, nests, and deer paths. It is crucial that we come to see ourselves as an integral part of the total living community".*

Based on this understanding, we must begin the regeneration of our cities and waterfronts over the next decade. Only by understanding the city as a part of nature can we deal with the wounds inflicted on it, mend its ways, and design its form so that it functions sustainably to satisfy needs without diminishing opportunities for future generations.

The Environmental Revolution

There is, of course, no other choice. The Environmental Revolution is already here — as almost everybody knows. It developed out of the perspectives of the conservation movement at the turn of the century, and was quickened by the actions of anti-pollution activists in the last 25 years. As a result, the environmental imperative today is hitting the city with seismic force.

The fact is that, in pursuit of its needs and pleasures, our throwaway society has poisoned the air, polluted the rivers, and contaminated the earth, without worrying or caring to learn about the long-term damage

caused to the environment or about the way we are foreclosing opportunities for future generations. Unswimmable beaches, undrinkable water, unfishable rivers that have become sewers — these are only some of the visible, touchable signposts of environmental carelessness and degradation.

People will no longer put up with it. Environmental consciousness has already begun to reorganize government policies and priorities, recast corporate strategies, and redefine community and individual responsibility and behaviour. And it is raising fundamental questions — spiritual questions — about the relationship of humankind to nature and to God. It has become a force strong enough to change the face, form, and function of cities around the world.

An Integrated Approach to Cities

It is for these reasons, among others, that the idea of using an ecosystem approach to the regeneration of cities has gained increasing acceptance. An ecosystem is composed of air, water, land, and living organisms, including humans, as well as the interactions among them. The concept has been applied to many types of interacting systems, among them lakes, watersheds, the biosphere, and cities themselves.

Traditionally, human activities have been managed on a piecemeal basis, treating the economy separately from social issues or the environment. But the ecosystem concept holds that these are interrelated, that decisions made in one area affect all others. Dealing effectively with the environmental problems in any city requires a holistic or ecosystem approach to managing human activities.

There are certain key characteristics of an ecosystem approach that help illustrate what is required. An ecosystem approach:

- *includes the whole system, not just parts of it;*

- *focuses on the interrelationships among the elements;*
- *understands that humans are part of nature, not separate from it;*
- *recognizes the dynamic nature of the ecosystem, presenting a moving picture rather than a still photograph;*
- *incorporates the concepts of carrying capacity, resilience, and sustainability — suggesting that there are limits to human activity;*
- *uses a broad definition of environments — natural, physical, economic, social and cultural;*
- *encompasses both urban and rural activities;*
- *is based on natural geographic units such as watersheds, rather than on political boundaries;*
- *embraces all levels of activity — local, regional, national, and international;*
- *emphasizes the importance of species other than humans and of generations other than the present; and*
- *is based on an ethic in which progress is measured by the quality, well-being, integrity, and dignity it accords natural, social, and economic systems.*

Because all environmental problems (and, in fact, all social and economic problems) cut across disciplines and jurisdictions, the multidisciplinary and multijurisdictional qualities inherent in ecosystem planning make this approach particularly necessary and appropriate.

Overcoming Jurisdictional Fragmentation

Unfortunately, most of society is not organized in a way that facilitates this comprehensive approach. In Canada, for example, four levels of government have jurisdiction in the Toronto city region, and more than 100 agencies exercise responsibility

with little effective co-ordination among them. Indeed, in the past, the parochial pressures of bureaucracies and representative governments have almost compelled them to be unresponsive to cross-jurisdictional issues. When everyone is in charge, no one is in charge.

The result is bureaucratic and political paralysis — a situation in which almost any agency can stop projects, and no one can do anything. Because lines of accountability are completely distorted or hidden by this jurisdictional fragmentation, the citizen is left without any means of recourse. The implications for our democracy may be more crucial than we know. The jurisdictional gridlock throughout this region is the single biggest obstacle to its environmental (and economic) regeneration. And this is not a problem unique to the Toronto city region.

The ecosystem approach, then, requires new institutional arrangements. As the Brundtland Commission warned in its 1987 report, **Our Common Future**:

Most of the institutions facing those challenges tend to be independent, fragmented, working to relatively narrow mandates with closed decision processes. Those responsible for managing natural resources and protecting the environment are institutionally separated from those responsible for managing the economy. The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change; the policies and institutions concerned must.

Common Features to Diverse Solutions

Each city region in the world will have to develop its own institutional adaptations in order to implement an ecosystem approach to planning. Each adaptation will reflect the history, culture, traditions, habits, and customs unique to that city. But it is also possible to see that cities will discover some common features in their new approach:

- the recognition of the primacy of natural boundaries and processes;
- the integration of land use with environmental planning in public process and law;
- the integration of urban and rural planning to link the city with its region;
- the creation of concurrent, rather than consecutive, planning processes;
- the integration of capital budgets of all government departments and agencies to ensure coherence, economies, and financial strength; and
- the recognition of the increasing importance of designing places and spaces that allow people to feel a part of nature while they take advantage of the immemorial human pleasures that only cities can offer.

These kinds of institutional adaptations will help cities develop their potential fully. **Environment by Design** could not express it better than by quoting Claude Lévi-Strauss:

Cities have often been likened to symphonies and poems, and the comparison seems to me a perfectly natural one. . . . By its form, as by the manner of its birth, the city has elements at once of biological procreation, organic evolution and aesthetic creation. It is both a natural object and a thing to be cultivated; something lived and something dreamed. It is *the* human invention par excellence.

Adapted from the article written by David Crombie and Ronald L. Doering printed in *Ecodecision Magazine*, No. 3, December 1991.

