



# Waterfront Regeneration Trust

## 2004 Accomplishments

**The Waterfront Regeneration Trust has three goals: extend and complete the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail and Greenway; promote the Trail and Greenway and foster public commitment to waterfront regeneration. To achieve these goals the Trust has developed two major programs: the Collaborative Communications and Promotions Program and the Lake Ontario Waterfront Investment Program. In 2004 the Trust and its many partners made excellent progress toward these goals.**

### **COMMUNICATIONS & PROMOTIONS PROGRAM**

In 2002 the Waterfront Regeneration Trust invited its 45 community partners to participate in the Collaborative Communications and Promotion Program to build public awareness of, and support for the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail and Greenway. A second objective was to attract public and private investment for the expansion, enhancement and promotion of the Trail. The response was then and continues to be very supportive. As directed by our partners, the Trust created a marketing plan for the Trail drawing on the marketing expertise of our local partners. The Trust is implementing the plan through a number of activities identified as priorities by our partners. Highlights from this year's work are described below.

### **WATERFRONT TRAIL SIGNAGE**

#### ***Directional Signage***

Signing the Waterfront Trail is a priority—for reasons of safety and clarity and for an effective marketing and promotions program. The Trust and its partners pledged to have a signed route by 2006. To facilitate this, the Trust has replenished its inventory

of directional signage with funding from Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program. New stretches of signed Trail include:

- Gananoque;
- Thousand Island Bike Path;
- The route through Lincoln and the side trip to Jordan in Niagara; and
- Brockville has requested and received signs for installation.

#### ***Trailhead Signage***

The Trust has partnered with MapArt to develop an exciting new format and a streamlined production process for our trailhead sign program. Digital base-map information, which shows local landmarks, greenspaces, parking and GO Transit, has been provided to the Trust for use in the creation of signage artwork. MapArt also serves as part of the creative team, providing design and cartographic expertise throughout the production.

In addition, to ensure that people have access to a hard copy of the maps, the Trail route has become a permanent feature of MapArt's popular mapping products including the Trail logo and a brief description of the Trail. This will give the Trail exposure in millions of publications that

are distributed in thousands of outlets from bookstores to gas stations. Based on the success of our arrangement and with data supplied by the Trust, MapArt will also place the logo of trails connecting to the Waterfront Trail on its maps.

Trailhead signs have been redesigned to reflect suggestions by users and to advance the Trust's marketing objectives for the Trail. The new signs show the Trail's route between two major destination points rather than confining the graphic to local municipal boundaries. For example the Trail in the Niagara Region is shown on two maps—the first from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Jordan Harbour and the second, from Port Dalhousie, St. Catharines to All thirty-five communities along the Trail are described in detailed community profiles. Profiles list where to stay, what to visit, list of tourism and visitor resources. Over 50 major annual waterfront festivals are listed in each profile. Wherever available, web links are provided.

As the chart shows, over one million people visited the Trail's website this year during the peak season. Visitation statistics have steadily increased since the 2002 Toronto Star End to End Tour.

The Trail is home to major music and cultural festivals, connects hundreds of beautiful parks and remote natural areas, the few remaining wetlands along Lake Ontario. For the first time, there is a website that describes the Trail's unique 740 km visitor experience and provides people with the necessary information and tools to plan their own trip.

In the Province's Tourism Strategy, the absence of web-based services was identified as a strategic weakness. "In a business climate that is increasingly dependent on information technology, less than two-thirds of Ontario tourist establishments had a website." Through the Trust's Trail website hundreds of small tourism related businesses have either

established or strengthened their presence on the web.

The web-maps and community profiles represent phase one of a major re-invention of the website. Subsequent phases will introduce:

- An easy to use reference library of Trust publications and reports;
- A search function; and
- An interactive feature that permits Trail users to communicate with each other about their trips.

