

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Lake is Great:

Lake Ontario is great. As one of the five North American Great Lakes; its greatness is reflected in its name, derived from the Huron word for great lake.

The lake provided the foundation upon which Toronto and Region was able to grow. Lake Ontario has shaped and enabled Toronto and Region to become the vibrant, diverse economic engine that it is. As great as the influence of the Lake has had in shaping this Region; this large Region also has the ability to influence the Lake.

Keeping it Great:

In earlier years, as Toronto and Region grew and became more urbanized in order to provide for its expanding population, environment protection was not at the forefront of planning and development. The results of extensive growth and urbanization were being clearly reflected along the Toronto waterfront and within the Regions' watershed; in 1987, the Toronto and Region was designated an Area of Concern by the Government of Canada as they recognized the need to focus attention on the area in order to improve environmental conditions. The Remedial Action Plan (RAP) was developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and all levels of government.

Lot of work has been done, and many plans as well as legislation have been crafted and enacted to restore environmental conditions

This report is intended to provide the reader with a broad overview of existing conditions (as of 2006), key actions underway, measuring progress and moving forward.

Remediation is no small task:

Designated in 1987, the AOC encompasses the Toronto Bay, as well as the six major watersheds that drain into the 45 kilometers of Toronto waterfront including the Rouge, the Don, the Humber, the Highland, Etobicoke and Mimico. Draining an area of over 2000 square kilometers and providing homes, roads and employment opportunities to over 3 million people, it is easy to see why restoring environmental conditions in an area this large, with this many people will be challenging. This area is over 47% urbanized, while 13% of the Region is considered urbanizing.

Are conditions getting better or worse?

This report intends to illustrate the staggering number of challenges Toronto and Region faces in order to restore environmental conditions, particularly those pertaining to water quality. In order to see real improvement in the environmental conditions in this Region, the Remedial Action Plan must contend both with historical issues relating to contaminated sediment, degraded benthos communities, and loss of fish and wildlife habitat but must also address the present day stresses being placed on the Region's ecosystem which will continue to be degraded in light of the continued urbanization. Between 2006 and 2031, the population of the City of Toronto, the Regions of Peel and York is expected to grow by additional 1.2 million people, or 26%. Meeting the needs of future residents of the area will lead to the continued losses of farmland, forests and wetlands, increasing pressures on wildlife and the continued degradation of terrestrial and aquatic resources.

Times are changing:

As outlined in this report, Toronto and Region does face significant challenges, but these challenges are being met with concerted and considerable efforts undertaken to protect and enhance

environmental conditions in the Region. Comprehensive monitoring programs provide vital information on the conditions of our watersheds, waterfront, and the natural resources, including the fish and wildlife that live within them. Bold, long-term plans and legislations have been developed and are being implemented; these measures will work to reduce and prevent pollution, and remediate degraded areas. Watershed and habitat plans are available to guide restoration activities. Strategies for remediating aging infrastructure and retrofitting stormwater management facilities are available. These plans and measures are big, bold and often complex - requiring significant resources. And while, we cannot expect to undo the centuries of pollution, land changes and urbanization in a few years; we all must continue *Moving Forward* to restore environmental conditions so that the Region is no longer considered an Area of Concern but one that supports a green, healthy, vibrant economy and community.