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INTRODUCTION: THE WORK OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE TORONTO WATERFRONT

WE SHALL NOT CEASE FROM EXPLORATION
AND THE END OF ALL OUR EXPLORING
WILL BE TO ARRIVE WHERE WE STARTED
AND TO KNOW THE PLACE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
—T.S. ELIOT. FOUR QUARTETS. LITTLE GIDDING, V

THE FIRST PHASE

On 30 March 1988, the Governor-in-Council, on the recommendation of the prime minister, approved the appointment of the Honourable David Crombie as Commissioner to:

inquire into and make recommendations regarding the future of the Toronto waterfront and to seek the concurrence of affected authorities in such recommendations, in order to ensure that, in the public interest, federal lands and jurisdiction serve to enhance the physical, environmental, legislative and administrative context governing the use, enjoyment and development of the Toronto waterfront and related lands.

More specifically, the Commission was directed to examine:

the role and mandate of the Board of Toronto Harbour Commissioners;

- the future of the Toronto Island Airport and related transportation services;
- the issues affecting the protection and the renewal of the natural environment insofar as they relate to federal responsibilities and jurisdiction;
- the issues regarding the effective management of federal lands within the Toronto waterfront area; and
- the possible use of federal lands, facilities, and jurisdiction to support emerging issues such as the proposed Olympic Games and World's Fair.

The Commission was initially given a three-year mandate, from June 1988 to June 1991; that was later extended to 31 December 1991, in order to give the Commission time to complete added work requested by the Province of Ontario.

The Government of Canada's decision to establish the Commission was based on

its recognition that the Toronto waterfront was an area offering many opportunities but had, to quote an Intergovernmental Waterfront Committee (IWC) that looked at the situation, “a number of urgent matters that must be studied and dealt with”.

The IWC had been organized informally 18 months before the Commission was established, after the prime minister asked Mr. Crombie, then a cabinet minister from Toronto with a particular interest in urban issues, to make recommendations on the appropriateness of having the Government of Canada, through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) — a Crown corporation — involve itself in urban redevelopment in downtown Toronto.

In the course of discussing this project with representatives of the Province, Metropolitan Toronto, and the City of Toronto, it became evident to Mr. Crombie that there were some common concerns, particularly about waterfront issues and about the jurisdictional gridlock that had developed in dealing with them. This led to a decision to set up the IWC, with then-Premier David Peterson in the chair, and a membership comprising Dennis Flynn, then chairman of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto; the then-mayor of Toronto, Art Eggleton; and Mr. Crombie.

The IWC met over the next several months to identify common concerns on which concerted action might be taken, work that proved to be the foundation for tasks eventually assigned to the Royal Commission.

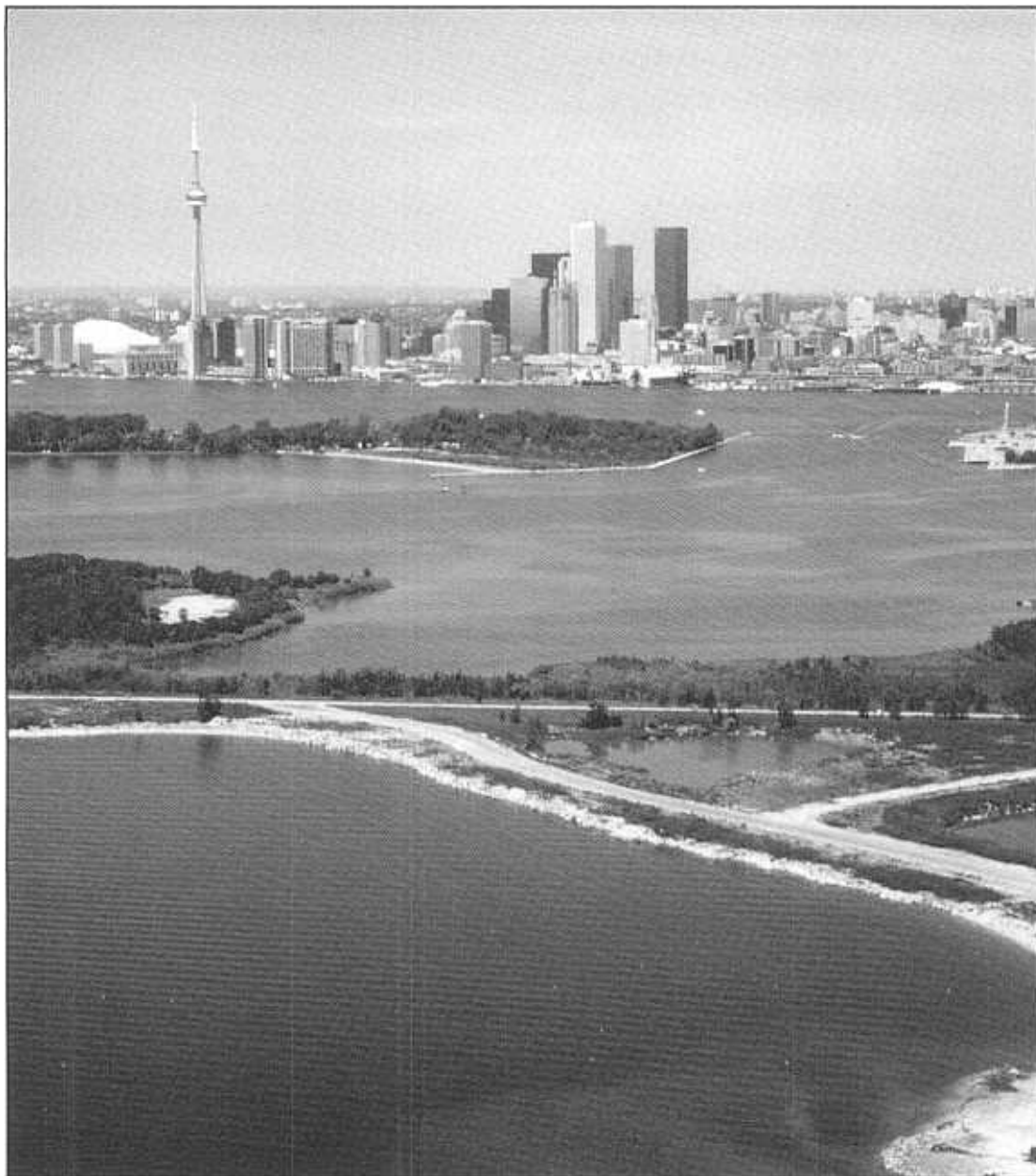
The Commission began by organizing five work groups that would look at broad waterfront issues, and planned a series of public hearings for the spring of 1989. In addition, Commission staff and experts

under contract began to analyse the port, airport, land-use, and development activities of federal agencies on the waterfront.

