



Introduction



Since aboriginal people first settled on the banks of Lake Ontario, the waterfront has attracted human activity. Generations of people have found places to live and work, sources of food and drinking water, means of transportation, and prime areas for recreation, all at the edge of the lake. Settlement by Europeans, and in recent decades immigration of people from around the world, has brought many different uses to the shoreline. Some of these uses have been in harmony with its special conditions, while others have had damaging effects.

This book is about our special relationship with Lake Ontario as expressed by the communities and activities along its shore. It seeks to remind us that the waterfront of today is a product of the heritage of its past - a heritage not just of buildings and culture, but also a heritage of ideas and traditions, and of the interactions between nature and people. It places special emphasis on the major changes in attitude and action that have characterized the past decade, on recognizing and celebrating the excellence in waterfront regeneration that has been achieved in many communities. And it looks ahead to the next decade, to focus and energize our ongoing work towards a healthier, more sustainable future.

While this book was compiled by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, it is a product of many voices. It draws on surveys filled out by waterfront communities, interactive workshops with community foundations, agency staff, business representatives and citizens, and a series of interviews with people who provided a range of personal and professional perspectives.

No one agency or individual bears responsibility for renewal of the Lake Ontario waterfront. Instead, that responsibility is shared among waterfront landowners, users, industries, municipalities, and a wide range of agencies and supporters. The Waterfront

Regeneration Trust however, plays a special role. A descendant of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, the Trust seeks to uphold the vision expressed by many Ontarians to that Commission, and to translate the vision into concrete actions.

The Trust works by sharing experiences and information about waterfront regeneration projects, by matching together good projects and potential sources of funding, and by inspiring communities and agencies to participate. This book provides a measure of our shared success in the decade since the Royal Commission's work, and in the five years since the Waterfront Trail was opened and the *Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy* completed. It is a celebration of vision, partnerships and hard work. It examines our collective experience to draw out lessons and themes for future work, and concludes with a call to action to continue revitalizing the waterfront with respect, excellence and innovation.