### **ANNUAL BIKE TRIP AND TORONTO STAR ARTICLE**

The Trust's annual cycling tour serves a number of objectives. It promotes the Waterfront Trail and the emerging regional trail connections to it. It increases the public profile of the Trail and our local partners through excellent media coverage. It provides the Trust with first-hand knowledge of the quality and readiness of the Trail for cycling tourism.

This year from July 22 to 24 inclusive we biked the Greater Niagara Circle Tour – Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail, Niagara River Recreational Trail, Friendship Trail and Welland Canal Trail. This series of Trails connects two Great Lakes (Ontario & Erie) by traveling both the natural connection (the Niagara River) and the 'man made' connection (the Welland Canal). The Trust has funded a number of projects in

#### **Web site hits in 2004 (2003 comparisons)**

**April – 192,453 (183,880)**  
**May – 215,037 (222,300)**  
**June – 261,954 (237,489)**  
**July – 329,418 (301, 286)**  
**August – 305,401 (225,980)**  
**September – 216,168 (180,078)**  
**October – 146,893 (145,930)**

communities that are part of the Greater Niagara Circle Route including Fort Erie, Port Colborne and Wainfleet, through its project funded by the Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program.

Our group included representatives from the Niagara Region, a father and son who had earned their end to end certificate the previous year, and Kate Harries from the Toronto Star who was writing for the paper's Travel Section. The article was featured in the Star on September 16, 2004.

### **TORONTO BIKE SHOW**

The Trust staffed a booth at this 3-day event; in addition to introducing the trail to new users we were also able to provide updated information to current users. The feedback that we received on the Trail was very positive. 20,000 cycling enthusiasts visited the Show. Our display was well attended and we sold over 140 mapbooks and distributed over 1,000 brochures.

### **PROMOTING THE TRAIL LOCALLY**

At the November 2003 Partners meeting, the Trust unveiled three possible ads promoting the Trail as a vacation destination. The Partners selected the final ad to be used in municipal recreation and tourism brochures to promote the Trail to its primary users—the residents of Lake Ontario communities. Approximately one-third of the partners reported to us that they published the ad in brochures and publications that are distributed to every household. These communities were: Burlington, Mississauga, Pickering, Second Marsh Newsletter, Clarington, Cobourg, Apple Route Tourism Map, Quinte West, Belleville, Greater Napanee, Loyalist and Kingston.

The Trust also developed a fall ad concept featuring the website as a vacation planning tool. The ad will run in the Northumberland News (distribution of 40,000) this year and

will be made available to partners for fall publications.

Local progress on the Waterfront Trail was also reported in the Lennox and Addington's Economic Development Report.

### **EZINES**

We have been creating and publishing our monthly electronic magazine, which highlights Greenway initiatives and activities. The Ezine provides an efficient and effective way to communicate success stories on the waterfront to both our partners and other interested parties. Our subscriber base is approximately 900. Back issues of the Ezine are available on the Trust's website.

### **WATERFRONT PARTNERS MEETING – Trail Blazers: What you should know about the impact and income of trails. November 5, 2004**

The Trust convened its annual partners meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup>. Glenn Dobbin, General Manager of Ontario Place generously hosted the meeting and welcomed approximately 40 partners who came to hear about the Trans Canada Trail's economic impact study. The results of the study make a major contribution to the case for public investment in trails.

Ian Lobb of Steve Bauer Bike Tours provided our partners with a sense of how the Waterfront Trail is already playing a role in cycling tourism. Located in Niagara, Ian offers a variety of trips along Lake Ontario.

At last year's partner meeting, representatives from communities east of Brockville expressed an interest in joining the Waterfront Trail. Mike Lalonde of Cornwall and Seaway Valley Tourism took partners on a tour of the largely off-road trail that exists from Morrisburg to Québec border (90 km). Among the benefits described by the Cornwall and Seaway Valley Tourism to working with the Trust and joining the Waterfront Trail was the

expanded market reach. The Trust is pursuing this opportunity further.