From the beginning, the Commission conducted open inquiries, seeking to consider all perspectives and listening to all points of view. Openness included invitations to federal, provincial, and municipal governments to participate in the Commission’s work groups and studies, alongside representatives of the private sector, labour, and academia. The Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario, and other invited participants accepted willingly and worked co-operatively from the start. Initially, however, municipalities were wary, fearing that the existence of the Commission might be an attempt by the federal government to extend its jurisdiction on the waterfront. As it became clear that this was not the case, and that the Commission intended to respect existing jurisdictions at all levels, a very high degree of intergovernmental co-operation was offered in every aspect of the Royal Commission’s work.

It soon became evident to the Commission, as it had been to some others, that waterfront problems were both broader and deeper than the list of issues included in the Commission’s federal mandate. They stemmed from historical forces related to the way society and the economy had evolved over the past 200 years, and to the impact each had on the waterfront and on the local and regional environment of which the waterfront is a part.

The public, ahead of governments, was aware of the nature of the problem. In the Commission’s first sets of hearings, dozens of deputants delivered the same message: by all means sort out the issues of Harbourfront and the Harbour



Toronto Skyline, view from the Toronto Islands

Commissioners, but help us find out how to make our lake publicly accessible, fishable, drinkable, and swimmable. This cannot happen while the rivers that empty into the lake are contaminated, the air that connects to it is dirty, the groundwaters polluted, and the soils through which they pass contaminated.

During this first phase of its work, the Commission published seven major reports, as background for the public hearings and as the basis of its analysis of waterfront needs and opportunities: *Environment and Health: Issues on the Toronto Waterfront*; *Housing and Neighbourhoods: The Liveable Waterfront*; *Access and Movement*; *Parks*,

Pleasures, and Public Amenities; Jobs, Opportunities, and Economic Growth; Persistence and Change: Waterfront Issues and the Board of Toronto Harbour Commissioners; and The Future of the Toronto Island Airport: The Issues.

Fortunately, the Commission had not been given specific boundaries as part of its original mandate. Therefore, work groups were encouraged to draw whatever boundaries they felt were necessary in considering the issues placed before them. The limits turned out to be broader (and vaguer) in some instances (e.g., environment and health) and narrower and more specific in others (e.g., housing and neighbourhoods).

However, at this stage of the Commission's existence, its principal geographic focus was the waterfront of the Regional Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, including the three local municipalities of Etobicoke, Toronto, and Scarborough. In many instances, the word *Toronto* came to be used as shorthand for all the communities in the region, defining the sense of place. In fact, a study conducted for the Commission in 1991 reveals that, rather than naming the individual municipalities in which they live, seven of every ten area residents think of themselves as coming from Toronto.

By the end of the first year of operations, the Commission had reached its first set of conclusions, which it conveyed to the federal government and the public through its first interim report, in August 1989. It summarizes the first phase of the Commission's work, which had focused on the waterfront in the context of Toronto's history, values, and contemporary issues:

Toronto was born on the waterfront. Long before the Simcoes. Long before the Town of York. Deep in the

mists of aboriginal time, the Toronto Carrying Place was a centre of trade, stabilized by community and endowed with spiritual significance.

When Toronto embraced the Railway Era in the 1850s, there were few hints of the City that would emerge, the City the railways would help to create. And if the City was cut off from its waterfront by dozens of sets of tracks flowing in and out of each other in the new lands south of Front Street — and it was — it is also clear that the City and its people benefitted mightily. Having secured a major share of a new technology, and established a formula for economic success that remains potent to this day, Toronto drew hundreds of industries to its shores over the years. And as energetic cities do, it began to attract people from other parts of Canada and from all over the world: creative people, people with dreams and ideas, people seeking freedom and better prospects, people whose children and their ensuing generations would keep Toronto vigorous. And the City prospered.

But as railways and then expressways cut people off from their waterfront, as people looked elsewhere to live, work, and play, and as our economic drive brought greater prosperity to more and more people, our perspective changed dramatically. The significance of waterfronts was lost and their importance diminished; the great contribution of our river valleys was no longer understood or taught and, save for a few hardy souls, the essential role of Nature in the City was all but forgotten. Progress meant industry and industry

meant railways. Railways required land for track and cities agreed to separate themselves from their waterfronts in order to capture the opportunities the railways offered.

But in our time the railways have become more interested in profit from the land than in service from the tracks; ships have changed their technologies and their trade routes; the economic base of cities is being changed and there has been a significant shift in human values. People are coming back to our waterfronts for pleasure and solace in a way that their great-grandparents would have understood.

This is dramatic, powerful, and far-reaching historical change. The people of Toronto

understand this. Time and again, they have expressed their belief that Toronto's way of doing things, its

values, its civic traditions could and should be used to deal with the forces that affect the future of the waterfront and the city.

Three words define the values of Toronto at its best: opportunity, tolerance, and orderliness. With a few pauses, Toronto has been a place at the cutting edge, a magnet for new ideas, and a resource in realizing them. In Toronto, as in all vigorous cities, opportunities beget opportunities.

Moreover, there has always been an ongoing opportunity to affect the course of the city itself — a sense that Toronto is a work in progress and that its directions can be changed. People

who have been in Toronto for a while begin to develop a feeling of what they want it to be, what of its many facets would benefit from change, what should stay the same.

