



Conclusions



The Lake Ontario waterfront was not degraded in one fell swoop; rather, its quality and health declined gradually, one small insult at a time. The past decade has seen a reversal of that slow process of decline, influenced by the renaissance of interest in the waterfront resulting from the publication of *Watershed*. But regeneration will not happen overnight either; it will be an ongoing process of gradual renewal, one project at a time.

Until the 1990s, people and communities had tended to turn their back on the Lake Ontario waterfront. Now that they have begun to face the water's edge again, they see the possibilities there, and expectations are rising steadily. Those expectations are not complex – clean water, clean air, no more beach closings, access to the shore, more green spaces, fewer large buildings and excellent design quality. Much progress has been made already, but continuing to realize this vision will require ongoing dedication, enthusiasm, hard work and persistence.

If there is any one lesson from the past decade, it is a message of optimism. It has been said that true leadership involves the lifting of our vision to higher sights, bringing

within reach that which was previously thought to be impossible. The leadership provided by the Royal Commission, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, and countless communities, groups and agencies has indeed brought the goal of waterfront regeneration within reach.

Leadership also creates an atmosphere where the creative potential of many people can be best expressed. The past decade has created a new generation of community leaders who understand the potential of waterfront regeneration to increase quality of life, bringing with it economic vigour and healthier communities. In time, that may be seen as our greatest collective achievement, and our greatest hope for a better future.

There is no quick fix for waterfront challenges. The Waterfront Trail will continue to evolve and improve over many years to come. Progress on water quality, wildlife habitats, economic renewal, and community development will often seem frustratingly slow and uneven. But we will make progress. We will learn from the successes, and from the failures, of our own and other communities. We will persist in the face of inertia and ineptitude, and innovate in the face of obstacles. We will leave our children a healthier, more attractive waterfront than the one we inherited. So welcome to tomorrow's waterfront, full of bright promise.

David Crombie, *The Waterfront Trail Guidebook*, 1995