Tim Peterson, MPP and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation announced the creation of the Ontario Trails Advisory Committee. Mr. Peterson chairs the committee, which will develop the Ontario Trails Strategy. The Strategy will provide a framework for decision-making and help to guide the orderly and sustainable development and management of Ontario Trails. The Ontario Trails Strategy is part of the Ministry's ACTIVE 2010 initiative, which is working to increase participation in physical activity and sport. The committee will identify a number of key trail issues and consult with stakeholders and the public to address the issues.

### **EXTENSION OF THE TRAIL TO QUÉBEC BORDER**

Representatives from the municipalities east of Brockville attended our 2003 Partners Meeting in Port Hope. After the meeting, they approached the Trust to see how they could have the Trail extended easterly from Brockville to the Quebec border. The interest grew from a casual conversation to a meeting in October of this year in Cornwall, with representatives from the affected municipalities and Cornwall and Seaway Valley Tourism to share information and discuss next steps. The distance from Brockville east to the Quebec border is approx. 140 kms; and there is an existing trail on 75 km of this total distance. The meeting concluded with an agreement in principle that the Trail would be extended, subject to the approval of the Trust Board and the financial contribution to the Communications and Promotions Program by the local partners. The target for the formal extension of the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail to the Quebec border would be 2006.

At the Velo Québec conference in October, we also had a chance to meet with province

of Quebec representatives as well as Velo Québec staff. There is a strong interest from the Québec side to joining up our Trails at the provincial border. From our initial look at the maps of our existing and proposed trails on both sides of the border, this seems to be a reasonable proposition.

We are tentatively planning our 2005 Bike Tour to cover the route from Brockville to Montréal; using this as an opportunity to audit the trails and connections; expand our marketing into Québec; and give the opportunity to Velo Québec to reach the Ontario market.

### **EXPANDING THE PARTNERSHIP**

The Trust is proud to welcome the St. Lawrence Parks Commission as a new member of the Waterfront Trail Partnership. The Commission is responsible for the 39 km Thousand Island Bikeway that runs from Gananoque to Brockville.

The Trust has become a member of the Seaway Trail. (The Seaway Trail follows the American shore of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.) Our organizations share marketing goals and anticipate many opportunities for joint promotional projects. The Waterfront Trail will be profiled in Seaway Trail's excellent travel publication, Journey Magazine, which is widely distributed throughout the United States.

Ontario Place is also showing its support for the Trail by distributing trail literature at its information kiosk and installing a trailhead sign at this location. They have also stated their willingness to collaborate on future events.

## **POLITICAL PROFILE**

The Ontario Trails Advisory Committee, the Ontario Tourism Strategy and Active 2010 are all recent initiatives announced by the Provincial government and demonstrate the growing importance of trail infrastructure.

The Trust has participated in consultations respecting these initiatives and is a member of the Ontario Trails Advisory Committee.

The Waterfront Trail and Greenway serve the goals of these programs. In order to ensure that our elected representatives understand the work underway along the waterfront, the Trust has sent letters describing the project to all federal and provincial and municipal representatives. These letters are made available to our partners through the Ezine.

## **PRESENTATIONS & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS**

The Waterfront Trail/Greenway has earned an excellent reputation as a successful example of partnership and design. As a result the Trust is requested to participate in a number of events and conferences to highlight our partners' achievements and leadership.

The Natural Cities Conference hosted by University of Toronto and the Velo Québec Tourism & Cycling Workshop, gave the Trust the opportunity to share the success of the Trail with international audiences.