Tolerance has meant the near-total absence of violent confrontation. There are forums where people grapple with ideas, interests, and beliefs. When compromise is possible, compromise is made, but even when it is not possible, "losers" are left with the knowledge that, next time, they could just as easily be "winners": an idea has been rejected, not the person who proposed it. This climate of tolerance has also meant that sooner or later, "New Torontonians" (new arrivals or new generations, or

both) will have their ideas and aspirations brought to the City's and the public's official attention and they will be given respectful considera-

tion. Tolerance means that everybody learns that everybody counts.

Orderliness has been important in the building of Toronto. With all the transformations the City has experienced and all the conflicts it has had to resolve, nothing has ever truly gotten out of hand. That discipline (a better word, maybe, than orderliness) has been here from the beginning — a lingering legacy, no doubt, of Governor Simcoe's garrison days. It is a value, or a virtue, that has been drawn upon by each succeeding wave of New Torontonians, reinterpreted on occasion and adapted to specific circumstances, but always enriched along the way.

Toronto has been a place at the cutting edge, a magnet for new ideas, and a resource in realizing them.

Toronto continues to recognize that freedom remains alive only in an atmosphere of order, that life here is played by a set of rules, and that the rules are meant to work for everybody. From this comes the assurance that nothing will ever get out of hand or out of control; that the City will never grow beyond its ability to solve its problems; that, when things start to go wrong, order will be restored and the right thing done.

Well, that's the faith. Easier to say than to do. Forging consensus rooted in these core values is the dull, hard work of democracy — an unrelenting, never-ending task that requires the

energies, interests, and imaginations of many people over long periods of time. Sometimes their voices are not heard. Sometimes the thread is lost — or their visions are blocked. And sometimes the soul-numbing experiences of day-to-day battle create a tempting cynicism that obscures the progress being achieved.

Indeed, the values that we call opportunity, tolerance, and orderliness work best when people believe they themselves can make a difference; when they feel that their dreams can expand their realities; and when they feel that Toronto holds its own unique promise for them, a promise that can be fulfilled by their efforts, both individually and in community with others.

Armed with this appreciation of Toronto's core values, the Commission turned its attention to a first set of recommendations. The Commission had already

decided to make interim recommendations that would facilitate the ongoing process of analysis and help forge a consensus on required courses of action. It would make final recommendations on issues it felt capable of dealing with as early as possible in its mandate, in hope of obtaining early agreement and response from the community and from the governments involved.

The Commission made more than 60 recommendations in this first interim

report, more than half of which dealt with environmental issues. Most of these suggestions were directed in the first instance to the federal government,

but a number were generic and applicable to two or more levels of government. True to its mandate, the Commission was seeking the concurrence of affected authorities.

The single most important recommendation of the interim report was the proposal that a watershed approach be adopted to protect Toronto's vital ecosystem. The report said:

To begin, a broad evaluation is needed to ensure that sufficient open space is maintained and that its environmentally significant features are preserved. Across the entire watershed, a "green" strategy [should] be devised to preserve the waterfront, river valley systems, head-waters, wetlands, and other significant features in the public interest. Such a strategy would physically link the waterfront to the river valley systems, which, in turn, would be linked by the preserved headwater areas. A

In the first interim report the most important recommendation was the proposal that a watershed approach be adopted to protect Toronto's ecosystem.

continuous trail system would guarantee public access to these natural and open spaces.

Major elements supporting the green strategy were the Commission's proposals that the Rouge River Valley be protected as a natural heritage park, Humber Bay Park East be protected as significant regional urban space, and the Leslie Street Spit be recognized as an urban wilderness park. The Commission defined "urban wilderness" as an extensive area in which natural processes predominate; there is public access without vehicles; and there are low-key, low-cost, unorganized recreation and contacts with wildlife.

The environmental recommendations made by the Commission in the report included proposals for:

- improving public access to the entire waterfront and extending public ownership;
- imposing a moratorium on lakefilling until a comprehensive lakefill policy is developed;
- establishing a waterfront-wide heritage policy;
- protecting all natural areas and wildlife along the waterfront, and rehabilitating and maintaining river valleys such as the Humber, the Don, and the Rouge;
- creating a watershed greenbelt;
- strengthening and more closely integrating the Ontario Planning Act and the Environmental Assessment Act, as well as strengthening the federal environmental review process; and
- controlling over-development, including high-rises, on the waterfront to prevent visual or physical barriers.

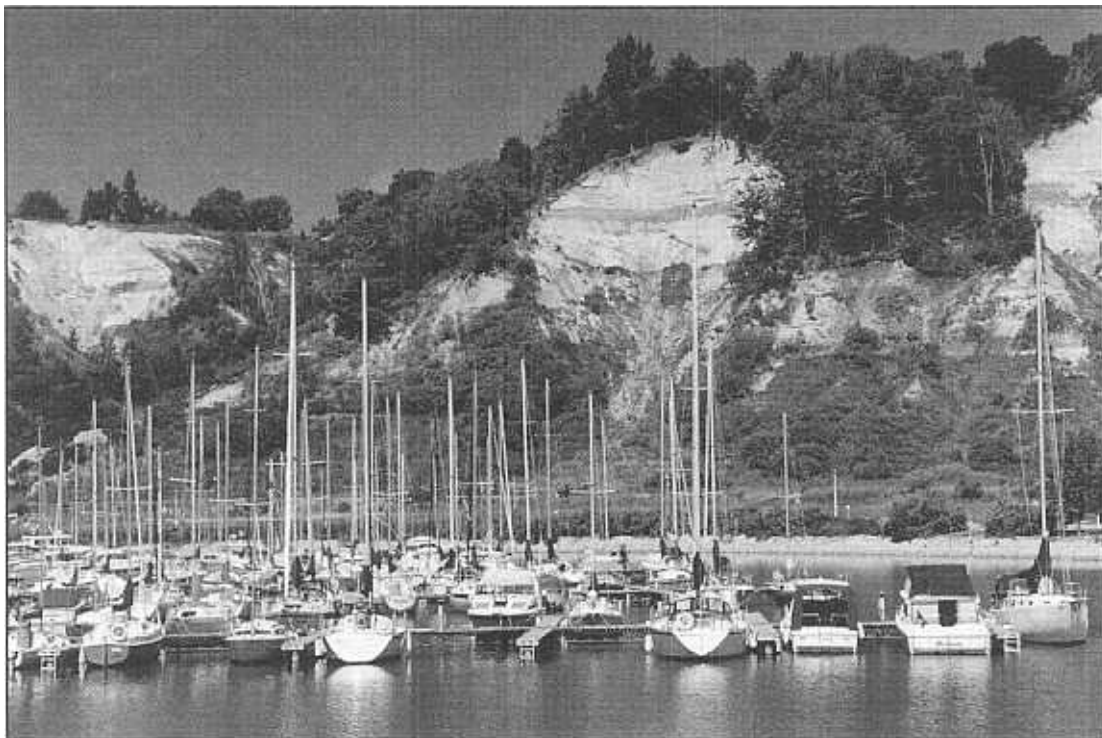
All these issues and recommendations were to be more fully analysed and considered in subsequent phases of the Commission's work.

In the same interim report, the Commission also made its final recommendations on the Toronto Island Airport and on Harbourfront, as well as its fundamental recommendations about the Board of Toronto Harbour Commissioners. They are summarized here and discussed in greater detail in Part III of this report.

The Commission recommended that the federal government terminate the Harbourfront Corporation and create a new entity, the Harbourfront Foundation, giving it a mandate to continue providing Harbourfront's wide variety of cultural, recreational, and educational programs, which would be supported by an endowment from the Harbourfront assets. The Commission suggested that lands not needed to endow the foundation should be disposed of, subject to negotiations with the City of Toronto; furthermore, the Commission felt that urban design improvements were also needed, to achieve the best physical integration of the Harbourfront area with the surrounding city and the water.

In considering the Toronto Island Airport, the Commission concluded that it should continue its dual role as part of a regional airport system. Within this system, it should serve general aviation and limited air commuter operations, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the 50-year Tripartite Agreement signed in 1983 among the City of Toronto, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners, and the federal Minister of Transport.

The Commission also recommended that a new airport plan be prepared, one



Bluffer's Park Marina, Scarborough

that would reflect that dual role and ensure that the airport would remain at its existing scale, be cleaner and quieter, and become more sensitive to the needs of its users. It also found a need for management improvements, including a new financial and accounting base, and improved public and user consultation processes.

The Commission recommended that the mandate of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners (THC) to operate the Port of Toronto be separated from planning or developing lands that do not serve the port function. The THC should retain its authority to operate the Port (and the airport) on behalf of the City of Toronto but should be limited to that task. The Commission suggested that, in addition to the proposed changes to the THC's mandate, greater local control of waterfront planning and a better system of accountability were needed.

The Commission indicated it would conduct studies during the next phase of its work, to evaluate how much land was needed for the port operation and which lands could be transferred to another body. It also recommended that an environmental audit of the entire East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area be carried out before there was further action to develop lands in those areas.

THE SECOND PHASE

On 30 August 1989, the same day the Commission's report was released, then-Treasury Board President Robert de Cotret responded on behalf of the Government of Canada:

The government is in substantial agreement with the Royal Commission's recommendations on Harbourfront, is generally supportive of the recommendation

that the airport continue to serve general aviation and limited commuter traffic, and is open to discussions with the City of Toronto regarding the recommendation to transfer management of lands no longer required for port purposes from the Toronto Harbour Commissioners to another body.

Shortly thereafter, on 17 October 1989, the Province of Ontario also acted: then-Premier David Peterson announced broad provincial measures to ensure that Toronto's waterfront is preserved, protected, and used prudently as an accessible and attractive place for people.

These measures included:

- endorsing the Royal Commission's report;
- providing an additional, complementary mandate to the Commission, asking it to report to the Province on waterfront development issues along the entire western basin of Lake Ontario, from the eastern boundary of Durham Region to the western boundary of Halton Region;
- agreeing to join the environmental audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area, and issuing an invitation to Metropolitan Toronto and the City of Toronto to participate as well;
- declaring a Provincial Interest in that area under the Planning Act, "to prevent any major development . . . until it can be determined what is appropriate for the people and the environment";
- asking the Commission to recommend ways of linking and integrating the waterfront to the upstream watersheds

throughout the Greater Toronto region; and (in a companion move)

- appointing Ron Kanter, then MPP for St. Andrew-St. Patrick, to identify ways of protecting forever the headwaters and river valleys from the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario.

Having said on numerous occasions that no one level of government can resolve all the issues related to the development of the waterfront in the public interest, Mr. Crombie called the new provincial mandate, added to that from the federal government, "a very strong signal of federal-provincial co-operation on these matters". Indeed, it made this Commission only the second in Canadian history to serve two levels of government. (The first had been the one called to investigate the Ocean Range disaster off Newfoundland in 1976.)

The mandate the Province gave the Commission was broad and comprehensive. Because of the waterfront's environmental significance; the extensive socio-economic pressures that characterize waterfront development; and the importance of rational planning and development of the waterfront to ensure future quality of life and the well-being of hinterland areas, the Province asked the Commission to inquire into and make recommendations concerning:

- appropriate allocation of waterfront lands to various uses — i.e., housing, open-space, industrial, and commercial uses;
- waterfront transportation in the context of the regional transportation system;
- housing and community development on the waterfront;

- employment and job opportunities relating to the waterfront; and
- initiatives to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment and the quality of life for people living in the region.

The Commission was asked to conclude its inquiries and submit its recommendations to the Province at the same time that it reported to the federal government.

In the second phase of its operations, the Commission used the same methods as in its first year: utilizing work groups, independent analysis, public hearings, and consult-

ing with interested parties. Now, however, it was working in a much more fully regional context — looking at a region with a shoreline of some 250 kilometres (155 miles) covering 17 local municipalities, six conservation authorities, four regional municipalities, and four counties on the waterfront.