Trust staff have presented or staffed displays at the following events:

- Ontario Recreation Facilities Association Regional Meeting
- Rural Destinations, Belleville
- CIBC Earth Day display at Commerce Court
- City of Toronto Earth Day Celebrations
- Ontario Trails Conference
- Toronto Bike Week Events and Tour TransCanada Trail Toronto Pavilion Reopening

- Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation Stewardship Strategy Workshop
- OPG Convergence Conference
- Natural Cities Conference U of T
- Ministry of Tourism & Recreation Strategic Planning Meeting
- State of the Great Lakes Ecosystem Waterfront Tour
- Stormwater Management Workshop
- Velo Québec International Tourism & Cycling Workshop

## **LAKE ONTARIO WATERFRONT INVESTMENT PROGRAM**

The Trust's application to the Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program (COIP) for the Lake Ontario Waterfront Investment Program was approved in 2003. This program triggered a \$32 million investment in the waterfront with the provincial and federal governments contribution of \$9.2 million leveraging an additional \$23 million from local municipalities, conservation authorities and community groups. The program comprises 50 projects of which just over one-half are now complete and available for the public's enjoyment. The remaining projects will be completed by March 2006 as stipulated by COIP.

The investment will result in 125kms of new trail and trail connections; six major waterfront promenades; two bridges; improvements to over 20 waterfront parks; five new cultural heritage facilities; interpretation of over 20 waterfront habitats; three major brownfield rehabilitation projects; six significant waterfront habitat restoration projects; and three harbour/marina revitalization projects.

## **NIAGARA REGION WATERFRONT TRAIL OPENING-OCTOBER 30<sup>th</sup>**

Partners in the Niagara Region celebrated the completion of 10 major projects along the Niagara section of the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail on October 30<sup>th</sup>. Together the projects, which are part of the Trust's

Lake Ontario Waterfront Investment Program, close a significant gap in the Trail and add a number of enhancements to the waterfront.

To mark the occasion, the Regional Niagara Bicycling Committee and the Niagara Freewheelers Bicycling Touring Club each rode from the opposite ends of the Niagara's Waterfront Trail, and met at the Historical Museum of Jordan in Jordan Village. A ribbon-cutting ceremony and celebration followed, in which Peter Partington, Chair of the Regional Municipality of Niagara, Bill Hodgson, Mayor of Lincoln, and Vicki Barron, Executive Director of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, thanked Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program partners John Maloney, MP for Welland, Tourism Minister Jim Bradley, local municipalities and bicycling organizations for their leadership and commitment to trail infrastructure.

## **FOSTERING COMMITMENT TO REGENERATION**

### **SOURCE PROTECTION REPORT AND LEGISLATION**

In June of this year, the Government of Ontario was presented with a report called ***Protecting Ontario's Drinking Water: Toward a Watershed Based Source Protection Planning***. This Report was prepared at the request of the Government by an expert Advisory Panel in response to one of the most important recommendations made by Justice O'Connor in the Walkerton Report. The Trust prepared a letter of support for this report and included this letter in our Ezine. Readers who supported the recommendations were urged to send letters to the Government.

Later in the year, the Government developed a draft of its new ***Drinking Water Source Protection Act***. Twenty-two citizen and environmental groups, coordinated by

the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) came together to prepare an analysis and list of recommendations on this new legislation. The Trust was part of this partnership and through a letter to the Government, we advised of our support for the CELA led response.

The importance of watershed based planning is fundamental to the successful realization of the Waterfront Trail and Greenway. Our involvement in this issue dates back to our days as the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront.

### **ROUGE PARK**

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust administers and manages a fund donated to the Trust by Heritage Canada for the purpose of protecting this beautiful natural resource. The Toronto Region and Conservation Authority working with community stakeholders is leading the important work underway to create Canada's largest urban park.

### **PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

A great deal has been accomplished in the past three years by our partnership.

Together we have:

- secured major infrastructure funding from senior levels of government;
- completed significant enhancements to the Trail;
- expanded number of partners;
- raised the political and media profile of the Trail;
- developed a sound marketing strategy;
- created an exciting new website featuring the Trail; and
- created a signature signage program.

To build on this success, the Trust will seek support for the 2005-2007 Communications and Promotions Program from its local

partners, the CIBC and other corporate leaders, and foundations.

**When the 740 kilometre, Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail and Greenway is complete, it will be because governments, business, community groups and the public acted as partners to create a waterfront legacy and bring people to the water's edge. This unique and expanding partnership is the strength behind the vision.**