The Commission held three more sets of public hearings in this second phase, in Burlington, Toronto, and Oshawa, and published three more background reports: *A Green Strategy for the Greater Toronto Waterfront*; *Waterfront Transportation in the Context of Regional Transportation*; and the results of the first phase of the environmental audit, *East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area: Environment in Transition*.

The work ranged from theory to practice, policy to program, and from the scale of the Great Lakes to that of the region and its communities. Fundamental to all its efforts was the conviction that the

environment had to be the workbench on which all other aspects of the Commission's operations and conclusions would be built.

This need — to consider the environment first and make it the central theme — led the Commission to choose an ecosystem approach for analysing the state of the environment of the waterfront, the watershed, and the (bio)region, and for charting their future. Learning as it went, leaning

heavily on thinkers (Jack Vallentyne, Andy Hamilton, Henry Regier, Don Gamble, Peter Sly, Katherine Davies, and Trevor Hancock, among others) who had been and are still working out underly-

ing ecosystem concepts, the Commission sought to understand the approach in theory and, in its audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area, to apply it.

The emphasis on understanding environmental conditions as a prelude to planning courses of action brought the Commission into contact with many parties, among them:

- the International Joint Commission (IJC), in connection with its work on water quality and water levels in the Great Lakes;
- the four parties (i.e., environmental agencies of the U.S. and Canadian governments, the State of New York, and the Province of Ontario) responsible for creating the Lake Ontario Toxics Management Plan (LOTMP); and
- locally, various stakeholders associated with Remedial Action Plans (RAPs),

The environment had to be the workbench on which all other aspects of the Commission's operations and conclusions would be built.

This conviction led to the ecosystem approach.

which are designed to clean up contamination “hot spots” in areas around the Great Lakes, Toronto being one of them.

The Commission’s second interim report, *Watershed* (1990), was submitted to the federal and provincial governments in September 1990; it begins with a definition of “ecosystem” and an explanation of the significance of the ecosystem approach:

Simply put, an ecosystem is composed of air, land, water, and living organisms, including humans, and the interactions among them. The concept has been applied to many types of interacting systems, including lakes, watersheds, cities, and the biosphere.

Traditionally, human activities have been managed on a piecemeal basis, treating the economy separately from social issues or the environment. But the ecosystem concept holds that these are interrelated, that decisions made in one area affect all the others. To deal effectively with the environmental problems in any ecosystem requires a holistic or “ecosystem” approach to managing human activities. . . .

The environmental audit is demonstrating the inextricable links among the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area, other parts of Toronto, the Don River Watershed, and the Great Lakes. Similarly, the Greater Toronto Area waterfront being investigated by the Royal Commission is part of a region that includes the watersheds of the

rivers leading into Lake Ontario from the GTA. Anything that happens within this area is tied ecologically to the health of the waterfront.

Therefore in order to truly understand the waterfront itself, we must gain an understanding of the biological region, or bioregion in which it lies.

Watershed then goes on to assess the state of the waterfront and of the Greater Toronto bioregion, defined by the Commission as the area bounded by the Niagara Escarpment to the west, the Oak Ridges Moraine to the north and east, and Lake Ontario to the south. In the words of the report:

The assessment concluded that this is an ecosystem under considerable stress; one that is, to a large degree, “dis-integrated”, in which the carrying capacity — the ability of air, land, and water to absorb the impact of human use — is clearly strained, and cannot be sustained over the longer term unless fundamental changes are made.

There is an urgent need for regeneration of the entire

Greater Toronto Bioregion to remediate environmental problems caused by past activities, to prevent further degradation, and to ensure that all future activities result in a net improvement in environmental health.

The Commission recognizes that governments, working alone, cannot solve our environmental problems, and that the bioregion’s six thousand industries and four million residents have responsibilities they must meet.

The ecosystem concept holds that economy, social issues, and environment are interrelated — decisions made in one area affect all the others.

Because the ecosystem approach highlights interactions among ecological, social, economic, and political systems in the bioregion, the Commission emphasized the importance of developing new administrative mechanisms that bring jurisdictions together to solve problems co-operatively and that help establish environmentally sound ways of living.

Watershed's second chapter focuses on the needs of the Greater Toronto waterfront in the context of its bioregion and offers a set of nine principles for planning, developing, and managing a healthy, integrated waterfront.

The Commission said the waterfront should be clean, green, useable, diverse, open, accessible, connected, affordable, and attractive. (There is a more detailed explanation of the interpretation, origins, and possible applications of these principles, both in *Watershed* and in this report.)

Watershed contains some 80 recommendations for implementing an ecosystem approach that will restore the health and usefulness of the waterfront. As in the first interim report, some suggestions are generic, involving the entire waterfront or region, while others are specific to particular areas or jurisdictions. Although many recommendations were directed to the federal government, most flowed from the Commission's provincial mandate.

Among the most important generic, region-wide recommendations were:

All federal, provincial, and municipal governments and agencies with an

interest in or influence over the waterfront should adopt the ecosystem approach and principles outlined in this report as a basis for planning.

The Province should declare the waterfront from Burlington to Newcastle a Provincial Resource, and it should provide leadership, resources, and opportunities for collaboration amongst various parties, in order to integrate planning and programs as part of efforts to regenerate the waterfront.

The Province should establish Waterfront Partnership Agreements with municipalities, along the lines recommended in this [*Watershed*] report.

Over the next year, the Province should work with the Commission to review ways in which the philosophy and principles of the eco-

system approach could best be integrated into the Planning Act and other relevant provincial legislation, as it affects the Greater Toronto bioregion. . . .

The Province should plan, co-ordinate, and implement a Waterfront Trail from Burlington to Newcastle, to be completed by 1993 to celebrate both the bicentennial of the founding of York and the centennial of the Ontario provincial parks system. . . .

The Province should take immediate steps to preserve the ecological, scenic,

Watershed offers recommendations for implementing an ecosystem approach and developing the administrative mechanisms to bring jurisdictions together to solve problems co-operatively and to establish environmentally sound ways of living.

and recreational significance of the Oak Ridges Moraine, and to ensure that future land use in the moraine does not result in cumulative impairment of the ecological quality of downstream rivers or the waterfront. . . .

The federal and provincial governments should modify the RAP process by elevating each municipality from being one of many stakeholders, to being a joint partner in developing and implementing the RAP. Using the watershed approach, all municipalities within a given watershed should be asked to collaborate on the RAP. . . .

The Province should bring forward comprehensive lakefill policies for public review as soon as possible. The policies should require thorough environmental appraisal of all individual lakefill projects, and of their cumulative effects, across the Greater Toronto Waterfront. Until such policies are in place, there should be a moratorium on new lakefilling. . . .

The waterfront, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and river valleys of the Greater Toronto Area should be recognized as Provincial Resources in the public debate and decisions made by all levels of government on the urban form and structure of the region. . . .

In addition to the recommendations dealing with environmental regeneration at the regional scale, *Watershed* considered a wide range of specific matters, including:

- devising a concept for the route of a continuous Waterfront Trail from Burlington to Newcastle;

- examining the possibility of reducing the barrier effects of the Gardiner/Lakeshore Corridor, by taking down the elevated portion of the expressway in phases and improving public transit and road systems in the area;
- creating a Waterfront Regeneration Trust, to co-ordinate the regeneration of the waterfront;
- defining and proposing the transfer of THC's non-port lands: to the City of Toronto for parkland and a wildlife corridor; to the Toronto Economic Development Corporation (TEDCO) for industrial purposes; and to the proposed Waterfront Trust for decontamination and redevelopment for mixed uses;
- creating a Centre for Green Enterprise and Industry; and
- drafting waterfront plans and projects in Halton Region, Mississauga, Etobicoke, Scarborough, and Durham Region.

When *Watershed* was released, Mr. Crombie said he was "encouraged over the past year by the continuing strong public interest in the waterfront and by signs of an emerging consensus among all levels of government concerning waterfront policies and priorities. The aim of this report", he continued, "is to provide the basis for governments to act now on the fundamental decisions that have to be taken to ensure that the people of Toronto have the waterfront they want and deserve".

There was widespread and positive community and government reaction to the Commission's principles, and to its recommended approach for regenerating the waterfront and watershed.

THE THIRD PHASE

Once more, the Government of Canada responded promptly. On 12 September 1990, Robert de Cotret, then Treasury Board president and Environment minister, said:

I fully support the comprehensive ecosystem approach that the Commission has adopted and which is integral to the *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement*. The federal government has an important role to play in responding to *Watershed* and we will do our full share within our jurisdiction.

He also commented favourably on the proposed Centre for Green Enterprise, and promised that the government would look closely at recommendations to increase public access to the waterfront, and to transfer federal lands along the waterfront to other levels of government. Mr. de Cotret added, "Mr. Crombie has presented a useful framework for discussing the future of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners. The government will be discussing these recommendations with the City of Toronto, the Province, the Royal Commission, and other interests".

That same afternoon, Bob Rae, then premier-elect, welcomed *Watershed*, saying:

The Government of Ontario will provide the strong provincial leadership needed to maintain the ecological integrity of the waterfront. We fully agree with the ecosystem approach to waterfront policies and priorities, and we are prepared to work closely with local governments and existing agencies to protect the ecology of the watershed and to create a diverse, integrated, and healthy waterfront.

Almost all municipalities across the waterfront also endorsed the report, as did

representatives of business, labour, and environmental and community groups.

Shortly after the release of *Watershed*, the Commission organized another work group, to review how the philosophy and principles of the ecosystem approach might best be integrated into the Planning Act and into other legislation that affects the Greater Toronto bioregion. The group's conclusions and recommendations were published in *Planning for Sustainability: Towards Integrating Environmental Protection into Land-Use Planning*.

The Province of Ontario responded more fully three months after *Watershed* was released. On 17 December 1991, Ruth Grier, Minister of the Environment and minister responsible for the Greater Toronto Area, commended the previous government and John Sweeney in particular, for giving the Commission a broad mandate and for supporting the Commission; she continued:

We endorse fully the principles put forward for the future direction of the waterfront area; a waterfront that is clean, green and attractive; a waterfront that is useable, diverse and open; and a waterfront that is connected, affordable and accessible.

We intend to use these nine principles as a guide, not only for the waterfront, but to move beyond the waterfront — to the GTA urban structure process. We will provide a framework to ensure that greenlands and watersheds become an integral part of future plans for the Greater Toronto Area.

Today, I would like to outline how we intend to implement key recommendations of the report.

Firstly, we will establish a continuous Waterfront Trail which will



Watersedge Park, Mississauga

become the Green-Way that ties the GTA together from Burlington to Newcastle. It will link to the Bruce and Ganaraska Trail systems at either end. We see the waterfront trail as the highest land use for all public lands along the water's edge. The trail will be much more than a four foot strip of asphalt. This trail will connect the waterfront with river valleys and source areas and link up areas of natural and historic importance along Lake Ontario. It will be a place for people, for families and children to enjoy the out of doors and the natural environment on foot or bicycle.

Secondly, we accept the idea of Waterfront Partnership Agreements as a valid implementation vehicle for waterfront plans. We will negotiate agreements between local, regional and federal governments, along with conservation authorities, to prepare responsible development plans and implementation

mechanisms for the waterfront consistent with the Crombie principles.

Thirdly, we will establish by legislation a Waterfront Regeneration Trust to co-ordinate regeneration activities.

Finally, we will move to halt the unnecessary privatization of the public shoreline and Crown resources such as water lots.

Mrs. Grier turned her attention to the remaining period of the Commission's mandate:

In the final year of the Royal Commission's work, we will ask Mr. Crombie to address:

The feasibility of relocating the Gardiner Expressway in consultation with Metropolitan Toronto and the Ministry of Transportation;

the pooling of lands and the integration of future plans for the Canadian National Exhibition,

Ontario Place, Fort York and HMCS York in consultation with the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation and the other authorities involved; and

policies, practices, technology and methods available to regenerate shoreline areas.

The Commission soon realized that these additions to its mandate could not be explored in the time still available. As a result, both the federal and provincial governments extended the Commission's life by six months, to December 1991.

In addition to publishing *Planning for Sustainability*, in the third phase of its work, the Commission completed the environmental audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area (*Pathways: Towards an Ecosystem Approach*) and the three tasks given it by the Province. The results of these efforts were published in three major reports: *Shoreline Regeneration*; *Garrison Common: Preliminary Master Plan*; and *The Toronto Central Waterfront Transportation Corridor Study*.

Adopting the ecosystem approach made the environment the key to the Commission's thinking. But that approach demands an understanding of the dynamic interaction among environmental, economic, and community issues. Therefore, in addition to work associated with the new elements of its mandate, the Commission carried out further research and mounted seminars to consider the broader implications of the ecosystem approach.

In addition, working papers were published on cumulative effects, soil decontamination, the regional economy, community profiles, and the waterfront in winter.

The Commission continued to communicate with a wide range of groups and individuals, using the *Newsletter*, speeches, presentations, consultations, and meetings. In the summer of 1991, it surveyed public opinion on waterfront issues, having the polling firm, Environics, add a number of questions to its regular survey of residents living in the Greater Toronto region.

Environics found that issues relating to the environment and the waterfront ranked high among elements identified as contributing to the quality of life in the region, and that people in the region view environmental protection as an economic issue.

THE FINAL REPORT

This final report summarizes all that has come before in the work and experience of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront. Throughout the Commission's existence, all those involved in it thought hard and listened carefully to the views and advice of people — thousands of people. Therefore, this is the work of many hands and minds; it embodies the values, aspirations, concerns, and hopes of these thousands of citizens.

In looking at our collective experience, those who were involved with the Commission in the course of its existence have come to the end of their work with a sense of optimism: the core values — orderliness, tolerance, and the seizing of opportunities — held by Torontonians are starting to be applied to the regeneration of the waterfront and the watersheds across the entire bioregion.

This final report treats waterfront regeneration as an opportunity that brings with it the long-term promise of a healthy environment, economic recovery and

sustainability, and maintaining a liveable community.

The likelihood that these opportunities will be realized is strengthened by an emerging sense of order as governments, working with business, labour, community leaders, and ordinary citizens, recognize the degree of discipline and tolerance that is needed: discipline to perform one's role without blocking or ignoring that played by others, and tolerance of their needs and functions as all work together to deal with the waterfront or watersheds.

The title of this final report, *Regeneration: Toronto's Waterfront and the Sustainable City*, reflects the Commission's beliefs about what has to be done and what can be accomplished. The report itself consists of four parts.

Part I, "Planning for Sustainability", describes what the Commission found about the need for regional planning and co-operation, based on the ecosystem approach, and including concepts of sustainability, health, equity, stewardship, responsibility, and the bioregion as "home". After an updated assessment of the environmental state of the bioregion, the report articulates the Commission's philosophy and principles. The Commission's own efforts as an "agent of change" — applying the ecosystem approach — are described, and their value is assessed.

Part I concludes with a discussion of the Commission's ideas for ecosystem-based planning practice. This is based on the *Planning for Sustainability* report and the working paper on cumulative effects, as well

as on practical methods for ecosystem-based planning now being used or proposed by experts in the field.

Part II, "Environmental Imperatives", deals with a range of environmental imperatives that must be considered by each level of government if it is to help restore and maintain ecosystem health.

This second section includes: a critical review of the state of the Great Lakes ecosystem and efforts at regenerating it; measures for regenerating the Lake Ontario shoreline in the Greater Toronto bioregion; an explanation of the environmental, social, and economic importance of a greenway and

trail system for the waterfront and the bioregion; and the advantages of considering winter conditions on the waterfront. It concludes with an analysis of the Don River

Regeneration explores the opportunities to realize the promise of a healthy environment, economic recovery and sustainability, and a liveable community.

watershed: its past, present, and future, treating the problems and opportunities of this watershed as typical of those throughout the bioregion.

Part III, "Places", surveys the various places along the waterfront, from Burlington in the west to Port Hope in the east. It includes summaries of responses to the Commission's previous area-specific recommendations, as well as encapsulating new research and recommendations for places across the waterfront, including the need for the integration of environment, land use, and transportation on the Central Waterfront.

This section reviews the Commission's own efforts to apply the ecosystem approach in its own work, in such projects as the

environmental audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area, the Garrison Common Preliminary Master Plan, and the Toronto Central Waterfront Transportation Corridor Study. As well, it includes comments on the initiatives undertaken by other bodies — municipalities, conservation authorities, federal and provincial ministries, and private-sector owners and developers — now using the ecosystem philosophy and approach.

The final section of the report, “Regeneration and Recovery”, discusses issues related to implementation of the Royal Commission’s recommendations. It includes the Commission’s ideas about the nature and structure of public administration needed to manage the waterfront: no single level of government can or should be in total control of the waterfront; each should perform its role in its own jurisdiction, in partnership with others.

The section also offers the Commission’s views on partnership agreements, the issue of financing waterfront regeneration, and a practical program of co-ordinated action across the waterfront, including consolidated capital budgets for the next five-year period.

Sir Winston Churchill once said that people create buildings and then buildings create people. The same is true of the cities and regions in which we live and their waterfronts. As a small element of two governments in a democracy, the Commission offers a possible map to a better, healthier, sustainable city. In a democracy, however, the ultimate decisions — what maps to use, whether to use a particular map, whether to use any map at all — rest with and are made real by the behaviour, attitudes, and actions of its citizens.